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Organizing Democracy: Reflections on the Rise of Political Organizations in the Nineteenth Century

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The contested nature of legitimacy lies at the heart of modern politics. A continuous tension can be found between the public, demanding to be properly represented, and their representatives, who have their own responsibilities along with their own rules and culture. Political history needs to address this contestation by looking at politics as a broad and yet entangled field rather than as something confined to institutions and politicians only. As political history thus widens into a more integrated study of politics in general, historians are investigating democracy, ideology, civil society, the welfare state, the diverse expressions of opposition, and many other key elements of modern political legitimacy from fresh perspectives. Parliamentary history has begun to study the way rhetoric, culture and media shape representation, while a new social history of politics is uncovering the strategies of popular meetings and political organizations to influence the political system.

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Editors

Organizing Democracy

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Preface

This book studies the new types of political organizations that emerged in (western) Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century, from popular meetings to single-issue organizations and political parties. The development of these types has often been used to demonstrate a development toward democratic representation or political institutionalization. This book challenges the idea that the development of "democracy" is a story of rise and progress. It is rather a story of continuous but never completely satisfying attempts of interpreting the rule of the people. Taking the perspective of nineteenth-century organizers as its point of departure, this study shows that contemporaries hardly distinguished between petitioning, meeting and association. The attraction of organizing was that it promised representation, accountability and popular participation. Only in the twentieth century, parties became reliable partners for the state in averting revolution, managing the unpredictable effects of universal suffrage and reforming society. This book analyzes them in their earliest stage as just one of the several types of civil society organizations that did not differ that much from each other. The promise of organization, and the experiments that resulted from it, deeply impacted modern politics.

Maartje Janse and Henk te Velde (eds)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Perspectives on Political Organizing

Maartje Janse and Henk te Velde

In the long century between the Revolutionary Era of the late eighteenth century and the extension of the franchise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, new types of political organization emerged, from nationwide pressure groups, to the revolutionary clubs of 1848, and to political parties. In hindsight, it is tempting to present these new organizations as part of a linear process of democratization and progress. In the twentieth century, the dominant understanding of democratization focused on the extension of suffrage rights and the emergence of the political party as indications of democracy. From this finalist perspective, a history of nineteenth-century political organizing would culminate in the 'invention' of the all-important political party. As one historian put it: 'The history of political associations belongs to the history of the emergence of parties as political agents'.[1]

This book instead takes the perspective of nineteenth-century contemporaries as its point of departure and unearths a far messier history: political organizations were established as part of a decades-long

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process of trial and error with new models of political expression. These experiments did not have a preconceived goal—and only a very limited number of them were primarily aimed at the extension of the franchise. Their purpose was broader: to develop new modes (or reinvent older modes) of popular participation and deliberation and of expressing popular opinion in the press, by petitioning, public meetings or organizations.

Some of the most influential nineteenth-century experiments were those that increased the scale and scope of previously known forms of organization. Changes in government and infrastructure, among other things, created both the need and possibility for national organization, in addition to often already existing local and regional organizations. This resulted in organizations with far greater membership than had been possible before. The supra-local mass organization first originated in the religious sphere but was applied to political issues from the 1820s onwards.

By political organizations we mean voluntary associations making claims that imply changing government policy and legislation, be it directly, through influencing parliament by means of petitioning; or indirectly, through trying to change public opinion, and attempting to influence voter's behaviour. These organizations eventually had a deep impact on political life at large. They stimulated citizens to redefine their relation to the state, forge new political identities and negotiate the boundaries of what was considered politics.

Seen from this perspective the history of democracy is not so much a history of 'phases' of democracy that occur one after the other, but rather a history of practices that were often used simultaneously in order to *organize* democracy. To better understand the phenomenon of political organization as it developed in relation to (representative) democracy, this book focuses on the nineteenth century, when political parties had not yet become the dominant mode of political organization. As a consequence, the case studies presented here are from Western Europe, mainly Britain, Ireland, Belgium, France, the German *Länder* and from the United States. The purpose of this book is, however, not to study these cases as such but to investigate the emergence of several types of organizations at a time when the difference between (ad hoc) meetings and (more permanent) associations still had to be defined.

Features of Nineteenth-Century Political Organizing

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the countries that appear in this book had at least developed a representative system of sorts, which allowed for participation of social elites within constitutional boundaries. This also implied a limited influence of a public opinion that was often narrowly defined as rational deliberation by financially independent, upper- and middle-class men—approximately the same group of citizens that was allowed to vote. During the French Revolution, the ideal of general suffrage had not been realized because even revolutionaries feared the direct influence of ordinary people on the political process.[2] Still, the limited post-revolutionary public opinion could put 'pressure from without' on the parliamentary system. The freedom of public opinion showed the (potential) gap between public opinion and parliament, and gave rise to fundamental questions such as: Do our representatives truly represent the people? How can we make heard the voices of those officially excluded from politics, as well as the voice of the people in between elections?[3]

Besides the press, public meetings and petitions, political organizing acquired increasing importance as a way to express opinions of the people in a broad array of issues. The attraction of organizing was that it could implement ideals of representation, accountability and popular participation already at the heart of popular protests but that had been very hard to realize. No matter their objectives, through their organizational practices alone, political associations challenged people's understanding of politics and expanded the political domain.[4]

Even though some histories of the pressure group go back as early as 1720, it is generally accepted that '[m]odern extraparliamentary political organization is a product of the late eighteenth century', as Eugene Black writes in the conclusion of his study of early British reform organizations.[5] Henry Jephson was, at the end of the nineteenth century, the first historian of public assemblies, and a strikingly perceptive scholar whose work remains worth reading. He too devotes an important part of his study to the rise of 'the Platform' in the eighteenth century.[6] Around 1780, he sees an important innovation in British political life: political associations were established to supplement and strengthen popular assemblies for the first time, and supra-local political organization was used 'as an instrument for giving cohesion and strength' to movements that had hitherto been ad hoc and local in character.[7]

Even in Britain, the legitimacy of a 'powerful Association to back up Platform agitation' was still broadly contested until the 1820s at least. The Platform agitation of public meetings itself was associated 'with the violent harangues of Athenian demagogues and Roman tribunes'. Similarly, the connected practice of petitioning was often regarded with suspicion and distaste, 'as tending dangerously towards government by the populace'.[8] Interestingly, and characteristic of the early nineteenth century, the critics hardly distinguished between meetings, petitioning and political organizations. All these things stirred up unrest and misled the innocent common people. In general, critics were annoyed that 'those who were excluded from the political nation could express their grievances to parliament'. According to most, they did not represent a real, legitimate 'interest' or point of view.[9] The political association both formulated public opinion and expressed it—it was 'both leader and follower of the people'—and as such the political association was seen as an illegitimate competitor to parliament. For the social elite, it was acceptable to voice demands only if they were presented in the form of polite requests to the respectable audience of the House of Commons or other political authorities.[10]

Some British radicals challenged the legitimacy of parliament by claiming that their organizations more faithfully represented the wishes of the people than did parliament and that they, in fact, were the true parliaments of the people. In a less radical manner, the right to petition was often invoked to legitimize political associations, as for instance in 1780: 'That association is a measure of unquestionable legality appears from the spirit of our laws, from the express right to present Petitions to Parliament, which involves the right to join in any peaceful mode for the more effectual support of those Petitions.'[11] It indicates that, at first, the organizers themselves also hardly distinguished between petitioning, meeting and association. Meetings were like short-term associations, and associations consisted of a series of meetings, while petitions could be the product of both. Only gradually did these forms become more clearly separated.

The eighteenth-century British campaign against the slave trade combined public assemblies, petitions and political organization in an innovative mode of agitation. Organized antislavery activity on a nationwide scale began in 1787 with the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, led by what was known as the London Committee. By employing travelling agents such as Thomas Clarkson, a 'new form of extraparliamentary action' and a 'novel type of reform movement' were conceived and developed. The London Committee 'set the movement on its "modern"

course, evolving a structure and organisation which made it possible to mobilize thousands of Britons across the length and breadth of the country'.[12] The antislavery movement deeply influenced subsequent single-issue movements, most notably the Anti-Corn Law League.[13]

The campaign against slave trade of the late eighteenth century introduced several remarkable innovations, but the numerous popular assemblies in the Anglo-American world and the new organizations connected to them usually had a markedly local or regional character. Religious, benevolent and moral reform organizations were crucial in the development of new organizing practices of the nineteenth century. The Missionary and Bible Societies, in fact, offered a blueprint of the modern mass organization, including most forms and activities that would become standardized later, such as local auxiliaries to national organizations.[14]

The proliferation of religious organizations explains why British, and to a lesser extent American, political organizations developed earlier and their organizational culture at large differed from that on the continent. The oppressive politics of some continental regimes also did much to dissuade their citizens from organizing in public. Here political associations often took the shape of networks of small-scale secret societies or crypto-political associations, rather than national mass organizations, and they were more likely to engage in either small societies or violent action than in mass petitioning.[15] And even when around mid-century there was a willingness to experiment with British-style antislavery organizations in countries such as France and the Netherlands, public meetings and agitation did not always prove to be the most obvious route to success. Differences in political culture, specifically a strong fear of mass organizations in the light of revolutionary experiences, prevented a ready transfer of 'foreign' organizational practices. However, after some adaptation to better fit the 'national character' and national political culture, some foreign organizational forms were adopted, albeit often without noisy mass meetings. Political organizing offered political outsiders the opportunity to experiment with, and test the limits of, popular participation in politics.[16]

Even in the United States, the country that called itself 'democratic' when that word was in other countries still a term of abuse, it turned out that democracy was easier said than done.[17] Here, fear of organizing was not related to a fear of democracy, as was the case in Europe. Still, organizing was far more contested than Tocqueville's famous account of the central role of voluntary associations in American democracy has made it seem. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, much as in Europe,

voluntary associations with a political aim were often considered as unconstitutional and dangerous moral crusades that endangered and destabilized the political system.[18] Specifically the fact that women and members of the free black community used the tool of organization to speak out in political matters as controversial as slavery was regarded as a threat to the political system.[19] Only white men were allowed to vote and seen as legitimate political actors.

There was another reason why American observers—and European ones for that matter—regarded political organizations as dangerous. As Johann Neem among others has shown, the early nineteenth-century suspicion of political organizations was rooted in the notion that national unity was created through the Revolutionary past; to 'organize' only a part of the whole equalled breaking up the nation.[20] This was partly an inheritance of the idea that 'parties' were not legitimate, as had been the common understanding of the phenomenon during most of the ancien régime.[21] On the other hand, the American attitude towards organizing reminds us of the French rejection of organization. There the story of the revolutionary origins of the nation created an even stronger discourse of national unity. Because of the importance the Jacobin tradition attached to the 'one and indivisible nation', full freedom of association was not granted until 1901. This was partly because citizens should relate to the government without interference of intermediate bodies that would 'usurp' power from the legitimate government.[22]

The 'communications revolution' that could be witnessed in the United States and Europe in the second quarter of the nineteenth century—produced by railways, postal systems, cheaper printing techniques—made organizing on a supra-local level easier, more common, and, in time, more accepted.[23] However, even then opinions differed on the best type of political organization. During the 1820s and 1830s, American Democrats had started to realize that single-issue organizations and their impressive moral crusades constituted a form of grass-roots politics that was hard to control. The modern Democratic Party was developed in these same decades, in part as an answer to the threat critical citizens posed through their organizations and protest. Organizing citizens as loyal partisans seemed a benign solution to the danger of instability that came with citizen protests, and one that allowed political leaders to retain control and stability.[24] Organization thus not only was a tool in the hands of political outsiders but could also be used by political elites to retain control over democracy. For Britain, it has even been argued that national

democracy-cum-organizations partly replaced older, more powerful forms of direct political participation by the local population.[25] Organization was not a democratic panacea.

In Britain, as early as 1818, the importance of party organization was similarly recognized by Whigs when they expressed the hope that 'The formation of a regular and respectable party to maintain the cause of the people, instead of blowing up the flame, and causing an explosion, is rather likely to moderate its violence, and give it a safe vent.'[26] It is, however, not easy to determine what they meant when they were talking about a 'party'. It is obvious that it was more than only the parliamentary party, but until the end of the nineteenth century no real national party organization existed, let alone determined political decisions inside parliament by organizing the voters. A party consisted of a cloud of associations, clubs and informal contacts, loosely held together by a common current of thought. When the Birmingham 'Caucus' in the 1870s first voiced its ambition to organize a national party, this caused quite a stir. Both defenders and critics of the Caucus agreed that it should not become a party 'machine' that manipulated the voters in order to gain electoral victory. Rather, its proponents argued, it should be an open forum that encouraged popular participation in politics. It turns out that the Caucus was, in practice, a rather rambling organization, which did not have nearly the demonic disciplining power its detractors accused it of having.[27] This form of organization was much closer to the earlier single-issue organizations than the older historiography, starting with the famous analysis by Mosei Ostrogorski, would have us believe.[28] In the same vein, American political organization, which had so many faces, was now mainly used to demonstrate the dangers of 'machine' politics.

In the meantime, liberal and Protestant continental political organizations were (rhetorically or literally) using the famous example of the British Anti-Corn Law League (1838–1846) to experiment with something that came close to a modern political party, as is demonstrated in this book by Andreas Biefang.[29] However, from our point of view, the question is not when exactly 'modern' political parties started. Instead we believe that these early parties belonged to the same category of associations as the ones that they took as examples for their organizational model. This is not to deny that something changed at the end of the nineteenth century, but this book will look at this history from a different angle. We are not interested in the history and prehistory of the modern political party as such but in the multifaceted forms of political organization and

mobilization during the nineteenth century. Political parties were not the necessary outcome of this process, but one of the subcategories of the larger species of political organization.

Even when full-blown mass parties emerged in Europe at the very end of the nineteenth century—the German socialist party of the 1890s being the first example—they still contained many features of earlier forms of organization. And in countries such as France, party organizations never succeeded in truly dominating national politics, not even during the twentieth century, as is shown in this book by Nicolas Roussellier. Still, the dominance of political parties grew, and they became the political organizations par excellence during the twentieth century. They have dominated the picture so completely that the resulting form of democracy has been characterized as 'party democracy'.[30] This was probably not because of their capacities for perfect representation and organization of the people as such but rather because they seemed to be able to bridge the gap between the political system and the electorate—a new concern in light of the extension of the franchise. Perhaps an even more important factor was that they proved to be reliable, dependable partners for the state who needed social partners for its endeavours to reform society and, later on, also build a welfare state. But this is a twentieth-century story. In the nineteenth century, political parties could already mobilize voters, but for this book their role as political organizations in civil society takes centre stage, and seen from this perspective, they do not differ that much from other organizations.

It is obvious that there are great differences between the countries discussed in the case studies of this book in terms of government, suffrage rights, public sphere, political culture and the pace of developments. However, this volume does not concentrate on these differences but analyses various forms of political organizing that emerged in the Western world in the nineteenth century. This book is not an attempt at a comparative history of political organizing, in the sense of juxtaposing individual national cases. Rather, we analyse the phenomenon of political organizing in the long nineteenth century through a series of case studies which all add to our understanding of the phenomenon. That the national contexts differ helps us to demonstrate how the phenomenon of political organizing worked in remarkably similar ways across the modern world. In that sense, this volume follows the footsteps of Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, who in his book *Civil Society* convincingly points out the remarkable similarities in associational life from Boston to St Petersburg. In a sense, our

volume supplements his book because Hoffmann excluded political organizations from his study.[31] While it is important to acknowledge differences, in this book we aim at a transnational study focusing on similarities between political organizations and in associational life at large. This will help us understand how and why political organizing was important to contemporary actors as well as to the development of political life, and why, on the other hand, so many commentators feared it so much.

Moreover, the occurrence of so many similarities despite all the national differences is no coincidence. Political behaviour is learned behaviour, and modes of organization are often the result of the transfer of foreign examples. Those seeking to mobilize others were always on the lookout for the optimal mode of organization and were eager to learn the best practices of other, including foreign, organizations. It depended on the circumstances whether they acknowledged their examples as prestigious models or rather ignored them because they wanted to show the purely 'national' character of their organization. Triggered by the successes of past- and present-day organizations, both at home and abroad, either with political, religious or social aims, they experimented further to build the ideal organizational forms to become successful in their own struggle. As Maartje Janse's essay on the way contemporaries thought and spoke of a new type of mass organizations suggests, from around 1830 organizing became 'modular', as historical sociologists term the adoption of organizational forms in new contexts.[32] Several of the chapters in this book focus on national organizations, especially since these were relatively new in the early nineteenth century: Andreas Biefang and Anne Heyer, for instance, discuss national political organizations in Germany, even before the country was fully unified. However, local organizations remained important throughout the century, as the contributions by Geerten Waling about Paris and Berlin in 1848 and Robert Allen about New York in the 1880s indicate.

Organizing Democracy

On an analytical level, this book shows the ways political organizations facilitated, organized and conceptualized democracy. Much has been written about the relationship between civic engagement and democracy, as the idea that a strongly developed civil society nurtures and sustains a stable democracy has become a dominant notion in political science since the Second World War.[33] Most important for historians perhaps was Jürgen Habermas' assertion about the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

that a flourishing public sphere depends on practices of sociability, which also links non-political activities to the realm of politics.[34] His work has stimulated research that underlines the merits of non-political—that is, not explicitly political—organizations in civil society for democracy. Meanwhile the relationship between political organizations and democracy seemed self-evident and unproblematic. Political historians and political scientists often assumed that political parties were the ideal bridge between parliament and the people.[35] On the other hand, social historians and historical sociologists wrote about social movements that furthered democracy by emancipating oppressed social groups, and historians of culture, gender and religion wrote about reform organizations such as antislavery that had important political aspects and implications. These debates were for a long time rarely informed by each other.

This book is the product of recent changes in the way we view politics at large and the way we understand democracy. The cultural turn in history has produced a rich historiography of 'political cultures' that takes contemporaries' perspectives as their point of departure and often tries to integrate what has been separated in our tradition of overspecialized history. In recent years, the interpretation of the development of democracy has changed. A couple of decades ago, scholars were first and foremost interested in 'democratization', understood as the spread, growth and reform of democracy. They did, of course, realize that democracy is a complicated concept, but were not primarily concerned with questioning the nature of democracy. No serious scholar would present a simple forward march of democracy, but many were interested in the connections between democracy and modernization, as, for instance, in interpretations about different waves of democratization, or, in the particular role of the state, as for instance in extending step by step citizen rights.

More recently, another perspective has been added, which addresses more directly the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the concept of democracy. Is it at all possible to have a 'real' democracy? Is not what we call democracy, in fact, a kind of representative aristocracy?[36] What did contemporaries mean when they used the term?[37] This new approach does not only exclude a simple linear development but also challenges the idea that the development of 'democracy' is a story of rise and progress at all. It is rather a story of continuous but never completely satisfying attempts of interpreting the rule of the people.[38] In this volume, we take this new interpretation as our point of departure, but we investigate democratic practices rather than democratic theory, even though we acknowledge

that conceptions of politics and political practices develop in dynamic relation to each other.

The contributors to this book are not interested in the 'phases' of democracy but instead investigate the various democratic organizational practices that were used and discussed during the nineteenth century. This could take the shape of the efficient and even bureaucratic form of a modern political party but also more floating forms, such as ad hoc mass meetings. The aim of this volume is not so much to challenge evolution per se but rather to uncover the implications, attractions and difficulties of the different modes of organizing democracy that coexisted at the time.

Robert Michels analysed the main example of the modern political party, the (German) Social Democratic Party, in his well-known *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1911). He argued that even in socialist parties, democracy ran the risk of turning into an oligarchy, at the expense of real popular participation. He set this tendency, partly implicitly, against a competing version of 'real' democracy which involved the direct participation of the members of the party, as opposed to merely formal representation. He did, of course, not invent this form of participatory democracy, whose ambitions and desires were certainly older than the parties themselves. The important thing is rather that these desires and this form of democracy did not disappear when the parties arrived.

Often the emergence of political parties has been interpreted as an indication of the modernization of politics.[39] In the same vein, Charles Tilly uses a dichotomy between pre-modern and modern repertoires of collective action to voice discontent and social and political protest. He also presents the rise of the social movement in the early nineteenth century as the transition from early modern to modern practices, and even seems to define the modern social movement as something that seems to be very close to the organization of a political party.[40] However, the history of political organization is much more than a history of political modernization, and concentrating on a pre-modern/modern dichotomy has led scholars to neglect the coexistence of the different democratic practices that, taken together, reveal the many faces of democracy, and perhaps also its inherent tensions. These tensions should be understood as the key characteristics of democratic practices, and, looking at democratic practices more closely, it appears that most forms of democracy also contain a combination of elements related to what we from a later perspective would define as either direct or representative democracy. The student

of the nineteenth century could therefore also be misled by a dichotomy between representative and direct democracy. At the time, many elements of democracy were merged. However, on the basis of this volume, three main democratic organizational practices or ways in which democracy was organized can be identified:

(1) **Popular meetings**: ad hoc mobilization and organization of the people as a manifestation of participatory democracy. These meetings both channelled and produced political ideas, energies and agitation, and gave people a sense of real participation in politics. Popular meetings were aimed at debating and voting on resolutions. These meetings were not 'direct democracy' in the classic sense of the word, the sense of plebiscites and referenda. However, as a democratic practice they produced a strong sense of direct involvement in politics, through voting and debating about the procedure, agenda, chairman and the order of the speakers. This was democracy on the spot, but its reach was limited and its effects often short lived. The contribution by Reeve Houston shows the importance of this side of democratic organizing in the United States, and Geerten Waling demonstrates that in the revolutionary situation of 1848, meetings were crucial, but that the difference between meeting and association was not obvious at all, particularly in revolutionary Paris. Gita Deneckere argues that public meetings, petitions, mass demonstrations and political associations in Belgium in the 1830s and 1840s were all closely related expressions of popular dissent, making use of the window of opportunity offered by the progressive constitution of the new kingdom, but with the intention to remain within the limits set by this new constitution. The story of political organizing in the nineteenth century is unthinkable without popular meetings. In fact, the two were closely related in most cases, and most of the contributions to this book contain references to these meetings, even if they are not the prime subject of the chapter.
(2) **Single-issue organizations**: semi-permanent mobilization, agitation and organization of people by means of meetings, petitioning and campaigns to right a social, moral or political wrong. More often than not, this included a substantial association that was, however, meant to be temporary, only for the duration of the campaign, and did not aim at permanent representation in (national)

politics. The single-issue organizations fostered a sense of connection and solidarity with like-minded people across the country. In doing so, they empowered in particular those who were formally excluded from politics to speak out in political matters. Maartje Janse shows that around 1830, the scale of national reform organizations, and the systematic nature of their campaigns, changed contemporaries' conceptions of the power of organization. Even though such associations were highly contested throughout the Anglo-American world, organizing had now clearly become a very powerful tool, or 'machine' as it was often referred to. The attraction of organizing grew in the early nineteenth century, and Kevin Butterfield's contribution addresses the remarkable fact that in the United States, membership was increasingly defined as the legal right of an individual citizen to join associations in civil society. This right was considered so important that the court could even overrule the decision of an association to expel a member. Henry Miller, in his contribution, does not concentrate on political organizations, but on petitioning as a form of political action. In doing so, he is able to show that for a long time, little distinction was made between single-issue organizations, on the one hand, and meetings and ad hoc protest forms, on the other.

(3) **Political parties**: permanent mobilization and organization of people who share political views. This normally included putting up candidates for (national) elections, a permanent board, national representation of local auxiliaries and some sort of bureaucracy, which, in the long run, ensured success in the game of established politics. The newly organized parties gave their members the sense they belonged to a powerful political and moral community that would eventually determine national politics. Andreas Biefang shows that the German Nationalverein of the 1860s already had the appearance of a modern party, but it was in practice a pressure group directed at influencing government policy rather than a social movement aiming at mobilizing the people for a just cause. Its organizational model was the by-that-time-iconic Anti-Corn Law League. Robert Allen makes visible a cloud of floating and flexible organizations based on personal engagement by concentrating on just a short time frame in political New York in the 1880s, instead of a teleological story of the development of political

organizing. What mattered was not the organization as such but what one wanted to achieve by it. Therefore, according to Anne Heyer, the early political parties that were often accused of manipulating the masses honestly attempted not only to organize the people but also to give them a voice. They had to do this, simply because it was their raison d'être, and also the only way to convince their potential followers to join up. Underlining organization as almost the only defining feature of the new parties is, at least partly, the result of hindsight, as Henk te Velde argues in his contribution. At the time, at the end of the nineteenth century, parties were part of a broad process of democratization that showed that participation was at least as important as organization. There were other ways to mobilize the people than through political parties. Even though in Western Europe political parties came to dominate politics in the twentieth century, Nicolas Roussellier uses the French case to stress that this result was less obvious than has often been thought. And where parties were dominant, as in Britain, even the Labour Party, modern party par excellence, could not simply rely on its organization but was to a certain extent dependent on older traditions of elite networking, as Hanneke Hoekstra argues.

The three forms of meetings, single-issue movement and parties could have been presented as a sequence of increasing sophistication in political organizing and a development towards a more democratic form of representation or towards political institutionalization. In this vein, the political party would appear as the democratic 'outcome' of the nineteenth century. We argue, however, that the three organizational forms are part of the same desire or need to organize democracy, and that they have always complemented each other. The three categories even partly overlap. Both single-issue organizations and political parties used popular meetings to express their aims and further their goals, and popular assemblies needed at least a rudimentary form of organization involving a chair, which sometimes evolved into a more permanent structure. Instead of necessarily identifying popular assemblies with direct participation and political parties with representation, this book contends that all three organizational forms contained at least some elements of both types of democracy. Reeve Huston's Chap. 4 in this volume shows that popular meetings have traits of representative democracy as well as direct democracy, and Henry Miller shows that this is also true for single-issue campaigns.

In the middle, or at the end of the nineteenth century—the moment differed according to the country—political organizations lost their revolutionary connotations and were increasingly understood as efficient means for putting pressure on the political system, disciplining the people or simply representing them. Politicians and reformers alike appreciated the possibility organization offered for streamlining the political process while still making the voice of the people heard. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was by no means clear what direct role, if any, 'the people' should play in politics. How to transform ideas about political participation into participatory practices? This was one of the key questions that dominated political life from the Revolutionary Era of the late eighteenth century onwards. Political organizations offered an answer that, eventually, appealed to both political outsiders and members of the political establishment. Though the latter group was often critical and fearful of the power of organizations, they realized that this was a preferable alternative to revolution. The political organization became a staple of modern politics, not in the least because it was a vehicle that seemed, on the one hand, to be able to avert revolution and, on the other, to manage the unpredictable effects of universal suffrage. The previous period of experimenting with new ways of mobilizing the people had demonstrated the power of organizing to all parties involved.

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CHAPTER 2

'Association Is a Mighty Engine': Mass Organization and the Machine Metaphor, 1825–1840

Maartje Janse

In Britain and the United States, the second quarter of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a new generation of single-issue organizations. Antislavery societies, temperance societies, the Irish Catholic Association, and the Anti-Corn Law League, to name a few prominent examples, impressed contemporaries with their efficient modes of organization. Mobilizing and disciplining a massive amount of people through numerous local auxiliaries into a national organization, influencing public opinion through a deluge of tracts and periodicals, mass petitioning, fundraising, led contemporaries to believe this was a new phenomenon, a new power in politics, for better or worse. But was there really a new type of political organization emerging in the late 1820s?

The first problem we encounter in answering this question is that we need to define the phenomenon in order to be able to study its lineage. Are these political organizations? Extra-parliamentary political organization in general is of course not an invention of the nineteenth century, rather a product of the late eighteenth century. Are these organizations

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part of the genealogy of benevolence, or of religiously motivated moral reform? In that case, the same applies: not an invention of the early nineteenth century.[1] Still, the sources for the late 1820s and 1830s indicate that contemporaries spoke of the organizations that attempted to sway public opinion (and often had clear political goals as well as moral aims) as a novel phenomenon. Building on the legacy of benevolent, religious, political, and moral reform organizations, these organizations had taken on new shapes and new meanings. They offered new promises and posed new threats. This chapter explores contemporary understanding of political organization through a close reading of sources in which people reflect on this phenomenon.

The most striking feature of these reflections is that this phenomenon did not have a name yet. A century later it would be called a pressure group for the first time, and to this day, different historiographies refer to it in different ways—social movement organizations, reform societies, advocacy groups, or single-issue organizations. This chapter does not attempt to narrowly define any phenomenon or plead for one specific expression, but instead focuses on one of the central characteristics of these organizations: their scale. It deals with national organizations with a sizeable membership, aimed at changing public opinion, and often aimed at legislative change as well, in the period between 1820 and 1840, 'when reform enthusiasms were, by earlier standards, most diverse and widespread, by later standards most intense'.[2] Around 1830 people described these organizations in various ways[3]; one metaphor, however, soon became dominant: that of the political organization as a machine, more specifically a steam engine.

Historians can use metaphors to analyse ideas and assumptions prevalent in a culture.[4] The widespread use of this metaphor is important for several reasons. Besides indicating that contemporaries sensed, in the second half of the 1820s, that there was something new at play here, the metaphor facilitated reflections on the opportunities and liabilities of this new phenomenon. Speaking of organizations as if they were machines allowed for negotiating their possibilities and dangers when placed in a political context. Furthermore, language is not just a passive operator of meaning but accomplishes something. Likewise, a metaphor does not simply reflect ideas already present, it moulds them too. Conceptual metaphors structure people's thoughts and actions as well as their language. These representations of reality shape action and enclose the field of possibilities by referring to what is 'thinkable'. Reconstructing the use of this meta-

phor, therefore, is reconstructing the way in which actors understand their situation, and, in the Weberian sense, 'rediscovering the affinities and the oppositions from which they plan their action, drawing the genealogies of possibilities and impossibilities that implicitly structure their horizon'.[5]

Understanding the phenomenon of mass organization through the concept of the steam engine had important implications for contemporaries' perceptions of mass organization, and their subsequent behaviour based on this perception. A more in-depth analysis of this metaphor is therefore warranted to arrive at a proper understanding of how its presence in political discourse empowered political outsiders, while it intimidated members of the establishment. The debate on mass organizations in society and politics can be read as a debate on mass society and democracy, and since people base their behaviour on their understanding of the world they live in, their understanding thereof matters.

One striking feature of the machine metaphor is that it was a transnational phenomenon, surfacing during the same years in debates over Irish, British and American reform organizations (and perhaps elsewhere). This chapter aims to explore the use of the machine metaphor in a transnational context, and attempts to answer the questions why this metaphor gained popularity in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and what insights it offers to the changing nature of reform, society, and political life in these crucial decades. The political constellations of the countries under scrutiny differed greatly and developed in varying ways, and there are differences in the way this metaphor functioned. However, the scope of this chapter prohibits a thorough comparative study. Instead, making use of a wide array of primary and secondary sources, going back and forth between different national contexts while focusing mainly on the shared rhetoric of mass organizations as machines, it should be seen as a broad exploration of a topic that merits additional research. As we will see, the metaphor represents a specific historical moment in social and political history: that of the birth of what historical sociologists later described as the social movement organization. Studying this metaphor can help us connect the lived experience of contemporaries to the structural development of political life.[6]

The Machine Metaphor in Politics

The metaphor of machinery used to describe political structures dates back to at least the seventeenth century. Besides important organic metaphors such as the 'body politic', mechanical metaphors were regularly

used. For centuries, people have thought and spoken of states in terms of the machinery, mechanism, or the wheels of government. There is an extensive literature on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mechanism. In the quest for political stability, philosophers discussed how states should integrate their different 'parts' into a well-working political 'system'. They spoke of a 'European state system' as a machine that, when it worked properly, would ensure a balance of power.[7] The implications of this machine metaphor meant that the political process could be imagined as (ideally) reliable and transparent, functioning consistently and independently from external influences. In the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, 'political machine' usually referred to the government or the political decision-making process at large as, for instance, when the German historian Heeren criticized the modernization of Western European state administration of the eighteenth century as the 'principle of rendering as far as possible, the administration of the state, a mechanical operation; for thus, it was thought, could it be organized most cheaply and commodiously'.[8]

The machine referred to here was still the classic machine of the automaton or the clockwork. The rapid developments in steam technology, however, as they occurred around 1800, infused the machine metaphor with a new element: that of power. Steam engines create movement by building up steam pressure and channelling that pressure in the desired direction. The politicization of the language of pressure dates from the 1820s and 1830s, decades that saw progress in mechanization and subsequent social and economic transformation at a much faster pace than any previous change.[9] This language is visible, for instance, in the debates on political reform in Britain. The Reform Act of 1832 was the product of novel conceptions about the place of public opinion in politics.

After the peace of 1815, it had become clear that a fundamental and permanent change had taken place. As Peter Fraser put it: 'An entirely new kind of public had come into being, which appeared to be stronger than the government'.[10] On 23 March 1820, a young Robert Peel, at that time member of parliament (MP) for Oxford University, wrote a letter to his friend and confidant John Wilson Croker on the crisis that had followed upon the death of King George III: 'It seems to me a curious crisis—when public opinion never had such influence on public measures, and yet never was so dissatisfied with the share which it possessed. It is growing too large for the channels that it has been accustomed to

run through. … [T]he engineers that made them never dreamt of various streams that are now struggling for a vent'.[11] The French Revolution had made politicians and the public alike aware that ignoring public opinion was no longer an option. If the steam of public opinion were to build up to produce too much internal pressure, the whole system could explode.

This language of political pressure referred specifically to public opinion. Talking about slavery, an observer compared the British Parliament to 'the steam engine which required only *the steam of public opinion*, strongly expressed, to enable it to annihilate Colonial Slavery at one majestic stroke'.[12] Most accounts of the political changes around this time argue that the 1832 Reform Act was the answer to this building pressure: the political engineers in Parliament designed a new system with broader channels for public opinion to run through, to stay with Peel's metaphor. By extending the franchise from 500,000 to 813,000 adult males, allowing a total of one out of six adult males to vote, the reformed parliament was considered to be doing enough justice to public opinion. Or, as radicals had argued in 1831, better representation would act as 'a safety valve by which the opinions of an immense part of the population would reach the House in a constitutional way'.[13]

Around 1830, however, reformers and their adversaries in Ireland, Britain, and the United States increasingly understood pressure groups as political machines in their own right. Reform organizations were thought to be expanding the political system by building channels and machines for change that they successfully welded onto the existing system. They generated and channelled pressure to change public opinion and thus ultimately bear upon government machinery. In the words of a radical Irish abolitionist: 'the rules and constitution of our Society [offer] the application of two or three plain … principles to this question, which are capable of being combined, so as to form the unlimited levers of a new machine of immense power, that has never yet been brought to bear fully or, indeed, at all, on the West Indian proprietory in these Kingdoms'.[14] It is important to note that these 'engines for reform', often built and operated by political outsiders, suggested not only that outsiders too should have a voice in debates over legislation but also that the political system could and should be expanded to include large numbers of disenfranchised citizens as they were represented in organized pressure groups.

Religious Machines

Modern mass politics were fundamentally shaped by religious practices and techniques. Elsewhere I have explored more extensively the different ways in which religious ideas and practices and forms informed a new perspective on the possibilities of mass organization in reform.[15] The religious associations of the early nineteenth century had created a large group of experienced organizers, new networks and new imagined communities, based on a shared religious identity. Many political mass organizations, both in Europe and the United States, took their organizational and disciplining techniques from churches, evangelical revivals, and religious organizations.[16] In particular, the innovations made in the latter, most importantly the auxiliary system and new fundraising methods, revolutionized the impact of political organizations from the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Just as national churches were locally organized, religious and later political organizations too started to organize in a way that balanced the role of the central organizing committee with its often cautious long-term strategy and the role of the local auxiliaries, which were the life and soul of the organization in terms of fundraising, mobilizing new members, and disseminating print work.

The Irish Catholic Association, founded in 1823, is a remarkable example of an early political mass movement that was shaped by religious forms. Its aim was political equality for Roman Catholics. British politics, of course, was closely intertwined with the Anglican Church, and neither Protestant dissenters nor Catholics could hold office or be elected to Parliament. The revolutionary decision of the organization's leader, lawyer Daniel O'Connell, in 1824 to open membership to anyone who was prepared to pay a penny—called the Catholic Rent—swiftly transformed the movement: in 1828, it had 10,000 full members and over three million associate members (close to half the total population of roughly seven million people), and a weekly income of over £2000. That same year, Conservative Prime Minister Peel and the very reluctant King George IV realized that to prevent a bloody revolt in Ireland they must give in to the demands of the Catholic Association. In 1829, the Catholic Relief Act was passed, opening the doors of Parliament to O'Connell.[17]

Reflecting on the Catholic Association, people often chose the machine metaphor to make sense of what had happened. In explaining the success of the Catholic protests, some pointed to the strongly shared sense of wrongdoing in Catholic Ireland. But, as organizer and historian of the

Catholic Association Thomas Wyse pointed out in 1829, just after the demise of the organization:

> To say that Ireland feels as one man, is merely saying there is a common suffering, common pursuit, and common sympathy; but floating loosely over society, without order or combination, this feeling is not yet of sufficient practical avail. Like similar powers in the physical world, unless pressed, by skill and management, into proper directions, and combinations, for any really useful result, they might as well not exist.[18]

These powers needed to be coordinated by the 'mighty engine' of the Catholic Association to effectively shake the Protestant supremacy.[19]

Not only the Catholic Rent, but also the 'Simultaneous Meetings' offered an impressive display of organizational power. Both were based on an innovative suggestion: Why not utilize the structure and mobilizing capacities of the Catholic Church, invite priests to act as agents, and organize simultaneous meetings directly after Sunday Mass? The Catholic Association coordinated this initiative. On 13 January 1828, meetings were held in more than 1600 Catholic churches, and O'Connell claimed that over 100,000 people met in Dublin, and almost five million gathered in the countryside. The purpose of these meetings was to petition parliament, but the symbolic effect was considered equally if not more important: the coordinated mass meetings represented the threat of a general armed insurgency.

To quote Wyse once more:

> The people met *without* arms, and for the peaceable purpose of *petitioning:* but they met at once, —they met on the same day,—above all, they met by the *order* of the Association. What if the Association at some later-period had ordered them to meet *with* arms, for the purpose, not of *petitioning* against, but *resisting* tithes, &c. &c.; —would they have disobeyed? The fulcrum and the power were found—the lever could be applied to any thing.[20]

This last sentence touches upon the essence of the mechanical metaphor of mass organizations: once the structure has been built, it can start producing change—and with some adjustments, it can be applied to purposes other than those it was originally intended for. The difference between a mass petition and a mass organization is of course the latter's semi-permanent character: all the effort put into mobilizing a group of people to further a cause was preserved in their membership. Once the engine

was built and had come to steam, it could change its course without losing too much power or momentum.

The Catholic Association was impressive, both for its supporters and for its enemies, 'who saw and feared the mighty engine which had been raised to shake their supremacy'.[21] Wyse described in 1828 his visions of 'good organization': 'uniform, universal, permanent, system of enlightened and energetic co-operation'. For good organization, he argued, order and combination were crucial. His criticisms of the leaders of local and provincial societies that were part of the Catholic Association reveal how political association on this new massive scale was understood in terms of engineering:

> [Their leaders] went wrongly about it. They continued pouring in, day after day, new streams of electricity—charging with the animating fluid numberless portions of the political machine—generating steam as occasion suggested; but a great deal of this was done at random, and no provision was made or attempted, when such powers were fully produced, for their temperate and judicious application. Besides the danger which they exposed us to in this wandering and uncontrolled shape, they did not allow us to bring one-half of our energies, and that half but feebly, into play.[22]

Just as in the case of real steam engines, the mechanics who knew how to work them and make fine adjustments to them were crucial to their success and could make the difference between a well-oiled machine, gaining momentum and efficiently mounting pressure on government, or one that never came up to speed. Or—worse still—one that built up too much pressure without providing a vent, leading it to explode.

'The Great Art of Adapting Means to Ends'

Where reformers were excited about the possibilities national mass organizations offered, some contemporaries were critical of this development and lamented it as evidence of the mechanization of society at large. In his famous essay 'Signs of the Times', published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1829, British historian Thomas Carlyle bemoans the mechanization of society, culture, and spirit. This is visible, he argues, in many of the new mass organizations:

> Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here too nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old natural methods. Everything has

> its cunningly devised implements, its preestablished apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery. … [W]e have Religious machines, of all imaginable varieties; the Bible-Society [is] a machine for converting the Heathen. It is the same in all other departments. Has any man, or any society of men, a truth to speak, a piece of spiritual work to do; they can nowise proceed at once and with the mere natural organs, but must first call a public meeting, appoint committees, issue prospectuses, eat a public dinner; in a word, construct or borrow machinery, wherewith to speak it and do it. Without machinery, they were hopeless, helpless; a colony of Hindoo weavers squatting in the heart of Lancashire.[23]

The importance of the technological metaphor in understanding the transformation of reform becomes clear in Carlyle's phrasing that societies 'construct or borrow machinery' to further their goals. Historical sociologist Sidney Tarrow introduced the phrase 'modularity' to indicate a unique characteristic of the protest repertoire of modern politics. From the late eighteenth century on, the repertoire of contentious action was no longer tied to specific circumstances, but could be employed in a variety of settings by a variety of social actors against a variety of opponents. The boycott, petition drive, and mass demonstration, for instance, were easily transferred across places, regimes, issues, and actors, as a number of historical sociologists, most prominently Tarrow himself and Charles Tilly have demonstrated.[24] Unfortunately, most scholars of social movements and protest repertoire pay little attention to the role of religious, benevolent and moral reform organizations in the development of the social movement. They present national 'social movement organizations' as self-evident efforts to coordinate 'campaigns of collective action'.[25] However, from the perspective of the history of religious and benevolent reform, it was rather the Bible Society, for instance, which offered a blueprint of the modern mass organization with all the forms and activities that would become standardized later. What frightened contemporaries was the fact that this powerful tool of mass organization as pioneered in religious field could be applied to political issues and was easily transferred across issues or borders. An American observer warned that the Anti-Slavery Society was 'an immense and powerful combination, that has suddenly leaped from the sphere of the religious world, brought with it a machinery which was manufactured in that sphere, … and neither the public, nor the Government, seem yet to know which end, or how, head or tail, to take hold of the monster'.[26] In 1824, a British critic of the recently established Anti-Slavery Society worried that this was a dangerous

precedent: 'if unchecked, and that the [anti-slavery] machinery is found to work well, according to the views of the institutions, why not have an anti-tythe society; [and] an anti-persecution society, for supporting religious freedom?' Or, adding what he considered an even more absurd question, 'Why not have an anti-restriction society, for the purpose of obtaining universal suffrage?'[27]

In the years between 1825 and 1840, the first generation of pressure groups experimented with fine-tuning their machines and improving the blueprint of the engines of reform. The wide availability of this new technology of organization can be understood as a crucial step in the process of democratization: ordinary men and women could make themselves heard and participate in public debates. For contemporary critics like Carlyle, however, the mechanization of society rather impeded human freedom by threatening man's ability to think and act creatively. The modularity of associating and protesting was typical of the 'Age of Machinery': 'the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practices the great art of adapting means to ends'.[28]

Some rejected this goal-oriented approach of 'adapting means to ends' and the calculated nature of these enterprises as reform devoid of life. Others welcomed the systematic approach to change as it empowered them to battle problems that had seemed impossible to tackle. The machine metaphor refers to a new conception of individual, society, and reform that gained popularity in the decades around 1800: that society can be changed by design, that reform is possible, and what is more, that if change for the better is possible, it is imperative that people do what they can to effect this change. Scientific improvement, good government, moral behaviour, and religious conversion were no longer seen as incidents, effected by the grace of God or even simple coincidence. They were now understood to be governed by universal laws and principles, and applying those principles in a systematic manner would guarantee the desired outcome.[29]

To give some limited examples from the United States: the systematic approach to achieving better results in agriculture, for instance, brought forth dozens of Agricultural Societies in the United States in the 1810s and 1820s, that spread new scientific insights on more productive farming. The farmer who laboured more steadily and systematically was rewarded by 'more return for the cultivation of his labor'. The tangible results offered people a new understanding of success and progress. Once the right approach was established, diligent application and perseverance

could result in spectacular outcomes.[30] This was proven once more by the success of the Evangelical Revivals. Charles Grandison Finney, the most prominent revivalist, declared that a good evangelist should be as self-conscious about his methods as a good farmer about scientific agriculture. 'A revival of religion is not a miracle', Finney taught, but a 'result of the right use of the constituted means'. In this sense, these evangelists were early psychologists of the techniques of persuasion.[31]

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the notions that a system was needed in everything and that success was in the hands of the individuals started to spread among middle-class men and women, and among considerable parts of the working classes as well. This was the era of self-help literature and of the self-made man. Through exercising moral restraint, he had better chances in the new market economy.[32] While this was by no means an exclusively American phenomenon, in the United States with its ample opportunities for social mobility and relatively weak political institutions, it seems to have been stronger, as reform was often aimed at improving individual behaviour. Inspired by both the changing economic situation and evangelical revivals, the modern man swore off drinking and gambling, worked hard and attempted to live a pious life. Moral reform organizations such as the American Temperance Society, founded in 1826, bridged the gap between individual aspirations and the concerted effort to change American society. The systematic approach to individual and social reform was carried out on a grand scale by this and other religious benevolent organizations that were national in scale and had a more permanent basis than the revivals. Their conviction that the forces of evil waged war on the world made them conceive of a counter-offensive that could match the magnitude of the attacks of the Lord of Darkness. 'There is power enough to reform almost any giant evil, if it is only directed against the evil by combined effort', concluded an American attending a meeting of the British and Foreign Temperance Society.[33] Similar organizations combined individual moral reform with political action, for instance, the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, the Anti-Masonic Party (both founded in 1828), or the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833).[34]

These reformers embraced the machine metaphor because it specifically referenced the systematic approach to large-scale change. While theirs may seem a very utilitarian approach, the popularity of systematic reform through mass organizations comprised more than just a rational approach to change, as the fascination with mass organizations held a more emo-

tional or irrational connotation as well. True, the steam engine represented man's control over the natural powers of boiling water and steam pressure, but the effect the machine had on its audience was comparable to that of natural phenomena such as volcanoes. Cultural historians have pointed out that the nineteenth century saw the advent of the 'technological sublime', in which the man-made steam engine offered a spectacle that inspired awe in all who witnessed it.

The Technological Sublime

The 'age of inventions and discoveries' sparked a profound fascination with technology on both sides of the Atlantic. The latest innovations were popularized through exhibits and periodical press. Workingmen's associations and self-help literature regarded knowledge as a prerequisite for individual and national prosperity.[35] In the second half of the 1820s and 1830s, newspapers and magazines were filled with stories of steam engines, as these were the years steam locomotives became available for public use on railroads. In 1825, British engineer George Stephenson built The Locomotion for the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first public steam railway in the world. In 1829, he built The Rocket, which was entered in, and won, the Rainhill Trials. This news was followed closely around the world, as Britain was the source of innovation for a long time. Only in the early 1830s did American engineers and mechanics start competing with their own engines.[36] The pioneers of steam locomotives were always attempting to find the right balance between speed and safety. News of innovations that made these engines faster and safer vied with reports of numerous incidents, such as explosions and derailments.

Eyewitness accounts of people riding a train, of those watching a train speed by as well as of those who survived railway accidents indicate a great enthusiasm for technology. The fascination for technology has been described as being at its core an experience of the sublime: an intense experience of being overcome by both admiration and fear at the same time. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the sublime experience was typically associated with natural phenomena, such as the eruption of a volcano, a thunderstorm, or glancing into the abyss. Romantic poets, writers, and painters had popularized this notion, and the birth of modern tourism was intimately connected to the modern desire to subject oneself to the destructive forces of nature—though preferably from a

safe distance. Climbing Etna and glancing down into its crater or visiting Niagara Falls was among the thrill-seeking activities of the well-to-do.[37]

As it turned out, there were varieties of sublime experience. In the nineteenth century, people responded similarly to the sublime spectacle that technology provided. Those who were ignorant of the progress of technology interpreted a train that passed by at 25 miles an hour—a speed considered to be 'annihilating space and time'—, in supernatural terms, as monstrous. However, those who knew about technology—a word first formulated in 1828—could add admiration to fear, and experience the sublimity of a powerful machine under human control. The response to technology provides a valuable context to better understand the observations made about the promise and perils of the new mass organizations. Similar observations are made of the scale, vastness, power, destructive potential, and of the big question: Who is in control of this inanimate object that seems to have come to life? Can we trust that person? Is he really in control?[38]

Could it be that the responses to mass organizations are another variety of the sublime experience? Can we speak of the sublime spectacle of mass organization? At first sight, it seems that there is an important difference between a steam engine on display and a mass organization—the latter is less visible, less tangible. For a large part, mass organizations are rhetorical constructions; symbolic claims for inclusion and attempts to redefine the boundaries of the official public (political) sphere.[39] National mass organizations could become true mass organizations only *because* they were larger than any real functioning mass meeting could ever be. While mass meetings and the display of mass petitions are capable of representing the mass organization, and are known to have made a great impression on onlookers, the modern mass organizations were considered powerful exactly because they were even larger and could never be seen in their entire manifestation. Instead they were represented in numbers: in quantifications of membership, auxiliaries, and income.[40]

It is exactly its abstract nature and the fact that one had to try and imagine the size and power of the mass organization that fascinated observers. The metaphor of the steam engine not only refers to the fact that combined efforts can lead to great changes; the steam engine also functioned as a representation of the invisible, intangible masses, like pressure building up—invisible until it causes motion or explosion. As long as the masses seemed far away or powerless, they were harmless. The sublime experience occurs when contemporaries catch a glimpse of the masses and realize that

the masses are real, are here, are unspeakably vast, and capable of effecting real change, for better or worse. The machine not only literally empowered people but also rendered large groups of anonymous individuals visible and challenged older, idealized, abstract notions of 'the people'.[41]

National mass organizations offered reformers a structure to conduct a long-term reform campaign. The sustained pressure made it possible to strategize and attempt to change public opinion over a number of years, but rendered them also more visible to critics, who started pondering the implications of semi-permanent campaigning for social and political life. Inspired by his visit with British abolitionists right around the time Parliament abolished slavery, American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison professed in 1833: 'One important measure remains to be effected—*a national organization of our strength*'. He believed that for 'a hundred thousand dollars … there may be moral machinery put into operation of sufficient power to emancipate every slave in the United States within seven years'.[42] He was too optimistic—slavery would be abolished only in 1865—but six years later, even a staunch critic of the American Anti-Slavery Society like Calvin Colton, listing its auxiliaries (1350), travelling agents (38), money raised ($40,000) and publications issued (total 646,502), had to admit that Garrison's organization was '*grand*' and 'a stupendous machinery'.[43]

In the face of this stupendous machine, individuals seemed not to count anymore. Contemporaries lamented the increase in scale in modern society, for instance, in this chapter in an Evangelical journal:

> This is the age of combinations. Mankind move only in masses. Individuals seem to be merely fractions—the societies of which they are members are the only units. Every thing seems governed by a kind of living steam engines—a cluster of wheels, pistons and levers—the chief moving power of which is some General Agents, or Executive Board—and the connecting chains, the force of numbers. … [T]o attempt checking [the masses] by individual influence, is like to stopping a patent threshing machine by putting single straws into it.[44]

No one would be able to stop the 'mighty engine' once it gained momentum, and it would destroy whatever obstacles were in its path, much like a steam-roller: 'If individuals are in the way [of reform], they must be removed or broken down'.[45] 'Association is a mighty engine, and must act, either for good or evil, to an extent which no man can foresee or comprehend', warned William Ellery Channing in 1829 in his essay *Remarks*

on the disposition which now prevails to form associations and to accomplish all objects by organized masses. 'They are perilous instruments. They ought to be suspected. … They are a kind of irregular government created within our Constitutional government. Let them be watched closely [for] a dangerous engine is at work among us'.[46] A decade later, Colton echoed his concerns, arguing that the American Anti-Slavery Society was dangerous, exactly because it was 'a grand and permanent political organization'. 'This Society, on account of its systematic and efficient organization is untiring, assiduous, is every where, lives forever, and is forever augmenting its forces'.[47]

This fear of the disruption of the social and political order by mass organizations that functioned as a 'state within a state' can be found in Europe as well. The Catholic Association in Ireland was described as 'the spectacle of an *imperium in imperio* of the most perfect kind',[48] while British critics denounced the 'angry passions' and enthusiasm aroused by 'that self-constituted body, the Anti-Slavery Society', as signs of increased polarization and opposition on both sides, and claimed that 'all societies so organized … are dangerous to the state—no part of which can be violently disorganized without hazard to the whole'.[49]

The mass organizations were often democratic in the sense that they were ruled by their own constitutions and that the delegates representing the local auxiliaries had the final vote. While charismatic leadership certainly helped to mobilize people, the great advantage of this semi-permanent structure was that once it was in place, it could function almost independently, and it would not be disrupted too much by a change in leadership. Critics, on the other hand, feared that once a machine had gained momentum, it could easily be 'turned to sinister ends'. Exactly because it was so powerful, the question of who controlled and operated the machine and what course they adopted was of paramount concern. In the words of Parsons Cooke, a Calvinist minister, a 'director has only to put his finger on this and that spring, to turn his whole enginery against the christian ministry'.[50]

The tweaking of the machine, reformers admitted, could lead to dangerous situations. Abolitionist William Scales thought it necessary to issue a manual-like warning: careful handling was advised. 'A moral engine has been invented, and set in motion. True, it accords with the first principles of the mechanics, that it should be allowed to acquire a sufficient momentum; but it also accords with these principles, that having acquired this momentum, it must be properly fed, or its velocity will be so increased

as to shatter its members, or its bands be so relaxed as to destroy its efficiency—in either case, ruining its proprietor.'[51] And of course the machine *should* appear dangerous for it to be effective. While many reformers still believed they would be able to convert everyone to their point of view, many started to consider the option of operating in a more combative style, antagonizing their opponents, stressing their power in numbers and hinting, however vaguely, at the possibility that they would not always be able to keep the lid on the pressure. Mass organizations like the Irish Catholic Association offered the prospect of a 'peaceful revolution' of public opinion, but often hinted at violence as a means to a peaceful end.

Concluding Remarks

In Britain, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, pressure groups were thought to be 'illegitimate, as they disturbed the deliberative role of parliament, and unnecessary as they spoke for no recognizable corporate or community interest', as Patricia Hollis explains in her introduction to an edited volume on 'Pressure from without', one of the few historical studies of this new type of organization. They were seen as 'the intimidating activity of a mob'. However, around 1867, pressure from without 'was seen as the healthy participation of an active citizenry', and any MP planning on submitting a bill could do so only if he had sufficient support from organizations who could put pressure from without on the legislative process. In only 30 years, pressure groups had gone from being illegitimate threats to the political process to being a legitimizing force for legislative change.[52]

After the 1832 Reform Act, Westminster seems to have closed itself off somewhat to the voices that clamoured outside its doors. In 1831, Parliament decided no discussion should accompany the presentation of petitions. The Speaker of the House, Tory Charles Manners-Sutton, told another young Tory, William Ewart Gladstone, that this was not simply a matter of saving precious time: 'His maxim was to shut out as far as might be all extrinsic pressure, and then to do what was right within doors'.[53] In 1867, the year of the Second Reform Act, the same Gladstone referred to pressure groups as 'agencies out of doors', which formed and matured public opinion, and were therefore 'the legitimate expressions of the people, by which bad legislation was to be corrected'.[54]

It is always difficult to precisely assess the importance and impact of language and metaphors, but Gladstone's reference to 'agencies out of

doors' that are 'legitimate expressions of the people' demonstrates a recognition of pressure groups as large and autonomous players in the political field. It reflects a changed attitude to mass organizations in politics. However, Hollis adds, 'After 1867, such groups were increasingly redundant, displaced by national party political machines which were providing both ideology and organization for the parliamentary parties'.[55] Already in 1818, the importance of party organization was recognized by Whigs, who hoped that a 'respectable party' would give 'a safe vent' to disruptive tendencies among the masses.[56] Early attempts by British party politicians to have their party perform this function were only partly successful, and it seems that pressure groups functioned in a similar matter for several decades.

Right around this time, on the other side of the Atlantic, 'political machine' started to refer to organizations dedicated to mobilizing votes. It denoted a system of local politics in which loyal voters are rewarded with practical benefits, known as the spoils system. The Tammany Hall Machine is one of the better-known examples of the ward-based, patronage-driven form of local government as it developed mainly in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was the system that gave 'political machines' a negative connotation.[57] And even though more research would be needed to bridge the gap between the historiographies of early party formation and grassroots organization,[58] the foundations laid for the modern Democratic Party in the 1820s and 1830s seem to stem from the same broadly shared sense that applying mass organization in politics was new and promising. Martin Van Buren, its main architect, had a 'passion for organization … a passion that would have seemed strange, even sinister to [his] predecessors'. Van Buren wanted to centralize and systematize election campaigns, and hoped for the election of a president 'as the result of a combined and concerted effort of a political party'. On the other hand, he thought of the extra-parliamentary pressure groups discussed above as unconstitutional for bringing non-political crusades into the political arena. The Democratic Party was in part an answer to the threat critical citizens posed through their organizations and protest. Organizing citizens into loyal partisans seemed a benign solution to the danger of instability that came with citizen protests, and one that allowed political leaders to retain control and stability.[59]

In the United States, mass organizations for reform triggered a backlash in the 1840s when they were accused of sowing discord and setting members of local communities against one another. Radicalized temper-

ance and antislavery societies had indeed played an important part in dismantling the rhetoric of the common good that had been dominant since Revolutionary times. Their combative spirit and the hostile responses they provoked, but above all their staying power, made people conceive of civil society in a different light. National reform organizations contributed to the development of a national identity, but in the end also promoted political pluralism.[60]

It is not difficult to see why reformers themselves enthusiastically applied the language of technology to their organizations. The metaphor of engines suggests that the end result will be reform—the question really is: At what pace? In 1853, Archibald Prentice, historian of the Anti-Corn Law League, put it this way: critics 'will not be in force to stop the wheels of improvement; but, like the governor of a steam-engine, they may prevent a dangerous rapidity of motion'.[61] Through associating their organizations with the steam locomotives and other engines reformers appropriated the image of modernity and progress that excited and sometimes scared contemporaries. The versatility of this metaphor meant that critics of mass organizations used the same metaphor, warning of derailments, train wrecks, and explosions similar to those they read about in the press on a regular basis. By doing so, they confirmed and spread the notion that pressure groups were a powerful instrument. When in 1829, Channing gloomily remarked that association was a 'mighty engine, and must act, either for good or for evil, to an extent which no man can foresee or comprehend', he reinstated the idea that the future belonged to machines.[62]

The use of the machine metaphor also indicates the tendency to systematize reform and protest. It refers to the phenomenon that social scientists later identified as 'modularity': the machine metaphor both reflected and reinforced the notion that the mass organization was a phenomenon in its own right, less tied to specific locations, people, and issues. Replicating this newly developed machine in other causes and countries became expected rather than an exception. Historians have long treated organizations as mere institutional reflections of social and political structures. Studying contemporaries' perspectives once more stresses that organizations are instead agents of change, creative forces for reimagining society and politics.[63] Having these machines at their disposal empowered large groups of people and encouraged them to engage in new struggles or organize to fight long-suffered wrongs. The revolutions in transportation, mail, and printing are important and oft-cited explanations for the changing nature

of reform organizations around this time, and indeed they facilitated the operation of reform organizations on an unprecedented scale. Still, such developments do not in themselves explain why people started to organize to reform their society and influence politics. We cannot explain the surge in popular participation in politics that lies at the heart of modern politics without taking into account the machine metaphor, which not only reflected but also reinforced awareness of the power of organization.

Notes

1. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge 2003); H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to the 1850s* (Basingstoke 1998); Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary Political Organization, 1769–1793* (Cambridge, MA 1963); Albrecht Koschnik, *'Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together': Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840* (Charlottesville 2007); Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA 2008).
2. Innes and Burns, 'Introduction', in: Idem (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, 1–70, 57.
3. For an overview of terms used see Graham Wootton, *Pressure Groups in Britain 1720–1970: An Essay in Interpretation with Original Documents* (London 1975) 1–12.
4. Murray Knowles and Rosamund Moon, *Introducing Metaphor* (London, New York 2004) 12.
5. Ibid., 30–32; Pierre Rosanvallon, 'Towards a Philosophical History of the Political', in: Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk (eds), *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge 2001) 189–203, esp. 194 (cit.), 200; also see John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford 1962).
6. Rosanvallon, 'Towards a Philosophical History of the Political', 192–93.
7. Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Der Staat als Maschine: Zur politischen Metaphorik des absoluten Fürstenstaats* (Berlin 1986); Harald Kleinschmidt, *The Nemesis of Power: A History of International Relations Theories* (London 2000) 112–46 (cit. 121–22); Gerhard Dorn-Van Rossum and Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, 'Organ,

Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper', *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Bd. IV (1978) 519–622; and Note, 'Organic and Mechanical Metaphors in Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought' *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 110, nr. 8 (1997) 1832–49 offer a useful introduction to mechanicism in (international) politics.

8. Dorn-Van Rossum and Böckenförde, 'Organ, Organismus', 558; Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren, *History of the Political System of Europe, and Its Colonies, from the Discovery of America to the Independence of the American Continent*, vol. 2, [1809] Transl. George Bancroft (1829) 66.
9. Wootton, *Pressure Groups*, 5–6; Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy 1815–1848* (Cambridge etc. 1980) 21.
10. Peter Fraser, 'Public petitioning and Parliament before 1832', *The Historical Association* (1961) 195.
11. Peel to Croker, 23 March 1820, cit. in Louis J. Jennings (ed.), *The Croker Papers*, 3 vols (1884), vol. 1, 155–56.
12. *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, May 1830; cit. in James Walvin, 'The rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787–1832', in: Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (eds) *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey* (Folkestone, Hamden 1980) 149–62, 158.
13. Cited in Patricia Hollis, 'Pressure from Without: An Introduction', in Idem (ed.), *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England* (London 1974) 5.
14. C.E.H. Orpen, *The Principles, Plans and Objects of the Hibernian Negro's Friend Society, contrasted with those of the previously existing Anti-Slavery Societies* (s.l. 1831) 12.
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16. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners*; Peter Stamatov, 'The Religious Field and the Path-Dependent Transformation of Popular Politics in the Anglo-American World, 1770–1840', *Theory and Society* 40 (2011) 437–73; for one of the first analyses of the religious roots

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17. Fergus O'Ferrall, Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy, 1820–30 (Dublin 1985).
18. Thomas Wyse, *Historical Sketch of the Late Catholic Association of Ireland*, 2 vols. (London 1829) vol. 2, cxlvi.
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20. Wyse, *Historical Sketch*, vol. 1, 298–303, cit. 300, 303.
21. *Ireland and O'Connell*, 31.
22. Wyse, *Historical Sketch*, vol. 2, cl-cli.
23. Thomas Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', *Edinburgh Review* xcviii (1829) 439–59, 442–43.
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25. Tarrow, 'Modular Collective Action', 82; for criticism see Stamatov, 'The Religious Field' and Craig Calhoun, '"New Social Movements" of the Early Nineteenth Century', *Social Science History*, vol. 17 no. 3 (Fall 1993) 385–427. An important exception is Michael Young, *Bearing Witness Against Sin: The Evangelical Birth of the American Social Movement* (Chicago 2006).
26. [Calvin Colton,] *Abolition a Sedition, by a Northern Man* (Philadelphia 1839) 29; for more on this see Janse, 'Dangerous Type of Politics?'.
27. J.R. Grosett, *Remarks on West India Affairs* (London 1824), 108–09.
28. Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', 442; Andrzej Diniejko, 'Thomas Carlyle and the Origin of the "Condition of England Question"',

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29. A useful introduction to the notion of reform is Joanna Innes, '"Reform" in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word', in: Burns and Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, 71–97.
30. Richard Briggs Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore 2009) 71; Mary Babson Fuhrer, *A Crisis of Community: The Trials and Transformation of a New England town, 1815–1848* (2014), chapter 3.
31. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford 2007) 171–72.
32. Stott, *Jolly Fellows*, 71, 91; for the cult of the self-made man see also Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, London, 2000) 138–44; Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, London, 2005) 22–43; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, etc. 1996) 22–29.
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CHAPTER 3

‘Petition! Petition!! Petition!!!: Petitioning and Political Organization in Britain, *c.* 1800–1850’

Henry Miller

The significance and strength of petitioning as a form of political organization lay in the fact that it was used by single-issue organizations to discipline and organize campaigns and also to encourage popular participation and engagement. Petitioning can be seen as an alternative form of representation at a time when the right to vote was limited, with petitioners’ wishes represented through issue-based demands, which were mediated, organized and mobilized through pressure groups and social movement organizations. At the same time, petitioning was inherently participatory, with petitions frequently the result of meetings or other forms of public engagement. Petitioning could therefore transcend some of the tensions between representation and direct action or popular assemblies and formal political organization explored elsewhere in this book. A study of petitioning as a form of political organization is valuable in other respects. While petitioning was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Britain and central to popular political activity, it has been understudied as a general

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phenomenon although accounts exist of specific campaigns.[1] Petitioning is best understood as a flexible tool or instrument that different groups used to serve different ends. Petitioning could be used to encourage popular participation while also forming a key part of the strategy of well-organized campaigns that sought to exert pressure on Parliament.

In his work on petitioning, Peter Jupp made an important distinction between 'institutional' and 'constitutional' petitioning. In his studies of the political system of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Jupp argued that elite politicians, especially those unsympathetic to popular causes, distrusted 'institutional' petitions produced by permanently campaigning organizations, such as anti-slavery groups or Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association, which campaigned for the abolition of civil restrictions on Catholics that prevented them from sitting in Parliament or holding other public offices. Members of Parliament (MPs) considered such petitions to be the product of skilful activists and issued by central organizations rather than genuine reflections of public opinion. For example, in the 1840s, protectionist MPs and peers argued that free trade petitions were stirred up by agents employed by the Anti-Corn Law League, the pressure group that campaigned for the abolition of tariffs on foreign grain to protect domestic farmers.[2] Parliamentarians looked more favourably on 'constitutional' petitions. These were petitions that were a spontaneous response to an issue, such as economic distress, which represented a broad cross-section of local opinion.[3] For example, the many county meetings called in 1829–1830, which produced petitions for agricultural relief from economic distress, were hard to dismiss as the work of radicals, as they comprised landed gentlemen, tenant farmers and local notables and took place under the leadership of local social elites.

There was a third mode of petitioning, used mainly by popular radicals, that was more participative. Popular radicals who believed in popular sovereignty and popular participation had much in common with radical democrats in the United States and revolutionaries in Europe. Radicals preferred to use petitioning in close association with the technique of the 'mass platform' (or huge public meetings). This mode of petitioning was less formally organized than 'institutional' petitioning and less hierarchical than 'constitutional' petitioning. It was also more confrontational, assertive and forceful. Radicals were dismissive of the language of 'decorous servility' traditionally used by petitioners and required by Parliament, arguing that the people had a right to *demand* redress from those in power. According to this view, the language of petitions should

be in terms of 'resolute firmness and of determined authority' and not be afraid of upsetting the sensibilities of elite politicians.[4] While these different forms of petitioning are worth distinguishing in theory, it would be unwise to draw too sharp a distinction in practice. Even in well-drilled and organized campaigns such as that of the Anti-Corn Law League, there were still opportunities for popular participation.

This chapter is split into three sections. Firstly, there is a brief overview of the enormous expansion of petitioning from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. This section outlines the huge increase in the volume of petitions and signatures as well as the shift to petitioning on public policy and national issues, and briefly examines some of the general methods of organization developed by the anti-slavery movement, which pioneered the use of petitioning in many respects. Secondly, the chapter considers the advantages of petitioning as a form of political participation and organization in this period, particularly in light of the different models of political organization discussed above. Thirdly and finally, the chapter reflects on petitioning and changes in this period, using the Anti-Corn Law League as a case study to highlight the shift away from the more spontaneous forms to the co-ordinated, orchestrated use of organized petitioning drives. Even so, there remained space for popular participation.

The Growth of Popular Petitioning

There was a phenomenal increase in the volume of public petitions to the House of Commons between the 1780s and the 1830s, as Table 3.1 shows. The 1832 select committee appointed to investigate potential solutions to the problems caused by this surge in popular petitioning noted with dry understatement that there had been 'a progressive and very considerable increase' in public petitions.[5] The number of petitions increased exponentially as did the number of signatures, although these were systematically recorded only after 1833. By the 1840s, tens of thousands of petitions were presented to the House of Commons each session, containing millions of signatures.

To give just a few examples, the first Chartist petition for male suffrage and other democratic reforms, presented in the House of Commons in 1839, contained over 1.2 million signatures.[6] While historians have long focused on the bogus signatures to the 1848 Chartist petition, even the most conservative estimate put the number of signatures at over 2 million.[7] The free trade campaigns led by the Anti-Corn Law League gained

Table 3.1 Number of public petitions to House of Commons, 1785–1847

Years	*Number of public petitions*
1785–1789	880
1801–1815	1026
1811–1815	4498
1827–1831	24,492
1837–1841	70,369
1843–1847	81,985

Source: Parliamentary Papers 1831–32 (639), *Report from the Select Committee on Public Petitions*, V, 335; PP 1847–48 (236), *Return of the Number of Public Petitions Presented and Printed, 1833–47*, LI, 33; PP 1852–53 (166), *Return of the Number of Petitions Presented Each of the Five Years Ending 1788–9, 1804–5, 1814–15, 1832, 1837, 1842, 1847, and 1852*, LXXXIII, 105

1.25, 1.59 and 1.11 million signatures for the years 1841, 1842 and 1843, respectively.[8] The campaign of Protestant Dissenters against the 1843 Factory Bill, whose educational clauses appeared to privilege the Established Church of England, generated over 10,000 petitions containing around 2 million signatures.[9] The 1845 Ultra-Protestant agitation against the government scheme to permanently endow the Catholic seminary at Maynooth in Ireland produced 1.2 million signatures.[10]

Outside of these well-known campaigns, there were plenty of other issues that generated large numbers of petitions and signatures. For instance, in 1840, there were 972 petitions, containing 268,259 signatures, from Evangelicals praying for an alteration in the system of lay patronage in the Church of Scotland.[11] In 1842, 138 petitions, containing over 220,000 signatures, called for the repeal of the legislative union between Britain and Ireland.[12] The 1848 bill to allow Jews to sit in Parliament was backed by 849 petitions and almost 300,000 signatures.[13]

Enough figures have been provided to show the huge scale of petitioning as it developed from the late eighteenth century. This growth in the quantity of petitions was one key change in the culture of petitioning from the 1780s onwards. A second key change was that the overwhelming majority of petitions were increasingly on public policy and national issues rather than local or individual complaints. This development was part of what Charles Tilly has described as the 'parliamentarization' of British popular politics. Instead of directing claims at local patrons or agents of the state, increasingly people directed their demands and grievances at the centre of the British polity: Parliament.[14] Petitioning for or against

proposed legislation, government policy or demands made by extra-parliamentary agitations became a standard part of political debate and culture. Long-running petitioning campaigns followed the rhythms of parliamentary life, with the process of organizing petitions starting before the new session. As the Anti-Corn Law League advised its supporters after Parliament had prorogued in autumn 1841, 'These [next] five months are given us, the out of doors agitators against the bread tax, to work in … Not one of the engines already set in motion must be lazily worked, and more must be added'.[15]

While the huge expansion and change in the nature of petitioning are obvious to see, the reasons for this growth in popular petitioning remain unclear. The work of historians of anti-slavery activism has highlighted the importance of the abolitionist campaigns of 1787–1788, 1792 and 1814 for pioneering new techniques of petitioning. For example, in 1787–1788, Manchester abolitionists advertised their petition in newspapers across the country, quickly publicizing and encouraging petitions from other areas.[16] The anti-slavery movement also made use of the tactic of calling a public meeting to pass resolutions subsequently embodied in a petition, which was then followed up by personal canvassing to garner signatures from the wider community.[17] Abolitionists relied on the formation of local committees, firstly on an *ad hoc* and then on a more permanent basis, to manage petitioning, with strategy and timing directed by a central body.[18] While establishing new forms of organization, the anti-slavery movement drew heavily on religious networks, by appealing to religious opinion and engaging the energies of Dissent, Anglican Evangelicals and Scottish Presbyterians in their campaigns.[19]

While the innovations in petitioning by anti-slavery activists have been well-documented, we still know little about other factors contributing to the growth of petitioning from the late eighteenth century. For example, the precise correlation between the growth of petitioning and the expansion of public meetings in this period remains to be examined.[20] In terms of periodization, Jupp has noted the increase in popular petitioning came in two waves: after 1815 and then with another surge after 1832.[21] There were differences between these two waves. Between 1815 and 1832, the presentation of petitions allowed MPs to speak and initiate debate, disrupting and interrupting parliamentary business. After 1832, the right to speak on petitions was restricted by procedural changes, but petitions and the number of signatures were systematically recorded for the first time by a permanent Select Committee on Public Petitions. This development

encouraged pressure groups and campaigns to maximize the number of signatures, as well as petitions, to impress parliamentarians, the press and opponents. This led to ever-increasing numbers of petitions and signatures in the 1840s, but the organizational techniques used led to complaints that they were effectively manufactured by well-organized political machines.

Finally, the abolition of the slave trade (1807), the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1828), Catholic emancipation (1829), the Reform Act (1832) and the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies (1833) all vindicated and validated the use of petitioning by political associations, pressure groups and radical movements. While Innes has rightly noted the failure rate of many campaigns, the examples above seemed to suggest that sheer weight of numbers would force Parliament to give way and engendered an optimism about the power of petitioning that was common to many campaigns in this period.[22] In 1830, an abolitionist urged petitions for the abolition of slavery as 'these are not times in which a Ministry, a body of Representatives or a House of Peers would withstand such an appeal as this!!'.[23] Just over a decade later, a free trader expressed similar sentiments:

> [I]t is by petitioning that the views of the people can best be shown; and consequently, let petitions be sent, not only from large towns and cities, but from villages and hamlets; not alone from thousands and tens of thousands of people, but from hundreds, and twenties and tens. Let this be done, and the death blow will be given to the bread tax monopoly.[24]

The Advantages of Petitioning as a Method of Political Organization

Petitioning possessed several attractions to campaigners as a mode of political organization and activity. Firstly, its ancient constitutional pedigree meant that it legitimized other forms of political activity and allowed campaigners to push the boundaries of parliamentary conventions. Secondly, petitioning uniquely provided direct access to Parliament and indeed the debating chamber of the House of Commons. Thirdly, petitioning was a key form of political organization, giving coherence and order to national campaigns that remained, in many respects, heavily localized. Fourthly, petitioning was closely associated with the idea of public opinion that became increasingly pervasive from the late eighteenth century.

However, it is important to remember that petitioning was widely adopted partly because of the lack of alternatives. The right to vote in parliamentary elections remained heavily restricted throughout this period. The estimated UK electorate was around 500,000, or 16% of the adult male population, in 1801. Due to the vagaries of the unreformed electoral system and the franchise, some constituencies had relatively large, socially inclusive electorates, while others had few electors or were firmly under the control of local patrons. While the 1832 Reform Act had a significant impact in terms of reinvigorating parliamentary government and making Parliament more responsive to public opinion, the electorate rose to only just over 800,000 or 18% of the adult male population.[25] Petitioning was a means of mass popular political participation and mobilization in a political system that was by modern conventional measures remarkably undemocratic.

The widespread use of petitioning is easy to understand given the restricted franchise, but it also benefitted from some of the issues involved with other forms of political activity. Historians of the eighteenth century, influenced by Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, have highlighted in rich detail the expansion of urban associational life, free from aristocratic patronage and control, as evidenced by the proliferation of newspapers, voluntary associations and public culture involving the 'middling sort'.[26] However, the public sphere was effectively closed down in the 1790s with the raft of legislative restrictions placed on freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and liberty of the press by Tory governments, designed to clamp down on radicalism.[27] For example, print was priced out of the reach of many by a series of duties on paper, advertisements and newspapers that were collectively dubbed the 'taxes on knowledge'. The use of the mass platform by post-war radicals was eventually curtailed by legislation passed in 1819.[28]

Other forms of political organization and activity after the 1820s were also not without their problems. For example, 'electoral pressure', registering supporters as electors to establish an electoral bloc in a constituency that could be used to oust or pressure MPs into changing their opinions, became feasible after the 1832 Reform Act. However, it was an expensive strategy that only the most deep-pocketed pressure groups could afford to indulge in.[29] For movements such as Chartism, which was largely made up of ordinary working people, the cheapness and accessibility of petitioning were key parts of its appeal.[30]

A crucial advantage of petitioning was that it was an ancient right and undoubtedly constitutional. In the 1790s, loyalist, conservative, Tory and government opponents of political change frequently contrasted the British constitution with revolutionary France. Through a 'balanced' constitution consisting of King, Lords and Commons, with each branch acting as a check on the other, Britain secured the benefits of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy without the disadvantages. The gradual accretion of constitutional precedents secured the practical freedoms, such as property rights, enjoyed by freeborn Englishmen. The British system, its defenders claimed, combined order with liberty, freedom with authority, unlike revolutionary France, which in sweeping away traditional customs had created anarchy, disorder and bloodshed.[31] In the rhetorical war between loyalists and conservatives, on the one hand, and radicals and reformers, on the other, it was easy for the former to claim that corresponding societies were akin to Jacobin clubs, that radical publications were seditious and that public meetings or dinners were necessarily threatening and conspiratorial. Such arguments were used to justify and defend government measures to curb freedom of speech and assembly in the 1790s. However, it was harder to mobilize such arguments against petitioning given its impeccable constitutional credentials, as even William Pitt, prime minister 1784–1801 and 1804–1806, was forced to admit.[32] This left petitioning as one of the few forms of political participation and mobilization not subjected to checks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and 'the right to petition provided an entering wedge even when the state had filled other gaps in the polity's wall'.[33] While the constitution was not democratic, the Anti-Corn Law League argued that through petitioning, it 'does afford means, which, if perseveringly worked, will enable us to attain our end, and it is our duty to work them until we get a better constitution'.[34]

The constitutionalism of petitioning legitimized political activity that was ostensibly for the purpose of petitioning Parliament, most obviously public meetings. Furthermore, as James Epstein has noted, while they were often on the defensive in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, radicals were able to make use of constitutional practices, historical precedents and common law to defend popular liberties.[35] It was no coincidence, then, that popular radicals such as William Cobbett presented the right to petition as one of the cherished birthrights of the freeborn Englishman.[36] As noted above, popular radicals used petitioning to address Parliament in confrontational language that questioned the

legitimacy of the legislature and demanded redress. Even agitations often portrayed as essentially middle class, such as the Anti-Corn Law League, used language that carried an implicit threat should Parliament ignore the petitions. As the League's newspaper thundered in 1841: 'Let there be at least two millions [of signatures] this session, and it will be a fool-hardy legislature indeed which dares to resist the prayer'.[37]

Petitioning was also used to push the boundaries of what was acceptable according to parliamentary conventions. This leads to a second key advantage of petitioning as a mode of political organization and mobilization: it provided direct access to Parliament and could bring issues right to the heart of the legislature, something no other form of political activity could provide. For all the vitality and vibrancy of election meetings, which historians such as Jon Lawrence have rightly emphasized, the fact is that under the terms of the Septennial Act, general or parliamentary elections could be up to seven years apart.[38] Petitioning enabled a constant stream of pressure to be exerted on Parliament and kept issues on the political agenda in the long gaps between parliamentary elections. Nothing would compel Parliament to act except 'constant, urgent pressure' in the view of the League.[39] Petitioning allowed public grievances and popular politics to be directly introduced to the heart of the political system.

As many pressure groups recognized, petitioning provided access to what remained throughout the nineteenth century an exclusive space that was largely the preserve of a male, hereditary, landed class. For example, the Chartists combined signatures into one huge petition, demonstrating the weight of numbers behind their cause. The 1842 petition, which was six miles long, was paraded around London through a procession before its presentation in Parliament. The petition legitimized and provided an excuse to have a Chartist demonstration in the heart of the capital. The petition was so bulky that it got stuck in the doorway to the Commons chamber.[40] The Chartist case is a good example of the theatricality of presenting petitions and the ways in which those campaigners outside Parliament sought to impress, even intimidate, legislators and gain publicity for their cause. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, both the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League campaigned for the right for petitioners to be heard at the bar of the Commons, a demand that was rejected. This was another way in which agitations attempted to use petitions as a means to bring their issues right into the Commons chamber.[41]

The way that petitioning evolved between the 1780s and 1820s provided further opportunities for agitations to use petitions as a means for

initiating debates and disrupting parliamentary business. Peter Fraser has written that the huge increase in the volume of petitions meant that by the late 1820s, the House of Commons spent almost all its time debating petitions. This was due to the procedure for introducing petitions and tabling motions. According to parliamentary conventions, substantive issues or motions, such as the abolition of slavery, could be debated only once a session. However, presenting petitions allowed debates on such issues to be initiated and kept on the parliamentary agenda throughout the session.[42] This was because before the procedural reforms of 1833, parliamentary conventions allowed the presentation of a petition to be used to put up to four questions to the House, to be voted on. Combined with the sheer volume of petitions, this enabled parliamentary spokesmen for extra-parliamentary agitations to disrupt and hold up parliamentary business.

A third advantage of petitioning was that it provided a focal point for agitations and national movements that were heavily localized. Petitioning struck a balance between local initiative and central co-ordination, between participation and organization. National political movements often fragmented along regional lines, or, tellingly, when successful or coherent, often drew their strength from a particular region, such as the Anti-Corn Law League and the Lancashire cotton district, for instance.[43] Petitioning campaigns, just like lecture tours or the use of official newspapers, were a way of providing national coherence and a collective identity to political movements that were largely carried on at a local level.[44]

Last but certainly not least, petitioning was increasingly valued as a means of political mobilization as it seemed to represent and reflect public opinion, a notion that gained credence from the later eighteenth century. The value of petitions (and increasingly signatures) for pressure groups and other political organizations was that it enabled them to claim the support of public opinion. This was important in two respects. Firstly, even parliamentarians who were opposed to political reform were forced to acknowledge the power of public opinion, if only rhetorically. By the 1820s, public opinion, usually associated with respectable, or middle-class, opinion, was generally accepted as a legitimate part of the political process by many MPs. Despite some criticism and complaints about the means by which agitations got up petitions, many MPs accepted them as rough indicators of public opinion.[45] Secondly, where political campaigns faced rival or counter-petitioning campaigns, it became essential to get more petitions and signatures to claim that they better reflected public opin-

ion. For example, in 1792, anti-slavery campaigners quickly responded to a pro-slavery petition from Manchester signed by 400 people with one opposing slavery signed by over 2000.[46] In the 1840s, the Anti-Corn Law League urged its supporters not only of the necessity of improving on the previous year's totals for the number of petitions and signatures but also of comprehensively outperforming the petitioning campaigns of the agricultural protectionists. The League's opponents, who had previously emphasized the quality of their petitions (i.e. representing the respectable or notable portion of local communities), were forced to adopt strategies to maximize the quantity of petitions and signatures.[47]

Organization and Participation: The Case of the Anti-Corn Law League

In many respects, the League perfected the organization of petitioning, building on past innovations by the anti-slavery movement and adding new tactics, which combined to provide a model for later agitations. To use Tilly's idea of repertoires of contention, the League made full use of existing repertoires available to them and expanded them. The example of the League highlights how by the 1840s petitioning drives had become professionally organized and co-ordinated by permanent associations and less spontaneous than they had been earlier. Organization was essential to co-ordinate extra-parliamentary activity so that petitions were timed to arrive in Parliament with maximum impact. In 1839, J.B. Smith, one of the leaders of the League, wanted a stream of petitions to be presented every day in the House of Commons.[48] Activity was timed to peak before Charles Villiers's annual anti-corn law motion in the House of Commons and directed through the medium of the League's official newspaper and circulars and correspondence between the League's leaders and local activists and free traders. Model pro-forma texts were published in the League's newspaper and circulated by itinerant lecturers, and petitioning forms for signatures were also available from the League's printer.[49]

Considerable emphasis was put on maximizing the number of petitions and signatures. The systematic recording of petitions and signatures after 1833 stimulated campaigns to engage in a numbers game and undoubtedly encouraged methods designed to artfully inflate signatures and petitions. To maximize the number of signatures, the League suggested that petitions from public meetings signed only by the chairman should always be paired with separate petitions signed by the inhabitants.[50] Many of the

inhabitants' petitions from large towns contained huge numbers of signatures, in the tens of thousands. To maximize the number of petitions, free traders adopted the tactics of anti-slavery and protectionist campaigners and called for many petitions to be sent from separate places even if signed by only a handful of people. Richard Cobden, the League's driving force, advised one free trader to 'send up as many petitions from as *many places* as possible. Even if it be a hamlet of three houses only it will do for a pet[itio]n'.[51] Others applied this formula of many petitions with a small number of signatures on a grand scale. As one London organizer wrote:

> We have men employed for the purpose of getting petitions signed and in a very short time the number so signed will be large indeed. There is a double advantage in this plan of separate petitions. If we send a parish petition to a particular workshop a few only of the people employed will sign it but if you make it *their own petition* nearly all will sign. This plan of separate petition not only gives numerous petitions – a great advantage – but also affords more signatures.[52]

As this quote suggests, League organizers in London made use of paid agents or canvassers to work street by street. In 1840, Sidney Smith, chief organizer for the Metropolitan Anti-Corn Law Association, claimed that he could secure 'all the petitions you choose to fund' and 250,000 signatures in the capital through this plan if money was forwarded from his Manchester overlords.[53]

In smaller places, local Anti-Corn Law Associations took the responsibility of dividing the town into districts with each one canvassed by members.[54] Activists also used towns as a base to tour and secure petitions from the surrounding area.[55] In the southern agricultural districts that were often protectionist strongholds, anti-corn law petitions were orchestrated by the League's itinerant lecturers during their speaking tours. For example, in 1841, the League lecturer James Acland reported that he was on track to send over 200 petitions from Buckinghamshire.[56] The League also encouraged petitions from religious congregations and workplaces, particularly factories.[57] Workplace petitions accounted for a high proportion of petitions from the industrial northwest, over 900 out of almost 1300 petitions in 1841.[58]

As with anti-slavery activism, the free trade campaign drew on the energies of female activists to canvass for petitions, while exploiting female petitions to emphasize the morality of the anti-corn laws cause. As is becoming

increasingly apparent, petitioning was a key form of political participation for women in an era when they were denied political and property rights (which frequently went hand in hand) and in which the rhetoric of gendered separate spheres limited the space for public political activity in theory if not always in practice.[59] In late 1841, the League embarked on a new strategy designed to complement its petitioning drive: sending a memorial to Queen Victoria from the women of the United Kingdom, appealing to the monarch as a woman to use the royal prerogative in favour of repeal of the corn laws.[60] Speaking in Bolton, the celebrated anti-slavery lecturer George Thompson reminded his female audience of the influence they had exercised on the question of slavery and declared his belief that it required 'but the women of Britain to give the casting vote in favour of the repeal of the bread tax'.[61] The Bolton memorial ended up being signed by 16,000 women and being 50 yards long.[62]

The League's petitioning campaign was remarkably successful in mobilizing numbers behind the anti-corn law agitation. Between 1839 and 1843, when the League abandoned petitioning to switch to a strategy of electoral pressure, over 17,000 anti-corn law petitions were sent to Parliament containing over 5.8 million signatures.[63] Indeed the League was almost too successful in its organization of petitioning. With some justice, opponents alleged that petitions were stirred up by paid agitators using unconstitutional methods. In 1843, a parliamentary investigation found that one free-trade organizer had forged 201 out of 214 signatures on one petition from south Yorkshire.[64] Three years later, another select committee ruefully observed that some of the methods used by the League were bringing the ancient tradition of petitioning into disrepute.[65]

Contemporary accusations by Chartist and protectionist opponents that the League's petitioning drives were inflated by misrepresentation, inauthentic signatures and the undue influence of employers over their workforce are one reason why the campaign was not taken seriously until recently. The League's abandonment of petitioning in 1843 due to its apparent ineffectiveness in favour of an electoral strategy is another reason why historians long neglected the League's use of petitioning. Yet while a degree of fraud was probably inevitable in large petitioning campaigns, it would be wrong to dismiss anti-corn law petitions as merely the product of a ruthless, professional organization. The petitioning campaign offered an opportunity for people to participate and make their voices heard. In this respect, petitioning allowed for a popular mobilization on behalf of free trade that was open to everyone. The switch to election campaigning

and fundraising reduced the opportunity for ordinary people who lacked the franchise or deep pockets to participate.[66]

Furthermore, petitioning drives used 'open' forms of signature collection that relied on genuine popular political participation as well as organized methods. These open methods, such as leaving petitions to lie in public places, gave people the freedom to sign or not and can be seen as a positive engagement with the petitioning process, beyond the solicitation by activists.[67] The adoption of petitions at public meetings was another key way in which petitions fostered popular participation. A Bristol organizer wrote in 1840 that 'the petition prepared by your Association was exposed in the streets & public meet[ing]s & signed by 6 or 7000'.[68] The huge success of the League's campaign relied upon local activity, albeit encouraged from the centre. Petitions were products of local popular mobilization and often sources of local pride. For example, in Bilston in the Black Country, a correspondent boasted that their petition was 63 feet long and contained over 4000 signatures. Furthermore, 'These names were not obtained after the bread-taxers' fashion, by subtlety or force, but were all voluntarily attached at the leading shops in the town'.[69] The impressive organization of the League's petitioning campaign should not be forgotten, but neither should it overshadow the fact that huge numbers of people chose to sign these petitions, displaying their own agency, and were not simply cajoled, intimidated or duped into it by skilful agitators.

Conclusion and Reflections

The scale and nature of petitioning changed hugely in the first half of the nineteenth century. The popularity of petitioning can be partly explained by the lack of other avenues for popular political participation at this time but also the unique advantages that petitioning offered as a means of political organization. The constitutional pedigree of petitioning allowed it to escape curbs on other forms of political activity, and it provided a way to bring popular politics to the very heart of an undemocratic representative system. Petitioning struck a balance between local activity and central coordination and enabled movements to claim the support of public opinion, an increasingly important commodity in the eyes of legislators. Due to the innovations of successive agitations, petitioning by the 1840s was largely organized by permanent campaigning bodies and less spontaneous. Yet we should be careful of assuming that there was some 'golden age' when petitioning reflected the unmediated voice of the public. Even the

campaigns of the League, arguably the most efficiently organized petitioning drives of the period under discussion, offered considerable space for genuine popular participation from people who lacked the means or rights (such as the franchise) to contribute through the other, limited methods available at this time. Petitioning, then, combined organization with popular participation, avoiding some of the tensions between these two models analysed elsewhere in this book. It must always be remembered that petitioning remained the most open, accessible and cheapest form of political participation for ordinary people, and this fact goes a long way towards explaining its extraordinary popularity and why it was used by so many different campaigns across the political spectrum.

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CHAPTER 4

Can 'The People' Speak? Popular Meetings and the Ambiguities of Popular Sovereignty in the United States, 1816–1828

Reeve Huston

Twenty-five years ago, the historian Edmund Morgan argued that from the seventeenth century forward, a fiction lay at the core of Anglo-American politics: that government rested on the consent of 'the people'. That this was a fiction is not hard to demonstrate. Popular sovereignty posited a unitary people with a single will, something that has never existed. Even the most democratic polity cannot translate the multiple, changing, conflicting wills of the citizenry into a coherent policy regime; no governing structure, even in revolutionary governments, has put every social and political relationship up for debate and transformation. Policy coherence and the maintenance of power equally demanded that some policies, institutions, and relationships—usually most of them—be removed from the influence of ordinary people.[1]

The fictitious character of popular sovereignty did not, however, stop people from trying to achieve it. The belief that the people should

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rule provided justification and ideological grounding for virtually every instance in which ordinary US citizens entered the public arena during the early nineteenth century. Ronald Formisano has argued that the central feature of what he calls 'populist' movements during this period was an effort to close the gap between the ideal and the practice of popular sovereignty.[2] I think that he is right about this and wish to build on his insight to ask a different question: How did always-unattainable quality of popular sovereignty affect Americans' thinking about it?

This chapter seeks to answer this question for the United States in a particular period: the interregnum between the first and second 'party systems' (1815–1824, often misleadingly referred to as the 'Era of Good Feelings'), when the United States was a one-party state and politics briefly turned on axes other than partisanship. Like Americans at every moment between the Revolution and the turn of the twentieth century, all white Americans during this period (and many others as well) embraced the idea that 'the people' should rule. As partisan conflict abated, they sought to put this ideal into practice in a wide variety of ways. In doing so, they unleashed extraordinary democratic energy, shaping political thought and practice for years to come. At the same time, they exposed the contradictions and ambiguities embedded in the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Conservatives and radicals, political operatives, elites, and ordinary citizens all affirmed that 'the people' spoke in a single voice. But they invoked 'the people' to demand multiple, often conflicting policies and notions of governance. Politically active Americans in the early nineteenth century repeatedly wrestled with a knot of questions: How was one to know when 'the people' had spoken? How was the power of the citizenry to be exercised? What limits, if any, should be placed on 'the people's' will? What function should representatives play in eliciting, interpreting, enacting, mediating, and/or blunting the expressed will of their constituents? Americans during the inaccurately named 'Era of Good Feelings' fought repeatedly over these questions. In doing so, they helped reshape American political practice and thought.

Nowhere were the contradictions and ambiguities embedded in popular sovereignty and the conflicts over how to resolve them more revealingly exposed than in public assemblies. Popular meetings were widespread in the so-called Era of Good Feelings. As partisanship waned after 1815, political elites abandoned their former practices of popular mobilization and government became less responsive. Ordinary people and outsider political activists began experimenting with inherited forms of popular

political mobilization and expression—especially through assemblies. A wide variety of activists called public meetings for numerous purposes: to benefit their faction at election time, repeal laws, oppose or promote the western spread of slavery, reform morals, and promote a plethora of economic reforms. Although these meetings used the same forms and procedures, the implicit political theory that informed them varied enormously. Organizers envisioned widely varying roles for 'the people' in public life. Meetings, in short, were the most prominent manifestation of a core political development of the Era of Good Feelings. They embodied an outpouring of democratic activity and sparked endless debate over what, exactly, 'democracy' was.

Public assemblies were part of a political inheritance reaching back to the colonial era. By the early eighteenth century, gatherings of subjects were taken to embody the will of local communities, and the aggrieved made use of those gatherings to present their grievances as those of the community as a whole. New Englanders viewed the town meeting as the voice of a homogeneous, united community. Throughout the English colonies, most people saw riots and 'regulations' (armed rural uprisings) as nothing more than local communities defending themselves. The mobilization of ordinary citizens during the Imperial Crisis and the Revolution transformed these traditions. Middling and poorer Americans learned to intervene purposefully in affairs of state and came to believe that they as well as gentlemen were capable of and entitled to doing so. The local, defensive orientation of crowd actions often (but not always) gave way to a focus on national aspirations and a capacity to act proactively. As a frightened Gouverneur Morris declared, 'the mob begin to think and to reason'. Between the outbreak of war and the ratification of the federal constitution, crowds came to act as a part of government, enforcing the decisions of revolutionary committees. The number of popular meetings proliferated, and middling and poorer people learned the basic rules and procedures of deliberative assemblies. Many argued that 'the people out of doors' should remain a part of government, claiming the right to instruct their representatives and to formally approve or veto legislation.[3]

The suppression of Shay's Rebellion and the political ascendancy of the Federalists silenced the more radical claims for 'the people out of doors'. But despite strenuous efforts, the Federalists failed to suppress or discredit public meetings that criticized governmental measures. Indeed, by the late 1790s they came to *encourage* public engagement in politics, including in deliberative assemblies, as a way of combatting their political rivals, the

Republicans. Between 1800 and 1815, the frequency of public assemblies multiplied as both parties organized their constituents into meetings, nominating conventions, and electoral committees. But the variety and purposes of those meetings narrowed dramatically, as the number of independent popular movements dropped dramatically at the very moment that partisan mobilization flourished.[4]

Partisan mobilization came to an abrupt halt in most of the United States after 1815. The Federalist Party collapsed under the weight of its reputation as a cabal of Anglophile traitors, and Republicans in most states, facing no significant opposition, abandoned popular political mobilization. Increasingly, politicians practiced an insider game. Political alliances came to rest on what politicians called 'friendship': a patron-client relationship that centered on an exchange of favors. Elections, in the words of Donald Ratcliffe, became 'one-sided personality contests'. Candidates' friends promoted them on the basis of their character, talents, and devotion to principle (without specifying which principles they were devoted *to*), while circulating unflattering rumors about their rivals. At the core of these changes lay a radical individualization of politics. Political choices ceased to be a collective matter and became the province of individual conscience and judgment. More than during the first decade of the century, legislators came to treasure their 'independence'—their freedom from any influence, including party or constituent pressure. Even voting came to be viewed as the aggregation of individual choices rather than a collective expression of a united citizenry. Increasingly, newspapers and political operatives came to label electioneering in any form—including calling party nominations and electoral meetings—as unwarranted 'interference' in the autonomous decision-making of voters.[5]

Public meetings were expected to follow the same procedure as they had before 1815. Each should be announced publicly (usually in the newspapers) well in advance in order to ensure wide attendance. Upon assembling, participants elected a chair and secretary pro tempore. Typically, after hearing speeches, a committee (usually appointed by the chair, sometimes elected by the meeting as a whole) retired to compose resolutions expressing the sentiments of the meeting. Sometimes, the committee also wrote an address to the public. Ideally, these documents should be read aloud and approved or altered by the meeting. The secretary then published them, along with the proceedings of the meeting, in the relevant newspapers. In theory, the chair's job was to ensure that each speaker had equal opportunity to be heard and that participants were given a chance

to ask questions and raise objections—in short, that collective decisions were transparent and uncoerced. The purpose of these procedures was to ensure that meetings arrived at the unmediated, informed sentiments of the people attending and conveyed them to a broader public.[6]

Transparent, uncoerced deliberation, full discussion with freedom of speech on all sides—these were widely held *expectations* of meetings, which each meeting sought diligently to appear to uphold. Whether the meeting's organizers intended to uphold those expectations in substance was another question. In New York and Pennsylvania, where partisan mobilization continued unabated after the War of 1812, electoral meetings remained a staple of political campaigns, and activists in other states occasionally called such meetings as well. Wherever they were held, election-time assemblies were run by the 'friends' of the candidate—political clients who were tied to a great man by personal loyalty and an exchange of favors. Typically, candidates' friends called a meeting and induced *their* clients to attend and to pressure their *own* dependents to attend. In 1816, when the friends of John Pope convinced two militia companies to call a convention to nominate someone to run against Henry Clay, Clay wrote to Willis Field, asking him to get other militia companies to pass resolutions opposing the convention

> I think … it would have an excellent effect if some company in Woodford county would meet and express in resolves [a refusal to concur in the nomination].… Can you not with some of my other friends get such resolutions adopted by some company? [7]

Election-time meetings, in other words, were a show of strength by a candidate's 'interest'—a chain of clientage held together by personal loyalty and favors. Still, these meetings presented themselves as assemblies of 'the people' or of 'the republican citizens' of a town or county. Such claims were frequently ridiculed by the meeting's opponents. According to a Pittsburgh newspaper editor, the process of holding a public meeting began when the local committee of vigilance advertised it in an obscure newspaper or through handbills handed out to a small circle of friends

> The people know little or nothing of all this—two or three of our cronies in different townships, hold these elections and return if possible one of themselves as a delegate. Our delegates meet—we make a great noise about republicanism—protest against caucusing—talk much about democracy and the rights of the people—and then pompously announce to the public that

> *the delegates chosen by the democratic republicans of the different townships* have formed a ticket to be run at the election—and woe to the man who dares to question our authority.… By this happy management we save the people an immensity of trouble.[8]

As partisan meetings became rarer and more tightly managed, the number of extra-partisan meetings exploded. The Era of Good Feelings witnessed the sudden intrusion of formerly minor issues—the expansion of slavery; banking, credit, and monetary policy; the responsiveness of elected officials to constituent demands—into public life. Initially, none of these issues was raised or debated along partisan lines. In the absence of an elite committed to popular mobilization, these issues gave rise to political experimentation, much of which aimed at developing (or recovering) effective forms of *self*-mobilization on the part of the citizenry. For reasons of space, this chapter will discuss only two examples: the public mobilization against a congressional pay raise in 1816 and the wave of popular organizing that occurred in response to the Panic of 1819.

The first major effort at non-partisan popular mobilization arose in response to the Compensation Act. In 1816, Congress raised its pay from six dollars per day to 1500 dollars a year, retroactive to the beginning of the current Congress. Scores of meetings and hundreds of letters to the editor excoriated the law. Grand juries denounced it, and in one case a crowd burned its congressman in effigy.[9] These assemblies seem to have been dominated by political neophytes. In Saratoga County, New York, only 4 of the 53 men who served as delegates or officers in protest meetings (7.5 percent) had participated in a Federalist meeting in the previous five years (there was no Republican newspaper in Saratoga County). Another 7.5 percent had participated in quasi-Federalist meetings, like the Fourth of July celebration or the Saratoga Bible Society. As a congressman observed, the Compensation Act 'aroused into active opposition … many who had seldom if ever been seen before on the political theatre'.[10]

Public meetings attacked the compensation law on a number of grounds. It expanded Congress's powers beyond constitutional limits and sacrificed the public interest to the private advantage of congressmen. The new salaries greatly exceeded what critics saw as the actual value of representatives' labor. As such, it robbed 'the people' of the fruits of their labor and turned the people's representatives into 'a *privileged order*', separate from and above the people. This sort of 'usurpation, encroachment, and corruption' constituted 'the greatest danger which now threatens [sic] our rights … as citizens'.

Most opponents of the law viewed their public meetings in a way that had been standard since the early 1790s: as a portion of 'the people' exercising their 'right … to … take into consideration the acts of its government, … and freely discuss them and express their opinion of the same'. Protest meetings claimed to represent only those attending. But they did expect their actions to produce consequences in public life. Popular assemblies served to organize the citizens of a given locality for political action. Meetings throughout the US expressed their determination, as the citizens of Milton, New York, declared, 'to *withhold our votes* from every candidate for any elective office … who shall have given his vote, *encouragement, countenance* or *influence* for the increase' of congressional salaries. Several followed the example of a Nashville meeting, which requested that those who voted for the Compensation Act 'VACATE their seats, that the people may have an opportunity of choosing others who would not misrepresent them'.[11]

Assemblies also served to communicate public sentiment to representatives. Countless meetings drafted petitions and remonstrances to their congressmen and senators. Although they claimed to represent only the people attending, they clearly viewed themselves as a *part* of 'the people', and they believed that meetings, letters to newspapers, grand jury resolutions, and votes at militia musters, all expressing the same sentiments in sufficient number, constituted an expression of the will of a unitary people. The citizens of Stillwater, New York, declared that when public servants, once remonstrated for their conduct by their constituents, continued to 'act incorrigibly, and endeavor to outrage the opinions of their employers, then it becomes the duty of the citizens to hurl them from their seats, and commit the care of their civil rights, to more worthy servants'. The remedy they proposed was an uncontroversial one—even Federalists had recognized the rights of the people to vote unfaithful representatives out of office. Nonetheless, their measure of a representatives' faithfulness was a radical one, not voiced widely since the 1780s: obedience to the expressed will of constituents. A Fourth of July toast in Washington, Pennsylvania, summarized this position even more pungently: '*Representation*. What matters it whether a government be called a monarchy, or a republic, if the representative can with impunity disregard the wishes of his constituents? The will of the people is LAW, to the *faithful* lawmaker'.[12]

Here was a doctrine that promised to transform constituents' relationship to their representatives. Since the revolutionary era, 'the people out of doors' had not presumed to dictate how their representatives should

vote. Petitions were uniformly deferential, 'praying' for specific relief or simply expressing the opinion of the signers. The widespread demand that representatives repeal the Compensation Act directly challenged the independence that officials treasured. More broadly, anti-compensation activists openly violated their representatives' expectation of deference. Protesters vilified, even harassed, the supporters of the bill. The names of Maryland's congressmen who had voted for the bill were posted 'at all the taverns, stores, blacksmith's shops and cross roads' in Frederick County. The citizens of Putnam County, Georgia, burned the bill's supporters in effigy. Many representatives shared the sentiments of Thomas Clayton of Delaware, who professed to feel 'deeply injured' by the 'public degradation' he faced.[13]

Anti-compensation activists also transformed the nature of political campaigning, if only for one election. Normally, politicians avoided discussing policies in their campaigns. They expected to be judged on their character, their talents, and their record of service. Opponents of the salary law throughout the country demanded that incumbents and challengers alike state their position on the Act. They vowed to vote against anyone who voted for it, who would not promise to repeal it, even, in some places, who accepted the new salary. In many areas, protesters made the act a litmus test in races for the state legislature, for it was legislators who would select senators.[14]

In short, constituents were injecting issues into politics, holding their representatives accountable for their policy choices, and insisting that those representatives obey their instructions. Even more surprising, many congressmen went along. Some conservatives, like Timothy Pickering, resigned rather than knuckle under. But many more promised to reverse themselves and vote for repeal. When 'A Fayetteville Voter' called on J. Carrel Breckenridge to state his position on the Compensation Act, Breckenridge wrote that 'The right of the people to make such a call, is not questioned'. He declared his opposition to the bill and promised to work for repeal. Scores of congressmen did the same.[15]

The fall elections proved devastating to supporters of the Compensation Act. Nearly 70 percent of House members were not returned to office—considerably more than the usual turnover of 50 percent. Only 19 percent of the men who voted for the law were reelected.[16] When the outgoing Congress returned for its lame-duck session (i.e., its final session before being replaced), repentant members acknowledged their obligation to obey their constituents. 'The people', one congressman observed, were

the 'owners and sovereigns' of the country. Representatives were merely 'their stewards' or 'agents'. Another condemned 'that high-toned principle, which caused a man … to set up his opinion in opposition to the opinions of thirty-five thousand of his constituents.… He ceased to be a Representative of the people when he did so, and represented himself alone'.[17]

Conservatives ridiculed their colleagues' posture of obedience. In the first place, they argued, those colleagues were genuflecting to a chimera. 'The voice of the people has not been heard', declaimed John Hurlburt of Massachusetts. 'It was the clamor of newspapers, it was the voice of party spirit, of faction, and misrepresentation'. John C. Calhoun challenged advocates of binding instruction to 'produce their instructions, properly authenticated. Let them name the time and place at which the people assembled, and deliberated on this question'. Thomas Grosvenor of New York went further, questioning whether 'the people' were capable of voicing a stable will. If a champion of constituent instruction were to obey the people's will, he thundered,

> Surely he would demand … that the voice he was about to worship should be that of a clear majority.… How can he ascertain that majority? Is there any method prescribed in the Constitution or the law? No; he must watch, and listen, and catch the voice of his district, as it floats on the breeze; or he must read it, if he can, in the popular shouts which issue from partial meetings and conventions of the people.[18]

Even if 'the people' could be heard, conservatives argued, legislators were duty-bound to obey their own judgment and conscience—judgment that they believed to be superior to that of their constituents. With the 'doctrine of obligatory instruction', Grosvenor argued, 'the … legislator becomes an automaton, to be danced on this floor by wires to be held by … active and turbulent demagogues'.[19] Make legislators the mere agents of the popular will and government bodies would replicate the tumult of popular assemblies: 'What a babel of legislation would this House present! Local prejudice, narrow feelings, headlong violence must enter this Hall; and here, uninformed by discussion, unmitigated by sober reflection … would be seen in disgraceful and endless collision'.[20]

After a long debate, Congress repealed the Compensation Act. Speaking for a sovereign people in a single voice and mobilizing citizens in sufficient numbers to make their claims plausible, opponents of the act compelled

'the people's' representatives to cede a portion of their authority to popular assemblies. Although their opposition to the congressional pay raise met with unqualified victory, their wider hope for an expanded popular sovereignty made no headway. The reason was simple: their movement was focused on a single issue and created no lasting organization. With the repeal of the Compensation Act, the meetings, remonstrances, and newspaper debates ceased, and politicians went back to business as usual.

Public, non-partisan meetings again became a major feature of public life during the financial panic of 1819 and the ensuing depression. Scores of public meetings, as well as less formal debates at crossroads, street corners, taverns, and coffee houses, testified to the vibrancy of public debate during the crisis.[21] These mobilizations, however, lacked the anti-compensation movement's unanimity. As a result, their impact was more fragmentary and more heavily mediated by officeholders and their political 'friends'. On the other hand, these meetings, along with a growing number of voluntary associations, envisioned a new set of methods through which ordinary citizens could shape their economy, society, and culture. Most of these meetings displayed little interest in shaping government policy; instead, they sought change by mobilizing the public to enact change directly, without the mediation of the state.

We don't know a lot about who attended the public meetings. A public assembly held in Frankfort, Kentucky, meeting was led by two former US senators and a retired congressman, at least one of whom was an officer of the Bank of Kentucky. Several meetings were held in response to a call by the New York Chamber of Commerce; the Boston meeting drafted a petition to be signed by the 'merchants and traders of the whole commonwealth'. More typical, however, was the assembly of 'Merchant's Farmer's Miller's &c.' who gathered in Green County, Kentucky, to discuss the Frankfort meeting's resolutions.[22]

More than any other meetings of the era, these gatherings gave rise to open and freewheeling debate. Unlike partisan meetings and those held in opposition to the Compensation Act, most of which heard only one side of debate, most meetings made room for speeches from the advocates of competing approaches to the crisis. An assembly in Lincoln County, Kentucky, read the Frankfort resolves three times and discussed each one at length before it 'negatived' all but one. The Harrison County meeting adopted its resolutions only 'after strenuous opposition'.[23]

The Panic of 1819, in short, gave rise to a genuine civic debate over economic policy. The seriousness of the debate grew out of an assumption

shared by almost all the participants: that the solution to the crisis would come from the citizenry. Theirs was a bottom-up vision of economic recovery, in which the sovereign 'people' took on a direct policy-making role. The announcement of meeting to be held at Nashville in July 1819 articulated this assumption well. The meeting was called 'for the purpose of taking into consideration the situation of our country … of adopting means of relief against our present calamities; and of providing against future embarrassments'. The meeting was to adopt the 'means of relief' itself, not to recommend them to the legislature.[24]

Most of the remedies proposed by public gatherings depended on the collective efforts of ordinary citizens rather than government action. An assembly in Cincinnati called on all citizens to refuse payment in the '*depreciated paper currency*' issued by their city's banks. Other meetings proposed the same action, while the Green County, Kentucky, meeting requested that inhabitants 'suspend *payment of their debts for the present*' in order to 'prevent this section of the country from *being drained of precious metals*'.[25]

Still, many meetings asked the government to intervene. The manner in which they addressed the government varied enormously, for there was little consensus in how a mobilized citizenry thought about its relationship to the government. Some meetings spoke in deferential terms, 'respectfully request[ing]' or 'humbly hop[ing]' and 'pray[ing]' for particular laws. More frequently, constituents expressed neither deference nor commands. Many believed that in acting autonomously, they were cooperating with the authorities by ascertaining the public will and helping the legislature craft remedies. The citizens of St. Louis declared that meetings like theirs allowed citizens and their representatives to 'mutually understand each other, and cooperate for the general weal'. The Franklin, Kentucky meeting called on citizens throughout the state to gather and pass resolutions of their own, to be considered 'among other measures' by 'the people and the legislature'. It charged its committee of correspondence with collating the findings and laying them before the governor.[26]

Still, a large minority of mobilized citizens made clear that they expected their legislators to obey them. Many meetings gave instructions that they considered to be binding. In both Pennsylvania and Kentucky, constituents demanded that candidates for the legislature pledge to revoke the charters of state banks that failed to redeem their notes, or to tax the branches of the Bank of the United States, or both. In both places, candidates went along—in Pennsylvania in 1818, a majority of the men elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives had done so.[27]

The problem with the expectation that representatives obey 'the people' was that the people did not speak with one voice. The years following the War of 1812 witnessed dramatic economic and social change, including the beginnings of rapid industrialization in New England and the mid-Atlantic, growing class stratification in settled farming communities, rapid migration to the frontier, endemic conflicts over access to land, the economic and political marginalization of the gentry, the emergence of a highly speculative and controversial finance sector, and an increasingly fierce scramble among entrepreneurs for markets, credit, and legislative favors. All of these economic developments brought new class, sectoral, and sectional conflicts in their wake. Nor did it help that few understood the new economic order.[28]

At the very moment when 'the people' mobilized to find solutions to economic crisis, they were more divided by economic interest and ideals than ever before. Rather than speaking in one voice, they produced the 'babel' of proposals that congressional conservatives had predicted in 1816. Different assemblies called for—and opposed—the chartering of new banks, the revocation of the charters of existing banks, the suspension of legal proceedings for the recovery of debts, a protective tariff, cuts in government spending, and complete government inaction. Several meetings were closely divided, and rival newspapers sometimes disputed whether a given proposal had been endorsed or defeated.[29] This chaotic assemblage of demands posed fundamental problems for the expansive vision of popular sovereignty that had re-emerged in the opposition to the Compensation Act. That idea assumed that 'the people' were unified in their will and that their wishes always pointed to a unitary public good. During the debate over the Compensation Act, these assumptions were rendered plausible by the unanimity in public debate. In the debates over the economy, that unity no longer existed. How could such a divided people shape law and policy? What was a representative to do when 'the people' spoke in a thousand conflicting voices?

An emerging group of political activists believed they had an answer to that question. Where the non-partisan public meetings of the Era of Good Feelings all envisioned 'the people' as an autonomous body with a clear and independently determined will, these activists saw public opinion as something to be actively mobilized, shaped, and managed. Between 1815 and 1828, a second and third generation of middling-born, upwardly mobile politicians gained unprecedented political power. During the early party battles between Federalists and Republicans (1795–1815), such

activists had taken the lead in mobilizing ordinary citizens into their parties. While gentlemen dominated national and state politics during the early period, such men came to dominate the Republican Party in at least three states (New York, Kentucky, and New Hampshire) after 1819. They became a part of the leading clique in several others.[30]

These men inherited from their partisan forebears an unashamed embrace of partisanship and a welter of methods—newspapers, broadsides, printed tickets, partisan songs and symbols, parades, barbecues, public meetings, large election committees, door-to-door canvassing—by which to instruct constituents in partisan thinking and mobilize them on behalf of the party at election time. They also insisted that politics was a career like the law. Far more than their predecessors, they sought to build efficient and powerful political organizations and to vest control over them to political specialists like themselves.

The most innovative group of middle-class politicos was the Bucktail faction in New York state, led by future President Martin Van Buren. 'The people' rarely entered into the private correspondence or autobiographies of the Bucktails. Instead, their main constituency was other partisan activists. Van Buren's memoir of the years before 1828 is crowded with people, all but one of whom is a political operative or an elected official. When Bucktail activists did mention ordinary voters in their letters and reminiscences, they alternately depicted them as an audience to be won over or a restraining force in politics, one that set limits on but did not determine what political leaders could do.[31]

The Bucktails were experts at popular mobilization, and after their break from their Clintonian rivals in 1819, they quickly revived the system of electoral mobilization that had prevailed before 1815. Candidates below the state level were nominated by a pyramid of local, county, legislative district conventions. Local electoral committees oversaw election activities. The faction's newspapers exhorted the rank and file to turn out and to organize their neighbors. But this was a different sort of popular mobilization than that practiced by opponents of the Compensation Act or advocates of economic reform. Bucktail meetings were tightly controlled and fully integrated into an electoral strategy overseen by an inner cadre of state leaders. Unanimity prevailed in Bucktail meetings; debate occurred in correspondence and over dinner tables among faction leaders, not in public assemblies. Nominations for state offices were made by the legislative caucus; popular meetings merely 'concur[red]' with those nominations. The Bucktails' most famous contribution to American political

practice was 'party regularity'—the insistence on strict adherence to the collective decisions of the parties—and their resulting ability to enforce unanimous support for those decisions.[32]

Another important group of rising middle-class politicians was the Republican faction around the editor Amos Kendall in Kentucky. Like the Bucktails, this group was shut out of the genteel patronage networks that had traditionally regulated access to political power, and they sought an alternate means to political power. They succeeded primarily by adopting the radical language of popular sovereignty pioneered by the anti-compensation movement. After being trounced in the 1816 elections by the opponents of the Compensation Act, Kendall and his middle-class allies learned to adopt the ideas and self-presentation of their erstwhile opponents. In the wake of the Panic of 1819, they sought to capture the enthusiasm behind Kentucky's public assemblies. As they did so, they narrowed a wide variety of ideas for economic relief voiced at those meetings to a single reform: debt relief. Rebranding themselves as the 'Reform party', Kendall and his allies maintained a top-down party structure. The state organization was run out of Kendall's printing office in Frankfort. Through the pages of the *Argus of Western America*, Kendall and his assistant, Francis Blair, determined the party's message. Nominations were made by informal caucusing among party leaders, not by convention. Party activists organized parades and dinners for the cause and sought the support of militia companies, but organizing remained in the hands of a few operatives rather than being delegated to electoral committees. On the other hand, their commitment to the *idea* of popular rule was uncompromising. Reform party spokesmen insisted that 'the will of the majority makes law.… A different position would end in tyranny and despotism'. When the state supreme court invalidated Kentucky's main debt relief law, party legislators abolished that court and replaced it with a new one, which they stacked with supporters of debt relief. Party leaders justified the policy by appealing to the same sort of radical popular sovereignty that had fueled the opposition to the Compensation Act. Courts, they insisted, had no right to declare a law unconstitutional; that power 'can only be exercised by the people themselves'. The notion that judges should be the sole defenders of the constitution was nothing but 'the old story which has been preached to the people from the beginning of the world, that *they are incapable of government themselves, and ought, therefore, to surrender the government into the hands of the wise and enlightened few'*.

To validate their claim to speak for 'the people', Reform Party activists organized numerous public assemblies. In the year after their reorganization of the supreme court, public assemblies, grand jury meetings, and militia musters throughout the state became constitutional courts, as assembled citizens listened to opposing speakers discuss the Act and took votes on its constitutionality. In most meetings, a majority was required to approve actions in order to pass constitutional muster. Here was another way of managing and channeling popular sentiment: by responding to widespread economic distress, expressing party initiatives in the language of radical popular sovereignty, and mobilizing the party rank and file in support of those initiatives.[33]

Middle-class political operatives like Kendall and Van Buren certainly championed a populist politics, but they combined it with a high degree of centralized control, vested in men like themselves. Both movements were very effective at mobilizing people, largely through public meetings. But they shifted the initiative in defining issues, making nominations, and determining strategy from local groups of assembled citizens to the political specialists in charge of state political factions. Public meetings served not to develop, clarify, and publicize the policy preferences and political ideas of ordinary citizens, but to muster the support of those citizens for policies and nominees chosen by cadre. There was nothing illegitimate or undemocratic in the Bucktails' or the Reform Party's methods. To stake out a position and attempt to win support for it was a kind of democracy—one that was more effective and institutionally lasting than the more spontaneous public mobilizations of 1816 and 1819–1820. But it was a very different kind of democracy than that pioneered by the opponents of the Compensation Act and those seeking remedies for economic depression. In the latter movements, ordinary citizens sought to act on their own behalf, without the mediation of representation. The Bucktails and Reform Party advocates re-introduced greater mediation into the expression of 'the people's will', and in the case of the Bucktails, adopted organizational innovations that greatly enhanced the power of the mediators. This was the vision of 'democracy' that would become dominant during the presidential campaigns and presidency of Andrew Jackson.

Public meetings during the Era of Good Feelings had a firm foundation in the doctrine of popular sovereignty. But in putting that doctrine into practice, they exposed the unresolved ambiguities and contradictions in that doctrine. Freed temporarily from the discipline of party organization, public meetings became an arena for experiments in popular self-

organization and for rethinking the meaning of popular sovereignty. At times, these meetings proved enormously empowering, demonstrating that ordinary people and political outsiders could have a profound effect upon politics and policy. At all times, however, these meetings exposed the ambiguities of popular sovereignty without resolving them. In most cases, they also demonstrated the limits of spontaneous, localized popular organization: impermanence and policy fragmentation. The return of partisan politics, now newly dominated by a cadre of self-made political specialists, overcame those limits, but did so at the cost of the autonomy and self-direction of popular assemblies. Political action through organized factions and parties would henceforth be institutionally stable and ideologically coherent, but their demands and ideas would be largely determined by a class of political specialists whose interests were distinct from those of the rank and file. This tension—between organization and autonomy, freedom, and efficacy—would remain a central problem for popular politics throughout the nineteenth century and, indeed, into our own time.

Notes

1. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988).
2. Ronald Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
3. Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy;* Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible*; Pauline Meier, *From Rebellion to Revolution*; Richard S. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*; Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution*; idem., *The American Revolution*; Gordon S. Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*; idem., *Radicalism of the American Revolution*; Brooke, *Columbia Rising.*
4. Countryman, *American Revolution*; Wood, *Creation*; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*; Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Streets*; Huston, Robertson, and Owen essays in Peart and Smith, *Practicing Democracy*; Pasley and Robertson essays in Pasley, Robertson, and Waldstreicher, *Beyond the Founders; Todd* Estes, 'Shaping the Politics of Public Opinion: Federalists and the Jay Treaty Debate', *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (2000), 393–422; Brooke, *Columbia Rising.*

5. *Diary and Journal of Richard Clough Anderson, Jr., 1814–1826,* Alfred Tischendorf and E. Taylor Parks (eds), (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 23–53; Reeve Huston, 'Friendship and Political Morality in the American Political Class, 1815–1820' (Paper presented at the Meeting of Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, Philadelphia, 17–20 July 2008); *Kentucky Reporter*, 10 July 1816, 12 July 26, 2 August 1820 and 1816–20, *passim*; Albany *Argus*, 1 March 1816, 24 April 1818 and 1816, 1820, *passim*; *Richmond Enquirer*, 1816, 1820, *passim*; Aaron Ward to Philip Van Courtlandt, 3 March 1819, in Judd (ed.), *Correspondence of the Van Courtlandt Family*, 4:81; Donald J. Ratcliffe, *Party Spirit in a Frontier Republic: Democratic Politics in Ohio, 1793–1821* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 208–39; *Kentucky* Reporter, 6, 27 March, 10, 17, 24 July 1816. This and the following paragraph summarize much of the argument in Reeve Huston, *Reforging American Democracy*: *Political Practice in the United States, 1812–1840*, chapter 2.
6. *Argus of Western America* (Franklin, Ky.), 1816–20; *Kentucky Reporter* (Franklin, Ky.), 1816–20; *Richmond* (Va.) *Enquirer*, 1816–20; *Albany* (NY) *Argus,* 1816–22, *passim*.
7. Henry Clay to Willis Field, 25 March 1818, in *Papers of Henry Clay*, 2: 181–2; *Kentucky Reporter,* 10, 17 July, 7 Aug. 1816. On politics in Pennsylvania and New York, see James A. Kehl, *Ill Feeling in the Era of Good Feeling: Western Pennsylvania Political Battles, 1815–1825* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1956), 91–100; Kim T. Phillips, 'The Pennsylvania Origins of the Jackson Movement', *Political Science Quarterly* 91 (1976): 490–2; Wallace article and dissertation; bio of De Witt Clinton.
8. Pittsburgh *Mercury*, quoted in Kehl, *Ill Feeling*, 100–1; *Kentucky Reporter,* 10, 17 July, 7 Aug., 1816.
9. For Federalist editors' early excoriation of the law, see *Western Monitor* (Lexington, KY), 14 June 1816; *Western American* (Williamsburg, OH), 20 April 1816; *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, 26 March 1816; *Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), 27 March 1816; *Troy Post*, quoted in *Albany Advertiser*, 12 April 1816; Ibid., 17 April 1816 ; *Repertory* (Boston) 28 March 1816; *Trenton Federalist*, quoted in *Western Monitor*, 19 April 1816; *Concord* (New Hampshire) *Gazette*, 9 April 1816; *Evening Post* (New York), 8 April 1816; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven), 23 July 1816. On protest meetings and letters to the editor, see *Saratoga Journal*

(Ballston Spa, NY), 31 July 1816; *Onondaga Advertiser*, reprinted in *Western American*, 7 Sept. 1816. For summaries of the actions of anti-Compensation meetings and activists, see Skeen, 'Vox Populi', 259–61; Huston, *Origins of Jacksonian Democracies*, chapter 3.

10. Names of participants in protest meetings were taken from *Saratoga Journal*, 1816, and were cross-checked with lists of delegates and officials at Federalist meetings, Federalist Fourth of July celebrations and meetings of the Saratoga Bible Society in the *Saratoga Journal*, 1812–1816. Quotation is in *Annals of Congress*, 14th Congress, 2nd session (find page number).
11. *Independent American* (Middlebury, VT), 26 June 1816; *Saratoga Journal* (Ballston Spa, NY), 12, 19 June, 31 July, 25 Sept., 2 Oct. 1816; *Western Monitor* (Nashville, TN), 19 July 1816; *Newburyport Herald*, 2 August 1816.
12. *Washington* (PA) *Reporter*, 8 July 1816 (first quotation); *Independent American*, 25 Sept. 1816 (second quotation). See also *Western Monitor*, 5, 23 July 1816; *Western American*, 3 Aug. 1816; *Rhode Island American*, reprinted in the *New-York Courier*, 2 July 1816; *Kentucky Gazette*, reprinted in the *Columbian* (New York), 18 June 1816; *Green Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), 2 June 1816; *Independent American*, reprinted in the *Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), 26 June 1816.
13. *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington), 9 July; *Georgetown Gazette*, reprinted in *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 24 June. The practice of 'the people out of doors' instructing their representatives was widespread during the Revolutionary era, but seems to have disappeared after the adoption of the Constitution. See Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*.
14. *Yankee* (Boston), 25 Oct. 1816; *Western Monitor*, 7 June, 5 July 1816; *Evening Post* (New York), 9 July 1816.
15. *Kentucky Gazette*, 10 June 1816; *Boston Patriot*, 11 Sept. 1816; *American*, reprinted in *Baltimore Patriot*, 27 Sept. 1816; *Western Monitor*, 24 May 1816; *Daily National Intelligencer*, 21 June, 18 July 1816; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), 6 Aug. 1816; *Centinal of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), 16 July 1816.
16. *Delaware Gazette and State Journal* (Wilmington), 19 Aug. 1816; C. Edward Skeen, '"Vox Populi, Vox Dei": The Compensation Act of 1816 and the Rise of Popular Politics', *Journal of the Early Republic* 6 (1986):266.

17. Ibid., 489, 598, 619.
18. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Congress, 2nd Session, 321 (first quotation), 576–8 (second quotation); 625–6 (third quotation). See also Ibid., 493–4, 553, 646–7.
19. Ibid., 629 (first quotation), 689–90 (second quotation).
20. Ibid., 630, 690–1.
21. *St. Louis* Enquirer, 8 June 1819; Argus *of Western America* (Frankfort, KY), 4 June, 6 Aug., 20, 17 Sept. 1819, 20 April, 4 May 1824; *Franklin Gazette* (Philadelphia), 20 Aug. 1819, *Indiana Centinel*, 21 Aug. 1819; *Kentucky Reporter*, 16 Aug. 1819; Murray N. Rothbard, 'The Franklin Resolutions and the Panic of 1819', *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 61 (1963):214–19; Harry R. Stevens, *The Early Jackson Party in Ohio* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1957), 18, 20.
22. *Rothbard*, 'Frankfort Resolves', 216; *Nashville Gazette*, 2 June 1819; *Washington* (PA) *Reporter*, 18 Jan 1819; *Franklin Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1819.
23. On the typical procedure of the gatherings, see *Edwardsville* (IL) *Spectator*, 20 March , 26 June 1821; *Brooksville Enquirer*, 5 March 1819; *Argus of Western America*, 4 June, 19 Sept. 1819; Stevens, *Early Jackson Party*, 18. On the Frankfort meeting and the assemblies that responded to it, see *St. Louis Enquirer*, 9 June 1819; *Argus of Western America* 21 May, 4 June, 6, 20 Aug., 17 Sept. 1819 ; *Franklin Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1819; *Indiana Centinel*, 21 Aug. 1819. For other meetings that called on citizens elsewhere to meet and discuss the crisis or that responded to such calls, see *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia), 8 Nov. 1819; *Baltimore Patriot*, 19 March 1819; *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* (Reading, PA), 30 Oct. 1819.
24. *Nashville Gazette*, 26 June 1819; see also *Franklin Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1819; *Kentucky Gazette*, reprinted in the (Clarksville) *Tennessee Weekly Chronicle,* 24 May 1819.
25. *Kentucky Reporter*, 16 Aug. 1819; *Alabama Republican*, reprinted in the *Nashville Gazette*, 7 Oct. 1820; *Washington* (PA) *Reporter*, 18 Jan 1819. Other solutions included favoring merchants who exported the produce of the region to other states and, most commonly, calls for industry and frugality. See *St. Louis Enquirer*, 16 March 1822 (find citation for meetings calling for industry and frugality as the solution to the crisis). Other meetings and activists sought to mobilize public opinion to pressure banks to act more

responsibly. See *St. Louis Enquirer*, 9 June 1819; *Kentucky Gazette*, reprinted in Clarksville *Tennessee Weekly Chronicle*, 24 May 1819.

26. For meetings issuing instructions, see *Edwardsville Spectator*, 13 Feb., 26 June 1821; *Argus of Western America*, 4 June 1819. For candidates' pledges, see *Spirit of the Times* (Carlisle, PA), 12 Jan. 1819; *Har Chronicle*, reprinted in Ibid; *Argus of Western America*, 18 June 1819; *Weekly Aurora*, 15 Feb. 1819.
27. For evidence of deferential address toward representatives, see *St. Louis Enquirer*, 16 June 1821; *Edwardsville Spectator*, 5 Dec. 1820 (quotations); *Argus of Western America*, 4 June 1819; *Franklin Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1819. On an ethos of cooperation with representatives, see, for example, *St. Louis Enquirer*, 9, 16 June 1821.
28. The literature on economic change is voluminous, but see, for example, Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1789–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Paul Wallace Gates, *The Farmer's Frontier*; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution*.
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30. Jeffrey Pasley, '*The Tyranny of Printers': Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); idem., 'A Journeyman, Either in Law or Politics: John Beckley and the Social Origins of Political Campaigning', *Journal of the Early Republic*; Donald B. Cole, *Martin Van Buren and the American Political System* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); idem., *A Jackson Man: Amos Kendall and*

the Rise of American Democracy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); idem., *Jacksonian Democracy in New Hampshire, 1800–1851* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). For a full discussion of the rise of this political bourgeoisie to power, see Reeve Huston, *Reforging American Democracy: Political Practices in the United States, 1812–1840.*

31. Johnston Verplanck to Van Buren, 25 Dec. 1819, Van Buren to Gorham A. Worth, 27 April 1818, both in *Papers of Martin Van Buren*; *Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 78, 90, 100, and 13–127, *passim*; Huston, *Reforging American Democracy.*
32. *Argus*, Feb.-April 1820, *passim*; Wallace, 'Ideologies of Party', 133.
33. *Argus of Western* America, 3 Dec. 1823, 4, 25 Feb., 14 April, 5, 11 May, 1 June 1824, 20, 27 April, 8 June 1825. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 163–71; Cole, *A Jackson Man*, 67–94; Larry D. Kramer, *The People Themselves: Popular Constitutionalism and Judicial Review* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

CHAPTER 5

Law and Voluntary Association in the Early United States

Kevin Butterfield

In 1835, New York Supreme Court justice Samuel Nelson drafted an opinion in a case that addressed the power of the Allegany County Medical Society to expel one of its own members. Henry Fawcett, it seemed, had joined the society under false pretences, probably lacking the qualifications to practice medicine or to join his county's medical society, which held a charter of incorporation from the state of New York. Fawcett found himself expelled from the medical society, with announcements to that effect circulated in the local papers. He sued for libel, claiming that the association had not followed the proper procedures in expelling him, and thus it had announced an expulsion that never happened. Announcing such a thing to the world, he declared, was a libellous assault on his reputation. And the highest court in New York would agree.[1]

The details of the particular conflict between Fawcett and the society are not important because they were simply one set of variations on a remarkably frequent occurrence in the early American republic. As voluntarily joined organizations became more common in American cities and

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towns, conflicts from within their ranks were inevitable. Joining together created new opportunities to exclude, expel, and break asunder. By the end of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, though, Americans had grown accustomed to the idea that law would provide the context and would define the contours of their growing civil society, in two ways. Within their own clubs and associations, there was a general tendency among American joiners and organizers to embrace a 'law-minded' way of thinking about affiliation and membership in private groups. Second, and equally important, those habits and practices helped to nourish the belief among the joiners and organizers of a wide array of associations that members had a right to expect legal protections when things went wrong. And throughout the post-Revolutionary period, American courts were willing and even eager to do what they could to resolve the tensions that arose between the desire for collective action and for the preservation of personal rights.[2]

Indeed, Justice Nelson took a moment to underscore the significance of that judicial superintendence when he declared that Fawcett's expulsion, wrongful as it was, should not raise any concerns about the potential of rampant abuse of power. Nelson was pleased to note that the power of a private society to expel its members is one 'deemed essential to the fulfillment of the object of the institution, and the orderly and faithful administration of its affairs'. But that same power of expulsion 'cannot be considered very dangerous to the rights of the corporators, when so cautiously guarded, and subject also to review by the writ of *certiorari* or *mandamus*'. Here, speaking of an incorporated institution, he applied common law principles governing corporate law to his understanding of the associational life of the new American republic. Nelson appeared confident that something he treasured, the 'individual rights' of each member or a corporator, was not in any real danger. The superintending power of the law, he and many others had come to believe, was the best guarantor of the rights and freedoms of those Americans who chose to join ranks with one another.[3]

In an age when the survival of even the new republic appeared to be tenuous, the associational impulse presents us with thousands of separate efforts to muster effective cooperation from previously unaffiliated individuals. Recent trends in two separate fields of early American historical research—legal history and the history of American civil society—help us to understand how and why the first generations of American citizens chose the solutions that they did. In terms of legal history, scholars such as

Christopher Tomlins have helped historians of the early United States to become extraordinarily attentive to the ways that law, not merely or even primarily as institutionally embodied, but rather as a way of thinking about all kinds of interpersonal relationships, became '*the* paradigmatic discourse explaining life in America'. In the early republic, law gave shape to collective life, on the small and the large scale. What is more, recent studies in the history of early American civil society have alerted scholars to the various problems and challenges posed by the explosive growth of civic associational life in post-Revolutionary America, not least the concern that the organization of diverse interests was a bane, not a blessing, to an ideally unified commonwealth. Bringing those two fields of historical inquiry together, however, points the way to a fuller understanding of what happened in the early United States and why so many Americans came to believe that law-minded and law-bound ways of acting collectively were the single-best way to resolve the tensions inherent between individual autonomy and collective action in a post-Revolutionary republic.[4]

In the end, Americans embraced a pluralistic world of competing advocacy and social-reform organizations only when that world was fully encompassed by the legal regimes of the American states. There was an emphasis unique to the post-Revolutionary United States—a new republic in which people frequently called upon older principles of corporate and individual rights derived from the English common law—on the idea that all groups, from the nation-state to the private association, comprised the same fundamental unit: the rights-bearing individual. Together, the everyday practices of association and the judicial protections of the personal rights of members reveal a belief that effective collaboration and collective strength came from law-minded and law-bound ways of joining together.

Law-Mindedness and Everyday Constitutionalism in American Civil Society

A young Alexis de Tocqueville in his American travels in 1831 was among the first observers to draw attention to Americans' propensity to form voluntary associations and to join them with a fervour and a frequency unmatched anywhere in the world. Since that time, the idea that Americans of the early nineteenth century were, in Tocqueville's words, 'forever forming associations' has become something more than a commonplace. It has become a subfield of American historical studies, one that has grown immensely in the past two decades as people attempt to

explain what works about American 'civil society' or the American 'public sphere'—and why it is so important. Although some kinds of voluntary associations, such as fraternal clubs and charitable societies, had existed in colonial British America, their membership was not extensive and was limited to a handful of urban centres. After the Revolution, something new appeared: men and women at nearly all levels of social standing, white and black, and in communities large and small, embraced voluntarism and self-created, relatively formal organizations as the very best of means to improve society and their own lives.[5]

There was a remarkable breadth and diversity to this burgeoning associational civil life of post-Revolutionary America. As more and more organizations were formed that were intended to work and advocate, not for the good of the public at large, but for the good of a particular interest in society—profit-seeking companies, political clubs, moral-reform societies, and the like—there were of course powerful post-Revolutionary anxieties about the fragmentation of the ideally unified commonwealth that these rising numbers of private organizations represented.[6]

Beyond that question, however, it is also incredibly revealing to examine *how* exactly these joiners and organizers chose to join together—that is, the methods they used, the priorities they set out for themselves, and the pitfalls they discovered and hoped subsequently to avoid. Where colonial societies organized voluntarily according to ideas of sensibility and sociability, the early decades of the new United States witnessed the formation of countless associations that were based upon models of concerted action that emphasized consent, procedural fairness, and constitutional and legal limits on what even a democratically organized association (that is to say, one formally organized and majority-ruled) could and could not legitimately do in regard to their own members. Even leaving aside for the moment the judicial protections of the rights of members, it was clear that when men and women joined voluntary societies in the early American republic they made certain that they were entering a world of rules, constitutions, democratic decision-making, and procedural regularity.

The factors at play in this tendency towards increasingly rule-bound and procedurally structured ways of organizing were diverse. Duplication of existing, often British, models was an especially important one. For instance, Benjamin Lundy in his *Genius of Universal Emancipation* reproduced the writing of British Quaker activist Elizabeth Heyrick and even reprinted a British sample constitution for the formation of female anti-slavery societies. This mock-up, which was drawn from 'the Proceedings

at the organization of Ladies' Anti-Slavery Societies in England' and which the paper called a 'formula', included such details as how to form committees, hold meetings, and even fill-in-the-blank models for important organizational matters. The American Bible Society was, according to one of its organizers, William Jay, nearly a replica of the national bible society in Britain. When he offered up a model constitution for the new society, it was, he said, 'With a few immaterial alterations, required chiefly by local peculiarities', a 'literal copy of that of the British and Foreign Bible Society'.[7]

Experiences and models from one kind of institution—particularly, the charitable ones formed in large numbers in the immediate wake of the Revolution—would find their way into other, more inward-looking associations, such as literary societies. This is especially apparent in women's groups, such as Charlestown's Social Circle in 1845, which looked as much like a typical benevolent society as it did a reading club when its members elected as their lead officer a 'first directress', a term most commonly used in fundraising and socially active societies. And 'annual reports issued by the literary societies at Townsend, Charlestown, and New-Hampton seminaries', according to historian Mary Kelley, 'read as if they were records of a voluntary association dedicated to benevolence'. There were, then, obvious organizational parallels across truly diverse forms of collective organization.[8]

Recent scholarship has begun to reveal that voluntary association spread as a technology, through the medium of print, by correspondence among societies, and by personal experiences of people who participated in multiple associations or who travelled to new communities. In the first third of the nineteenth century, methods of creating organized, more-or-less permanent societies that would persist even if the original members were replaced by new ones found their way from community to community. The New Haven Mutual Aid Association, for instance, even included their influences in the preamble to its own constitution, noting that 'we have formed ourselves into a society, (for the general plan of which we are indebted to a similar one now existing in Newark, N.J.) and we, the subscribers, do adopt the following Constitution and By-Laws for our government'.[9] Sample constitutions, published annual reports, correspondence between and among voluntary organizations, the creation of auxiliary societies (in some cases, auxiliaries comprised other auxiliaries!)—all of these would help to produce an associational world of remarkable consistency marked by a nearly ubiquitous embrace of rule-bound ways of

working together. Those who joined were there because they chose to be, with articles of organization and bylaws telling each (would-be) member from the outset what would be expected of him or her.[10]

In short, the people themselves found a solution to the problem of how best to combine their efforts. In their emphases on rules, laws, and constitutions that they used to give shape to a great many of their own social relationships, many Americans were expressing a belief that it was their own and self-made constitutions and rules that would bind them together. The emerging American practices of association, in both men's and women's associations, were integrally related to the broader culture of legality of the early United States. Particularly important was the idea that human relationships not only were governed by law but they *ought* to be so governed. A constitution would be and should be abided by, operating as a sort of fundamental law from which all associational power derived. In each meeting and in an everyday, commonplace sort of way, American men and women would act in ways that showed that they believed their own constitutions mattered, as guides for how to act cooperatively and as limits on what the group could and could not do. Problems and disputes that tested the viability and durability of their own self-governance would undoubtedly arise, to be sure, but a vocabulary for dealing with potential or actual conflicts was already at hand.

Law and American Voluntarism

Moments of contest in which discontented people would turn to an outside legal authority to adjudicate an internal dispute amplified and underscored post-Revolutionary Americans' widespread embrace of law-minded ways of cooperating. Though it was a development arising out of individual moments of conflict, not consensus, there would come to be a widely shared belief that the internal workings of private associations must ultimately be open to public scrutiny, that they must fall within a larger framework of legal superintendence, and that that legal framework was one that prioritized the rights of the individual over and above the authority of the association. Imperatives towards a legalistic way of thinking about voluntary membership, then, came from within and from without, each reinforcing the other.

Legal structures, practices, and remedies that had their origins long before the American Revolution provided some of the ammunition with which many of the conflicts between member and group would be fought,

particularly the charter of incorporation and the writ of mandamus. Despite the more-or-less unquestioned belief in the idea that the greatest threats to personal liberty could be found in the exercise of public power, the citizens of the early American republic quickly came to see that private authority—even authority created by the voluntary affiliation of American citizens into a formal association—might also array itself against the liberties and against the happiness of the people or, as it happened, of a single person.

In a handful of instances early in the nineteenth century that had powerful consequences for the future of American civil society, members of voluntary associations would seek judicial intervention in what were essentially private, internal disputes. They would seek court-ordered remedies to the violations of their rights as members. Some of the rights that those discontented members invoked were ones defined in the articles of association (again, usually called 'constitutions') of the group itself, but many were not. Some were creatures of the common law, which offered some useful terms and concepts for those who sought to keep private, associational authority within positive bounds. And some of those rights were products of the American Revolution, of a republican belief in the idea that no governing power, public or private, could pretend to hold certain kinds of unchecked authority over anyone, even one who had voluntarily chosen to be there.

Charters of incorporation were important to this development. After the Revolution, countless voluntary organizations for many and diverse purposes were chartered by the states in which they were formed. The nation's first general incorporation laws, allowing charters of incorporation to be issued as a matter of routine (rather than special legislative action), appeared in New York and Pennsylvania, including an important 1791 Pennsylvania statute that allowed religious and charitable organizations to be chartered essentially at will. The eventual embrace in post-Revolutionary America of the chartered corporation as a form of collective action that was both effective and well suited to a republican government is an important part of the story being told here. We know that the protection of corporate charters from unilateral revision at the hands of governments, by classifying those documents as contracts protected constitutionally from arbitrary amendment, was a means of securing the pluralism of civil society from the state. But the charter was not merely an instrument of private corporate autonomy. It was, at the same time, an instrument of public authority and a means of public supervision. It facilitated the penetration of civil society by public norms and allowed

legislators and jurists to set and enforce limits to the legitimate exercise of corporate authority over members. And there was virtually no form of joining together that did not become increasingly 'chartered' in the decades immediately following the American Revolution.[11]

Judicial actions on behalf of individual members in these chartered institutions hinged on the willingness of American courts to embrace the use of the writ of mandamus as a point of entry in the associational life of the early United States. For English jurists, mandamus had long been seen as a prerogative writ, an order emanating directly from the authority of the king. The preeminent eighteenth-century scholar of the common law, William Blackstone, described it as 'a command issuing in the king's name from the court of king's bench, and directed to any person, corporation, or inferior court of judicature, within the king's dominions; requiring them to do some *particular* thing'. It was a flexible means of addressing a vast array of injustices. In the growing numbers of internal disputes within municipal corporations in seventeenth-century England—most particularly, in the decades of and surrounding the English Civil War—the court of King's Bench could use the writ of mandamus as 'an effective instrument' that allowed not Parliament or the king, but the courts to become 'a powerful arbiter'. The result was stability. When internal mechanisms for resolution failed, repeatedly, conflict could be channelled into legal modes of resolution. Litigation replaced disintegration. And mandamus became the chief means by which a dispute between a member of an incorporated organization and the larger group could be resolved.[12]

All of the themes being explored here in the context of American civil society—a growing law-mindedness among American joiners and organizers, a wariness of associational threats to personal political autonomy, and the importance of legal forms and institutions in determining the internal workings of post-Revolutionary private associations—culminated in the showdown between John Binns and William Duane, two Irish newspaper editors in early-nineteenth-century Philadelphia. After being expelled from the St. Patrick Benevolent Society, Binns took his case to the court of public opinion, via repeated newspaper pieces denouncing the tyrannical habits of his former associates, and then to court. Binns' argument there began with the fact that the St. Patrick Benevolent Society was incorporated, and he petitioned for a writ of mandamus to compel the club to readmit him. When Chief Justice William Tilghman sided with Binns and ordered that his expulsion be declared null and void, he cited a 1768 opinion by Lord Mansfield in the English case of *Rex v. Richardson* (invoked

here, influentially, for the first time in an American courtroom) and held that all chartered corporations were subject to judicial superintendence, including those joined solely by people who wished to create a society of collegial and mutually supportive volunteers. Binns' 'right of membership' had been violated arbitrarily, and the court would not allow his expulsion to stand. 'I consider it as a point of very great importance, in which thousands of persons are, or very soon will be interested', wrote Tilghman, 'for the members of these corporations are increasing rapidly and daily'. And their 'right of membership' was 'valuable'—valuable to Binns and to countless others—and was 'not to be taken away without an authority fairly derived either from the charter, or the nature of corporate bodies'. The rights were valuable to individuals; the preservation of those rights by legal enforcement was invaluable to a thriving civil society. The Pennsylvania judiciary as well as jurists around the country seized on this principle. As Justice John Bannister Gibson would put it in 1822, the courts of the commonwealth would come to stand as a 'superintending power' over all the 'inferior associations' of American civic life.[13]

In the several years immediately following the Binns-Duane quarrel, Pennsylvania courts decided a series of cases arising out of membership disputes in associations formed exclusively for mutual financial aid. And these were developments that had important, even national, implications. When James Kent discussed 'the various causes that have been adjudged sufficient or insufficient for the removal or disfranchisement of a member of a corporation' in his *Commentaries on American Law,* for instance, he cited only Stewart Kyd's eighteenth-century English treatise on corporate law, *Commonwealth v. St. Patrick Benevolent Society,* and two other Pennsylvania cases that immediately followed. Disputes that might at first glance appear to have centred on narrow points of law prove to have been deeply grounded in post-Revolutionary ideas about majority rule, personal rights, and the perceived dangers of arbitrary authority. Those ideas shaped American civil society no less than they shaped the political structures and practices of the most vibrant democratic republic then in existence.[14]

The mutual benefit societies that found themselves defending their associational practices in American courts were, in fact, common in both the United States and Great Britain, formed as a way for individuals of no great means to deal with unforeseen hardships, to prepare for the costs associated with their own death and burial, and to provide for their families. It was clearly to the advantage of those who organized these

groups to choose their fellows carefully and to take those steps necessary to maintain a certain level of collegiality and financial stability. And thus, unlike other varieties of concerted action in the early American republic, the internal workings of mutual benefit societies did not become increasingly formalized and procedurally precise in the early nineteenth century, for both in Great Britain (where they were usually called 'friendly societies') and in North America these societies were already, by the mid-eighteenth century, astonishingly detailed and specific in their descriptions of the rights and duties of membership. As Conrad Wright has noted, the forms and practices did not represent much of a break with the past. In early-nineteenth-century Philadelphia, about 100 such groups existed, numbering usually from 60 to 100 members, with similar initiation fees and monthly dues of about 37 cents each month that entitled a member or his family to support in case of sickness or death.[15]

Nearly all of the city's mutual aid groups had been incorporated under Pennsylvania's 1791 general incorporation act. In the months and years immediately following the 1810 decision in *Commonwealth v. St. Patrick Benevolent Society,* the first cases involving members of such groups found their way into Pennsylvania courts. The first came when Joseph Vanderslice was expelled from the American Beneficial Society, and he sought a court-ordered readmission. Both sides argued the facts and the justice of his expulsion, with Vanderslice even submitting into evidence a copy of the constitution and rules of the society and swearing that he had 'not in any particular committed a breach thereof'. Though there is no recorded outcome in this case, it was clear that the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania was willing to hear and adjudicate the dispute. In the next few years, more cases of precisely this sort would find their way into Pennsylvania courtrooms. In one such case, Charles Hepburn sought mandamus not because his expulsion was unjust, exactly, but simply because he had never been given notice and a chance to defend himself. He believed that his not having been told that his expulsion was to be voted on was, in itself, enough to make his removal void and illegal. It was not the last time that broader, extra-associational standards of fairness—and not simply fine-pointed details of procedure derived from charters or bylaws—were invoked to resolve internal disputes within the 'self-created' associations of the early national United States. In 1810s Pennsylvania, the act of seeking redress in court for questions regarding membership in private societies became increasingly common and, judging from the phrasings found in petition after petition, even routine.[16]

Something else would become almost routine: the complaining member won. Time after time, courts would order a compulsory readmission. William M. Stewart was one exception that, in the eyes of a Pennsylvania chief justice writing some 40 years after Stewart's case, proved the rule. He falsified a bill, turning four dollars into 40, and sought compensation. He was found out and expelled. And then he called for a writ of mandamus to compel the society to restore him to 'the standing and rights of a member of the Philanthropic Society'. Stewart's argument failed. 'If this was not forgery, it was very like it', wrote Tilghman. The case, though, left its mark on the emerging common law of membership. The court did not equivocate on its power and its willingness to look into the case. It even took into evidence a copy of the minutes of the Philanthropic Society from all of the meetings in which Stewart's case was discussed. And two of the most influential treatises of the nineteenth century, James Kent's *Commentaries* and Joseph Angell and Samuel Ames' *Treatise on the Law of Private Corporation*, would refer to it as important in helping to establish the legal requirements for a member's expulsion. What is most remarkable about the case is how anomalous the outcome, the court's ultimate approval of the expulsion of a member of a private society, actually was. Writing in 1864, another chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, George Washington Woodward, attempted to chronicle the long history of cases in English and American law regarding expulsions and the contested rights of membership. For him, Stewart's case provided something 'very rare in the authorities, an instance of expulsion that was sustained'. In reported appellate cases, courts rarely hesitated to compel the readmission of a member they believed had been wronged.[17]

In one notable case in the decade following *Commonwealth v. St. Patrick Benevolent Society,* a mandamus hearing about an expulsion from the Pennsylvania Beneficial Institution, the highest court in Pennsylvania would determine that John Hansell had a right to expect ample notice and a fair hearing when his membership status was under review. As Chief Justice Tilghman would say directly, 'no man should be expelled in his absence without notice'. Lacking such notice and a fair process of expulsion, Hansell must be readmitted. The English common law governing municipal corporations helped to lay the foundation for Tilghman's opinion, but here he was deliberately extending that principle to protect the rights of individual members of the vastly growing assortment of voluntary societies of the commonwealth.[18]

These developments would have national reach. In a case involving a profit-seeking business corporation in North Carolina a few years later, that state's Supreme Court held that there were certain rights of which no person should be deprived, important among them the principle that 'no man shall be condemned or prejudiced in his rights, without an opportunity of being heard'. The member of the canal company was compulsorily readmitted by mandamus. The young nation's private societies, when deciding a case involving one of their own members, were and ought to be treated as courts of justice. And they should be held to exacting standards not unlike those that governed the conduct of any judicial tribunal. One of those—the right to be heard in one's own defence—was fundamental, and no member was to be deprived of it under any circumstances.[19]

The idea that membership was and ought to be a relationship defined by law—and, when push came to shove, secured by courts of law—developed into a robust and full legal reality over the course of second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Writers and compilers of American legal digests and treatises in the 1820s (such as James Kent) and the 1830s and 1840s (such as Angell and Ames, David Hoffman, and others) would cite and describe *Commonwealth v. St. Patrick Benevolent Society*, usually alongside the Pennsylvania mutual benefit society cases that followed, as establishing the idea that expulsion from incorporated voluntary associations was something that could be legitimately challenged in court. Participants in these associations were not there at the pleasure of their fellow members. These were law-minded and law-bound relationships, not affectionate and emotional ones. The rights of membership, which included such things as the right to notice and to fair hearings regardless of whether such principles were spelled out in the articles of agreement, were guaranteed by law.[20]

In short, by the 1830s American associational life had become less a multitude of jurisdictions and more a wide array of opportunities for individual voluntarism that all fell within a larger body of law. The jurisprudential efforts to define and delimit the power of voluntary associations over their members helped to place the voluntary association of the early American republic on an unquestionably liberal foundation, as courts proved willing to bring the associational activities of Americans within the embrace of a larger regime of civil rights. And, in states north and south, a surprisingly consistent and culturally resonant system of law governing voluntary membership came into being in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Early American civil society rested on a post-Revolutionary commitment to the principle that civil rights and fair procedure should be brought to bear in increasingly diverse areas of social activity.[21]

And it is here that the law and the everyday practices of civic association came together to produce something fruitful for the future of American democracy. Perhaps, we have been wrong to emphasize the themes that Tocqueville first noted in his 1831 travels through the United States, that private, voluntary associations served as the training ground for democracy, both a space and a process by which people learned to honour one another's voices and perspectives. The legal history of these societies suggests that an even greater significance lies in the ways that these associations ultimately became the training ground for something no less valuable to the success of the American democratic experiment: increasingly formal, law-minded, and procedurally consistent relations among people.[22]

There has been a tendency to describe a move over the course of the nineteenth century from more democratic and popular modes of assembly and collective action towards more bureaucratized, procedurally oriented, and centrally coordinated forms of organization, particularly in the case of political associations, but the American experience might suggest that this dichotomy can be overstated. The post-Revolutionary American experience puts on display some ways in which civic associations were marked by procedural regularity and law-minded ways of collaborating from quite early in their history, and, more important still, that development occurred for reasons arising out of a shared legal and political culture that saw the protection of personal rights as a fundamental purpose of government and law, something that the first generations of American citizens saw as absolutely essential to the health and vitality of their republic.

It was owing to those law-bound and law-minded ideas about voluntary association of the post-Revolutionary era that such groups, in time, came to be seen as a means to strengthen, not weaken, a democratic republic. And the hand of the state, as expressed in courts of law, played an important role. Individuals aware of the importance of their own rights and confident that they could find protection in court found themselves helping to develop a jurisprudence that reflected the priorities and practices of a post-Revolutionary world of voluntarism and collective action. In time, the association came to be seen as a means to empower, not threaten, the individual. Our understandings of the essential elements that allow a civil society to develop in the first place—across time and space, in the histories of nineteenth-century Europe and the United States as well as in emerging democracies around the world today—must include a closer attention to the history of what Americans came to call 'the right of membership'.

Notes

1. *Fawcett v. Charles,* 13 Wend. 473 (1835). See also *Ex parte Paine,* 1 Hill 665 (1841); Lawrence Lewis, Jr., 'Disfranchisement from Private Corporations', *American Law Register,* new series, 21 (1882): 694, 701–02.
2. On the concept of 'law-mindedness', see John Phillip Reid, *Law for the Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1980); Kevin Butterfield, *The Making of Tocqueville's America: Law and Association in the Early United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), chaps. 1, 4.
3. *Fawcett v. Charles,* 13 Wend. 473, 477 (1835).
4. Christopher L. Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Ideology in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21; Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Albrecht Koschnik, *'Let a Common Interest Bind Us Together': Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775–1840* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Maartje Janse, 'A Dangerous Type of Politics? Politics and Religion in Early Mass Organizations: The Anglo-American World, c. 1830', in Joost Augusteijn, Patrick Dassen, and Maartje Janse (eds), *Political Religion beyond Totalitarianism: The Sacralization of Politics in the Age of Democracy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 55–76; Jessica Choppin Roney, *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition: The Origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).
5. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 513; Arthur

M. Schlesinger, 'Biography of a Nation of Joiners', *American Historical Review* 50 (1944): 1–25.

6. Pauline Maier, 'The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation', *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., 50 (1993): 51–84; Oscar Handlin and Mary Flug Handlin, *Commonwealth: A Study of the Role of Government in the American Economy: Massachusetts, 1774–1861,* rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969); Neem, *Creating a Nation of* Joiners.
7. Kathleen D. McCarthy, 'Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere', in McCarthy, (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy, and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1990), 1–31; Scott Gregory Lien, 'The Centripetal Force of Benevolence: Social Unity and Voluntary Associations in the Early Republic', unpublished paper presented at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Fourteenth Annual Conference, June 2008, pp. 7–8; *Genius of Universal Emancipation,* 12 May 1827; Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 15–23; A Citizen of the State of New York [William Jay], *A Memoir on the Subject of a General Bible Society for the United States of America* (New-Jersey: n.p., 1816), 15; *Constitution of the American Bible Society: Formed by a Convention of Delegates, Held in the City of New York, May 1816* (New York: G. F. Hopkins, 1816).
8. Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 125.
9. Branch Bible Society of Lebanon, Record Book, 1829–1856, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.; *Constitution and By-Laws of the New Haven Mutual Aid Association: Adopted April, 1833; Revised December, 1833* (New Haven, Conn.: Jas. F. Babcock, 1834).
10. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners,* chap. 4; Jason Mazzone, 'Organizing the Republic: Civic Associations and American Constitutionalism, 1780–1830' (J.D. diss., Yale Law School, 2004), chaps. 2–3; Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman:

University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Butterfield, *Making of Tocqueville's America,* chap. 4.

11. Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, 'Origins of the American Business Corporation', *Journal of Economic History,* 5 (1945): 1–23; Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: History of the Early American Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 460–61; Pauline Maier, 'The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation', *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., 50 (1993): 51–84; [Anonymous], 'Corporations', *American Jurist and Law Magazine* (October 1830): 300; William J. Novak, 'The American Law of Association: The Legal-Political Construction of Civil Society', *Studies in American Political Development* 15 (2001): 163–88; Kevin Butterfield, 'A Common Law of Membership: Expulsion, Regulation, and Civil Society in the Early Republic', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 133 (2009): 255–75.
12. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1771–1772), 3:109–11; Edith G. Henderson, *Foundations of English Administrative Law: Certiorari and Mandamus in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 61–65, 72; Joseph K. Angell and Samuel Ames, *A Treatise on the Law of Private Corporations, Aggregate* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1832), 238n.3; Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 67–73, 131–43, quotations on 72–73; A. J. Harding, *Public Duties and Private Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 82–133; Kevin Butterfield, 'The Right to Be a Freemason: Secret Societies and the Power of the Law in the Early Republic', *Common-Place: The Interactive Journal of Early American Life* 12 (2011).
13. *Commonwealth v. St. Patrick Benevolent Society,* 2 Binn. (Penn.) 441, 445–47 (1810); *Case of the Corporation of St. Mary's Church,* 7 Serg. and Rawle (Pa.) 517, 544 (1822).
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CHAPTER 6

Organizing in a Moment of Madness: Political Meetings and Clubs in 1848

Geerten Waling

Introduction

1848 was a political laboratory. Within a few months, dozens of revolutions and revolts broke out on the European continent. 1848 was a 'moment of madness': one of the rare occasions in history in which there was widespread sentiment that 'all was possible'.[1] Contemporaries labelled 1848 as the 'springtime of the peoples'. As the revolutions created the freedom of the press, assembly and association, politics immediately dominated the public sphere and entered the everyday life of millions of citizens. Besides the explosion of political expression in its printed forms (such as newspapers, pamphlets and posters), physical participation in politics became both accessible and fashionable. Suddenly, massive audiences gathered around open-air stages in parks and squares to listen to political speeches and to discuss the course of the revolution and the political future of their countries. For similar reasons, thousands of euphoric and ambitious citizens started to establish and visit revolutionary clubs in overcrowded cafés, theatres and public buildings.[2] The political meetings and clubs of 1848 were rather new and undefined experiments in the

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realm of political organization. These experiments could come about only in a revolutionary moment, and yet they would reshape Europe's political culture.[3]

Scholars who study nineteenth-century popular politics mostly focus on a single form of political participation. Either they look at the political meeting to explain the expanding and changing political culture in the nineteenth century[4] or they study associations as institutionalized political organizations to grasp the influence of the emerging civil society and the development of party politics.[5] When we look at the revolutions of 1848, this division becomes problematic because it obscures how interwoven the two forms could be, especially in a revolutionary 'moment of madness'. Not only did meetings and clubs occur simultaneously and in the same cities but they were also organized and visited by more or less the same people. Many clubs even emerged from ad hoc meetings and, in turn, some of the mass meetings were initiated by clubs. The two forms should therefore be studied integrally. A revolutionary meeting should also be considered as a form of organization, and, the other way around, a revolutionary club should be seen as another way of 'organizing democracy'. Thus, meetings and clubs were two sides of the same coin, and as such they represent the expanding political participation of ordinary citizens in the early days of modern democracy.

The two case studies in this chapter substantiate and illustrate these claims: the February Revolution in Paris and the March Revolution in Berlin.[6] Paris was the central locus of the 1848 revolutions, and the nascent Second Republic hosted the most extensive public debate of Europe. Its sizeable club movement, with hundreds of clubs and associations being founded in a period of only three months, shows how actively and how physically the common Parisians participated in that debate.[7] What happened in Paris was an immediate source of inspiration for cities and towns all over the continent, including for Berlin. After the subsequent March Revolution, the Prussian king managed to bend without breaking, by diverting the popular anger towards the army and promising democratic reforms. Nevertheless, Berlin experienced a vibrant 'moment of madness' in which political meetings and clubs were organized with an enthusiasm comparable to that of Paris.[8] Examining the two cases gives us a broader understanding of the importance and peculiarities of political organization in 1848 on a European scale.

Meetings on the Brink of Revolution

In the years before 1848, when economic, political and social crises raged across the continent, oppositional forces obtained little if any parliamentarian power. Nonetheless, reformers gathered in unauthorized political meetings, where demands for democratic reform were formulated on behalf of 'the people'.[9] In Paris, the revolution was preceded by a series of reform banquets: political dinners that grew particularly influential from mid-1847 onwards. The political banquet was a form of organization in between conversations around the dinner table and plain political rallies. Vincent Robert, in his elaborate study on the French 'era of banquets' (1818–1848), designates the banquet as a form of 'quasi-association' or 'association in dotted lines'.[10] Banquets circumvented the strict *Code pénal*, the Napoleonic law that prohibited every unauthorized association formed to discuss religious, literary, political or any other sort of affairs on a regular basis.[11] A banquet offered the possibility of openly assembling a large number of guests in public or semi-public places, in a non-hierarchical mixture of ranks, classes and professions. Despite the lack of an official political agenda, the dinners had the unmistakable purpose of facilitating political debates. The authorities kept a close eye, but tolerated the festivities.

The banquets expressed the desire of French republicans to build an opposition outside parliament, in a civil society that was not allowed to play a political role according to the Jacobin model that had dominated in France since the French Revolution. That model rejected intermediary bodies between individual citizens and the state because they were seen as a threat to the single, unified society. However, Pierre Rosanvallon states that the focus on the Jacobin model conceals the 'other history of France': a multitude of efforts to organize and associate despite all bans. The banquets, although not mentioned by Rosanvallon, could be seen as an example of these efforts.[12]

Another example would be the underground associations in which Parisians, mostly sub-bourgeois radicals and early socialists, started to organize themselves in the 1830s and 1840s. These 'secret societies' had a revolutionary, often conspiratorial character.[13] One of the most influential societies, the Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, protected itself from persecution by adopting a fragmented, cell-shaped structure and a semi-military hierarchy. The worlds of the banquets and the secret societies were not completely separated. The reformist ideas in the banquet

movement could count on support from the ranks of the secret societies and the workers' organizations, such as the newspaper *L'Atelier*.[14] Both worlds struggled with the repression of political meetings, and some banquet organizers had been active in secret societies before.[15] But unlike the underground organizers, most banquet initiators rejected secrecy and conspiracy and respected the public order. Nevertheless, both visiting a banquet and joining a secret society meant participating physically in political affairs, discussing them, setting goals and formulating demands. As such, these occasions would prove effective breeding grounds for future republican politicians.[16] Ironically, it was the banquet movement, which was by no means advocating revolts and revolutions, that brought about the February Revolution. A long-planned banquet of a Parisian section of the National Guard on 22 February 1848 was prohibited by the government. Subsequently, the agitation among both the National Guard and the people of Paris resulted in the riots and barricades that would chase King Louis Philippe out of the Tuileries two days later.[17]

In Berlin, the outbreak of the March Revolution was similarly the effect of political meetings (among other factors). A range of mass meetings in the weeks before had challenged the government's legitimacy. Prussia was the most authoritarian and the most restrictive of all German states in the repression of the freedom of print, assembly and association.[18] In the years before 1848, some local workers' associations had begun to organize networks, but any meetings of a political nature were out of the question.[19] Underground networks were not as developed as in Paris and were mostly initiated from the outside, such as the local branch of the international Communist League. For the people of Berlin, things changed on 29 February 1848, when news arrived from Paris. As trains brought in confusing messages about the February Revolution, Berliners filled the cafés and bakeries to read the newspapers or, for the illiterate, to listen to them as they were read out loud from stages.[20] An important news hub was the Berliner Zeitungshalle, a literary society established in 1846 that by 1848 had become the hangout 'of all politically thinking men'. The news from Paris caused its clientele to 'politicize with a freedom that until then had been unheard of in Berlin'.[21]

The early spring drew crowds from the city out into the public park of the Tiergarten. There, at a recreational hotspot called the *Zelten*, Berliners celebrated the end of winter with beer and cigars, while discussing the news from Paris and the chances for reform in Prussia.[22] At first, dozens of people joined the spontaneous gatherings, but in a matter of days,

the Tiergarten music stage had been turned into a rostrum, from which speakers addressed an audience that soon expanded to several hundreds. On 6 March, a group of students gathered in a chaotic meeting in one of the Zelten cafés, where they decided to send a request to the Prussian king.[23] As the discussion was resumed the next day, 600 people appeared. The meeting lasted for four hours and ended with the decision to ask the king for equal political rights and free elections, as well as for the freedom of expression, press, assembly and association. These would appear to be common demands in the 1848 revolutions. A deputation of ten was commissioned to elaborate a draft request and to present it at the next Zelten meeting.[24]

As the deputation of ten met the next day in the Zeitungshalle, an unexpected visitor showed up: the chief of the Berlin police force, Von Minutoli. In the secret conversation that followed, the Prussian aristocrat Von Minutoli supposedly stated that he had nothing against the publication of the request, nor against 'a[nother] popular meeting', but that he wanted to discourage the organizers from actually marching to the king and handing him the request (let alone doing that while being escorted by a crowd of angry citizens). If such a thing were to happen, the police and army would intervene with all necessary means to break up the procession. Earlier that day, Minutoli had agreed upon this approach with the king in person. The conversation in the Zeitungshalle was game-changing because it implied that, according to the recollections of the Prussian general Karl Ludwig von Prittwitz (1790–1871), the Berlin police force at that moment had submitted itself to negotiations 'with the embryo of the revolution'.[25]

Instead of a discouragement, Von Minutoli's warning to the Zelten reformers was in fact an inadvertent encouragement. The authorities recognized the existence of the opposition articulated in the Zelten meetings, outside the realm of state politics. The organizers, middle-class intellectuals with radical democratic ideas, succeeded in reaching out to a large audience. As the political awareness of the Berliners increased, the meetings grew bigger and the orators soon acquired heroic reputations.[26]

Two weeks after the first Zelten meeting, the force of public opinion suddenly seemed insuppressible and asserted concrete political influence. The Zelten request to the king was transformed into a petition, with 6000 signatures by 10 March.[27] On 13 March, the first warm day of the year, more people than ever joined the Zelten meetings. A spontaneous protest march towards the city palace led the Prussian army to disperse the crowd

as it entered the Brandenburg Gate. Berlin was now close to an insurrection, with the Zelten as the main fire source.[28] News from the revolution in Vienna (13 March) seeped through and stirred the sentiments even more. On 18 March, the Prussian king finally broke his silence and publicly conceded to the reformers' wishes before a worried crowd on the palace square. But this concession appeared to be too late: the situation escalated and barricades were built all over the city. After one violent night, the king withdrew his troops from the city, appointed new ministers and sought peace with his 'dear Berliners'.[29]

We have seen how large-scale public meetings stood at the basis of the 1848 revolutions in Paris and Berlin—as was the case in so many European towns and cities.[30] On the brink of revolution, lacking a civil society infrastructure for political discussions, politically inexperienced people still gathered to discuss politics and formulate demands, rather than resorting to violence. However, the ad hoc character of the meetings should not suggest that they were unorganized. Reformist movements initiated and planned the meetings or turned spontaneous gatherings into structured assemblies by appointing leaders and speakers, setting agendas and inventing procedures for speeches, discussions and votes.[31] The agitation of the mass meetings culminated in the 1848 revolutions, but their history did not end there. The meetings laid the groundwork for the revolutionary aftermath, by reinforcing the demand for freedom of the press, assembly and association. The heydays of popular politics had only just begun; the promises of the revolution now demanded effective participation of the people in institutionalized meetings.[32]

Club Fever in Paris

After their respective February and March Revolutions, political meetings and associations were tolerated and soon legalized in both Paris and Berlin.[33] Within days, revolutionaries established hundreds of political clubs with varying shapes and missions. Paris was the first city where such a club movement emerged, starting on 24 February, the day of the regime change. The reflex of founding clubs reflects earlier organizational experiences in moments of revolution. The most notorious examples were the radical Jacobin clubs from the French Revolution (1789–1795), but they were remembered as violent and all too powerful.[34] During the Restoration decades, new ideas were formed about a less threatening model of political organization. In his now-forgotten essay *On the necessity to form clubs*

(1830), the French republican writer Théophile Dinocourt (1791–1862) proposed to reinvent clubs as a means for fundamental democratic reform. For him, clubs were political associations that could help build and protect a republican system all over the country: 'France is one immense jury, assembled by its right to judge the acts of government'.[35] Dinocourt refuted the anti-associational Jacobin model and instead praised public, political meetings where the acts of government could be checked and judged by committed citizens. Clubs were desirable and necessary institutions to enable free and fair elections and a free press, and to stop and prevent the abuse of power by any government. Also, Dinocourt wanted the clubs to function as 'schools', where citizens could learn about politics, about their rights and duties and about a 'public morale' that France had always lacked. The clubs had to become the expression of the 'immoveable will' of the people as a counterbalance to the ever changing and deceiving realm of state politics.[36]

Eighteen years later, Dinocourt's vision of clubs as essential institutions in a democratic republic would resonate in the 1848 clubs.[37] As in his blueprint, the clubs appointed boards, drew up club constitutions and statutes, scheduled sessions on fixed weekdays (some clubs met on a daily basis), agreed on a membership administration, sought contact with other clubs and with newspapers and the Provisional Government. In the first weeks after the February Revolution, 'club fever'[38] struck Paris, as 50,000–70,000 inhabitants, about 20 per cent of the adult male population, started to frequent club meetings. Of the about 300 hundred clubs in 1848, some 60 per cent had been founded in the very first month.[39]

Night after night the clubs gathered in ballrooms, theatres, cafés, schools, barracks, hospitals and churches, which they rented, appropriated or obtained with help from the government.[40] 'A great number of clubs has been formed in the capital: the political life now lies there entirely; a persistent movement reigns there. A flaming patriotism inspires all of their members. […] What a magnificent show!'[41] The first edition of club daily *La Voix des Clubs* opened in overt euphoria. 'The clubs', the editors stated, 'are the demonstration of reason; they are the elaboration of popular judgment; they are the tongue of the masses; they are the Republic, which makes itself heard by thousands of voices combined'.[42] In this view, the Parisian clubs were not only a representation or reflection of the French population but even a direct echo of the 'voice of the people'. The clubs announced a new form of citizenship, which promised the political participation of all adult, male citizens.[43]

In the experimental phase between February and April 1848, it was self-evident that all clubs would be accessible for every citizen, provided that he was trustworthy and loyal to the new republic.[44] For a proper, democratic citizen, visiting a club was even a *duty*, as the founders of the moderate republican Club des Hommes Libres stated in their founding manifesto: 'be it to mutually enlighten oneself about the scope of one's rights and one's duties, and about which choice to make in the next elections, be it to draw the attention of national assemblies to the great social issues that are currently at stake, be it finally (and that is the most essential point) to establish a *popular forum* where the reforms of political institutions, which have diverted from their true destination, will be discussed'.[45] Political participation on a large scale was needed to shape the new era that dawned. The clubs can be seen as an institutionalization of the rostrum, and as a 'popular forum', catering to the need to discuss politics.

The accessible and broad nature of this forum should lead us to think of the clubs as 'institutionalized popular assemblies', rather than associations in the sense of the limited and more defined voluntary associations that had emerged in Europe in the previous decades. These (mostly middle-class) associations had explicitly excluded specific groups or individuals through their rules or their high membership fees. In 1848, following practices in the United Kingdom, the concept of 'association' on the continent acquired the character of a political, broadly accessible form of organization.[46] However, the term 'association' in 1848 is used almost exclusively for labour associations, established to pursue the socialist ideal of the 'organization of labour'. In eighteenth-century England, 'club' already referred to 'informal organizations', in contrast to 'union' or 'association', which were organizations that represented a specific group and fulfilled an advisory task. The clubs may have been associations in the institutional sense—featuring a board, committees, membership and so forth—but their meetings and their role were more similar to those of popular assemblies, constituting the 'organization of politics', and in that sense, of organizing democracy. The terms 'club', 'popular assembly' (*assemblée populaire*) and 'popular society' (*société populaire*) were used interchangeably for one and the same phenomenon. For example, the newspaper *La Voix des Clubs* bore the subtitle *Journal quotidien des assemblées populaires*.[47]

Not only were the clubs of 1848 more accessible than associations, they lacked a closely defined rank and file and did not aim to represent the interests of a single group but also claimed to be the voice of the entire

people. In most cases, the clubs were founded in the climax of the February Revolution—and their faith was attached to the faith of that revolution. Hence, building a sustainable institution for the long term is rarely mentioned as a priority in reports and publications of the clubs. The clubs were rooted in the revolutionary moment of 1848, which had brought about an urgent desire for political participation in popular assemblies. Meeting was the concrete goal, but it also became, by way of the clubs as institutes, a symbol and a power in itself: 'The voice of the people is the voice of God. […] Brothers! On to the clubs; clubs everywhere, may the clubs enlighten France. Everything for the People and by the People'.[48]

The largest and most visible clubs were the ones led by experienced revolutionaries like Blanqui, Barbès, Cabet and Raspail, who had been activists in the secret societies of the 1830s and 1840s. They adhered to some form of refurbished Jacobin radicalism, early socialism or early communism. Their meetings were attended by thousands of visitors every night, a fan base that stemmed from the pre-1848 underground networks. These 'name clubs' had an authoritarian organizational structure, in which the charismatic personality of the leader both attracted visitors by the thousands and secured some form of order in the crowded and chaotic meetings.[49] Besides ardent speeches by the leader or by talented guest speakers, no other form of discussion was possible in the massive crowd. Acclamation represented the only way audience members could make their views known at these events. With regard to the club of Cabet, for example, which received about 5000 visitors on its opening night in the week after the February Revolution[50], *La Voix des Clubs* reports complaints about the lack of proper procedures and the endangered value of the club meetings,[51] but also admiration for the strict organization and 'moral guidance' of Cabet.[52]

While the 'name clubs' structured their organization in this authoritarian fashion, smaller clubs structured their meetings according to a more egalitarian model. In the Club des Hommes Libres, for example, a small club of rather unknown initiators that was founded in March in a ballroom close to the Louvre, the procedure and content of every club meeting was subjected to extensive discussions and multiple voting rounds. At one of its first meetings, a manifesto stating the principles of the club was read out loud several times and the assembly approved every single paragraph by another vote, after which the members one by one endorsed the document with their signatures. A similar procedure was followed to adopt the rules and regulations for the meetings of these Free Men. The next

meeting, after thorough consideration, they elected a club president—albeit for the term of only two weeks.[53] As a consequence of the focus on equality and democracy, the level of active participation for average club members was much higher in the Club of Free Men than in authoritarian clubs, but the leverage of such a small and unwieldy organization must have been disappointing.[54]

When examining the 1848 club fever, we should take into account the specific revolutionary situation of 1848 as a 'moment of madness'.[55] The revolution had not only facilitated the apparition of clubs as political institutions (by means of the freedom of assembly and association) but had also necessitated them.[56] Insecurity about the course of the revolution and about the viability of the Second Republic led to a demand for semi-institutionalized popular platforms to debate reform, to check the policy of the Provisional Government and to prepare the April elections. In these matters, the clubs had two unique features to offer. First, clubs offered all citizens a chance to participate in an immediate way in politics: to discuss urgent matters, to vote for resolutions, to organize petitions and to address the government. Second, the club movement as a whole claimed to be a more genuine and legitimate representation of the people, in the absence of a legitimate parliament, an elected government or other democratic institutions between the February Revolution and the end of April.[57]

Voicing the demands of the people was the chief mission of the clubs. As an oppositional force, they formed a counterbalance to the Provisional Government in the first months after the revolution—just as Dinocourt had desired in 1830. Clubs did so by sending petitions, addresses and delegations to the Provisional Government, but also by organizing (and participating in) mass demonstrations on 17 March, 16 April and, eventually, a failed attempted *coup d'état* on 15 May.[58] The claim of representation was particularly visible in the run-up to the April elections, when the clubs played an active role as electoral committees by inviting candidates, discussing the candidacies, drawing up lists of candidates and checking on the credibility of the candidates and the fairness of the procedure.[59]

Clubs in Revolutionary Berlin

In Berlin, political clubs evolved from the popular assemblies (*Volksversammlungen*) that also continued to take place after the March Revolution. The meetings that had demanded reform now faced a moment of revolution, including the euphoria and insecurity that were connected

to it. On 23 and 25 March, two turbulent mass meetings took place in the concert hall of the Hotel de Russie on Unter den Linden. On the agenda was, in addition to the demands for political and social reform, the future of the reformist (and meanwhile: revolutionary) movement itself. A group of radicals, *democrats*, agreed to found a Politische Club (from May onwards: Demokratische Club) and the moderates, *constutionalists*, followed later that week with their own platform: the Constitutionelle Club.[60] In the separate club meetings that followed, provisional boards were formed, an administration was set up and public venues were designated as locations for the frequent club meetings.

The resemblance with Paris suggests that the idea of establishing clubs must have been influenced by what was known of the club fever that was raging in Paris, but direct references to the transfer of this organizational repertoire are hard to find.[61] Club founders, rather than risking negative associations with French revolutionaries, legitimized themselves by referring to what was actually needed in the situation in Berlin. A proposal for what was to become the Politische Club—a blueprint that resembled Dinocourt's plea for clubs—was prepared between the two meetings by the democrat Julius Hoppe:

> To secure the fruits of the Revolution, for their perfect execution the establishment of a political club is imperative, so the fighters for freedom will not waste or lose their strength individually as happened before, but get to know one another and will strive ever more unanimously and powerfully for that goal, which will appear to be the common goal after the first [club] meeting.[62]

In Hoppe's plan, the club would make the 'political voice' of the Berliners heard as a counterweight against the rule of 'bureaucracy, militarist aristocracy and bourgeoisie'.[63]

Over the course of 1848, the Berlin clubs underwent a process of institutionalization and professionalization. The Politische Club adopted an official club constitution on the occasion of its transition into the Demokratische Club in May, stating the main goals and procedures of the club in nine articles. A second, much more elaborate constitution of 32 articles was adopted in September.[64] The Constitutionelle Club had apparently started with only a three-article constitution on 31 March, but became increasingly fanatic in the appointment of committees, the regulation of debates up to the tiniest detail and the overall deployment

of 'parliamentarian' habits.[65] The club was openly criticized for that 'lethargy' by outsiders and insiders alike.[66] Both clubs adopted significantly 'egalitarian' procedures, based on joint decision-making and a modest leadership.

In the Berlin club movement, the authoritarian club model was more rare than in Paris, but Berlin already had an earlier form of authoritarian mass meeting, namely the ongoing outdoor popular assemblies. While more and more clubs were being founded, the *Volksversammlungen* continued to take place in the Zelten and now also in other public areas. The Zelten organizers deemed it necessary to institutionalize their meetings in a club: the Volksverein unter den Zelten. That club adopted as its goals the armament of the people, representation of the people and education of the people.[67] The decision to start their own club suggests that for popular meetings, the clubs were a desirable innovation in the practice of political meeting. However, Berlin remained a stage for popular political meetings as well over the course of 1848. Dozens of clubs, varying in shape, scale and ideology, appeared all over Berlin. These popular assemblies were often initiated by a club, or by a collective of clubs. The themes on the agenda concerned mostly public safety in Berlin then under threat by revolutionary violence, on one hand, and by a counterrevolution by the Prussian army, on the other.[68]

Although the *Volksversammlungen* were no longer the main stage of political participation between April and November 1848, they certainly served as an addition to the clubs. More than offering a stage for political discussion, as was their role in the early March days, the open-air stages for bigger audiences became a source of legitimacy for a political struggle that had its centre of gravity elsewhere: in the clubs and in printed pamphlets and newspapers. The availability of organized club meetings—gathering on fixed weekdays, at fixed locations, backed-up by a central administration of funds and membership—must have reduced the attractiveness of and need for holding stand-alone mass meetings. Instead, these meetings became vehicles for acquiring mass support for political standpoints that had already been formulated in clubs.

Conclusion

The explosive expansion of the public debate in 1848, both in scale and in political character, familiarized and engaged ordinary citizens with politics. The euphoria, uncertainty and anxiety that were typical for a moment

of revolution enabled experiments in political participation and organization, such as the meetings and clubs discussed in this chapter. Ad hoc mass meetings and political clubs are often seen as two different forms of political participation, but 1848 shows how the two can be present simultaneously and can share similar goals. The meetings and clubs of 1848 both aimed at democratic surveillance during the elections, formulating demands for political and social reform and seeing to a proper execution of these demands by the addressed authorities.

The fluid character of political participation in 1848 is underlined by this dual case study of Paris and Berlin, which showed that the revolutionary clubs in fact performed as 'institutionalized popular assemblies' all along. We have also seen that the meetings in Berlin were not as ad hoc as they seemed. Firstly, they were planned in advance by committees and authorized by the government. Secondly, they transformed into clubs: with the famous Hotel de Russie meeting as a cradle for at least three clubs, but also with the Volksverein as a more direct institutionalization of the Zelten meetings. Thirdly, mass meetings were soon initiated by the clubs, whenever they sought support from a larger crowd than their own rank and file. So if we try to look through the eyes of a Parisian or a Berliner living in 1848, we might not see much difference between meeting and association—but rather a range of ill-defined, but new and exciting experiments with bottom-up political participation.

Another difference apparent from the comparison is the level of radicalism of the club movements in both cities. In Berlin, where the old monarchy had remained largely intact, the clubs assumed the role of reformist societies, oppositional bodies demanding reform from the authorities. This continuity explains why some of the prerevolutionary meetings transformed into clubs in the week after the revolution. In Paris, the club movement was seen as a support mechanism for the revolution and for the Provisional Government of the new republic. The revolutionary euphoria called for immediate action by strong, experienced leaders. Those leaders were the ones who led the sizeable 'name clubs' in Paris with an authoritarian meeting procedure. The smaller clubs with the egalitarian model operated more in the background. In Berlin, the large crowds (of thousands) visited the mass meetings, whereas the clubs with a rank and file of merely hundreds adopted the egalitarian model.

In both cities, the call for representation was urgent in 1848, which explains why the clubs, by offering both participation and representation of 'the people', assumed an almost parliamentarian role. In Paris, the clubs

lost their *raison d'être*, influence and support after the parliamentary elections of April. A short radicalization in May and June did not prevent, but rather accelerated, their downfall and also the suppression by the authorities. The clubs in Berlin, as reformist and debating societies, had a longer lifespan—until the restoration of Prussian royal authority in November 1848. But already in the summer, even conservatives had started to implement political organization as a means to reclaim the power that they had lost in the revolution. They adapted to the new domain of political competition: the public debate.

The two forms of democratic participation discussed in this chapter cannot be fully understood when studied separately, as is often done in literature. The democratic experiments of 1848 are not easily separated in terms of ad hoc versus institutionalized, open versus closed or meeting versus association. Neither should we analyse them as stages in the development of organizing democracy, for the one form did not replace or succeed the other. When we consider them integrally, in their quality as democratic experiments in a very specific moment of revolutionary madness, they can shed light on the complex processes of the politicization of the people and the popularization of politics, which were so significant for nineteenth-century Europe.

Notes

1. Aristide R. Zolberg, 'Moments of madness', *Politics & Society* 2 (1972) 183–207.
2. Although European societies were eager to 'associate' in the nineteenth century, the states were hostile to this idea; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Die Politik der Geselligkeit. Freimaurerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft, 1840–1918* (Göttingen 2000) 13. Between 1789 and 1848, the freedom of assembly had remained strictly limited and often repressed, Paula Cossart, *Le meeting politique. De la délibération à la manifestation (1868–1939)* (Rennes 2010) 29–38.
3. In doing so, this article discards the traditional notion of 1848 as a 'failed revolution'—an approach that is much inspired by Jonathan Sperber, *The European revolutions, 1848–1851* (Cambridge 2007) 277, passim.
4. James Vernon, *Politics and the people. A study in English political culture, 1815–1867* (Cambridge 1993) o.a. 117–31, 160, 183–206.

Also most of Charles Tilly's work on social movements can be interpreted as accounts of the ad hoc (rather than the institutionalized) forms of participation: for example, Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social movements, 1768–2008* (Boulder, CO and London 2009).

5. Peter Clark, *British clubs and societies 1580–1800. The origins of an associational world* (Oxford 2000); R. J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', in: F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950* (Cambridge 1990) 395–444; Graeme Morton, R. J. Morris and B. M. A. de Vries (eds), *Civil society, associations, and urban places. Class, nation, and culture in nineteenth-century Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington (VT) 2006) especially 139–57; Werner Boldt, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Parteiwesens. Fraktionen, politische Vereine und Parteien in der Revolution 1848. Darstellung und Dokumentation* (Paderborn 1971); Pierre Rosanvallon, *The demands of liberty. Civil society in France since the Revolution* (Cambridge (MA) 2007); Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of liberty. Civil society and its rivals* (London 1994).
6. I have elaborated these case studies in my PhD thesis for the NWO-research project 'The Promise of Organization' at Leiden University, the Netherlands. This thesis is published (in Dutch) as Geerten Waling, *1848—Clubkoorts en revolutie. Democratische experimenten in Parijs en Berlijn* (Nijmegen 2016).
7. The only monograph on this topic is Peter H. Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy. The Paris club movement in 1848* (Princeton (NJ) 1975).
8. Much attention is given to popular politics by Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848: eine Politik- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Revolution* (Bonn 1997).
9. Be it the population as a whole, or the 'common people' in particular. In that sense, they were typical 'democratic meetings'; John R. Parkinson, *Democracy & public space. The physical sites of democratic performance* (Oxford and New York 2012) 36. About these meetings as part of a broader pattern on the verge of 1848, see Sperber, *The European revolutions*, 109–56, esp. 112–16.
10. Vincent Robert, *Le temps des banquets. Politique et symbolique d'une génération (1818–1848)* (Paris 2010) 100, see also 100–08.
11. Dominique Reynié, *Le triomphe de l'opinion publique. L'espace public français du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris 1998) 111.
12. Rosanvallon, *The demands of liberty*, 2–6.

13. See Jean-Noël Tardy, *L'Âge des ombres. Complots, conspirations et sociétés secrètes au XIXe siècle* (Paris 2015).
14. Armand Cuvillier, *Un journal d'ouvriers.* L'Atelier*, 1840–1850* (Paris 1914) Chapter 2.
15. Robert, *Le temps des banquets*, 330. Radicals and moderate republicans were considered as the same political current, the 'republican party': J. Tchernoff, *Le parti républicain sous la monarchie de Juillet* (Paris 1901) 342–404.
16. Many of the leading speakers and organizers of the banquets would step up in 1848 as ministers or other high officials of the provisional government (February-May 1848); Robert, *Le temps des banquets*, 327–30. Printed reports of reformist banquets, such as *Banquet de la Réforme électorale et parlementaire* (Meaux [26 September] 1847) and *Banquets démocratiques : Lille, Dijon, Chalon* (Paris 1848) mention speakers such as Odillon Barrot, Louis Blanc, Garnier-Pagès, Ledru-Rollin, Flocon and Lafayette.
17. Sperber, *The European revolutions*, 116; Robert, *Le temps des banquets*, 125–47, 367–90.
18. As can be seen from an in-depth study on democrats in the western parts of Germany: Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland radicals. The democratic movement and the revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton (NJ) 1991) 92–136.
19. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie. Vereine und zivile Gesellschaft im transnationalen Vergleich 1750–1914* (Göttingen 2003) 35–55; Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn 2000) 29–35.
20. *1848. Volksversammlungen in den Zelten. Kinderstube der Demokratie* (Berlin 1998) 102.
21. The 'besuchteste Lokal aller politisch denkenden Männer' and: "'mit einer Freiheit politisiert, wie sie bis dahin in Berlin ungehört gewesen'", wrote Kochhann, a liberal member of the city council, quoted by Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, 120–21. *1848. Volksversammlungen in den Zelten*, 100–02; Heinz Warnecke, 'Gustav Julius (1810–1851). Streiter für eine "Freie Presse"', in: Helmut Bleiber, Walter Schmidt and Susanne Schötz (eds), *Akteure eines Umbruchs: Männer und Frauen der Revolution von 1848/49* I (Berlin 2003) 295–360.

22. Smoking was a particular sign of both conviviality and rebellion since smoking in the open air was strictly prohibited. It remained so until a week after the revolution, 25 March 1848; Egon Caesar Conte Corti, *Geschichte des Rauchens. 'Die trockene Trunkenheit'* (Frankfurt am Main 1986) 275–80. The Zelten area had already been the scene of some specific political and religious meetings over the course of the 1840s. Outside the Brandenburg Gate, the atmosphere was more open to free expression and exchange of political ideas than within the walls of the Prussian capital. *1848. Volksversammlungen in den Zelten*, 100–32.
23. It had to be a 'testimony of the spirit that dominated in Berlin', which would especially express the wishes of the young generation; *1848. Volksversammlungen in den Zelten*, 100–32.
24. Ibidem 100–32, 103. The group consisted of intellectuals such as the writer Julius Löwenberg, Gustav Julius (owner of the Zeitungshalle), the art critic Max Schaβler and the doctor Moritz Löwinson.
25. 'mit dem Embryo der Revolution in Unterhandlung getreten'; Karl Ludwig von Prittwitz, *Berlin 1848: das Erinnerungswerk des Generalleutnants Karl Ludwig von Prittwitz und andere Quellen zur Berliner Märzrevolution und zur Geschichte Preussens um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin and New York 1985) 18–21; Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, 120–29; *1848. Volksversammlungen in den Zelten*, 102–03; Dorothea Minkels, (ed.), *1848 gezeichnet. Der Berliner Polizeipräsident Julius von Minutoli* (Berlin 2003) 112–14.
26. See the recollections by law student and revolutionary Paul Boerner (1829–1885) of the Zelten meeting on 7 March, in which he made his first, insecure steps as an orator: Paul Börner, *Erinnerungen eines Revolutionärs. Skizzen aus dem Jahre 1848* Band I (Leipzig 1920) 59, 81, 82, 129. Within weeks, he had become so popular that little prints of his silhouette were sold on the street to his fans. Such merchandise for orators was a new phenomenon; Andreas Schulz, 'Vom Volksredner zum Berufsagitator. Rednerideal und parlamentarische Redepraxis im 19. Jahrhundert', in: Andreas Schulz and Andreas Wirsching (eds), *Das Parlament als Kommunikationsraum* (Berlin 2012) 247–66, there 252. The meetings offered a direct connection between the speaker and his

audience, which could make its (dis)approval known by applauding and cheering. See also Vernon's characterization of contemporary meetings in England: Vernon, *Politics and the people*, 117–31.

27. The city council intervened and proposed another, less reformist request. Also, a special request on behalf of the workers of Berlin was drawn up, focusing on social issues. Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, 134–37.
28. Ibidem 137–42; Börner, *Erinnerungen eines Revolutionärs* I, 96ff.
29. See a poster calling for a meeting about an *Adresse* to the king (s.d.; probably 23 March) and a protest poster against the army (30 March), Zentral- und Landesarchiv Berlin (ZLB) Sammlung 1848 Microfilm Mappe 1, docs. 1–105. Despite the success of the revolution, the Zelten meetings remained controversial. See 'Bitte an meine Mitbürger des 32. Bezirks', in which two local politicians call upon the inhabitants of their 32nd city district to not support the demands for electoral reform in the Zelten. ZLB Microfilm Mappe 1, doc. 37.
30. Sperber, *The European revolutions*, 112–33.
31. Ibidem, 165–66.
32. Samuel Hayat, for the French February Revolution, uses the term 'promised Republic', a concept opposed to the 'actual Republic' that developed over the course of 1848 and that disappointed the radical revolutionaries; Samuel Hayat, *1848. Quand la République était révolutionnaire* (Paris 2014) 23.
33. Sperber, *The European revolutions*, 166–77.
34. Ibidem; Samuel Hayat, 'Participation, discussion et représentation. L'expérience clubiste de 1848', *Participations* (2012) 119–40. On the Jacobin clubs: Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution* (3 books; Princeton (NJ) 1982 & 1988 and New York & Oxford 2000).
35. 'La France est un immense jury, appelé par ses droits à juger les actes du pouvoir'; the motto of Théophile Dinocourt, *De la nécessité de former des clubs* (orig. 1830; Paris 1848) 1.
36. See for example ibidem, 7–13, 16.
37. Dinocourt fully realized this. When his essay was reprinted in 1848, he added a new epilogue in which he applauded the formation of assemblies, clubs and committees intended to check the Provisional Government. Ibidem, 42.

38. 'Paris avait la fièvre des clubs'; as stated by Louis-Antoine Garnier-Pagès, minister in the 1848 Provisional Government, in his recollections *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* III (Paris 1866) 290.
39. Figures based on the overview by Alphonse Lucas, *Les clubs et les clubistes. Histoire complète critique et anecdotique des clubs et des comités électoraux* (Paris 1851). A more modest account names 147 clubs in Paris and its *banlieue* by 30 March 1848: J. Tchernoff, *Associations et sociétés secrètes. La deuxième république, 1848–1851* (Paris 1905) 205–09. Amann states that five clubs existed on 1 March and 203 by mid-April: Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy*, 33–35. The number of Parisians eligible to vote in 1848 was about 300,000 (out of a population of one million).
40. W. Scott Haine, *The world of the Paris café. Sociability among the French working class, 1789–1914* (Baltimore (MD) and London 1996) 61–62, 214; Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy*, 65–67. Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris MS 1213, folio 672.
41. '[U]n grand nombre de clubs se sont formés dans la capitale : la vie politique s'y est refugiée tout entière ; un mouvement incessant y règne. Un brûlant patriotisme inspire tous leurs membres. […] Quelle magnifique spectacle!' *La Voix des Clubs* (8 March 1848).
42. 'Les clubs, c'est l'action de la pensée ; c'est l'élaboration du jugement populaire ; c'est la parole des masses ; c'est la République qui se fait entendre par des milliers de voix collectives'. *La Voix des Clubs* (8 March 1848).
43. Hayat, *1848*, 71–74, 105–09.
44. The Club de l'Union at the Sorbonne, directed by both students and workers, announced in its founding manifesto that it would refuse only 'disingenuous and corrupt' visitors; Lucas, *Les clubs*, 249–50. Female visitors were frequently tolerated but were rarely allowed to speak or vote; Gabriella Hauch, 'Frauen-Räume in der Männer-Revolution 1848', in: Dieter Dowe, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (eds), *Europa 1848. Revolution und Reform* (Bonn 1998) 841–900, there 847.
45. 'soit afin de s'éclairer mutuellement sur l'étendue de ses droits et de ses devoirs, et sur les choix à faire dans les élections prochaines, soit pour appeler l'attention des assemblées nationales sur les grandes questions sociales qui s'agitent en ce moment, soit enfin (et c'est là le point le plus essentiel) pour établir une *tribune*

populaire où seront discutées les réformes des institutions politiques qui viendraient à s'écarter de leur véritable destination'. *La Commune de Paris. Moniteur des clubs 4* (12 March 1848). My italics.

46. Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie*, 54–55; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Civil society, 1750–1914* (Basingstoke and New York 2006) 24–43. About this transition, see Boudien de Vries, 'Voluntary societies in the Netherlands, 1750–1900', in: Morton, Morris and De Vries, *Civil society*, 103–16; Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', 407; Vernon, *Politics and the people*, 185.
47. About the use of the concepts *assemblées/sociétés populaires*, see Lucas, *Les clubs*, 35–36, 148. In his newspaper *Le Populaire* (2 March 1848), Cabet, on the one hand, calls for (labour) *associations* and, on the other hand, for the organization of discussion in newspapers and in *sociétés populaires*; Alfred Delvau, (ed.), *Les murailles révolutionnaires. Collection complète des professions de foi, affiches décrets, bulletins de la République, fac–simile de signatures* (Paris 1852) 859–60.
48. 'La voix du peuple est la voix de Dieu. […] Frères! Aux clubs donc; partout des clubs, que les clubs éclairent la France. Tout pour le Peuple et par le Peuple', wrote editor and club organizer Sobrier in *La Commune de Paris* (10 March 1848).
49. An exception was the Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen of 1848, which was indeed a continuation of a notorious secret society from the 1830s—in name and also in the semi-military, cell-shaped organizational structure—, but which had a revolving leadership without 'big names'. Lucas, *Les clubs*, 94–122. Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy*, 63–64.
50. *La voix des clubs* 1 (8 March 1848). Lucas, *Les clubs*, 145.
51. Such as the letter from a shocked member of Cabet's club; *La voix des clubs* 3 (14 March 1848).
52. *La voix des clubs* 2 (13 March 1848).
53. *La commune de Paris* 4 (12 March 1848); *La voix des clubs* 2 and 4 (13 and 15 March 1848).
54. Lucas, *Les clubs*, 163.
55. See Zolberg, 'Moments of madness'.
56. Amann, *Revolution and mass democracy*, 35–39.
57. 'Les clubs, c'est l'action de la pensée ; c'est l'élaboration du jugement populaire ; c'est la parole des masses ; c'est la République qui

se fait entendre par des milliers de voix collectives'. *La voix des clubs* 1 (8 March 1848).

58. Hayat, *1848*, 96–105, 169–288. Hayat too easily projects the political opposition by the most radical club leaders onto the whole of the Paris club movement, which does not do justice to the several moderate (and even some conservative) clubs that took different stances.
59. Vincent Villette, *Apprendre à voter sous la IIe République. Le suffrage de masse dans le département de la Seine, 1848–1851* (Paris 2013) passim.
60. *Berliner Zeitungshalle* 74 (28-3-1848).
61. It is likely that references to Paris lack in printed sources because of the reluctance of many Germans to embrace a French revolution, after 1789 and its aftermath leading to the Liberation Wars (Although being too critical of France was also a delicate matter among revolutionaries, as was experienced by Börner, *Erinnerungen eines Revolutionärs* I, 82, also see II, 85).
62. 'Zur Sicherung der Früchte der Revolution, zu ihrer vollkommenen Durchführung ist die Bildung eines politischen Klubs unerläβlich, damit die Kämpfer für die Freiheit nicht wie früher ihre Kräfte einzeln vergeuden oder aufgerieben werden, sondern sich kennenlernen und je einmütiger desto kräftiger nach demjenigen Ziele streben, welches sich nach den ersten Versammlungen als das gemeinsame herausstellen wird.'; J. Hoppe, 'Aufforderung zur Bildung eines politischen Klubs' (23 March 1848), found in the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin, Sammlung Friedländer, Band 1, doc. 397.
63. J. Hoppe, 'Aufforderung zur Bildung…'.
64. E. Meyen, 'Der demokratische Club in Berlin' (21-5-1848; Landesarchiv Berlin Sammlung Revolution von 1848/49, F Rep 310 2247PK); 'Statuten des demokratischen Clubs zu Berlin' (1-9-1848; Friedländer Band 4, doc. 89).
65. The three-article constitution of the Constitutionelle Club had supposedly been adopted on 31 March, but appeared on a printed poster on 8 June 1848 (Friedländer Band 2, doc. 563).
66. See Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, 283–84, 965. For a satirical sketch with that message, see *Der Teufel in Berlin* 3 (s.d. 1848) p. 3, Friedländer Band 3, doc. 127.

67. *Flugblatt Nr. 1. der Volksversammlung unter den Zelten* (1-4-1848), K. Obermann, (ed.), *Flugblätter der Revolution. Eine Flugblattsammlung zur Geschichte der Revolution von 1848/49 in Deutschland* (Berlin (DDR) 1970) Flugblatt 44, 130–32.
68. For example, the meeting on 27 August, organized by the Constitutionelle Club at a military site outside the Prenzlauer gate (Friedländer Band 4, doc. 54) or the meeting on 15 October, organized by the Demokratische Club at the Zelten (Friedländer Band 4, doc. 392).

CHAPTER 7

The Democratic Framing of Protest in the Age of Revolution: The Language of Civil Rights and the Organization of Petitions and Demonstrations in Belgium, 1830–1848

Gita Deneckere

Introduction

In this contribution, I analyse the organization of popular protest in Belgium during the Age of Revolution 1830–1848. I argue that the language of civil rights as inscribed in the Belgian Constitution of 1831 played a major role in the ways people without formal representation in parliament organized and expressed themselves politically during that time. Civil rights discourse—formulated in the US Declaration of Independence of 1776, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789 and derivative texts—has had a worldwide impact that continues to this day.[1] During the 1830–1848 period it was used and appropriated all over Europe by radical movements and organizations to demand justice and recognition for men and women who were excluded from formal political participation.[2]

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The language of civil rights is, in my view, a 'universalizing' rather than a 'universal' discourse—it can generate various interpretations depending on local and, therefore, historical contexts. The study of the impact of civil rights discourse on the way(s) popular movements in the nineteenth century developed their organization and strategies is consequently not to be considered as a linear or teleological account of successes and continuing progress. Instead, we should be attentive to ambiguities and struggle, trial and error, paradoxes and contradictions.

The promises and 'universal' ambitions of liberty, equality and fraternity were, from the very beginning, thwarted by lack of freedom and institutionalized inequality and contempt for women, slaves, workers and black people. In practice, the installation of the 'universal' ideals in the constitutions and constitutional states of the nineteenth century was accompanied by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of those who enjoyed civil rights and those who did not. To give an example, all Belgians were officially equal in the eyes of the law—article 10 of the Belgian Constitution of 1831 says literally 'all Belgians are equal before the law'—albeit not in terms of suffrage, to name but one major 'inequality'. It was precisely from this contradiction between law and practice that the struggle for universal suffrage was born. But, this inequality notwithstanding, the Belgian liberal constitution offered space for citizens to participate in the public realm. This contribution analyses how and when people without suffrage made use of this space.

With regard to civil rights and liberties, the Belgian case is particularly interesting: In the run-up to the 1830 revolution, which was the 'founding event' of the Belgian constitutional state, civil rights and liberties were a crucial and extremely important issue for various contending groups. Consequently, in terms of civil rights and liberties, the liberal Belgian Constitution written in 1831 would prove to be an enlightening example in nineteenth-century Europe. Citizens were permitted to petition, demonstrate, establish associations and freely express their opinions through written and spoken word. Although there were few restrictions on the constitutional freedom of association, nineteenth-century jurisprudence showed plenty of reservations where workers' associations were concerned. The right to strike was not constitutionally guaranteed in Belgium. Nevertheless, the penalization of strikes and labour unions did not preclude other forms of organization by workers and 'ordinary people' in general. In this contribution, I endeavour to show how ordinary people who were formally excluded from democratic politics organized

and acted upon constitutionally guaranteed civil rights in the first half of the nineteenth century, long before the organized workers' movements and workers' parties emerged in the 1880s.[3]

The Importance of Civil Rights Discourse in the Belgian Revolution of 1830

The revolution from which Belgium emerged as a nation in 1830 was, like most revolutions, an extremely complex event, in which various social groups and organizations were involved, each with divergent and often conflicting interests and objectives. The Catholic clergy rallied with conservative landowners and merchants to regain lost privileges and power. On the other side of the political spectrum, progressive forces—liberal journalists, intellectuals, teachers, lawyers—struggled for a democratic system with rights and freedoms—in the spirit of the French Revolution. The common enemy was the Kingdom of the Netherlands, established in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna as a strong buffer state against revolutionary France. From the outset, the 're-union' of the Northern and Southern Netherlands under the Dutch king Willem I of Orange met with growing tensions and opposition from the South. In the late 1820s, the resistance to King Willem I and his authoritarian policies led to a joining of forces in the 'Monster Alliance' of Catholics and Liberals and various forms of collective action, culminating in a wave of protest in the summer of 1830, when the common people were also mobilized.[4]

The opposition to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the rule of Willem I initially evoked civil rights set down in the Dutch Constitution of 1815. If it is possible to describe a univocal goal, then that was, in general terms, the 'redress of grievances', a formula probably derived from the first amendment of the American Bill of Rights, the constitutionally guaranteed civil right 'to petition the government for a redress of grievances'. The opposition's programme was, indeed, framed in language that seems borrowed from the American Bill of Rights.[5] The British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lord Aberdeen, even summarized the Belgian revolt of 1830 in a letter to the Duke of Wellington, the leader of the Tory government, as follows: 'The objective appears to be the redress of local grievances and a substantial expansion of the rights and privileges of the people'.[6]

Even if the phrase on the 'redress of grievances' echoes an early modern political vocabulary, the Alliance of Catholics and Liberals in the Southern Netherlands evoked the right to petition guaranteed by art. 161 of the

Dutch Constitution of 1815 to legitimize its actions. The familiarity with the use of this type of direct political expression was, of course, age old. The right to petition had been written into the French Constitution of 1791 and was broadly recognized in the Southern Netherlands, annexed to France in 1792. Between 1792 and 1793, in particular, this type of extra-parliamentary action was used on different occasions to publicize the demands of groups lacking political representation. In 1829, it became *the* vehicle for the opposition in the Southern Netherlands to air its grievances against Willem I.[7]

The petition movements in March and October 1829 mobilized huge numbers of people. As in olden times, the petitions were addressed directly to the king, not to the States General (the Dutch parliament uniting North and South). The clergy in particular was very successful in collecting signatures from 'the masses'. Although the press was also very much engaged in the petition movement, with influential papers such as *Le Catholique des Pays-Bas* and *Le Politique*, the most effective stage from which ordinary people could be mobilized was indeed the pulpit. The impact of the highly active parish priests on their parishioners was far greater than the impact of the opposition press, whose reach was primarily restricted to the cities and the literate upper echelons of society. In 1829, in some parishes, the priest succeeded in mobilizing as much as three-quarters of the population for the 'petition frenzy'. In March 1829, 150 petitions were signed by 50,000 people. Six months later, almost 1000 petitions collected 360,000 signatures, including a great number of small crosses, indicating a high level of illiteracy among the signatories. The petition movement was a top-down movement; the mobilization of the masses was intended to demonstrate that the basis for the opposition to Willem I was much larger than simply a 'bunch of radicals'.[8]

The 'bunch of radicals' referred to the activities of the radical clubs as the mirror image of the massive petition movements. The 'Jacobin' clubs in the Southern Netherlands were influenced by the French example and primarily promoted urban solidarity, with mutual contacts between the cities. This created a network of radicalism with, as the most active nodes, the editorial staffs of opposition newspapers, chiefly of a Liberal bent. The headquarters of this network was *Le Courrier des Pays-Bas*; the central figure was the popular leader Louis De Potter, who, at the end of 1828, was sentenced to 18 months in prison and a fine after a controversial press trial. His arrest was prompted by an alternative 'king's speech', in which he called for ministerial responsibility and freedom of

education and language. De Potter continued to actively play on public opinion from his prison cell. When, in 1830, his sentence was commuted to exile, a protest demonstration was organized against the hated Dutch Minister of Justice, Van Maanen. Through its repressive action and the censorship of the press, the regime created martyrs, which only increased their popularity and strengthened their leadership. De Potter became the face of the opposition, including the Catholics, who, like him, championed 'freedom': freedom of religion, education, press and speech. The Catholics in Belgium embraced the liberal constitutional liberties to defend their threatened position in terms of religion and education. The French priest Félicité de Lamennais led the way. The French Revolution produced results that were not all negative for the 'liberal' Catholics in Belgium—constitutions and civil rights could be employed to promote Catholic interests.[9]

The merging of Catholic and Liberal interests under the umbrella of 'rights and freedoms' explains the broad support for the 'liberal' revolution of 1830 and the new nation state that was created in 1830. In February 1831 the Belgian Constitution was adopted by the National Congress. It was a compromise between conservative and progressive forces, but as to the civil rights and freedoms that were embedded in it, it bore the hallmark of the radical clubs and intellectuals like De Potter. Freedom of speech, the right to assembly, the right to establish associations, freedom of the press and freedom of religion were solidly guaranteed by the state. In 1831, the Belgian Constitution could be considered the most liberal on the entire globe. It served as an example for liberal reformers throughout Europe and as a lever for protest and contestation in the young nation state itself.

From Petitions to Demonstrations in Ghent, 1831–1839

Between 1833 and 1839, the ailing cotton industry in Ghent formed the background for mass petitions from workers, who evoked the right to petition on several occasions. The petition movements were aimed at the Belgian parliament and the new Belgian king, Leopold I. In the slipstream of the petitions, huge mass demonstrations were organized. It goes without saying that the right to petition, that had proved to be such an important means of political expression in the warm-up to the Belgian

Revolution, had been included in the Constitution (art. 21). Various petitions were organized in the aftermath of the Revolution and influenced legislation. The petitions prompted parliamentary discussions in all areas of social-political life (on free trade, municipal patents, religious freedom, the judiciary system and taxation, to cite just a few examples).

In 1833, 1835 and 1839, petitions and mass demonstrations were organized by Ghent textile workers, who, invoking their constitutional rights, demanded intervention and protection from the new Belgian state. The period between 1830 and 1839 was characterized by a latent state of war with the Netherlands. From military, diplomatic and economic perspectives, it was a period of consolidation, largely determined by the European powers. The protracted conflict with King Willem I also caused economic depression and constant social unrest. There was a general consensus in Ghent, in all social strata, that—compared to the economic growth Ghent had experienced under Willem I—the Belgian government had let the industrial city down. In December 1833, Ghent's workers for the first time expressed their complaints *en masse*—without taking to the streets. A petition *from the working people of the factories* reached Brussels. The petition was fixed to a piece of cotton measuring 35 ells and covered with no fewer than 12,000 signatures and crosses.[10] Just four days after its conception and translation into French, the petition of 9 December 1833 was read in Parliament.

The extraordinary form of the petition caused a stir in Parliament because of the enormous number of signatures and crosses. Some MPs questioned the authenticity of the workers' grievances and suggested that the petition had not been organized autonomously by the workers themselves: Was it true that foremen had sacked workers to force them to sign the petition? Could the foremen have lowered themselves to 'anti-governmental intrigues'? Was it possible that the petition had become a parody of the political instrument that had been so important for the Belgian Revolution?[11]

Indeed, the workers were egged on by the cotton manufacturers, but what is of importance here is that they believed petitions would make more of an impression than the industrialists' lobbying in political circles. The petitions were written from the perspective of the workers themselves, who framed the social consequences of industrial stagnation in heartbreaking terms. First, the workers had seen themselves forced to pledge their *Sunday clothes, footstove, cupper saucepan, woolen blankets*, but now they had also lost their jobs and hence their bread: *our lean day's*

wage is the only possession we still have in this world. The *illiterate working people* pretended not to understand the causes of their misery and not to know how to relieve it. What they saw was that their cotton no longer found external markets. The shops in Ghent were full of cheaper English, French and Swiss cloth. The cotton workers pleaded for work and suggested that the government take protectionist measures to shield the internal market.

In the end, the members of parliament were convinced of the authenticity of the petition, and their response indicates mass petitioning was accepted as a democratic means of expression and claim-making rather than a revolutionary protest. The liberal Minister of Internal Affairs, Charles Rogier, announced that he would take the petition seriously and would try to find remedies for the justified complaints. The petition resulted in the establishment, with financial support from the government, of the *Société de l'Industrie Cotonnière* in 1834, a new commercial enterprise promoting the export of Flemish cotton.[12] Obviously, this measure first and foremost served the interests of the manufacturers. But the concession to the petition encouraged the Ghent workers to continue this course of action.

In February 1835, the cotton spinners formulated a new petition, aimed at the governor, with the polite request to use his influence with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the House of Representatives to plead the cotton workers' case again. The workers demanded a law that, if it did not exclude cotton imports, at least ensured reciprocity in customs laws in relation to countries that were flooding the Belgian market with their goods.[13] While the petition of December 1833 was simply sent to Brussels, a petition march lent strength to this new petition. As the previous petition had raised doubts as to the authenticity of the workers' grievances, the idea now was to prove its authenticity by demonstrating just how many workers supported the new demands. In the organization of this mass demonstration in Ghent, we observe that the workers understood that some form of visible 'proof' of their broad support and peaceful intentions would help to consolidate their constitutional right to petition parliament. The mass demonstration in 1835 was indeed intended literally as the living *demonstration* that the petition was the authentic expression of the complaints of the workers and no one else.

The archives enable us to observe the organizing of the petition and the demonstration, as the Ghent police and local military authorities were now alerted and wrote detailed reports to their superiors. The cotton workers had formed an 'association'[14] led by their masters and foremen.

Each Sunday or Monday they gathered in a pub, *Het Vosken* [The Fox]. The hierarchical organization of the shop floor was extended outside the factories. The weekly membership contributions of masters and foremen were for instance four to eight times higher than the contributions of the 'ordinary' workers. The overt goal of the association was to frequently send petitions and deputations to government to obtain the prohibition of foreign cotton in Belgium. The membership had to become as numerous as possible to put as much pressure as possible on the government. Remarkably, the cotton workers solicited a lawyer, Eugène Van Huffel, to frame their petition in well-formulated phrases. He could not write what he pleased, however: The text of the petition was read aloud to the numerous workers present in *Het Vosken* on 9 February 1835 and needed to be approved by their votes.[15]

To demonstrate that the grievances were genuine grievances of the workers, the next day, a petition march of around 2000 workers took to the streets of Ghent: Each foreman led his own 'contingent' of 10–15 workers.[16] By disciplining the workers, the demonstration proved to the bystanders that their expressions of grievances were to be understood within a democratic frame, rather than as a spontaneous or revolutionary outburst. The demonstration was an early example of what Charles Tilly has called WUNC display in relation to collective action: the display of Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment as a prerequisite to successfully conveying a political message in democratic regimes.[17]

The timing for the petition and demonstration in February 1835 was excellent: 24 Flemish MPs had just handed in a bill to protect the Flemish textile industry by means of protectionist legislation. They used the petition of the Ghent cotton workers to accelerate parliamentary decision-making. The eloquence of the petition was—as in the year before—striking. With a newfound boldness, the workers reminded the representatives of their mandate. *Give us work and don't forget that you did not get a mandate to promote the interests of other countries, but to defend the interests of your fellow citizens and to let them enjoy all the prosperity of this rich and beautiful country.* The workers also asked the MPs to imagine what they would do if the factory workers enjoyed full citizenship and the democratic right to send their own representatives to parliament. They nevertheless signed off with a traditional deferential phrase: *Vos très-humbles serviteurs.* Their approach once more convinced parliament. The parliamentary Petition Commission concluded that the bill of the 24 Flemish MPs had to be taken into account.[18] In September 1835 the liberal Minister of Finances

promised that Parliament would prepare legislation to provide the textile industry with an internal market.

During the severe 'cotton crisis' in the autumn of 1839, the pattern of organizing a petition and an accompanying demonstration needed to be repeated, as the government had not fulfilled the promises made in 1835. This time it took a violent workers' revolt to shake the Belgian authorities into action. The intricacies of the Ghent 'cotton revolt' are too entangled to untwine within the scope of this contribution.[19] What interests us here is that the workers also in this context evoked the right to petition, but to underline the fact that they had lost faith in parliament, they now addressed their demands to the king. In July 1839, the spinner Cesar Van Moerkercke wrote to King Leopold I that the unfortunate position of the Ghent factory workers was due not to the Belgian Revolution but should be attributed to the conduct of the manufacturers. The petition was a strikingly pointed complaint, which clearly sets out how mechanization was disrupting craft traditions and how that was perceived by the workers. They saw the manufacturers lining their pockets in their name and with their sweat. The subsidies from Willem I had been used to invest in machines, *which reduce hundreds of us to beggary by the day.* The workers had to suffer the wage cuts and injustices in silence, as they had no one to turn to. The foremen dismissed them; the Council of Prud'hommes[20] was composed of manufacturers and 'higher up' they were seen as troublemakers. Instead of employing the democratic language of civil rights and mandates, the workers used more traditional language, putting limitless trust in the king: *Wij aenzien U als onzen enigen troost, wij smeeken U als onzen vader, wij werpen ons aen uwe voeten als uwe kinderen, hebt medelijden met onzen toestand.* [We look to you as our only solace, we beg of you as our father, we throw ourselves at your feet like your children, have compassion for our plight]. In return for that royalism, Van Moerkercke asked for measures and, in particular, a fixed minimum wage. The plea fell on deaf ears, as witnessed by the curt reply from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Impossible.*[21]

When petitioning alone had proved insufficient to move the government, other forms of protest and organization were employed, such as a march on the provincial governor's office with the request to act as the workers' spokesman in Brussels. In 1839, as in 1834 and 1835, a new mass petition asking for protectionism (in two languages, Flemish and French) was edited, with the help of a lawyer. In no time the cotton workers mobilized massive support for their plea. The signatures on the

original petition filled 158 pages: 12,000 people signed or put a small cross behind their name.[22] The mass demonstration that was to carry the petition to the governor was extremely well organized, displaying the discipline, numbers and worthiness of the workers. As in 1835, the masters and foremen took the lead. In preparation for the demonstration, they organized several meetings with up to 700 participants in *Den Groenen*, a pub with enough room to gather all these people. The option of going on strike was heavily debated but eventually discarded—the masters and foremen wanted to remain within the constitutionally guaranteed rights of protest and democratic expression. The pressure from the lower strata of the working class to get to the streets was channelled deliberately into constitutional forms of protest.[23]

On 2 October 1839, the Vrijdagmarkt, between 8 and 9 in the morning, was already packed with people. More than 6000 and perhaps 10,000 factory workers had heeded the call to demonstrate. The number of women participants was remarkable. In 1839 roughly 9000 cotton workers were employed in Ghent itself. So almost all Ghent cotton workers took part in the demonstration. They were hierarchically positioned, by factory, with the foremen in front of their workers. The governor received a delegation with the petition and responded favourably to the request. He promised to mediate in Brussels and asked the cotton workers in turn to go calmly back to their factories. In vain. The order and discipline of the mass demonstration was thwarted by less docile groups of workers who took to the streets and started a row that would lead to the Ghent 'Cotton Revolt' of 1839.[24]

The Freedom of Association and Assembly

The police pointed to the meeting movement of Jacob Kats as being responsible for the uproar and violence in Ghent. However, the radical movement was doing anything but inciting the workers to use violent and unlawful means to express their grievances. The authorities' fear of political disorder explains their excessive interest in the radicals, whose intentions were fundamentally aimed at bringing the workers into the legal frames of civil society.

The radical movement in Belgium had its roots in the revolution of 1830.[25] Louis De Potter was one of its leaders. The radicals were republican minded and profiled themselves as champions of Belgian patriotic sentiments. At the same time, they constituted the core of early nineteenth-century opposition to the Belgian state. They had indeed expected more

from the revolution than what was realized. The new political elite in Belgium who took power in 1830 had resisted giving all Belgians full citizenship. Only 1% of the male population who paid a certain amount of taxes had the vote, while the phrase 'all Belgians are equal before the law' was one of the constitutional pillars of the new nation state. The political mission of the radicals was aimed at making the disfranchised conscious of their basic rights. They operated mainly in Brussels, but in the 1830s also tried to 'recuperate' the discontent of the cotton workers in Ghent, described in the previous section.

The radicals tried hard, but they rarely succeeded in connecting with the workers. They did not act as spokesmen of the workers' grievances but rather as political intermediaries, who tried to convey the language of constitutional democracy to groups that were, as yet, excluded from participating in elections and representative institutions. The right of association would prove to be the basic right on which the radical democrats insisted from the beginning. A pamphlet dating from 1834, addressed to the workers of Ghent, *Aan de werklieden van Gend,* with an *Ontwerp van Associatie* [Association Bill] should be seen in that context. The radicals had noticed how the Ghent workers had in December 1833 evoked the constitutional right to submit petitions to the government. According to the pamphlet, by taking this step, they had *done well* and *heralded some progress: It is the first sign you have given in twenty years of wanting to make use of your political rights.* They felt, however, that the workers were being used by the manufacturers and encouraged them to take matters into their own hands. After all, the Constitution also provided for the right of association: *Yes, you are formally guaranteed that right by law*. Referring to the modern workers' associations created in England and France, the pamphlet stated that the workers should unite and form associations as a means to become stronger and to make sure their grievances would be heard. The radicals also warned the workers not to use unlawful forms of actions, like coalitions: *It is strictly forbidden to all members of the association to "coalize" or rise up against their masters, factory owners or foremen*. The French penal law that remained in force from 1810 to 1867 in Belgium punished 'coalitions' between masters with the aim of lowering workers' wages (art. 414) and—above all—coalitions between workers with the aim of raising their wages (art. 415).[26] Also 'gatherings in public places without organization and stirred by blind anger' had to be replaced by formalized actions headed by recognized leaders to whom the members of the association should obey and show respect.[27]

There are no indications that the message of the radical movement had been absorbed by the mass of cotton workers in Ghent by 1834. Spreading democratic ideas through public meetings would prove to be somewhat more successful. The radical democrats were closely affiliated with the movement of a popular teacher and playwright, Jacob Kats, who operated primarily in Brussels.[28] His first public meetings date from August 1836. In *Den Waren Volksvriend* [The True People's Friend], Kats's newspaper, the objective was formulated as follows: *The sole purpose of the meeting is to establish a meeting or association for all working classes according to the example of the English or Swiss workers, and has no objective other than to enlighten and civilize one another, with the aim of obtaining the right to no longer be rejected by others as villains or bad people*.[29] The parallels between the meeting movement in Belgium and the London Working Men's Association, set up in 1836 by William Lovett and Henry Hetherington, are obvious: taking action within the frames of legality, in view of education, 'enlightenment' and discussion, to form *a moral, reflecting, yet energetic public opinion; so as eventually to lead to a gradual improvement in the condition of the working classes, without violence or commotion*.[30]

Jacob Kats's meeting movement, making use of the English example and eclectically inspired by Utopian socialism (Saint-Simon, Buonarotti, Babeuf, Fourier), strove for the recognition of the disfranchised workers as respectable citizens. The struggle for social justice and democracy was closely intertwined with the radical movement and not in the least revolutionary or even inflammatory. *Den Waren Volksvriend* was on the contrary permeated by a moralizing discourse of respectability and moderation that also guided the organization of the meetings themselves. Legality was, not surprisingly, the key word. Article 19 of the Constitution was constantly and often literally referred to in *Den Waren Volksvriend* as legitimation of the meetings: *The Belgians have the right to gather peaceably and without arms, as long as they behave in accordance with the laws, which can regulate the exercise of this right without, however, subjecting it to prior permission. This provision does not apply to meetings in the open air, which remain fully subject to the police laws.*

Judging by the traces in the police archives, after a few clashes with the police during the first year, Kats's meetings in Brussels actually caused surprisingly few disturbances. In July 1838, the Brussels police decided there was no point in continuing to engage *mouchards*, or secret police, to supervise the meetings. Kats's role during the Ghent Cotton Revolt of

1839 also provides evidence of the fundamentally law-abiding attitude of the meeting leaders in their interactions with the working people. They kept to means of protest provided for by law: a series of meetings (not in the open air) and yet another petition to parliament, emulating the tradition of mass petitioning that already existed among the factory workers. At first, Kats's meetings were not very popular in Ghent. Kats did not master the local dialect and his speeches did not get through.[31] But this changed at the end of September 1839 when social unrest was spreading through the city. The meetings in *De Vier Colonnes* [The Four Columns] now attracted hundreds of cotton workers, to the great satisfaction of Kats and his allies. *We approve that you are yourself organizing to raise your voice in order to obtain work and food*.[32] The meeting leaders would do everything in their power to prevent violent derailments. They were the last to offer the workers their support when it eventually came to street demonstrations and violence in Ghent.

The same was also true in February and March of 1848, when Belgium was spared the wave of revolution that led to regime changes throughout Europe.[33] On 7 November 1847, in Brussels, the *Association Démocratique* was established, a select core group of radical and democratic opposition forces. The meetings were public and accessible to non-members. The association's means and objectives were—in line with the attitude of the radicals since 1830—entirely in accordance with the Belgian Constitution. Karl Marx, in exile in Brussels at the time, was its vice-president. He was not the only political exile who had affiliated himself with the movement: Adelbert von Bornstedt and Jacques Imbert were also members. The *Association Démocratique* refrained, however, from organizing a republican/democratic revolt in Belgium. First of all, the bridge to the working classes was virtually non-existent. The European protest wave could have forged contacts between the radical democrats and the workers, but that did simply not happen. When the news of the fall of the July Monarchy in France and the announcement of the Second French Republic had filtered through to broad circles of the population, the *Association Démocratique* did not seize the opportunity to organize any significant movement in the Belgian capital or elsewhere in the country.

On Sunday 27 February 1848, the gathering of the *Association Démocratique* in *La Cour de Bruxelles* attracted a great deal of popular interest. The Belgian radicals congratulated the French revolutionaries but, at the same time, approved resolutions for protecting Belgian neutrality, public order and Belgian nationality.[34] After all, the *Association*

Démocratique recognized the use of only legal means. Eighteen years on, even the small group of radical democrats and malcontents from 1830 were not aiming at a continuation of that revolution. *Our people behave beautifully, even such an absurd old fellow as De Potter preaches national union and devotion to the national existence of the country*, King Leopold I would conclude in a letter to Queen Victoria.[35]

Conclusion

Although 99% of the population of Belgium was excluded from citizenship and suffrage in the Age of Revolution between 1830 and 1848, ordinary people engaged in politics in diverse ways. My contribution focused on the impact of the language of civil and constitutional rights in that process. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, we saw how people without formal representation started appropriating the language of civil rights and liberties in order to make their claims and grievances heard. The struggle for and the enforcement and constitutional guarantee of civil rights was a major precondition for the emergence of civil society in Belgium. This struggle generated well-organized forms of popular protest long before the formation of the organized workers' movement and mass parties at the end of the nineteenth century. Even though the protest forms themselves were not necessarily new, the way they were legitimated—through references to constitutionally guaranteed civil rights—was a sign of adaptation to the new forms of democratic politics of the nineteenth century. In line with Charles Tilly's WUNC-acronym of demonstrating Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment, most radicals and workers refrained from any language or protest form that could be associated with violence and revolution, opting instead for disciplined behaviour and rights-based discourse.

The fact that the demands and complaints of ordinary people could be *legally* brought into the public sphere was an important element that legitimized their actions. The examples in this contribution show how the dynamics of appropriation and subversion of the civil rights discourse in nineteenth-century politics acted as a lever for protest and popular assemblies. Since the proclamation of the liberal Belgian Constitution in February 1831, we can see how the constitutionally guaranteed rights and liberties were deftly subverted by taking the language on liberty and equality literally. Precisely because of their universal ambition, the founding texts of democracy, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*

and its derivatives, like the basic set of rights and liberties in the Belgian Constitution, generated new frames of protest and organization that aimed at bridging the gap between the universal ideals of democracy and the harsh reality of deprivation and disenfranchisement. On various occasions, ordinary people and the radical movement that claimed to speak in their name referred to the gap that existed between the 'legal' and the 'real' country. No matter how short lived their organizations often proved to be, they oriented people without suffrage to the basic structures of civil society by evoking rights whose exercise was guaranteed by the constitution: most importantly, the right to petition and the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

Notes

1. S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: human rights in history*. Harvard, 2010. See also J.N. Wasserstrom, L. Hunt & M.B. Young (eds), *Human rights and revolutions.* Lanham, 2000; M.R. Ishay, *The history of human rights. From ancient times to the globalization era*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2004.
2. L. Hunt, *The French Revolution and human rights. A brief documentary history*. Boston, 1996; J. Innes, M. Philp, *Re-imagining democracy in the age of revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland, 1750–1850*. Oxford, 2013; SCOTT, J.W., *Only paradoxes to offer: French feminists and the rights of man*. Cambridge, Mass, 1996.
3. G. Deneckere, *Sire, het volk mort. Sociaal protest in België 1831–1918*. Antwerp, 1997.
4. E. Witte, '1830 in België: een proletarische opstand? Het antwoord van de historici', In: A. Morelli (ed.), *Rebellen. Van de Galliërs tot de indignado's*. Berchem, 2013, 144.
5. 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances'.
6. Cited in R. Falter, *1830. De scheiding van Nederland, België en Luxemburg*. Tielt, 2005, 57.
7. L. François, 'De petitiebeweging in het Verenigd Koninkrijk der Nederlanden', In: C. Tamse, E. Witte, *Staat- en natievorming in Willem I's koninkrijk 1815–1830*. Brussel, 1992, 122–70.

8. *Le Politique*, 15 August 1829.
9. E. Witte, *De constructie van België 1828–1847*. Tielt, 2005; J. Koch, *Koning Willem I*. Amsterdam, 2013, 435.
10. Petition of the Ghent cotton workers, December 1833. *Documents Parlementaires*, 1833–34, n° 49.
11. Proceedings of the Belgian parliament, 11 and 13 December 1833. *Moniteur Belge*, 13 and 15 December 1833.
12. *Moniteur Belge*, 11 February 1834. *Statuts de la Société Anonyme établie à Gand sous la dénomination de Société de l'Industrie Cotonnière ayant pour objet l'exportation des produits de l'industrie cotonnière belge*. Gent, s.d. [1834].
13. Police report to Procurator-General Ganser, 9 February 1835. General State Archives Brussels, *Ministry of Justice. Public Security*, 127.
14. The association was not identified, or at least the authorities did not mention a specific name in their reports.
15. Local commander Van de Poele to General Clump, 9 and 10 February 1835. Royal Museum of the Army, *Belgium in the period 1830–1839*, XXXVIII/130.
16. Van de Poele to Clump, 10 February 1835. Royal Museum of the Army, *Belgium in the period 1830–1839*, XXXVIII/130 ; Major Loys (gendarmerie East-Flanders) to the national gendarmerie, 10 February 1835. General State Archives Brussels, *Ministry of Justice. Public Security*, 127.
17. C. Tilly, *Regimes and repertoires*. Chicago, 2006, 53–54.
18. Proceedings of the Belgian parliament, 11 February 1835. *Moniteur Belge*, 12 February 1835.
19. G. Deneckere, *Het katoenoproer van Gent in 1839. Collectieve actie en sociale geschiedenis*. Nijmegen, 1999.
20. The Council of Prud'hommes was a kind of labour court, introduced by the French law of 1810. K. Pittomvils, 'Alledaagse arbeidsconflicten in de Gentse textielindustrie. De praktijk van de werkrechtersraad in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, XXI (1995) 181–211.
21. Petition by Van Moerkercke to King Leopold I, July 1839. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Industrie Cotonnière*, 2298/I; note by the Cabinet of the King to the minister of Foreign Affairs, 8 July 1839. *Ibidem*.

22. Petition by the Ghent cotton spinners to King Leopold I, October 1839. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Industrie Cotonnière*, 2298/I.
23. Testimonies of 25 participants to the meetings of 29 September and 1 October 1839 in *Den Groenen*. General State Archives Brussels, *Assize Court Brabant*, 762bis.
24. Deneckere, Katoenoproer … *op. cit.*, pp. 71–103.
25. E. Witte, 'De Belgische radikalen: brugfiguren in de demokratische beweging (1830–1847)', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 90, (1977), 11–45.
26. J. Neuville, *La condition ouvrière au XIXe siècle. Tome 2. L'ouvrier suspect*. Brussels, 1980, 170–260.
27. S.n., *Aen de werklieden van Gend*. Gent, s.d. [1834].
28. J. Kuypers, *Jacob Kats, agitator*. Brussels, 1930; BUSSELS S. & VAN OOSTVELDT B., Wij zijn geen Crapuul! Jacob Kats's strijd als vroegsocialistisch theatermaker, redenaar en journalist. *Brood & rozen: tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van sociale bewegingen*, 2012 (4), 28–47.
29. *Den Waren Volksvriend*, 24 August 1836.
30. Inaugural manifest *London Working Men's Association*, 1836.
31. Statistique morale, November–December 1838. State Archives Ghent, *Province of East-Flanders 1830–1850*, 1990; governor De Schiervel to minister of Internal Affairs de Theux, 21 September 1839. General State Archives Brussels, *Ministery of Justice. Public Security*, 127.
32. *Den Volksvriend*, October 1839, nr. 36.
33. On 1848 in Belgium, see J. Dhondt, 'La Belgique en 1848', In: *Actes du Congrès historique du centenaire de la revolution de 1848*. Paris, 1948, pp. 115–32; G. Deneckere, Sire …, 131–55; WALING G., *1848. Clubkoorts en revolutie. Democratische experimenten in Parijs en Berlijn*. Nijmegen, 2016.
34. Information on Lucien Jottrand, 29 February 1848. City Archives Brussels, *Meeting*, 3; testimony Charles-Louis Spilthoorn, 24 March 1848. General State Archives Brussels, *Assize Court of Brabant*, 876.
35. Leopold to Victoria, 4 March 1848. Archives Royal Palace Brussels, *Correspondance Leopold-Victoria*, IV/2.

CHAPTER 8

Brilliant Failure: Political Parties Under the Republican Era in France (1870–1914)

Nicolas Roussellier

The emergence of mass politics in France was in many ways a striking paradox. On the one hand, in the long nineteenth century, the idea prevailed that France was at the forefront of modern politics. This idea was shared by all political currents despite the variety of interpretations, either positive or negative. On the conservative side, the succession of revolutions from 1789 to 1871 was seen as a lethal disease. France as a political country was apparently unable to overcome the instability triggered by the Revolution and by the King's death. The conservative interpretation was often joined by large sections of the Liberals, who had entertained from the beginning a rather ambiguous vision of the revolutionary era,[1] praising its principles but fearing the popular violence associated with the event. The propensity for revolution, however, was interpreted by the European left as proof that France was the political nation *par excellence*. French politics was a laboratory for modern politics, and the French were the avant-garde of mass politics. The uncertainty and turmoil that France

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was experiencing through popular surges were not signs of an irreparable decadence but proof that the country was always trying to go further on the road leading to a 'true' Republic. That was notably the ideal envisioned by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and by the majority of the socialist left around 1848–1849 and again around 1870.[2] The French were the 'chosen people of the Revolution'.[3] Besides, after the political stabilization from the 1870s onwards and the electoral triumphs of the Republicans in 1877 and in 1881, France enjoyed a special status in *fin de siècle* Europe. France was the only large country in Europe that was a republic amidst old monarchies and authoritarian or semi-authoritarian empires.

The enviable status of France at the vanguard of modern politics began to deteriorate and even to reverse at the end of the nineteenth century. In this process, the new 'political science' played an important role. Between 1870 and 1910, political science, both in Europe and in the USA, tended to underline the flaws of the French Republican system. To praise its qualities seemed no longer accurate in the face of new political challenges. The French Republic was characterized by the instability of its governments and the fragmentation of political groups.[4] Compared to other political systems, particularly the British regime, the French Third Republic was, according to new political scientists, excessively centralized. 'Jacobinism' and the roles of the State and the Administration were part of an 'evil' that the French Republic had failed to overcome and, in some ways, had even worsened. The comments of Walter Bagehot, for instance, about the early Third Republic were very ambivalent. On the one hand, he did not want to appear too negative. As a good liberal he praised the French liberal Adolphe Thiers and his efforts to become an equivalent of a French Premier (between 1871 and 1873). On the other hand, Bagehot was not very optimistic. The French political class had shown many times that the country was not ready to comply with the conditions required for the proper functioning of a (British-style) 'parliamentary government'. In particular, the French did not have the ability to listen to the arguments of their opponents, let alone to accept dissident interpretations. They were unable to undertake a reasonable and productive discussion.[5] This incapacity would strike the Republic a fatal blow.

The forms and strength of political organizations played a crucial role in the debate about the deficient French political system. Political scientists and historians tended to underline the fragmentation of parliamentary groups and political movements. According to them, the instability of governments and ministers was due to the absence of large

modern political parties, especially in the period of Republican experiments (1848–1851 for the Second Republic and 1870–1914 for the first stage of the Third Republic). Even today, historians and political scientists alike are struck by the fragmentation of political groups by political activism[6] or within the chambers of the parliament.[7] According to the young political science, the dispersion of groups and factions and the absence of stable political parties were the causes of the repetition of ministerial crises.[8] It fuelled the general image of weakness and political chaos often associated with French Republican politics. It also prevented France from gaining the status of a genuine 'parliamentary government' based on the criteria that were beginning to be fixed and canonized by the European constitutionalists and specialists of Public Law.[9]

The absence or weakness of French political parties was not only a topic of discussion among scientists and academics but also the constant obsession of leading French political actors. From the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century, French politicians like Léon Gambetta, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, André Tardieu and Michel Debré bemoaned the lack of organized parties. The British example of Whigs and Tories was widely praised by French politicians despite their ignorance of the actual functioning of British politics. There were many attempts at creating organized and modern political parties, notably in the 1870s (with Gambetta) or in the 1890s (with Waldeck-Rousseau). All these attempts ended in failure. The 'French problem' was seen as a counter-model in the evaluation of political systems. Influenced by foreign experiences that seemed more stable but also by the French liberal tradition, prominent French political scientists and jurists like Adhémar Esmein and Raymond Carré de Malberg thought that the French Republic had followed a deviant path of parliamentary development. They preferred the 'rule of law' (*Etat de droit*) and its constant progress based on the activity of the Council of State and its jurisprudence, and did not like the existing political and legislative regime.[10] The French parliamentary system was incomplete because it was not based on disciplined political parties. From this point of view, the Fifth Republic was presented as the constitutional regime that put an end to that curse. The Gaullist Constitution, at last, had found the key to the 'true' way of the parliamentary regime. Michel Debré, for instance, one of the two 'founding fathers' of the new Republic along with De Gaulle, introduced the new Constitution of 1958 not as a decline of the parliamentary system but as a way to restore it on a solid and efficient basis.[11]

However, the peculiarities of the Republican forms of political organizations should not be seen as anomalies but as part of a particular political experience. If large and organized political parties did not exist in France (or were very awkwardly shaped and weakly disciplined[12]), how can we explain the fact that French politics was able to develop in a continuous and rather flourishing manner, notably under the Republic? How did the French Republic achieve democratic 'performances' quite comparable to the ones obtained by other democracies based on modern party systems. Why was there, for example, a high electoral turnout, a successful politicization of the masses and political pluralism? In other words, what system did replace the nation-wide political parties? Should we stick to the thesis of 'delay' in the development of the French political life comparable to the economic and social backwardness found in the paradigm of the 'stalemate society' proposed by Stanley Hoffmann 50 years ago?[13] Or had French politics, in the absence of political parties, followed a specific path of political modernization that proved efficient in its own right?

Why Did the Political Parties Fail?

The hesitation to even envision organization and discipline in the political realm in general, characterized both the political culture of the right (carried by the monarchists and the Bonapartists) and the political culture of the left (embodied by Republicans of different hues including socialists). The major political traditions in France rejected the model of political parties even if they did so for very different reasons. On the right, the dominant ideology has long maintained reluctance towards what the Italian political scientist Paolo Pombeni has called the 'forme-parti' or party model.[14] The monarchists have experienced multiple political divisions that have been traditionally simplified by the distinction between 'légitimistes' and 'orléanistes'.[15] However that may be, they have all long rejected the organization of modern political parties. Their political ideal was the national 'concord': general reconciliation in respect and, for some monarchists, in devotion to the king. The fact that the monarchists (including Legitimists) were for most of the nineteenth century in the opposition did not prompt the formation of a party but an eschatological hope for the return of the king. The restoration of the monarchy was seen as an almost miraculous event that would silence the quarrels dividing the nation since the Revolution of 1789. It is striking to note, for instance, how the Legitimists circles behaved around 1871–1873 when several

attempts were made to put the count of Chambord ('Henri V') on the throne. Everything happened through negotiations between parliamentary factions and the entourage of the royal heir. An agreement between aristocratic groups was supposed to play a key role. Neither a monarchist party with a minimum of coherence nor a political organization like a club was involved in that dubious enterprise. The attempt was not based on the political organization of the masses. And it failed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when political life became increasingly modernized, especially in urban areas, distrust if not rejection of political parties remained a key feature of the conservative and nationalist political culture. Political parties were accused of dividing the 'people' and the 'country', and of weakening the State and therefore of jeopardizing France as a prominent power on both the European and the imperial stages. These ideas, which were still widespread around 1910, strongly influenced, for example, the young Charles de Gaulle. Even in the 1950s, the most popular politician of the Fourth Republic, along with Pierre Mendès France, was Antoine Pinay, the man who had built his whole career of local and national representative on the image of an 'a-political' politician. He rejected ideologies, constantly called for national 'concord', and was a staunch opponent of parties, which he saw as political machines incompatible with the ideal of liberty. During the Fourth Republic, he was a member of the Centre national des indépendants, a party that, as its name suggests, imposed little discipline on its members. It is clear that Antoine Pinay was the most popular politician of his time, in part at least because of his anti-parties stand.[16]

The 'nationalist synthesis', to borrow a concept of René Rémond, that appeared during the Dreyfus Affair in the 1890s, did not help to reconcile the French Right with the model of an organized political party willing to comply with normal or stable politics and with Republican and Constitutional rules. The Anti-Dreyfus fight led to the decline of the 'notables', the modernization of the repertory of action and a deeper penetration into the popular classes of the French Right.[17] However, nothing of this was going in the direction of organized political parties ready to accept the constitutional game. The modernization of the right-wing movements stimulated political activism like street activism but also intellectual and cultural fights as launched by the Action française,[18] rather than political parties. If one fraction of the Right within the parliamentary sphere had repeatedly tried to promote the creation of a major political party (peopled by moderates and conservatives), another important frac-

tion had given their preference to anti-constitutional forms of political action, by recourse to extra-parliamentary agitation and rejection of electoral competitions. These radical groups of the Right were not available for the formation of a conservative party on the British model, which had long been the dream of French moderates. In this context, the 'league' was widely praised as a form of organization that was able to challenge the party model, which appeared too conventional from a rightist point of view. It is sufficient to cite the Ligue des Patriotes or the Ligue de la Patrie française, two prominent actors in the anti-dreyfusard camp in the 1890s and the 1900s. The structure of the Ligue was preferred to the political party because it allowed maintaining the traditional rejection of the Republic. It was seen as a better tool in promoting the cause of the monarchy in the case of the Action française, or the cause of an authoritarian and nationalistic type of Republic in the case of the Ligue des Patriotes, which was founded in 1882 and played a crucial role in the populist wave of Boulangism of the late 1880s. The modern frame of a league was also better adapted to the new urban and popular clientele than the traditional 'party', which was more a sort of conglomerate of elected people and notables than a popular organization.

It was not until the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958 that the right-wing movements acceded to the status of 'constitutional' actors, supporters of the regime, and ready to adopt the modern model of political parties and its discipline. However, the organizational instability epitomized by frequent changes of party names has also characterized the history of the French right since 1958. The anti-party spirit remains a central feature of the political culture of the Right up to our time. This cultural trait explains partially the success of the National Front since the mid-1980s.

The Left

Strong ambiguities had also existed in the camp of the Left. Yet, from the Revolution to the creation of the Third Republic, left-wing groups had seemed several times on the brink of the foundation of political parties. Forced to organize themselves in the opposition and sometimes clandestinely, the groups of the Left had relied on the politicized fractions of the working classes all through the nineteenth century, which provided a context that could have been a good basis for the formation of political parties. Indeed, the groups of the Left were also able to inherit the legacy of old forms of popular sociability, as Maurice Agulhon had dem-

onstrated.[19] The Left had a rich past of organizing in popular societies and political clubs, especially during the 1830s and the 1840s.[20] Nevertheless, these clubs and associations had not succeeded in uniting themselves in a modern nation-wide political organization (under the Second Empire for instance). The catchword 'Republican party' was often used during the nineteenth century, especially between 1820 and 1870, but its meaning was not associated with a formal organization. It was rather a rhetorical expression to unite the numerous fractions of the Left, from moderate Republicans to socialists. The 'Republican party' had a strong resonance as a sentimental evocation but almost no actual reality in terms of political organization.

With the advent of the Third Republic in the 1870s, a change seemed plausible. Léon Gambetta tried to become the leader of a large and popular Republican party. The Republican party should change from a mere rhetorical or sentimental signification into a real organization, notably in the electoral field. This change should have led to unity and discipline of the Republican group within the National Assembly. The perspective envisioned by Gambetta was explicitly to foster a British-style political life characterized by the existence of two major parties: one moderate with a conservative leaning and the other more radical and progressive. The requisite was that both parties should be Republican in their principles. They should support the constitutional regime of the Republic. Gambetta's scheme implied that the Republicans first had to win a total victory over the monarchists and the Bonapartists. As a harbinger, Gambetta had undertaken a considerable electoral project by centralizing a large file of Republican candidates with their respective constituencies.[21]

However, Gambetta never succeeded in reaching the scale of a truly organized political party. That failure could partially be explained by political circumstances and notably feelings of jealousy and distrust among other Republican leaders. Many of them had always been suspicious about the authoritarian tendency attributed to Gambetta. The experience of the Government of the National Defence of 1870–1871 during which Gambetta had been accused of behaving like a 'dictator' was often held against him. But the failure of Gambetta can be explained more convincingly by the existence of structural obstacles, both intellectual and ideological, opposed to the formation of modern political parties. Several reasons can be invoked here. Firstly, a modern British-style political party entailed the acceptance of strong personal leadership. The role played by Gladstone at the head of the English Liberal party showed that only a

form of personal power could guarantee the internal unity of the party and its consistency in parliament. The majority of the French Republicans were not ready to accept this type of strong leadership. For many Republicans, lulled by the ideal of popular sovereignty and the idea of collegiate power, it made no sense to accept the kind of personal tyranny for the sake of a modern party that they had so strongly objected to with respect to monarchs or the idea of a strong president that they had fiercely fought against during the Second Empire. They rejected any absolute 'personal power' (*pouvoir personnel*).

Moreover, Gambetta's idea was that the Republicans would organize themselves into two different parties after previously having vanquished or absorbed the 'old parties' of Legitimists, Orleanists and Bonapartists. Yet, the Republicans never managed to eliminate the representatives of the former political regimes. The Right was beaten but retained strongholds almost everywhere in France.[22] The 'old parties' that the Republicans tended to see as definitively condemned by History have often re-emerged. Monarchism, for instance, was usually seen as a species endangered around 1890, and yet it enjoyed a process of renaissance with the success of the Ligue of Action française in the 1900s. The influence of both the Action française and its intellectual leader, Charles Maurras, lasted until the establishment of the Vichy Regime in 1940. The Bonapartists were fading away little by little in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century Bonapartist culture was successfully transmitted to a modern patriotic right-wing movement, mainly through leagues, first of the nationalists in the *fin de siècle*, then in several leagues of the interwar period like the Jeunesses Patriotes and eventually in the Gaullism of the RPF during the Fourth Republic.

The survival of the old parties posed a challenge for the Republicans, especially within the troubled game of the parliament. Under the Third Republic, the peculiar process of the formation of political majorities makes it difficult to draw clear boundaries between political groups.[23] For reasons of parliamentary tactics, the Republicans often called for the unity of all Republican tendencies under the label of the 'Republican party' and against the anti-Republican Right. This propensity to favour political majorities of a 'Republican concentration' (moderate Republicans and Radicals together) delayed the emergence of a moderate Republican party and another Republican party of a progressive type. When the moderate Republicans tried to build a majority (and possibly a political party) by an alliance with different groups of the Right, the more advanced Republican

fractions immediately accused them of betraying the Republic, as was the case with Méline in the 1890s. Thus, many moderate Republicans did not want to cross the line that might have led to the creation of a modern political party similar to the English Conservative Party. It would have meant cutting ties with the rest of the Republicans. Raymond Poincaré, for instance, was the leading political figure of the 1920s. Yet, despite the moral prestige he enjoyed around 1926–28, he had never envisioned the creation of a modern political party of the French Right or Centre Right. He still wanted to be remembered as a good Republican, that is to say as a man faithful to the Republican regime and its values, including laïcité. Most moderate Republicans did not feel at ease within a coalition that separated them from their Radical partners.

To borrow an expression from Freud, we could say that a Republican 'superego' impeded many moderate Republicans from going beyond the boundaries of the old Republican identity of the defence of the regime, the defence of the State school system, the laïcité.[24] Symmetrically, when the radicals of the Radical Party, which had been founded in 1901, decided to conclude an alliance with the Socialists, the moderate Republicans accused them of betraying the Republic. This accusation was an obstacle to the creation of a large party of the Left uniting Socialists and Radicals. Moreover, many Radicals who actually defended moderate ideas about economics and social issues did not feel at ease in an alliance with the Socialists. That was the case in 1924 with the 'Cartel of the Leftists' (*Cartel des gauches*) and even more in 1936 with the Popular Front (because the new alliance included not only the Radicals and the Socialists but also the Communists).

The French parliamentary game had long been characterized by political majorities swaying from the centre-left to the centre-right. This parliamentarianism *à la française* that blurred the map of political groups had a permanent impact on the French political system. The French Republicans were never able to choose between a large Republican party, which would have rallied all the Republican fractions, or the formation of two separate parties, one moderate and the other radical. The programme of Gambetta ended in a complete failure in the early 1880s. The Third Republic never became a Republic of parties.

The reluctance towards creating organized and disciplined parties also derived from the specific conditions of political life under the Third Republic. Alternatives to political parties were sometimes more efficient as was shown in the Dreyfus Case. The 'dreyfusard party' was not a political party but a configuration of networks including a family network around

the wife and the brother of Alfred Dreyfus, intellectual and academic networks as well as literary salons. These networks were in tune with the 'emotional dynamic' that strongly connected dreyfusards.[25] When several dreyfusards with a strong attachment to the rule of law launched an organization, it was not a political party, not an electoral machine, but a league, the Ligue des droits de l'homme. This league welcomed members of different tendencies of the French Left, mainly Radicals and Socialists. It played a role in the early twentieth century rather similar to the role played by the 'Republican party' in the nineteenth century.[26]

The call for unity among Republicans was not only a rhetorical tool. In the 1890s and 1900s and again in the 1930s, the defence of the Republic was seen as a necessity. The Republic as a regime, let alone as a 'spirit', had not been fully accepted by all political forces. The Republican Defence in the struggle against the Boulangism of the 1880s or in the Dreyfus Affair made the different Republican fractions collaborate in the same majority and support the same government, whereas, at the same time, several political parties were created, in particular, the Radical Party and the Alliance Démocratique in 1901. Torn between the Republican ideal and the affiliation to a specific party, Republicans were never clear about their allegiances. The identity of the Alliance Démocratique as a party remained weak,[27] and the Radicals were sometimes allied with the centre-right and sometimes with the Socialists, but they were never strong enough to constitute a solid majority by their own resources.

In 1901, the Law on the right of association offered a juridical structure that sustained the existence of political parties.[28] For the first time, political parties could exist overtly. The newspapers began to publish reports of party congresses and to write about steering committees and other partisan demonstrations.[29] Behind this modern façade, it was, however, very difficult to measure the actual strength of the different political parties, especially when we turn our attention to what was happening on the ground. The figures about membership are disputable. They are commonly overestimated, especially if one tries to count the exact number of individual and voluntary memberships. In many cases, at the local level, the committees, federations or sections did not have a perennial existence. That was true for the moderates of the Alliance Démocratique and the Fédération Républicaine as well for the Radicals. Political parties existed under the Third Republic, but hardly as true modern political organizations. Even the Socialist Party (SFIO) which was compelled to adopt a rigid and disciplined form of organization in 1905 (under the pres-

sure of the International) could not be compared to the German Social-democratic party (the SPD) which had in 1912 one million members and four million voters.

There was one more and very important obstacle on the road leading to the formation of political parties. Even when political parties were created (after 1901), they were not able to impose on their representatives a minimal doctrinal coherence, let alone voting discipline within the parliamentary assemblies. Neither the moderate nor the radical parliamentary forces were based on discipline. Since the late 1870s, 'undisciplined' moderate and radical Republicans had always represented between two-thirds and three quarters of the total of representatives. This lack of collective behaviour also existed in local politics. There were numerous instances of local dissidence in the constituencies during electoral campaigns. The numerous cases of dissident voting in the Chamber and in the Senate were not felt as a shameful disease by the majority of the parliamentarians in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, dissidence was *praised* as a fundamental right of parliamentarians. Parliamentarians cherished a spirit of independence and saw themselves as representatives of the people instead of party pawns. The lack of party discipline was part of the political identity of the moderates of the centre-right as well as of members of the centre-left, that is to say the two pillars of the regime. From the 1880s to the 1910s, it was not uncommon among Radicals and independent Socialists to reject the model of political parties as churches and sects imposing dogmas and unilateral discipline.

The Special Features of French Republican Politics

The French difficulty with forming modern political parties was neither an accident nor the mechanical effect of a French 'backwardness'. The modernization of French political life under the Second and Third Republics is an indisputable fact, and it even continued under the Second Empire.[30] There were no flourishing major political parties as in Germany or in Great Britain, yet the French Republican system was characterized by a high level of political participation, electoral pluralism and an increase in competitive elections,[31] and by the decreasing number of fiefs and decreasing power of the 'notables'.[32] Despite everything, French society seems to have known a very high degree of politicization and a capacity to integrate the major part of the social classes.

The absence of major political parties does not correspond necessarily to a failure of the process of political modernization. The failure of the political parties may instead be interpreted as a sign that *another* path of political modernization was followed. There is a political modernization worthy of the name that does not go through the organization of mass parties and disciplined parliamentary groups. To understand this political development, we must consider both the top of the political life and the base.

At the summit, the French parliamentary culture of the 'freedom of conscience' was shared by a majority of the representatives under the Third Republic. This 'Parliament of the Eloquents' had an external image of low governability, but the reality looks very different from the inside. Members of the Cabinet changed very often, but most of these changes were superficial. The 'ministerial crises' usually concerned only the president of the Council and a few other members of the Cabinet; most of the time, these were simple political adjustments. Far from being a real political 'crisis', these adjustments were used to adapt parliamentary alliances. Stability was based on the parliamentary majority, not on the continuation of the life of a Cabinet. This allowed the assemblies to impose their legislative demands on the executive that wanted to monopolize the decision-making process. This also allowed the Republican regime to enact a large number of fundamental reforms, such as the school laws of the 1880s, the first social laws of the late 1890s and the 1900s, and the law of Separation between Church and State of 1905.

But the basis of political life shows why the absence of organized and disciplined political parties did not justify the image of archaism of the French political system. Five factors can be underlined on the basis of many departmental monographs and other local studies.[33] Unsurprisingly, many authors have emphasized first and foremost the personal connections between the constituency and its representative. Interpersonal contact was crucial for the relationship between the local politician and the electors. Contrary to the common assumption, this was not the asymmetrical relation based on traditional domination by notables. In most cases, the 'notable' was not an archaic personage who exercised his authority through the simple effect of his economic and social superiority. In fact, after 1880, notables were able to consolidate their position by linking their personal qualities with horizontal networks. The authoritarian notable became a more democratic notable. Familial networks existed and were particularly powerful in some

constituencies.[34] Clientele networks and networks of associations like agricultural cooperatives could be very efficient. Above all, political networks based on local government had given the 'notable' more control over his constituency than a political party could have provided. In this sense, the prominent position of radicals in a city like Béziers should not be explained by the strength of the Radical Party at the national level (which lacked a common platform and a stable identity) but by the capacity of radicals to organize themselves at the local level as a 'party of associations', which counted among others the local section of the Ligue des droits de l'homme, the local section of the Ligue de l'Enseignement, the free-mason lodges and the local organization of the 'Jeunesses laïques'.[35] Through this system of local politics, the radicals of Béziers were able to resist the nationalization of political life and the authority of political parties until the 1970s.

A politician of the Third Republic could not retain his position if he did not compile political mandates like 'Russian dolls'.[36] His success would have been unlikely without the support of the Administration, in particular the help of the prefect with whom he constituted a 'departmental condominium' as for instance in the department of Loiret which became a stronghold of the Radical party.[37] In other constituencies, the Church and the local aristocracy provided decisive support.[38]

The mayors and the members of the departmental councils had usually no interest in putting themselves under the yoke of a political party organized at the national level. As a result, the French political parties resembled an archipelago of departmental federations, which were themselves patchworks of local committees or networks. That was true for the Radicals and for the moderate Right, but it was also true for the Socialist Party (SFIO) which was built on that loose model of party.[39] The French political reality was far from the cliché of Jacobin France, powerfully centralized and with an authoritarian Administration supposed to control the whole process of local political life. Even the clientele phenomenon (*clientélisme*) that has usually been identified with social and a political archaism deserves to be rehabilitated in this perspective.[40] Clientelism was in constant evolution. Distribution of official medals, offices of public servants and public aides or allowances by Republican politicians replaced distribution of private goods by rich and aristocratic notables.[41] The French political system has developed more along a horizontal than a vertical pattern, more through its territories than through nation-wide pillars like mass parties or mass trade unions.

The second crucial factor is the importance of propaganda. It was often decisive for a local politician to have the ownership, directly or indirectly, of a local newspaper. The Third Republic was the golden age of the regional and local press, and local politicized newspapers were a key factor for personal and direct control over the electors without recourse to an organized party (1880–1910).

The third factor is the uneasy position of the representative between the Administration and his electors. He had to prove his capacity by obtaining individual advantages that he would distribute to his electors. He had also to prove his ability in providing collective goods that would benefit a town or the constituency as a whole. Thus, the local politician was fostering his position as the prominent personage of his town, canton or department. If he reached such a status, the 'notable' did not need any political party. And he was also in tune with Republican values of the nineteenth century, such as the service of the public good and the unity of the local polity.

The fourth factor was linked to civic representation. It was crucial to be the master of local ceremonies, give public speeches and be at the centre of public inaugurations. In this way, local politicians could claim to embody not a particular political party, but the town or the 'little country' (*la petite patrie*) as a whole, and to be 'above parties and above divisions' (to use a very common phrase of that time). He was the democratic monarch of his constituency rather than the leader of a political fraction. This was the trademark of the majority of Republican leaders in the nineteenth century. And it had a long heritage. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, Antoine Pinay had first built his image of consensual representative, independent of all parties, at the local level. Then, he transferred this catch-all identity to the national level. Pinay's ascension was no exception. Most of the main political leaders of the centre-right and of the moderate right, like Thiers, Waldeck-Rousseau, Poincaré, Briand and Paul Reynaud, preferred to play the card of the politician 'above political parties' to becoming leader of a party.[42] They preferred playing an intermediate role between political fractions to the pejorative image attached to unilateral partisanship.

Conclusion

The absence of unified and disciplined mass parties in French politics of the nineteenth century had long-lasting consequences in the twentieth century, but it was not a synonym for political archaism or failed modernization. The power of the 'notables' and the weight of the, until the 1950s,

still predominantly rural French society prevented the emergence of modern political parties. And the attachment of French parliamentarians to the traditional rights of discussion and to the freedom of vote slowed down the emergence of disciplined parliamentary parties. However, there was no fatal stagnation or backwardness. Despite the absence of major political parties, French political life was modernizing and was characterized by a very high turnout, a widespread diffusion of political ideas and increasingly competitive elections. Political flexibility had allowed the enactment of major Republican legislation. These laws had rallied very large majorities composed of different political groups, and they had proved themselves more durable than other laws that had received the support of a partisan majority. The 1905 law on the Separation between Church and State is one example of these 'great' legislative accomplishments. On the ground, French politics was characterized by semi-spontaneous forms of political organization, such as local committees, public meetings[43] and networks of different kinds. The traditional 'sociability' with its social or sometimes religious origins had transformed into a political and modern form of local and basic organization. Rather than signs of political backwardness, the new forms of political organization proved capable of diffusing political ideas and political commitments on a large scale. At the end of the nineteenth century, French society was profoundly politicized without having followed the path of modern political parties.

In this perspective, the French case shows that the emergence of mass politics in the nineteenth century did not always imply the emergence of disciplined political parties. There is not just one type of democracy, characterized by the triumph of parties. There is also a form of Republican democracy based on vivid and long-lasting Republican principles on the national stage and on horizontal networks on the local level.

Notes

1. See: Lucien Jaume, *L'individu effacé ou le paradoxe du libéralisme français*, (Paris, Fayard, 1997) (an essential book). I dare to quote here: Nicolas Roussellier, 'La culture politique libérale' in Serge Berstein (ed.), *Les cultures politiques en France*, (Paris, Seuil, 1999), 69–112.
2. David Priestland, *The Red Flag. A history of Communism*, chapter 1 A German Prometheus. See also: Jean-Jacques Becker, Gilles

Candar (ed.), *Histoire des gauches en France*. Vol. 1, *L'héritage du 19e siècle*, (Paris, La Découverte, 2005).

3. F. Engels, in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 10 May 1849. Quoted in: Maximilien Rubel (presentation) of Karl Marx, *Les luttes de classes en France*, (Paris, Gallimard, collection Folio Histoire, 1994), 496.
4. See for instance: Lawrence Lowell, *Governments and Parties in continental Europe*, (London, Longmans, 2 vol., 1896) (Lowell was a jurist and professor of political science and also the president of Harvard University between 1909 and 1933 and the president of the American Political Science Association). See also: John Bodley, *France: the Revolution and Modern France*, (London, Macmillan, 4 books, 1899) (Bodley was an English member of the civil service and a specialist on France).
5. Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, preface to the second edition of 1872, (Collins, The Fontana Library, 1963) (with an Introduction by R.H.S. Crossman), 297. Bagehot wrote also that the French people did not have the same kind of culture of respect towards the parliamentary institution that the English people had. The 'respect' that the French people did have went rather to the prefect and to the officials of the Administrative State.
6. Pamela Pilbeam, *Republicanism in Nineteenth Century France, 1814–1871*, (London, MacMillan, 1995).
7. Nicolas Roussellier, *Le Parlement de l'éloquence*, (Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1997).
8. See the classic of the political science published in the early 1950s: Maurice Duverger, *Les partis politiques*, (Paris, A. Colin, 1951).
9. We shall note here that Bagehot's book had been translated into French as early as 1869: *La Constitution anglaise*, translated by M. Gaulhiac (Paris, Germer Ballière) (online on Google books). See the recent article of: Armel Le Divellec, 'Bagehot et les fonctions du Parlement (britannique). Sur la genèse d'une découverte de la pensée constitutionnelle', *Jus Politicum*, n°7 (online).
10. Marie-Joëlle Redor, *De l'Etat légal à l'Etat de droit: l'évolution des conceptions de la doctrine publiciste française: 1879–1914*, (Paris, Economica, 1992). See also: Guillaume Sacriste, *La République des constitutionnalistes: professeurs de droit et légitimation de l'Etat en France, 1870–1914*, (Paris, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2011).
11. For Debré, the fact that the Parliament would be able to support durably the same government was a good way to restore the public

image of the Parliament, despite the new constitutional tools dedicated to the control and to the reduction of the traditional parliamentary liberties. See his allocution before the General Assembly of the Council of State, the 27 August 1958 in: *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'élaboration de la Constitution du 4 octobre 1958*, volume III, (La Documentation Française), 261. See also: Michel Debré, *Trois Républiques pour une France: mémoires*, volume 2, (Paris, Albin Michel, 1988), 369.

12. See the case of the different socialist parties in the 1880s and 1890s before the partial unification of 1905 and the case of the Radical Party born in 1901.
13. Stanley Hoffmann et al., *In Search of France*, (Harvard University Press, 1963) (French translation published by Seuil the same year).
14. Paolo Pombeni, *Introduction à l'histoire des partis politiques* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1992) (translated from the Italian).
15. René Rémond, *La Droite en France de 1815 à nos jours: continuité et diversité d'une tradition politique*, (Paris, Aubier, 1954) (First édition).
16. Sylvie Guillaume, *Antoine Pinay ou la confiance en politique*, (Paris, Presses de la FNSP, 1984).
17. Mathias Bernard has studied the evolution of the Fédération républicaine in the department of the Rhône: Mathias Bernard, *La dérive des modérés: la Fédération républicaine du Rhône sous la IIIe République*, (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998).
18. See the classic from Eugen Weber, *L'Action française*, (Paris, Stock, 1964) (translated from English).
19. See the classic: Maurice Agulhon, *La République au village: les populations du Var, de la Révolution à la Seconde République*, (Paris, Plon, 1970).
20. See the classic: Georges Weill, *Histoire du parti républicain en France (1814–1870)*, (Paris, F. Alcan, 1900).
21. Jérôme Grévy, *La République des* opportunistes, (Paris, Perrin, 1998), p. 248ff.
22. See about these notions of 'fie' and 'bastion': François Dubasque and Éric Kocher-Marboeuf (eds), *Terres d'élections. Les dynamiques de l'ancrage politique, 1750–2009*, (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014).
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25. Ruth Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the affair that divided France*, (London, Allen Lane Penguin Books, 2010).
26. Emmanuel Naquet, *Pour l'Humanité. La Ligue des droits de l'homme, de l'affaire Dreyfus à la défaite de 1940* (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014).
27. Rosemonde Sanson, *L'Alliance républicaine démocratique: une formation de Centre*, (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003).
28. Claire Andrieu, Gilles Le Béguec, Danielle Tartakowsky (eds), *Associations et champ politique. La loi de 1901 à l'épreuve du siècle*, (Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2001).
29. See for instance about the Ligue des droits de l'homme: E. Naquet, 198.
30. See the rich historical essay by: Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From subject to citizen: the Second Empire and the Emergence of modern French democracy*, (Princeton University Press, 1998).
31. I have tried to address this issue in: Nicolas Roussellier, 'Electoral Antipluralism and Electoral Pluralism in France' in: Julian Wright, H.S. Jones, *Pluralism and the Idea of the Republic in France*, (Palgrave, 2012).
32. See: Nicolas Roussellier, 'Les caractères de la vie politique dans la France républicaine, 1880–1914', chapter 13 in: Serge Berstein, Michel Winock (eds), *L'invention de la démocratie, Histoire de la France politique*, volume 3, le XIXe siècle, (Paris, Seuil, 2008).
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34. Kinship groups are studied by Alexandre Niess for the department of the Marne. Mathieu Trouvé gives the example of the Vendée in the same line. See: Dubasque, Kocher-Marboeuf (eds), *op. cit.*
35. *Ibidem*, contribution of Fabien Nicolas, 220.

36. *Ibidem*, contribution of Jacques Puyaubert, 324.
37. Pierre Allorant, *Ibidem*, 40.
38. *Ibidem*, contribution of David Bensoussan.
39. Aude Chamouard, *Une autre histoire du socialisme: les politiques à l'épreuve du terrain (1910–2010)*, (CNRS Editions, 2010).
40. See for the particular case of Corsica: Jean-Louis Briquet, *La tradition en mouvement: clientélisme et politique en Corse*, (Paris, Belin, 1997).
41. See the example of Alfred Naquet in the 1870s and in the 1880s. When Naquet became a staunch support of Boulanger in the late 1880s, he immediately lost access to the distribution of public goods and the support of the local prefect. His local networks were destroyed. Christophe Portalez, 'Alfred Naquet et ses amis politiques: patronage, influence et scandale en République (1870–1898)', doctoral thesis (unpublished), University of Avignon, 2015.
42. To emphasize the difference between the British parliamentary government and the young French Republic, Bagehot noted that Adolphe Thiers, who was very similar in some ways to a British Premier, betrayed an important difference: Thiers was trying to make himself indispensable to all parties, rather than assuming the role of a leader of one party (preface of 1872, *op. cit.*).
43. The history of public meetings goes through the nineteenth century from the Restoration to the gilded age of the Third Republic. It is also the case for the tradition of the 'banquets'. See, respectively, Paula Cossart, *Le meeting politique. De la délibération à la manifestation (1868–1939)*, (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010) and Vincent Robert, *Le temps des banquets. Politique et symbolique d'une génération (1818–1848)*, (Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010).

CHAPTER 9

The *German National Association* 1859–1867: Rise and Fall of a Proto-Party

Andreas Biefang

The Deutscher Nationalverein, or German National Association, holds a special position in the history of political organization in the nineteenth century. It was, as Friedrich Engels opined in retrospect, the 'strongest organization the German bourgeoisie has ever had'.[1] Founded in September 1859, it aimed to bring about a German national state with a directly elected parliament and a central government under Prussian leadership. This national union of federal states was to replace the Deutscher Bund or German Confederation, which had united the 36 German states since 1815 into a confederation of federal states but which was a purely monarchical construct and possessed no democratic legitimacy whatsoever.[2] The National Association based its political agenda on the Reichsverfassung, the German constitution proclaimed by the revolutionary national assembly in Frankfurt on 28 March 1849.[3] However, this time, it wanted to achieve its goals not by revolution but by organizing. In the self-confident words of its manager Lorenz Nagel

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(April 1865), it wanted 'to bring the German people to power by means of organizing'.[4]

Indeed, the founders of the association did much more in the field of organizing than what the liberal middle classes had so far been prepared to do. To that end, they borrowed and combined concepts from German, Italian and English examples. Within a few years, the Nationalverein developed from a nationalist pressure group into a mass organization that was directed towards parliament and resembled a modern political party. However, in 1867, immediately after the foundation of the North German Confederation it disbanded again. Its successor, the National Liberal Party, was set up as a parliamentary party without any extra-parliamentary structures to speak of. The Social Democrats, who around 1900 were the European model or bogeyman of a bureaucratic mass party, took over the organizational heritage of the National Association.

This contribution will present the National Association as a laboratory of the nineteenth-century bourgeois attempts at organization. The first section will discuss the phases of the history of the association and its corresponding political strategies. The development of the organization can be understood only in relation to its dramatic political history. The second and most important section will discuss the organizational design of the National Association, its models, leaders and the way it operated. The development from pressure group to prototype of mass party deserves special attention as does the question of democracy within the party itself. The third and last section will explain the reasons for the dissolution (*Auflösung*) of the National Association and will try to determine the place of the Association in the history of political organizing by the liberal middle classes.

Aims and Political Strategies: Three Phases in the History of the Nationalverein

The foundation of the Nationalverein in September 1859 was a result of the so-called New Era. This expression served as a euphemism for the hoped-for domestic policy reforms and political campaigns aimed at establishing a united German nation that a large part of the middle classes associated with the accession of the Prince Regent and later King Wilhelm I of Prussia.[5] After a decade of oppression, the state persecution of the press and of associations, clubs, societies and the like, which had characterized the decade after the suppression of the 1848–1849 revolutions, did in

fact ease off. The establishment of a supra-local political organization would otherwise not have been possible. The first of these newly founded national organizations was the Kongress Deutscher Volkswirte, the congress of German economists, which was established in 1858 and advocated a liberal-capitalist economic order. The Deutscher Nationalverein evolved a year later largely from its political wing. An important reason for its organization was the war between the Habsburg Monarchy and Sardinia-Piedmont, which was supported by France. Many liberals and democrats saw the 'Vaterland in Gefahr'. From the early phases of its establishment, it testified to the strong mobilizing power of emerging nationalism for the self-organization of citizens.[6]

A range of meetings at regional level preceded the foundation of the Nationalverein, which was formalized at a national assembly in Frankfurt called for 16 September 1859 and attended by over 100 liberal and democratic politicians. A temporary political agenda was agreed upon and a concise organizational statute was decided on. It was to be drawn up in detail by a commission consisting of 12 members.[7] In the first few months after the foundation, the Nationalverein's steering committees, the commission and the executive committee were kept busy with the consolidation of the organization's structure and agenda. The difficulty was that a 'German nation' as a political and emotional community existed only half-heartedly, as large parts of the various federal states' respective populations were still focused entirely on the individual states' centres. The Nationalverein's organizational structure and agenda had to unite 1848 constitutionalists and 1848 democrats, northern and southern Germans, Protestants and Catholics, those who believed in a 'Greater Germany', and those who did not. It was therefore both a driver and an expression of nation-building.

The Nationalverein's political history can be divided into three phases that greatly depended on the political developments in Prussia. These phases corresponded with a respectively adapted political strategy. The first phase was defined by the advent of the so-called New Era in Prussia and lasted from 1859 to around 1861–1862. During these years, the Nationalverein pursued a political strategy that could be described as a 'warmongering strategy'. It was applied for the first time on the occasion of the war in Northern Italy in 1859. The basic idea was as simple as it was risky. At the time, the Nationalverein called for the military and diplomatic authority of the Confederation's various members to be transferred entirely to Prussia for the duration of the war. It was hoped that this action would break the hated principle of a confederation of federal states in

favour of a single, powerful German state. The thinking behind this plan was that Prussia would not relinquish this authority once it possessed it, or at any rate not if the war ended in a victory. A national parliament would subsequently have to be established to ensure that the political order thus created did not smack of despotism and to lend it political legitimacy. The war thereby became a nationalist-revolutionary-charged instrument to aid the foundation of a Prussian-dominated national state.

Over the next few years, the Nationalverein attempted to engender several foreign policy crises or to exacerbate such crises by means of agitation in order to trigger the described mechanism. The first such instance was the occasion of Savoy and Nice being ceded to France in the spring of 1860 as agreed by Piedmont-Sardinia in return for French military aid. After that, the warmongering concentrated increasingly on Schleswig-Holstein, a problem firmly and deeply rooted in the nation's emotions and far better suited to agitation designed for mass impact than evoking the comparably abstract idea of a 'danger emanating from France'. To some extent, this strategy proved successful with the war against Denmark in 1864, but in completely different and less favourable circumstances than expected. On the occasion of the 1867 'Luxembourg Crisis' in 1867, involving the question as to whether the Grand Duchy, which had so far belonged to the German Confederation, would in future be French, German or neutral, the Nationalverein again reverted to its warmongering strategy. The 1870–1871 national-liberal enthusiasm for war was also a direct result of the warmongering strategy described above. From the emerging national-liberal perspective, the 1864, 1866 and 1870–1871 wars were fought for the purpose of national unification.

From the perspective of the Nationalverein, this 'warmongering strategy' assumed a liberalized Prussia willing to accept considerable foreign policy and military risks. Alas, there was no such Prussia. In actual fact, in terms of foreign policy, the conservative monarchy's actions never went against the legal system of the German Confederation and any international treaties, and as far as domestic policy was concerned, the short phase of cautious liberalization soon came to an end. On the contrary, the debates about military reform rapidly grew into a constitutional crisis between the liberal-dominated parliament and the royal government. The Nationalverein responded to these developments by ceasing to appeal directly to the Prussian government and shifting its political focus to the individual states. However, it was not averse to reverting to its original strategy whenever possible.

The second phase in the organization's politics, which lasted from 1861 until early 1864, was determined by the necessity of having to distance itself from Prussia at times. The basic principle of this new strategy consisted of concentrating on bringing the policies of the various German federal states in line with each other. This was intended to increase the pressure on the 'Bundestag', then the standing conference of the member states of the German Confederation, to instigate reforms, and indirectly also on Prussia. Branches of the 'Deutsche Fortschrittspartei', the German progress party, were founded in Prussia, Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, Nassau, Hanover and other federal states whose steering committee members enjoyed close links with their Nationalverein counterparts with the intention of creating the institutional prerequisites for achieving this goal.[8] For the same reason, the Nationalverein also became involved in the foundation of the Deutscher Handelstag, the German chamber of commerce, and the Deutscher Abgeordnetentag, the German members of parliament congress, both of which had their roots in the individual states' respective institutions. The collaboration and division of labour with the Abgeordnetentag was particularly successful, as the congress consisted of progressive-liberal members of federal state parliaments from across the Confederation's states.

At the same time, the Nationalverein practised a more 'grassroots' political approach with increased mass impact, which resulted in a considerably higher number of meetings held at a local level. However, this new style also included demonstrative participation in events organized by the national gymnastics and shooting associations and also the independent organization of celebrations commemorating Fichte and, above all, the anniversary of the proclamation of the Reichsverfassung constitution in 1849. By means of such performative and symbolic acts, the Nationalverein attempted to credibly demonstrate that large parts of the population supported its aims. The October 1862 general assembly, at which the 1849 Reichsverfassung constitution including the fundamental rights and electoral laws defined therein were formally adopted as the Nationalverein's agenda, was the peak of its sharp swing to the left.

The fundamentally pro-Prussian Nationalverein's cohesion was thereby maintained also during the constitutional crisis. The organization even managed to gain new members, and to reject the Austrian reform plans for the Confederation, which did not entail a directly elected parliament, as undemocratic and anti-national. However, when the Prussian government, under its new chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who was considered

the incarnation of political backwardness, continued to pursue its collision course against the parliament in violation of the constitution, the Nationalverein underwent a crisis. The October 1863 general assembly was marred by disputes between the various wings of the organization and splitting tendencies.

In what was a difficult situation for the Nationalverein, the conflict about which nation Schleswig-Holstein belonged to entered its decisive stage occasioned by the death of King Frederick VII of Denmark, who by personal union was also Duke of Schleswig and Holstein. The Nationalverein entered the third and final phase of its history. In a dramatic sitting in late December 1863, it decided to revert to the 'warmongering strategy', although in a radicalized and extended form: the plan consisted of clarifying matters by supporting the German pretender to Schleswig-Holstein's throne, Friedrich von Augustenburg. This involved the 'Augustenburger' taking up residency in Kiel immediately, supported by a semi-legal army of volunteers organized by the Nationalverein, and taking over all affairs of state. The idea behind this show of partiality was to turn the international legal conflict between the German confederation and Denmark into a war between the nations, fought for Schleswig-Holstein's liberty. The intended outcome was a united German nation under Prussian leadership—without Bismarck.

This strategy, pervaded by nationalist-revolutionary elements, failed primarily due to Prussia's and Austria's determination to conquer the duchies for Germany not by citing nationalist-revolutionary rights but on the strength of international treaties. With these latest—above all, Prussian—military victories, the national constitution movement's strategy completely collapsed. The Nationalverein was cast into a maelstrom of opposing currents: on the one side, there were those who were pro-annexation and prepared to tolerate Bismarck's now even more powerful regime and in return accept the fact that Prussia's territories would be extended northwards. On the other side stood the principled federalists who were opposed to granting concessions to a still reactionary Prussia.

The Nationalverein no longer managed to consolidate these divergent opinions into an agenda acceptable to all. From 1865 onwards, it became restricted to its right-leaning, liberal, primarily Protestant wing as members departed and breakaway groups formed. It became regionally weighted in favour of northern Germany and the minor central German states. These remnants, too, were unable to agree on a common attitude towards the Prussian government and wavered between cooperation and

confrontation. Nevertheless, once the Prussian proposals for the reform of the German Confederation—which included the establishment of a body of directly elected national representatives—became public in April 1866, the Nationalverein became involved in instigating the tough negotiations that culminated in the 1867 constitutional compromise, which anticipated the constitution adopted by the newly founded German Empire in 1871.[9] The nationalist-liberal remnants of the Nationalverein, which later evolved into the nationalist-liberal wing of North German Confederation's Reichstag, played a major part in ensuring that the new state was born as a federal state rather than simply a Prussia enlarged by annexations.

The Nationalverein's Organizational Structure

The Nationalverein managed to have such political impact not least due to its new and modern organizational structure. Its founders modelled the organization's structure on various national and international examples, which they combined with a few innovations. Most of the literature cites the Italian *Società nazionale* as a role model, which has always seemed likely due to the identical name and the somewhat similar political circumstances.[10] However, this assumption is superficial and must be modified. In actual fact, the organization's founders at best looked towards the Italian role model in political terms. Italy's *Società nazionale*, founded in 1857 as a union of liberal and democratic nationalists, fought for the establishment of a unified Italian state in close cooperation with the Piedmont government led by Camillo Cavour. The Nationalverein's 'conservative liberal' constitutional wing would have hoped for a similar cooperation with the Prussian government, but the greater majority of the organization was not content with playing the role of mere propaganda organ for Prussia. As far as the organizational structure was concerned, the organization's founders in fact built on experiences gained throughout the history of German associations, clubs and societies. Above all, however, they were inspired by Richard Cobden's Anti-Corn Law League, copying many details of its organizational structures and forms of action.[11] The Nationalverein's founders did not look towards Italy for guidance, but to highly industrialized and politically developed England.[12]

The Nationalverein continued the traditions of traditional German associations, clubs and societies, and therefore also adopted their traditionally democratic internal structures: the principle of making a public impact as well as the regular members' meetings, agenda debates, an

elected board and functionary accountability.[13] However, in one important aspect, the organization differed from the previous norm: its centralist architecture. The federative fraternity alliances during the Vormärz era, the decades leading up to the March Revolution in the states belonging to the German Confederation, and the years of the Revolution, above all the Preß- und Vaterlandsverein, founded in 1832, and the democratic Centralmärzverein, founded in 1848–1849, had been unusual in that the political decision-making power had remained at the level of the local society.[14] Decision-making was visible at a national level only through annual general meetings, where the so-called 'Vororte', outposts, were elected. These were local organizations of particular importance that were charged with running the business for one year. The 'Vororte' had little authority. They served mainly as coordination and communication centres and could neither act nor issue instructions in the name of their affiliated organizations.

The Nationalverein broke with this cumbersome pattern. In 1859, it constituted itself as a single organization for the whole of Germany and did not permit any local branches. Each member therefore received instructions directly from headquarters. The political power was concentrated in its main executive body, the commission, replacing the almost authority-less 'Vororte'. This created a new type of organization: a centralized and powerful union of agitators.

The commission originally set up when the Nationalverein was founded became the hub of its power. Its members were elected at the annual general meeting by way of secret and equal vote. It was charged with leading the organization in political as well as business terms for one year at a time. For the day-to-day business, the commission elected an executive committee from amongst its members, which consisted of a chairman, his deputy and a head executive secretary as well as two to four other people. The commission had a lot of power. It was authorized to represent the Nationalverein and act in its name, and managed the organization's substantial funds. It also had an unrestricted right to co-opt, which de facto diminished the democratic character of the commission elections. If a person was not elected at the general meeting, he was simply co-opted, if need be. The commission set down the guiding principles of the organization's politics, fixed the dates and agenda points of the general meetings and prepared the fundamental proposals. In the organization's entire history, there was no example of a commission being voted down. Yet, the general meetings, with their almost parliamentary rituals and solemn pre-

sentations, still remained central arenas for debates with a public impact. Without these, the commission would not have enjoyed either legitimacy or resonance.

The Nationalverein was founded on the concept of a membership-based organization and numbered around 25,000 paying members at its peak in 1862–1863. This was an unusually high number, equalled neither in the conservative nor in the democratic movements, nor in the emerging socialist camp. However, membership in the Nationalverein was de facto restricted to those social classes that owned at least some assets and could pay the annual membership fees (at least one thaler). The Nationalverein's social mix reflected almost exactly what Ludwig August Rochau, for example, the publisher of the Nationalverein's weekly paper, described as the 'middle classes', which he considered the actual, true embodiment of 'the people'. Members of the working class and small-scale tradesmen remained excluded.[15]

The Nationalverein attempted to organize these population groups into workers' (education) leagues and gymnastics and shooting associations over which it wanted to retain political control. It established its influence through a targeted personnel strategy as the executive boards of these leagues and clubs usually consisted of Nationalverein members. This organizational concept was inspired by secret societies that consisted of core and satellite organizations, as had been the ideal typical case in the relationship between the Communist League and various workers' associations during the Revolution, for example, or as reflected by the organizational structure of the Italian *Societè nazionale*, which had to some extent adopted the traditions of the *Carbonari* and Giuseppe Mazzini.[16] On the whole, this strategy worked remarkably well in the case of the workers' (education) leagues until at least 1863–1865; things were somewhat more difficult with regard to the gymnastics and shooting associations. All in all, the Nationalverein managed to secure a wide range of supporters without ever endangering the relative exclusivity of actual membership. Even though the tradesmen amongst its members were only a (significant) minority, the organization's influence reached far into the lower middle classes through the affiliated organization system.

In Coburg in Thuringia, which had been chosen as the seat of the organization's headquarters for reasons to do with the law of unincorporated associations as well as for political reasons, the Nationalverein established an office which can be understood as a prototype for modern political party headquarters. The increase in headquarter staff was closely con-

nected to the initially rapid growth in membership. Full-time staff were soon employed to deal with the everyday business and political correspondence, the administration of the membership fees and also the organization's public relations. As early as December 1859, the board enjoyed the services of a secretary, who was soon joined by a trained bookkeeper. In August 1861, the organization had at least eight full-time salaried staff.

The political executives also received payments from the organization's funds. These were usually expense and travel cost reimbursements related to attendance at the board, commission and general meetings, or related to other journeys usually undertaken for the purpose of political agitation. However, the political executives were not paid an official salary. Only the organization's head executive secretary, Feodor Streit, who worked full time for the organization, was paid a regular monthly remuneration for his services. In 1862–1863, around the turn of the year, the Nationalverein therefore had a powerful organization at its fingertips that, although by no means comparable with that engine of political warfare, the Anti-Corn Law League, despite the many aspects borrowed from this British model, was nevertheless an innovation for Germany.

Forms of Action

The Nationalverein's activities initially focused on gaining public support, as could be expected from a body of agitators. The raising of public awareness was seen as a core element of its understanding of liberal politics. According to this view, only politics that were at least not opposed to the main current of public opinion could be successful in the long term. It was therefore important to consolidate the differing regional interests and identities of a fragmented Germany into a national agenda that was as universal and as popular as possible. In that sense, the adoption of the 1849 Reichsverfassung constitution as the agenda in 1862 was also an element of the fight for public support and was therefore decided on for strategic reasons and not because it represented its various advocates' personal convictions. On the whole, the deference accorded to the power of public opinion was justified and 'modern', even though it could of course not replace the actions of the political decision-makers in government and administration. It could, however, shift the framework conditions for political action and thereby influence decisions. This was the agitation approach the Nationalverein pursued with its 'warmongering strategy'. Ultimately, Bismarck also accepted a degree of dependence on the support

of wide sections of the population of some standing, but only after he had shifted the 1866 political power constellations clearly in his favour.

Based on this recognition of the significance of public support when it came to political power, the Nationalverein pursued extensive propaganda efforts. In this context, the foundation of the Nationalverein's own weekly paper, the *Wochenschrift*, must be mentioned first of all—this was also something completely new in the history of German organizations. The paper fulfilled two functions: on the one hand, it communicated news and information to the organization's members; on the other hand, it was to serve as the leading political organ for the liberal-democratic middle classes. Subscription price, content and style were aimed at a sophisticated audience. Even though the number of subscriptions barely exceeded 5000, the paper was read by a considerably higher number of people because it was circulated throughout the organizations. Countless local newspapers also copied articles that appeared in the *Wochenschrift*. However, the *Wochenschrift* never became a mass-circulation paper like Berlin's *Volks-Zeitung*.[17]

Besides the *Wochenschrift*, which retained the character of a contributory organization, the Nationalverein financed a wide range of political brochures and newspapers, established an office for correspondence in order to influence the international press manned by a well-paid member of staff expressly employed for this purpose, and published a total of 12 brochures in which it explained its most important political ideas and aims in detail. However, the Nationalverein was not interested in influencing the public only in the short term. The organization also considered it important to establish a liberal, Protestant presence in the national history, as proven by the experiment of a public library of German history set-up by the Nationalverein, inspired by Friedrich Kapp, or the publication of cultural-conflict-provoking attacks on the Catholic Church.[18] The close connection between nationalist-liberal politics and the historical sciences that characterized the late nineteenth century may be observed here in its formation phase.

An important field of activity in the first years was the so-called Wehrpolitik, the home-guard policy. The committee saw this as the promotion of military exercises in the gymnastics and shooting associations or in the yet-to-be-established 'Wehrvereine', home-guard associations. For this purpose, it commissioned Wilhelm Rüstow, Giuseppe Garibaldi's military advisor and a brigade commander, to draft an expert's report intended to serve as the basis for this paramilitary training. Together with detailed

military exercise and parade regulations, this report was published in May 1861 in the form of a brochure and sent to the executive committees of numerous gymnastics associations. Simultaneously, the Nationalverein became involved in the organization and hosting of the major national gymnastics and shooting festivals and also encouraged the foundation of National Associations for both groups.

With this policy, it pursued several aims concurrently. The first was to increase the pressure on the various state governments for reforms and to encourage them to give up the system of standing armies through a symbolic anticipation of general conscription. In this way, the governments were to be deprived of a powerful tool that they had abused by turning it against their own people. The underlying intention to influence domestic policy could be seen in the fact that members of home-guard associations or national defence leagues were to be eligible for a reduction of their compulsory military service period. The home-guard policy also had a foreign policy component as it intended to prove to the world that the German nation was prepared to defend its home territories. Another aspect was the fear of not being adequately equipped for the generally expected great European war.

Despite the various attempts to shunt the Nationalverein's almost constitutional home-guard policy off onto a track that smacked of revolutionary activities, the organization's leaders above all regarded this policy as symbolic—leaving aside the 1863–1864 Schleswig-Holstein crisis. This also applies to the donations collected for the establishment of a German navy, a drive started in 1861. By agitating for a German navy, the Nationalverein continued to root for a plan first mentioned at the Frankfurt national assembly that found great emotional resonance amongst the German nationalists. After ascertaining in confidential negotiations with the Prussian minister responsible for defence and the navy, Albrecht von Roon, that the Prussian government would accept the money, the committee transferred the astonishing sum of 140,000 guldens to the Admiralty.

In part, the Nationalverein's policy towards the labour movement was connected to its home-guard policy, namely in respect to its efforts to integrate those parts of the population that were not in a position to pay the membership fees. The organization thereby showed that it had learned from the failed revolution, as one of the reasons for its failure was believed to have been the division between rich and poor. It was no coincidence that many commission members and agents became actively

involved in the workers' (education) leagues that had been established in most cities since the early 1860s under middle-class patronage. The workers' journey to the Great London World Exposition in the summer of 1862 organized by the Nationalverein inadvertently turned out to be of historic importance.[19] As a part of the integration strategy, it was supposed to acquaint selected workers with the situation in England and to demonstrate individual prospects of advancement to them. However, the journey did not achieve the desired results; instead, some of the workers drew completely different conclusions from the events and on their return started to organize a national workers' congress. The Nationalverein attempted to halt the process of an independently organized labour movement that had been triggered by the journey to London by providing occasional financial support to the 'Vereinstag deutscher Arbeitervereine', the congress of German workers' associations established in 1863 under middle-class patronage. Some of its members even sat on the executive committees of both organizations. The Nationalverein also funded the Leipziger Arbeiterbildungsverein, the Leipzig workers' educational association chaired by August Bebel.

Another of the Nationalverein's fields of activity turns out to be of particular importance in terms of the development of organizational definition and capacity, namely the promotion and coordination of the progress parties in the individual states concurrent with the strategy change in 1861. Even the emergence of the Deutsche Fortschrittspartei, the German progress party, in Prussia since late 1860 had occurred in the style of the Nationalverein.[20] The organization not only influenced the party's agenda but also supported the election campaign by providing materials, funding and manpower. The assertion that the Prussian progress party would probably not have been created in the familiar form without the Nationalverein is no exaggeration. The question of whether the constitutional crisis could have been avoided also cannot be answered adequately without taking the Nationalverein into account.

Following the Deutsche Fortschrittspartei's election successes in Prussia, parties of the same name and political direction were created in all of the Confederation's major states. All of them were headed by leading Nationalverein members. Between 1862 and 1865, the Nationalverein lent its support to the election campaigns in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, in Nassau and in Bavaria on several occasions by providing funds or pamphlets and mobilizing its network of agents. The organizational interlacing between the progress party and the Nationalverein was particularly

marked in Württemberg, where the party membership fees were collected by the Nationalverein's network of agents.

In the eyes of numerous contemporaries, the Nationalverein was certainly more than just the Prussian leadership's propaganda organ. This is also shown by the diverse petitions received at its headquarters from widely different sections of the population. They ranged from applications for subsidies for newspapers or other media ventures to an organization member's request for a scholarship grant for his son and even a widow's appeal for support in a family emergency. The commission contributed funds to the research into submarine cannon boats, gave money for an expedition to Africa, and granted support to persecuted officers and officials from Schleswig-Holstein, to supporters of the organization in the Electorate of Hesse whose properties had suffered hail damage, and also to German victims of Indian attacks in North America. All this shows that the Nationalverein was seen as a kind of major social power with extensive authority and resources.

On the Way to a Modern Major Party? The Efforts Undertaken to Reform the Nationalverein

The Nationalverein had an agenda and organizational structures, and took recourse to forms of action that approached those of a modern political party in terms of organization type. Above all, it was distinctly parliament focused. As a national parliament did not exist, it had to concentrate on influencing the parliaments of the individual German states, although without a doubt with the aim of potential involvement in a future national parliament. However, the Nationalverein's centralism was more suitable for a band of agitators than for a political party: the authority held by the commission's 'steering oligarchy' (Shlomo Na'aman) was in stark contrast to the democratic legacy of the traditional German associations, societies and clubs. This is revealed particularly in the interaction between the organization's headquarters and the local branches.

Any communication between the individual members and the Nationalverein's headquarters was dealt with by the so-called local agents appointed by the organization's executives. These local agents numbered around 400 in 1862–1863. They were usually well-educated, property-owning local dignitaries with close contacts to the various committees and societies in their local community. However, they were supposed to fulfil political tasks independently only to a limited extent; as functionaries

who received their instructions from headquarters, their duties primarily tended to lie in communicating instructions, information and propaganda material from headquarters to 'the base', meaning the ordinary members, and in collecting the membership fees and transferring them to Coburg.

This centralist organizational structure resulted in organizational and political problems. Firstly, the local agents' accounting for the membership fees was often full of mistakes and prone to abuse, prompting regular controls of the books. Secondly, the members started to object to the commission's autocracy. Inspired by the legacy of the traditional German associations, societies and clubs, local member groups continued to form associations that drew up their own statutes, elected an executive committee and charged their own membership fees.

In view of this situation, the head executive secretary Feodor Streit planned to gradually decentralize the organization's structure. According to his plans, the local agents were to be grouped in precisely defined 'rayons', departments and report to the so-called main agents. These main agents, who were to be elected by the local agents that formed a rayon, were to play an important political role. However, his concept failed because the majority of the commission voted against relinquishing some of its authority to democratically legitimated mid-level functionaries. Instead, the commission came up with the idea of appointing a general inspector charged with mitigating the administrative or political problems in individual member groups by becoming personally involved. However, after the preferred candidate for the job, Friedrich Kapp, had graciously declined, no other suitable candidate was forthcoming.

As the need for action became increasingly more urgent, the commission fell back on Streit's rayon idea, although this was altered to a more acceptable form. According to the revised concept, the main agents were no longer to be elected by the local agents but to be appointed by the commission—assuming their functions were not fulfilled by members of the commission themselves. They were charged with ensuring that the books of the rayons they were responsible for were in order and with political supervision of the rayons. In this way, the commission hoped to compensate for the disadvantages of a centralism fundamentally considered useful without curtailing its own authority any more than necessary.

In the summer of 1863, the commission also decided to gradually change the annual general meeting into a delegate conference. It therefore proposed the election of delegates whose numbers were to correspond to the size of the respective local group, a rather vague definition.

The granting of any kind of imperative mandate was explicitly excluded. This attempt to shift the political-opinion forming to the local member groups represented a decisive step towards increasing the decentralized, participatory elements, a move that could have changed the annual general meeting into a conference of representative delegates in the medium term. However, this organization model never got a chance to prove itself in practice as the outbreak of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis in 1863–1864 led to a totally new set of political framework conditions. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1863, the Nationalverein was close to a threshold that, had it been crossed, would finally have transformed it from a band of agitators into a democratically structured, modern political party.

Post-Nationalverein: The National Liberal Party and Social Democracy

Numerous contemporaries saw the Prussian-Austrian 'Fratricidal War' and the foundation of the North German Confederation in 1866–1867 as a 'revolution', albeit as a 'top-down revolution'. The new confederate state had a national parliament consisting of representatives elected on the basis of general, equal, secret and direct voting rights (for men); the government of the new nation was in the hands of the Prussian monarchy, and the constitution promised potential extensive legislative reforms for the purpose of creating a common national jurisdiction. Most observers believed that a true 'Reichsgründung', the formation of a national state which included the as-yet-separate southern German states, was only a matter of time. Many of the points on the Nationalverein's agenda therefore seemed accomplished, although in part under circumstances different from those originally anticipated.

A heated debate about whether the organization should be continued and developed further under these new circumstances broke out within the Nationalverein, now largely reduced to its right wing. In the course of this debate, the importance of democratic voting rights, which would increase future election campaign efforts, was extensively discussed. The power political significance of an independent party organization was also clearly recognized and considered. Nevertheless, after drawn-out debates, the powers that objected to a continuation of the Nationalverein won the day. They intended to make the national parliament the sole forum of their political activities and viewed extra-parliamentary organizations as an indicator of an oppositional persuasion that was no longer neces-

sary for liberals now 'able to govern' (Hermann Baumgarten). Obviously, the sceptical opinion of such organizations that had characterized the constitutionalists during the entire nineteenth century came to the fore here. Their increased willingness to become organized had undoubtedly been connected to the dominance of the 'national question' in the 1860s. Granted, in terms of its executives, the National Liberal party originated almost entirely in the Nationalverein. However, through the voluntary relinquishment of their extra-parliamentary organization, they had agreed to a partial abdication of power. The consequences did not become apparent until Bismarck no longer needed the liberals to gain majorities for his policies in the Reichstag.

Instead, the Nationalverein's organizational legacy was adopted by the Social Democrats. When Ferdinand Lassalle founded the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein (ADAV, General German Workers' Association) in 1863, he structured it wholly in accordance with his personal preferences.[21] He simply copied the Nationalverein's union statutes. However, the ADAV's local member groups soon did their own thing, too, particularly after Lasalle's untimely death in a duel. The ADAV's joining with the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine, the confederation of German workers' associations, which embodied the federative 'Vorort' principle in the history of the labour movement, led to the creation of the Social Democratic Workers' party in 1875, a modern political party that became a role model for major political parties throughout Europe.[22] Even though the National Liberals relinquished their organizational legacy, they never forgot the Nationalverein. Whenever they endeavoured to improve the way in which their party was organized, which they considered inadequate, they looked to the prototype, the Nationalverein, for inspiration.

Notes

1. Friedrich Engels, 'Die Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte', in: Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 21, Berlin (DDR) 1962, 406–65, 426. In nineteenth-century German usage 'Partei' would normally mean an intellectual or ideological current. When contemporaries talked about an organization, they used the word 'Verein'. Only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century did the present-day parlance become common.
2. Jürgen Müller, *Deutscher Bund und deutsche Nation 1848–1866*, Munich 2005.

3. Manfred Botzenhart, *Deutscher Parlamentarismus in der Revolutionszeit 1848–1850*, Düsseldorf 1977.
4. *Wochenblatt des Nationalvereins*, Nr. 1, 6. 4. 1865.
5. For an overview of the period, see: Marc Hewitson, *Nationalism in Germany, 1848–1866. Revolutionary Nation*, Basingstoke 2010; Christian Jansen, *Gründerzeit und Nationsbildung 1848–1871*, Paderborn 2011, for example.
6. Nikolaus Buschmann, *Einkreisung und Waffenbruderschaft. Die öffentliche Deutung von Krieg und Nation in Deutschland 1850–1871*, Göttingen 2003. Andreas Biefang, *Politisches Bürgertum in Deutschland. Nationale Organisationen und Eliten 1857–1868*, Düsseldorf 1994; Shlomo Na'aman, *Der deutsche Nationalverein. Die politische Konstituierung des deutschen Bürgertums 1859–1867*, Düsseldorf 1987. Further: Jürgen Frölich, '"Lager des gothaisch-liberalen Philistertums" (F. Engels) or '"Geistig-politische Wiederaufnahme der Ideen von 1849" (E. Marcks)? The Deutscher Nationalverein in German language historiography since the late 19th century', *Jahrbuch zur Liberalismusforschung* 16 (2004), 151–71.
7. A hard copy of all documents and texts on the Nationalverein has been published in: Andreas Biefang (ed.), *Der Deutsche Nationalverein 1859–1867. Vorstands- und Ausschussprotokolle*, Düsseldorf 1995. References to the respective individual sources have therefore been dispensed with.
8. On the liberal parties in the German states: Andreas Biefang, 'National-preußisch oder deutsch-national? Die Deutsche Fortschrittspartei in Preußen 1861–1867', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 27 (1997), 360–83; Theodor Schieder, 'Die kleindeutsche Partei in Bayern in den Kämpfen um die nationale Einheit 1863–1871', PhD dissertation. Munich 1937; Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalismus und Demokratie in Württemberg zwischen Revolution und Reichsgründung*, Düsseldorf 1974; Lothar Gall, *Der Liberalismus als regierende Partei. Das Großherzogtum Baden zwischen Restauration und Reichsgründung*, Wiesbaden 1968; *Einheit vor Freiheit? Die hessischen Landtage in der Zeit der Reichseinigung 1862–1875*, Manfred H. W. Köhler and Christof Dipper (eds), Darmstadt 2010.
9. Andreas Biefang, 'Modernität wider Willen. Bemerkungen zur Entstehung des demokratischen Wahlrechts des Kaiserreichs', in:

Wolfram Pyta/Ludwig Richter (eds), *Gestaltungskraft des Politischen. Festschrift für Eberhard Kolb*, Berlin 1998, 239–59; Klaus Erich Pollmann, *Parlamentarismus im Norddeutschen Bund 1867–1870*, Düsseldorf 1985.

10. Raymond Grew, *A Sterner Plan for Italian Unity. The Italian National Society in the Risorgimento*, Princeton 1963; Mark Gellert, *Die 'Società Nazionale Italiana' und der 'Deutsche Nationalverein'. Ein Vergleich der Organisationen und ihrer Rolle in nationaler Bewegung und Einigung*, Aachen 1999.
11. Paul A. Pickering/Alex Tyrrell, *The People's Bread. A History of the Anti-Corn Law League*, London 2000; Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade. Interests, Ideas, and Institutions in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge, MA/London 2006.
12. The Nationalverein had many supporters amongst the German exiles living in London. Cf. Sabine Sundermann, *Deutscher Nationalismus im englischen Exil. Zum sozialen und politischen Innenleben der deutschen Kolonie in London 1848–1871*, Paderborn 1997.
13. Dieter Langewiesche, 'Die Anfänge der deutschen Parteien. Partei, Fraktion und Verein in der Revolution von 1848/49', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 4 (1978), 324–61; Otto Dann (ed.), *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, Munich 1984; Jörg Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus (1770–1840),* Frankfurt a. M./New York 1998.
14. Cornelia Foerster, *Der Preß- und Vaterlandsverein von 1832/33. Sozialstruktur und Organisationsformen der bürgerlichen Bewegung in der Zeit des Hambacher Festes*, Trier 1982; Michael Wettengel, 'Der Centralmärzverein und die Entstehung des deutschen Parteienwesens während der Revolution von 1848/49', *JzLF* 3 (1991), 34–81.
15. Ludwig August v. Rochau, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik. Angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands*, re-edited and with an introduction by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Frankfurt am Main 1972, for example.
16. Shlomo Na'aman, 'Der Bund der Kommunisten in Deutschland in der zweiten Phase seines Bestehens', *AfS* 5 (1965), 5–82; Martin Hundt, *Geschichte des Bundes der Kommunisten 1836–1852*, Frankfurt am Main 1993; Andreas Biefang, 'Massenbasis des Liberalismus? Der Deutsche Nationalverein und die Vereine der Arbeiter, Turner, Schützen und Sänger', in: Friedhelm Brusniak/

Dietmar Klenke (eds), *'Heil deutschem Wort und Sang!'. Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte*, Augsburg 1995, 23–38.

17. Jürgen Frölich, *Die Berliner 'Volks-Zeitung' 1853 bis 1867. Preußischer Linksliberalismus zwischen 'Reaktion' und 'Revolution von oben'*, Frankfurt am Main 1990.
18. Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Von Preußens Aufgabe in Deutschland zu Deutschlands Aufgabe in der Welt', *Historische Zeitschrift* 231 (1980), 265–324; Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Geschichtskultur in Deutschland von 1850 bis 1871', in Id., *Deutsche Geschichtskultur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2013, 239–87.
19. Shlomo Na'aman, *Die Konstituierung der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1862/63. Darstellung und Dokumentation*, Assen 1975; Toni Offermann, *Arbeiterbewegung und liberales Bürgertum in Deutschland 1850–1863,* Bonn 1979.
20. Andreas Biefang, 'National-preußisch oder deutsch-national?'
21. Toni Offermann, *Die erste deutsche Arbeiterpartei. Organisation, Verbreitung und Sozialstruktur von ADAV und LADAV 1863–1871*, Bonn 2002.
22. Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz*, Bonn 2000.

CHAPTER 10

Manipulation or Participation? Membership Inclusion in the Party Organizations of the German Social Democratic Workers' Party and the British National Liberal Federation

Anne Heyer

Introduction

Contemporaries as well as later academic scholars have criticized the democratic nature of early political parties. Whereas party activists emphasized the participatory power of mass organization, critics feared them as autocratic machines, dominated by a small club of wire-pullers. In their eyes, the representative structure of parties enabled their leaders to speak in the name of ordinary members, without ever consulting the organizations' rank and file. It seemed that true popular participation could be achieved only on the basis of direct democracy and not in the representative organizations of political parties.[1] Considering this negative image, it is

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no surprise that the nineteenth-century concern that a selfish party leader would 'run through the question of the day, seeking for a cry which may help him to a career'[2] found an echo in later academic studies. Although historians have recently provided more detailed accounts of party history, the view of early critics has prevailed, including in the social sciences.[3] Even those commentators who observed a causal link between democratic consolidation and the emergence of political parties argued that organizational necessities will inevitably force party leaders to establish a representative oligarchy to further their own interests.[4] In competition with traditional elites, historical mass parties focused on internal cohesion and consequently applied rigid disciplining mechanisms.[5] Even today, parties still stand for a top-down approach of interest representation, in contrast to grass-roots social movements.[6] What can be asserted for contemporary parties is even more likely to hold true for their forerunners. Diversified and vivid membership participation, often resulting in a lengthy discussion process, must have been impractical for early parties. In the late nineteenth century, even if party leaders sang the song of democracy, their audience was trapped in a rigid hierarchy governed by the upper ranks.

Not surprisingly, members of early parties offered another interpretation of their experiences with representation. Although the implementation of membership participation proved to be a challenge in the second half of the nineteenth century, the inclusive intentions of party activists were more honest than contemporaries expected. Popular participation was an ideal that was to be reached at different institutional levels not only in national politics but also in the discourse and structure of some of the organizations themselves. After all, members often provided the backbone of the new organizations and justified their claims for power. The large network of supporters facilitated nation-wide activities and financed campaigns and offices. In return, leaders regularly offered members access to the parties' governing institutions through the system of representation. Within their organizations, members could become political men. Even though members could not vote directly on parties' political orientation, they became part of a political organization that provided them with information and the opportunity to run for party and public offices. Following the principle of representation, members as local delegates could determine the political course of the party at party congresses. Back home in their local branches, they defined the appearance of the party in the constituencies. Taking their responsibilities seriously, members were well aware of the need for coherent action and regularly demanded sta-

ble organizational structures to make their voices heard. Moreover, party leaders operated in a moral framework that required serious treatment of their participatory claims for their organizations. They not only needed to justify their decisions to their followers but also had to legitimate their behaviour to themselves.

This contribution focuses on the perceptions and experiences of early party activists in order to explore the origins of these different interpretations of the mass party. Instead of following the distinction between direct democracy and representation, the chapter concentrates on party members and their ability to participate and control its leadership in a representative system. The study focuses on the founding congresses and their subsequent five years, the period when the organizations were still evolving. Two different case studies, the German Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) and the British National Liberal Federation (NLF), are presented.[7] The British NLF functioned as a lobby group for non-conformists and Radicals who attempted to exercise greater influence within the Liberal Party. As leader of the organization, Joseph Chamberlain became infamous as the 'master of the Caucus'.[8] He was also the career-oriented party leader criticized in the quote at the beginning of this piece. His contemporaries suspected him of exploiting the NLF solely for his own advantage and of establishing a dictatorial regime hidden behind the organization's popular appearance. In contrast, the German SDAP, inspired by the teachings of Karl Marx, was considered to be the first and foremost representative of the working class. Indeed, the party had limited interest in parliamentary politics, which it considered to be corrupt and a theatre stage for traditional elites. Judged very differently by their contemporaries and later commentators, the two organizations developed individual organizational responses to different political environments. However, despite their differences in political orientation, they both implemented membership participation and leadership restriction in their early years. Their cases illustrate that the need for efficient decision-making in representative organization does not inevitably preclude participation or facilitate autocratic leadership.

How to Implement Organizational Ideals?

Both the German SDAP and the British NLF were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of institutional change. The extension of suffrage rights shifted the relationship between formal state institu-

tions and citizens. In Britain, the Second Reform Act increased the size of the electorate from 1,430,000 to 2,470,000, bringing the vote to many working-class households in 1867.[9] In order to reach these new voters, Conservatives as well as Liberals experimented with electoral organization to secure as many votes as possible.[10] In Germany, the unification of the Second Empire in 1871 provided the Social Democrats with a platform for political campaigns on the national level but also confronted them with oppressive state authorities. With the introduction of suffrage rights, all German men, older than 25, became voters for the German parliamentary assembly, the Reichstag.[11] In these changing circumstances, an organizational structure that efficiently united members for national campaigns became indispensable, both to British Radical Liberals and to German Social Democrats. The German SDAP and the British NLF are among the most apparent responses to this political vacuum. With the foundation of the two organizations, party activists hoped to advance the political participation of ordinary people. Leaders of SDAP and NLF were challenged with the task of developing an organizational outline that would allow them to simultaneously coordinate coherent responses to political developments and adhere to their ideological demands of participation.

In Germany in 1869 at the foundation congress of the SDAP, political activists united their resources to work together for the enhancement of the working class. Their aim was to create an organization that could distance itself from the deficiencies of previous Social Democratic institutions. The delegates at the founding congress agreed that a strong, but not omnipotent, leadership would be responsible for the organizational orientation of the new party. Consequently, in 1868 the Federation of German Workers' Associations (VDAV)[12] voted in favour of a political programme that prepared the foundation of the SDAP as a party.[13] Because of its radicalized political orientation, the SDAP organization needed a more coherent command structure than the VDAV. The party also invited representatives of its main competitor, the General German Workers Association (ADAV),[14] to join its ranks. Such a development became possible because in the ADAV, under the authoritarian leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle, internal opposition had arisen, seizing the opportunity to leave the organization.

August Bebel, as former president of the VDAV and architect behind the new party SDAP, tried to appeal to these defecting ADAV members by offering them an attractive compromise. The SDAP would not only take over the organizational features of the VDAV but combine the most

distinguished features of Social Democratic organizations, VDAV and ADAV. Bebel promised that the new party was not to be dominated by a single powerful leader, but rather would divide its responsibilities between different individuals, because of 'blind obedience, the personality cult is itself undemocratic'.[15] Not one but five party members constituted the leading institution of the party, the board.[16] The location of the board was determined by election at the annual party congress. After a lengthy debate, the congress agreed that it would select one specific local branch whose members elected the board from their local companions. With this procedure in place, Bebel hoped that the party would be able 'to prevent the abuse of violence in the hand of one single person and at the same time enable uniform action'.[17]

Although delegates had voted against the centralization of power in one individual party bureaucrat, they supported the creation of a board constituted exclusively by members of a single party branch. Consequently, the administration of the party became concentrated in one location, preventing a regionally diversified leadership. Practical considerations stood behind this approach. As former president of the VDAV, Bebel had experienced how difficult the administration of the party would become with a geographically dispersed board. Yet, the new organization was likely to engage in even more controversial political action than its predecessor, the loosely organized VDAV. The board had the responsibility to decide whether to implement or impede political campaigns. Coordinating the numerous local branches of the party and its newspaper was much easier at regular board meetings. Pressing leadership action needed fast internal face-to-face communication and could not be based on endless discussions by mail. Therefore, the party's constitution required board members to be present at meetings because it asked the board 'to make its decisions together'.[18] Only with at least three members present were the board's decisions considered as binding. In addition, delegates at the founding congress installed a control commission.[19] This commission, whose location was also selected at the annual party congress, acted as the counterweight to the board. It was composed of 11 members and 'obliged to check and investigate the management, files, books and cash register and so forth of the board at least once quarterly'.[20] It also had the right to suspend individual members or the entire board.

In Britain, the foundation of the NLF was rooted in the idea that the Liberal Party needed a new approach to leadership, thereby echoing the organizational concerns of the early SDAP. For the NLF, this approach

was based on popular representation and the incorporation of the British working class in political decisions. Joseph Chamberlain, later president of the NLF, gained his political reputation by criticizing Liberal leaders for their reluctance to implement radical reforms. In 1874, he presented the solution to this problem as 'the speedy reorganization of the Liberalism of the future'.[21] With the foundation of the NLF, Chamberlain hoped to meet this demand. He aimed at the development of a new organization that would use representative principles and press Liberal leaders to finally implement reform.

> The essential feature of the proposed Federation is the principle which must henceforth govern the action of Liberals as a political party—namely, the direct participation of all members of the party in the direction of its policy; (…). This object can be secured only by the organisation of the party upon a representative basis; that is, by popularly elected committees of local associations, and by the union of such local associations, by means of their freely chosen representatives, in a general federation.[22]

Following this spirit, the invitation to the founding congress proudly announced that the NLF would be 'established on a popular basis'[23] in 1877. The federation's national structure resembled the National Education League. Chamberlain, together with his supporters, had used this lobby organization to change educational policy in favour of non-conformist believers. With the foundation of the NLF, the single-issue organization of the National Education League became redundant and it was dissolved. At the local level, the Birmingham Liberal Association became the model for the federation's individual associations.[24] The proposed constitution praised this successful Liberal association and suggested that 'all Liberal Associations, established on a similar popular basis, should enter into a Federated Union'.[25] On a national level, the council, the annual assembly of the NLF, was 'composed of delegated representatives of the Federated Associations'.[26] The council elected the president, vice-presidents, treasurer and honorary secretary. Together with the officers, the council formed the formally leading political institution of the NLF, the general committee. The task of the general committee was to support the foundation of new associations, to strengthen the objects of the federation and to organize the annual meeting of the council. It also had 'to submit to the Federated Associations political questions and measures upon which united action may be considered desirable'.[27]

Birmingham was the organizational heart of the NLF at the beginning. Here, the meetings of the general committee took place, fortifying the position of Chamberlain and his associates. Being based in the political environment of the city, they gained permanent access to the committee and had the opportunity to dominate its decisions. Surprisingly, there was no open critical engagement with the leading role of the political clique of Birmingham at the congress. The likely reason for this was the formally guaranteed independence of local branches. They could decide on their own whether to follow or disregard the suggestions of the Birmingham centre of the NLF. Formally, there was no reason for them to be suspicious of the authority of Chamberlain and his supporters.[28]

> No interference with the local independence of the Federated Associations is proposed or contemplated. Each one of the Associations will arrange the detail of its own organisation and administer its own affairs (…).[29]

Although not always followed in the daily practice of the federation, this decentralized approach also supported the creation of a stable administrative leadership in Birmingham. The secretary of the general committee, Francis Schnadhorst, who also remained secretary of the Birmingham branch, had an influential managing position within the organization.[30] He was so successful that he maintained his secretary post until 1893.

NLF delegates also discussed the composition of the general council in relation to the size of the population of the respective branch. Although daily business was driven by practical concerns, questions of popular representation determined the party's discourse on basic organizational questions. Against his branch's power interests, the delegate of London, Mr Firth, noted that his constituency with a large but mainly apolitical population would be overrepresented at the general council. Following Firth, other speakers also emphasized the impracticality of the proposed scheme. Finally, R.N. Philips, president of the influential Manchester Liberal Association, suggested first bringing the scheme into practice and evaluating its performance only after a year. This practical suggestion gained the support of the congress and the resolution was unanimously accepted. Between 5 and 20 representatives per delegation could attend the council, depending on the size of the borough or town.

For similar practical reasons, the delegates rejected the resolution of the delegate Wood. He suggested organizing an election in which all members could vote on the objectives of the federation. The association he repre-

sented, the 'Leicester Association had had no opportunity of considering the desirability even of forming a federation'.[31] However, Chamberlain defended his preferred organizational model, and, as chairman of the meeting, argued:

> If this subject was to be refereed to 100 associations meeting in different districts, how could they all be brought together to decide by a majority what should be adopted? If, after the Conference had come to the conclusion, the scheme was unsatisfactory to any of the several associations, it was perfectly open to them not to join the federation.[32]

The conference rejected Wood's proposal because conducting a referendum of all members seemed to cause too many practical difficulties. Popular representation was important, but delegates also shared a sense of urgency to bring the organization into life without losing too much time with extensive debates. Ordinary delegates as well as Chamberlain voted at the congress in favour of, first, founding the organization and later reconsidering its procedures.

In the German SDAP, the number of representatives present at annual congresses was not determined by the size of the electorate of the represented town or district but generally could reach the maximum of five members. Also the number of members registered with the local branch did not matter in this context.[33] In opposition to this regulation, Mühlwasser[34] argued that membership size should determine the number of delegates at the party congress. Otherwise, the smallest villages could have the same voting power as the biggest metropolis. Due to limited financial resources, those branches situated further away from the venue of the congress would be forced to send a smaller number of delegates. Those branches situated in closer proximity would be able to send a numerically strong delegation. By following this plan, the SDAP would break 'the first and holiest principle of a true people's party'.[35] Therefore, the party should 'return to the principle of pure democracy and say: only someone who represents a specific number of voters—the congress might agree about the number-, can have the vote of a delegate'.[36] Unfortunately, neither the party's leadership nor delegates expressed an interest in Mühlwasser's proposal. Without further debate, they voted in favour of the proposal of five delegates per town, expressing their preference for the practical solution.

Organization in Practice

In less than a decade after their founding congresses, SDAP and NLF were forced to adjust their organizations according to changing political and social circumstances. Both organizations displayed a flexible attitude in dealing with various challenges and opportunities but overall maintained their representative structure based on local branches. Concerns of efficiency guided organizational modifications to prepare the two parties either for upcoming elections or to ensure their existence in times of threatening state institutions. Acting in these challenging political circumstances, efficient administration seemed to be indispensable to the organizations. However, in contrast to their reputation as selfish machines using every opportunity to establish autocratic leadership structures, the parties remained committed to their organizational promises. Their attempts were focused on developing an organization that would function efficiently and simultaneously involve membership participation and avoid complete leadership control.

Following the founding constitution of the NLF, local branches were formally independent entities. But in times of electoral campaigning, the organization's leadership took a more direct approach in influencing the political strategy of local associations. For the borough election in East Worcestershire, Joseph Chamberlain disapproved of the strategy of the Liberal candidate Hastings who refused to start campaigning at an early stage. Chamberlain in his position as NLF president decided that Hastings 'must be overruled'.[37] Chamberlain was also active in searching for a fitting constituency for Robert Laycock. Because he considered him as a suitable candidate, 'a fair speaker and a sound politician',[38] he wrote to the NLF secretary Schnadhorst about Laycock's possible candidacy. In his letter, Chamberlain presented a detailed electoral strategy, discussing the qualifications of the candidate for various constituencies.

> The question is where to suggest him. If Lord Anson does not accept quickly he would do for East Staffordshire or if Gladstone is not settled we might name him to our Committee in East Worcestershire. Failing both these there is still the southern division of Warwickshire and the other divisions of Staffordshire to consider in our immediate neighbourhood, but what is necessary is to act quickly.[39]

In addition to the management of local electoral affairs, changing political circumstances eventually triggered an adjustment of the relationship between NLF leaders and local branches. In 1880, the federation increased the influence of its leadership by adding an article to the constitution. The revised constitution still paid tribute to the popular basis of the NLF. The organization also continued to reject a political programme and emphasized the independent position of local branches. However, a small article proposed to the founding congress by NLF leaders but omitted from the final founding constitution became part of the new constitution. Although not being very strict, this modification increased the influence of the general council on local associations.

> Each Association arranges the detail of its own organization, and administers its own affairs: but from time to time, and on all occasions of emergency, representatives of all the Associations in union are convened to consider the course of action which may be recommended to their respective constituents.[40]

This version of the article was implemented right in time for the 1880 election. In view of the upcoming election, the NLF's leadership referred to the federation's need for a focused and tightly organized campaign. It explained to its members that 'in order that the Liberal majority of the nation might be enabled (…) to resume its former preponderance in the Legislative Council of the nation'[41] the federation needed to mobilize all its resources.

Even after the Liberals won the election, the NLF could not expect that its radical demands would be directly transformed into government policies. The Liberal government might have seemed to be a natural recipient of NLF lobbying. But Gladstone, as Liberal Prime Minister, faced many political challenges, including the strong Whig faction in his cabinet, and remained careful in his interaction with the NLF. For the NLF, this meant that the organization had to double its campaigning efforts. The historic opportunity of a Liberal delegation in power could not be squandered. As the leadership of the federation euphemistically announced to its members, the task of the federation was now 'to support the Government, by expression of public opinion, and to strengthen its hands in such a way that it may introduce and succeed in carrying complete measures'.[42] In order to meet its new challenge, the NLF widened its organizational structure and created a broader leadership. It extended the composition of its general

committee, increasing representation in its formally leading institution. Under the fourth rule of the 1877 constitution, brought into practice only in 1881, the general committee 'shall have the power to add twenty-five to its number'.[43] The party congress nominated 24 additional members to the general committee. These additional delegates represented local chapters and strengthened the representative function of the organization.

In Germany, the SDAP, founded on the basis of the VDAV, had assumed a clear political position that supported centralized administration.[44] In contrast to the NLF, the German Social Democrats did not emphasize the independence of individual branches but rather elaborated on the best strategy to intensify the relationship between local chapters and the board. In the eyes of party members, the SDAP needed local branches that operated according to its political programme and strictly followed its campaigns. In 1869, Carl Hirsch emphasized the role of local associations in the SDAP's struggle for political change.

> If our party shall be organized according to its purpose, then its organization must be to promote agitation in the sense of our principles, in the sense of our programme. But because it is not possible under the blue sky, but usually it can be agitated only at a specific place, here follows the necessity that the indispensable basis of our organization is local, fomenting facilities.[45]

The SDAP's political campaign concentrated on the local level. By addressing them in the context of their daily lives, workers could not only be mobilized but also be educated in preparation for the future people's state. Although the party had managed to gain two seats in the German national parliament in 1871, its ability to influence national politics remained limited.[46] In addition, the German Reichstag also had very little actual legislative power. The SDAP could not hope to successfully lobby for policy changes within the German government, as the leadership of the NLF had managed with the Liberal Party in power.

Censorship and repression made it difficult for the German Social Democrats to build up their organization and attract new members. The party's leadership was fully exposed to the harsh measures of the German authorities. In March 1871, August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and Adolf Hepner were imprisoned and charged with high treason. For Bebel and Liebknecht, this meant a sharp break that interrupted their communication with party institutions. The prison's personnel checked their mail for subversive messages.[47] In 1870, the party had experienced an even

more serious crisis with the imprisonment of its entire board by the North German military authorities. The organization's public appeal against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and in favour of a fair peace with France had provoked the arrest.[48] Following the loss of its board, the leadership of the SDAP was transferred to the control commission. The commission selected Dresden as the location of the new board. It determined that Walster would be secretary and Vahlteich treasurer.[49] Due to the immediacy of events, the control commission suspended the routine procedures of the local election of the board. The response of the Saxon authorities was not foreseeable and demanded a rapid decision. Since the election of the subsequent board would take place in a short period of time, this unusual procedure was considered to be justified.[50] In the beginning of 1871, the seat of the board was transferred to Leipzig to coordinate the campaign for the approaching parliamentary election. In contrast to the previous nomination of the Dresden board, the board was again elected by local members in keeping with the constitution of the SDAP. At the subsequent party congress in 1871, delegates elected Hamburg as the new location of the board. With the party congress selecting the location of the board again, the former procedures for the election of the board were reinstalled.

The difficulties surrounding the arrest of the Braunschweig board caused further discussions at the party congress in 1871. August Otto Walster, secretary of the Dresden board, expressed his disappointment at the party's organizational inability to deal with the crisis.

> There it was unfortunately shown that the organization was not adequate, was not adequately prepared and taken care of in a way that could have been expected from party fellows in a necessary manner. Late, very late the news came to us if at all when party fellows were again reprimanded in brutal manner; later, very late we were in the position to intervene helpingly and moderately and often only when we had taken initiative on our own. We of course had expected that everywhere where party fellows were reprimanded the remaining party fellows would consult and send in reports on the spot (…).[51]

Walster's disappointment focused on the disloyalty and failed communication between local branches and the party's headquarters. The SDAP had survived the repression of the German authorities, but local associations had failed to mobilize the necessary support for the party. Bracke, former treasurer of the arrested Braunschweig board, objected to Walster's

comment. He argued that it was only due to the harsh circumstances of the Franco-Prussian War that the party had been so severely damaged. In his time as board member, he in his communication with local branches 'had such an extraordinary mass of work that he (…) often had longed for once having the burden removed'.[52] It was, therefore, not the organization itself that had caused problems but the difficult political situation.

Although Walster's critical comment was ignored by the majority of delegates, the party eventually adjusted its organizational format. Its leadership developed a new system to improve the coordination between party centre and local branches. The 1871 congress installed the office of the trustee at the local level.[53] The trustee registered party meetings and events with local authorities but was also responsible for transferring membership fees to the SDAP board. Trustees were elected by their local branch with a simple majority. However, only the party's board had the power to eventually appoint them. Legal regulations on associational structure forced the SDAP to develop this rather impractical procedure. The party claimed that it would prevent local associations from becoming legal units of the SDAP.[54] The concept seemed to be a success, and the number of trustees grew from 100 in 1872 to 226 in 1874.[55]

Participation and Legitimacy

Despite the considerable differences between the two organizations, neither SDAP nor NLF used their representative structure to establish an unrestricted autocratic regime. From the beginning, the SDAP focused on a centralized regime that would keep its leadership in check by strengthening party institutions and facilitating membership involvement. The NLF took a different approach and offered its local branches simultaneously independence from and representation in the governing institutions of the organization. The reasons for maintaining and developing these organizational procedures are as simple as they are unexpected. Despite their differences, both organizations had valid reasons to provide room for membership participation and for the restriction of leaders in their representative structures because it ultimately supported efficiency and coherence. The SDAP relied on the narrative of working-class involvement to mobilize its members. The NLF could attract its supporters with the idea of popular participation and the independence of local branches. In addition, members in both organizations were well aware of the needs of a functioning leadership model and approached party leaders for guidance

and advice. Leaders also depended on a fair organizational model to justify their commitment to themselves and their close associates.[56]

For the British NLF, a successful way to mobilize its Liberal followers was to refer to its promise to include common people in political decisions. The founders of the federation justified the establishment of the new organization by referring to the comprehensive political and social changes that demanded the expansion of popular participation in Liberal party matters.

> Thanks to the increased intelligence of the people, or, at all events, to their increased education—thanks to the greater interest which, owing to the cheap press, is felt in political affairs—and thanks, above all, to the extension of the franchise, it has now become necessary, (…) that the people at large should be taken into the counsels of the party[57]

In this interpretation, the federation did not only lobby for Radical influence but also fought for the access of ordinary people to politics. Directly and repeatedly emphasizing the 'popular'[58] nature of its organization, the NLF could extend its influence among local associations that were politically close to the Liberal Party. Following the model of the Birmingham Liberal Association, they were generally expected to 'establish (…) corresponding methods of political action'.[59] This entrance criterion did not only demand organizational coherence from local associations but also provided them with legitimacy because the NLF's representative model was promoted as participatory. Based on its popular claims, the organization managed to connect political demands to organizational structure. This provided the NLF with ideological influence without a political programme. It equipped the federation with a brand that increased its visibility in the eyes of its members and the wider public.

The emphasis on popular politics within the NLF was also necessary because the organization did not have as many working-class leaders as its political campaigns might have suggested. Many British Liberals distrusted the organization that they assumed to be completely controlled by the industrialist Joseph Chamberlain. Based on its founding constitution, the NLF promised to its supporters to champion the independence of local branches and impede control by the Birmingham centre. The party's leadership did not always follow this rule and regularly intervened in local matters during electoral campaigns. However, these interventions were initiated not only by the leadership but also local branches

themselves asked for the advice of leaders. For instance, the Newcastle under Lyme Liberal Council did not consider it a problem to write to Schnadhorst asking him to run as their electoral candidate. When Schnadhorst declined, the president of Newcastle thanked him 'for his generous letter, giving them free action as to any course they make take in the future as to their representation'.[60] Embracing the leading role of the central leadership, he expressed his hope that Schnadhorst would 'resume his place at the head of our affairs as the best and wisest organiser our party have ever seen'.[61]

The NLF leadership skilfully involved members in their electoral strategies to mobilize their support. Leaders expressed their gratitude for the commitment of local members by keeping up contact and praising their efforts. The spokesman for the Norwood Liberal and Radical Association wrote to the NLF secretary Schnadhost to describe the effect of this approach in his local branch.

> I read your letter (…) to the meeting and it was received with great satisfaction. Several members expressed themselves as especially glad to hear that you intend to thank those who make personal execution on your behalf. Experience has shown that the voluntary canvassers and others value very highly any special mark of appreciation by the Candidate for whom they have devoted much time and energy.[62]

This formal appreciation tied active members to the organization and encouraged further support. Because they were granted direct communication with Schnadhorst, members in local branches could feel that they had become an essential part of the NLF. Their connection with the organization grew, and they were willing to continue their involvement in political campaigns.

For the German SDAP, participation was the open secret behind the success of the organization. Party members did not need to praise its participatory nature, but rather discussed the implications of specific representative procedures. They approached the topic of organizational structures seriously and discussed possible amendments in their local branches. For the 1873 party congress in Eisenach, the impressive number of 55 proposals was submitted by local branches.[63] They focused on organizational matters, many in a remarkably detailed way. In their local branches, members had discussed possible amendments to the party constitution that had been suggested by the party's leadership. From their

own experiences or what had been brought to their attention by party newspapers, members contributed directly to the discussions on organizational structure. Because the SDAP did not only formally but also practically incorporate members' interests, they were willing to take great personal risks to promote the party. They spent much of their personal and professional lives within the organization.

As did their counterparts in the British NLF, in Germany, SDAP party members asked for a strong political organization because they wanted to be part of an effective institution. Their interpretation of political participation was not only connected to purely structural matters but became also strongly inspired by their individual experiences as party members. They considered the existence of their organization as a success in their struggle for working-class participation, both within the organization and in national politics. In this atmosphere, the Leipzig representative, Schilling, enthusiastically shared his emotions with the founding congress.

> I greet this day of today's congress as the most beautiful one of my life. (…) Finally the day arrived where the unity among German workers is established![64]

For Schilling, the common political cause of German workers called for close cooperation. Unity became even more pressing in times of crisis. In the aftermath of the SDAP board's arrest in 1870 and in hindsight after the next national election, the control commission reported that they were approached 'by several sides' to strive for 'tight centralization'.[65] Being part of a coherent organization became a leading theme within the organizational discourse. Extending their political knowledge, reading the party newspaper and taking part in SDAP events, party members felt that they had become political men. They benefited from political brochures and educational programmes that supported the creation of an SDAP identity. They identified with the party because it provided them with the experience of becoming part of a political organization, bringing them closer to daily politics.[66] Even though internal coherence was under pressure in times of crisis, the party could count on the continued support and loyalty of its members.

Legitimization based on membership participation and leadership restriction not only facilitated the support of the rank and file of NLF and SDAP. It enabled members to comply with leaders' wishes, but also

served leaders' need to justify their rule 'in their own eyes'.[67] Whereas this interpretation can only be indirectly derived from sources, there are several historical details that illustrate that party leaders followed their own conceptual framework when they developed a model of organization. Although leaders occasionally benefited from their organizational engagement, their personal risks seem to be too high to explain their commitment. Especially in the early years of his career, Chamberlain was strongly ridiculed and criticized in the contemporary press. His doctor worried about Chamberlain's health when he was just about to start his political career in London.[68] As president of the NLF, he and his supporters were generally considered to be populists who threatened the unity of the nation. In the comparably tolerant political environment of Britain, they did not face severe prosecution like imprisonment but risked their social reputation as honorary gentlemen. Also Schnadhorst, as the NLF's secretary, faced serious health problems and often returned to the administration of the party without the proper time for rest. For SDAP leaders, the danger of suppression and poverty was even more severe. The arrests and trials of many Social Democratic leaders were not only a heavy burden on their own shoulders but also posed a threat to their families who counted on them as breadwinners.

Party leaders were confronted with harsher circumstances than ordinary members. As a reward for their political engagement, they earned the respect of their followers and, in the case of the NLF, influence on national politics. Yet, even more important to the parties' leadership seemed to be the justification of their actions to themselves and their immediate circle.[69] Because they believed in the legitimacy of their actions, party activists could pursue their difficult leadership roles. Following their call for the inclusion of ordinary people in national politics, they also had a motive to implement participatory structures in their own organizations. In this interpretation, the emphasis on membership participation and leadership restriction in the two organizations not only constituted a clever marketing strategy but was also rooted in the needs of political leaders for self-appreciation. Devoting parts of their political careers to popular and participatory elements, they could become skilled leaders who acted in accord with serious political motives. This is not to say that party leaders were exclusively concerned with altruistic motives. Clearly, the majority of them also used their organization to further their own political careers.

That party leaders personally benefited from their political engagement did not mean that their interest in the role of ordinary members

was a deception. SDAP leaders like August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht wrote extensively about their political motives that inspired their political behaviour and justified the hardships they suffered. As a political prisoner, Bebel used his involuntary break from the party's daily business to study 'Marx's Capital, (…) Engels' The Condition of the Working Class in England, Lasalle's The System of Acquired Rights'[70] and many other publications of Social Democratic literature. His fellow inmate, Wilhelm Liebknecht, even continued writing critical articles for the party's newspaper, further provoking the authorities and risking extension of his imprisonment. The motives behind Chamberlain's career have been criticized more often than those of the German Social Democrats. He was frequently accused of exclusively working towards his own good and exploiting his popular supporters for his own benefit.[71] Nevertheless, Chamberlain truly devoted his early political life to his career as a Radical party leader. In his time as the president of the NLF, Chamberlain mainly addressed his peer group, fellow Liberals in the constituencies, to justify his actions. These radical supporters of the Liberal party were the ones who constituted the NLF. It was to them Chamberlain spoke when he created a representative organization with formally independent branches and popular orientation. They were also the main audience when Chamberlain praised the contribution of ordinary voters to the NLF in *The Times*.

> (…) the active support, for the most part voluntary and unpaid, of thousands and tens of thousands of voters, who have been willing to work hard for the candidates in whose selection they have for the first time had an influential voice.[72]

Based on the promise of participation, Chamberlain could offer his supporters political influence because he could mobilize working-class followers and gain their support for Liberals running as candidates for parliament. However, the idea of popular participation was also attractive to these circles because of its moral value. Their political goal of the advancement of the working class and personal interest in a political career became interconnected in the organization of the NLF. Like the SDAP party leaders, NLF representatives not only lived for politics but also started to make a living from it in party and government offices.[73] As a consequence, less affluent and less influential activists could enter the political realm.

Conclusion

Looking at the experiences of leaders and members of the British NLF and German SDAP, representation is not necessarily an obstacle to membership participation and leadership restriction but might also encourage an active party life. The organizations of the NLF and SDAP were based on representative structures that might be easily interpreted as the opposite of the procedures of direct democracy. In spite of their popular political orientation, the NLF as well as the SDAP declined to conduct membership referenda but rather relied on local representatives to vote on their constitution, leaders and, in the case of the SDAP, also its political programme. Yet, the organizational structures of the two organizations did not inevitably enforce autocratic regimes on naïve members. Whereas SDAP leaders provided its members with many opportunities to exercise influence, the NLF offered its followers formal independence from its leadership. The SDAP tried to balance its strong leadership with a centralized organizational structure that regularly informed and invited members to participate in its decision-making structures. The NLF approached the topic differently and provided members with loose organizational procedures to develop their own political strategies and careers. Instead of being solely manipulating machines, parties could also become institutions where people with little political experience could establish closer contact with political life. Party leaders and members both chose to implement representative structures that would involve members and control leaders but, simultaneously, function efficiently in the political realm.

Although NLF and SDAP exercised less influence on established politics than their contemporaries might have thought, their organizations responded to an important political question of their time.[74] Could representative structures facilitate popular participation without the seizure of power by populist leaders? Their case shows that party activists joined in a constant process of negotiation between efficiency and membership participation within the framework of their representative structures. Although the institutional structure of later political parties became much firmer, there is no reason to expect that membership participation and leadership confinement were completely lost in the process of institutionalization as suggested by early commentators.[75] If membership inclusion and leadership constraint are not interpreted only in the framework of direct democracy, they become a likely feature of representative structures. Leaders were subject to a system of checks and balances, including their

individual need for self-legitimation. Members became political men by joining a political organization that provided them with identity and influence. They could influence the organization as delegates at congresses and had the possibility to use local branches for their political activities: a procedure also applied in contemporary political systems that we know of today as liberal democracies.

Notes

1. Manin refers to the distinction between representative government and direct democracy. See Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
2. 'Mr. Joseph Chamberlain on the Liberal Programm', *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 10, 1874, 7.
3. See, e.g., Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit: Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum* Sozialistengesetz (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2000). For a more elaborate discussion on the development of early social science interpretation of political parties, see also Henk te Velde's contribution in this publication.
4. Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt 1911); Mosei Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan and Co., Limited 1902).
5. Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy,' *Party Politics* 1 (1) (1995): 5–28.
6. Herbert Kitschelt 'Social Movements, Political Parties, and Democratic Theory,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (1993): 13–29.
7. This paper is part of a PhD project on the Birth of the Mass Party comparing three case studies: the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, the British National Liberal Federation and the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party.
8. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, 315.

9. The figures are from Francis Barrymore Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 2.
10. Harold John Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978).
11. Margaret Lavinia Anderson, 'Voter, Junker, Landrat, Priest: The Old Authorities and the New Franchise in Imperial Germany,' *The American Historical Review* 98 (5) (1993): 1448–74.
12. In German V*ereinstag Deutscher Arbeitervereine.*
13. Ilse Fischer, ed., *August Bebel und der Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine 1867/68: Brieftagebuch und Dokumente* (Bonn: Dietz, 1994).
14. In German *Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein.*
15. *Das Eisenacher Programm: Beschlossen auf dem Parteitag des Allgemeinen Deutschen Sozial-Demokratischen Arbeiterkongresses zu Eisenach am 7., 8. und 9. August 1869* (1869; repri., Offenbach: Drott, 1947), 38. '*der blinde Gehorsam, der Personenkultus ist an sich undemokratisch.*'
16. In German *Ausschuss.*
17. *Das Eisenacher Programm*, 37 'verhindert den Miβbrauch der Gewalt in der Hand einer einzelnen Person und ermöglicht zugleich einheitliches Handeln'.
18. 'Programm und Statuten der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei, beschlossen auf dem Kongress in Eisenach 1869'. In *Programmatische Dokumente der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, ed. Dieter Dowe and Kurt Klotzbach (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1984), 177. 'faβt alle Beschlüsse gemeinsam'.
19. In German *Kontrollkommission.*
20. 'Programm und Statuten der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei', 177 'ist verplichtet, die Geschäftsführung, Akten, Bücher, Kasse usw. des Ausschusses mindestens einmal vierteljährlich zu prüfen und zu untersuchen'.
21. Joseph Chamberlain, 'The Liberal Party and Its Leaders,' *Fortnighly Review*, 81 (1873): 302.
22. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations,' Birmingham 1877, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations, Special Collections, University of Bristol, 7.

23. Ibid., 3.
24. Francis H. Herrick, 'The Origins of the National Liberal Federation,' *The Journal of Modern History* 17 (2) (1945): 116–29.
25. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations', 7.
26. 'First Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council held in Leeds', Birmingham 1879, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations, Special Collections, University of Bristol, 35.
27. Ibid., 36.
28. The NLF's later president Robert Spence Watson also emphasized the independence of local associations. Robert Spence Watson, *The National Liberal Federation from its Commencement to the General Election of* 1906 (London: T. Fischer Unwin, 1907).
29. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations', 7.
30. Barry McGill, 'Francis Schnadhorst and Liberal Party Organization,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 34 (1962): 19–39.
31. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations', 37.
32. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations', 37.
33. 'Programm und Statuten der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei'.
34. Mühlwasser's relationship to leading SDAP members soon proved to be difficult. His own Workers' Newspaper that he published in Austria was not welcome, and Liebknecht intervened, asking him to abandon it. Later, Mühlwasser became a witness in the Wiener Hochverratsprozess and testified against Austrian Social Democrats.
35. *Das Eisenacher Programm,* 76. 'erste und heiligste Prinzip einer echten Volkspartei'.
36. *Das Eisenacher Programm,* 76 '(…) auf das Prinzip der reinen Demokratie zurückgehen und sagen: Nur wer eine bestimmte Anzahl Wähler vertritt—über die Zahl möge sich der Kongress verständigen,—kann eine Stimme als Delegierter haben.'
37. 25, April 1879, Manuscript Papers Relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the Organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.
38. 27, February 1880, Manuscript Papers Relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the Organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

39. Ibid.
40. 'The National Liberal Federation: Its General Objects and its Immediate Work', Birmingham 1880, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations, Special Collections, University of Bristol, 4.
41. 'Second Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council held in Darlington', Birmingham 1880, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations, Special Collections, University of Bristol, 11.
42. 'The National Liberal Federation: Its General Objects and its Immediate Work', 5.
43. 'First Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council held in Leeds', 36.
44. Shlomo Na'aman, *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zur Arbeiterpartei* (Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1976).
45. Carl Hirsch, *Die Organisation der der Deutschen Arbeiterpartei* (Berlin: J. Winckler, 1869), 8. 'Soll also unsere Partei zweckmäβig organisirt sein, so muβ die Organisation erstens derartig sein, daβ sie die Agitation im Sinne unserer Prinzipien, im Sinne unseres Programms möglichst fördert. Da nun aber nichjt in der blauen Luft, sondern immer nur an einem bestimmten Orte, immer nur da und dort agitirt werden kann, so folgt hieraus mit Nothwednigkeit, daβ unsere Organisation lokale, agitatorische Einrichtungen eine unentbehrliche Grundlage sind'.
46. Franz Osteroth and Dieter Schuster, '3. März 1871.' In *Chronik der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie (Electronic Ed.)*, (Bonn: FES Library, 2001). Accessed January 26, 2017, http://library.fes.de/fulltext/bibliothek/chronik/.
    The Social Democrats had also gained seats in previous elections, but these earlier successes were limited; e.g., under the banner of the Saxon People's Party, they managed to obtain four seats in the North German Reichstag in 1867.
47. Georg Eckert, ed., *Briefwechsel mit deutschen Sozialdemokraten* (Assen: Van Grocum, 1973).
48. Franz Osteroth and Dieter Schuster, '13. Sept. 1871.' In *Chronik der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie (Electronic Ed.),* (Bonn: FES Library, 2001). Accessed January 26, 2017, http://library.fes.de/fulltext/bibliothek/chronik/.
49. Vahlteich declined the offer, and Dresden suggested Köhler who accepted.

50. 'Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei,' in *Protokolle der Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (Glashütten am Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), 65.
51. Ibid., 68. 'Da hat sich leider gezeigt, daβ die Organisation nicht derartig war, nicht derartig vorbereitet und gepflegt war, wie man das nöthiger Weise von den Parteigenossen erwarten konnte. Spät, sehr spät kamen überhaupt Nachrichten an uns, wenn Parteigenossen aufs neue in brutaler Weise gemaβregelt waren; spät, sehr spät wurden wir, und häufig erst dann, wenn wir uns selbst darum gekümmert hatten, in die Lage versetzt, helfend und mildern einzugreifen. Wir hatten selsbverständlich erwartet, daβ überall da, wo Parteigenossen gemaβregelt wurden, die übrigen Parteigenossen an Ort und Stelle Berathung pflegen, Berichte einsenden (…)'.
52. Ibid., 69 'eine so auβerordentliche Masse von Arbeit gehabt, daβ ich mich (…) oft gesehnt habe, endlich einmal diese furchtbare Last los zu sein.'
53. In German *Vertrauensmann*.
54. 'Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei,' 108–9.
55. Gary P. Steenson, *'Not One Man! Not One Penny!': German Social Democracy, 1863–1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 26.
56. Rodney Barker, *Legitimating Identities: The Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
57. 'Proceedings Attending the Formation of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations,' 14.
58. Ibid., 4.
59. 'Objects and Constitution of the National Federation of Liberal Association' Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation of Liberal Associations, Special Collections, University of Bristol, 4.
60. 27, November 1889, Francis Schnadhorst Correspondence, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham University.
61. Ibid.
62. 23, September 1886, Francis Schnadhorst Correspondence, Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham University.

63. 'Protokoll über den dritten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei', *Protokolle der Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei,* (Glashütten am Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), V–XV.
64. *Das Eisenacher Programm,* 46 'Ich begrüße den Tag des heutigen Kongresses als den schönsten meines ganzen Lebens! (…) Endlich ist der Tag gekommen, wo die Einigkeit unter den deutschen Arbeitern hergestellt wird!'
65. 'Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei,' 65 'von verschiedenen Seiten' 'straffere Zentralisation'.
66. Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit: Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz.*
67. Barker, *Legitimating Identities*, 36–7.
68. Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
69. Barker, *Legitimating Identities.*
70. August Bebel, *Aus meinem Lebel* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), 371.
71. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties.*
72. Quote from *The Times* in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 131.
73. Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968).
74. Please see for the NLF, Eugenio Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
75. A view most prominently supported by Robert Michels's law of iron oligarchy, but also directly or indirectly presented by later scholars. Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie;* Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties.*

CHAPTER 11

Agitate, Educate, and Organize: Radical Networks in New York in the Early 1880s

Robert Allen

Introduction

In the early 1880s, a range of political organizations were available in New York[1]—clubs, leagues, unions, federations and parties. They provided opportunities, resources and events that would express the many concerns held by individuals, and groups, who believed that the current democratic machine, dominated by Tammany Hall, could never deliver them from the grasping hands of the monopolists. For the network of radicals, the club or party remained a means to an end, rather than an organizational end in itself. This contribution will concentrate on individuals and activities within a short period of time rather than long-term developments. The limitation to location and timescale provides an opportunity to look at the spectrum of organizational opportunities available to activists—from permanent national parties to short-lived local clubs—and at the extended and informal social network from which the individuals who led and populated those organizations came. Using a synchronic horizontal analysis of this brief period in time, rather than focusing on the trajectories of the individual organizations, allows a consideration of the multiple organiza-

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tional memberships of activists, the characteristics of their organizations, the varied political and personal experiences they encountered, and the overarching commonality and constancy of purpose they exhibited across the organizations. Such a detailed synchronic approach can show that the radical labour movement was more important than any particular organization; the one moment when everything came together turned out to be the great parade of September 1882, bringing labour onto the streets in a way not seen before, and establishing USA Labor Day.

The story of two men will provide us with a starting point. In June 1880, the New York press announced the arrival of an 'English Agitator', John De Morgan, a 'celebrated speaker in the people's cause' and 'anti-monarchist and anti-Land Grabber'.[2] Now in his early 30s, he had been a notorious agitator and radical journalist for over a decade. Irish-born, but educated in England, he had established the Cork branch of Marx's International Workingmen's Association (the First International), founded a short-lived National Republican Brotherhood, had leadership roles in various populist causes including the preservation of urban common lands, and had attempted to establish a third party, the People's Political Union. However—tired, broke and despondent—he immigrated to the USA where he hoped to 'labour for radicalism … under the more glorious—because more free—flag of America'.[3]

As a newcomer to the USA, he faced a bewildering panoply of radical organizations and causes. Kazin has described the late nineteenth century in the USA as a 'frenzied political landscape'[4] and Lause noted that during this period 'Gotham politics experienced a confusing whirlwind of parties and open factions'.[5] Ostrogorski, writing in 1902, commented that:

> American parties have never been parties in the European sense … It is difficult to create a third party because in reality there are many parties, i.e. factions … A third party is simply a faction that has opted out of one of the two large coalitions.[6]

Though described as 'English', De Morgan used his Irish birth and connections and his interest in land reform as a starting point for his new radical career. He had arrived in New York during the run-up to the 1880 Presidential election and, ever the opportunist, quickly attached himself to the radical Greenback-Labor party (GLP), for a few years the primary national electoral vehicle for the radical labour movement. Here, he found himself regularly lecturing alongside another exiled 'English Irishman'

and ex-internationalist, Robert Blissert. Resident in the USA since 1867, Blissert, a tailor by trade, had been blacklisted after the London tailors' strike of 1865. Originally active in the New York branch of the First International, he was prominent in the Amalgamated Trades and Labor Union as well as his own Journeyman Tailors' Union. Like De Morgan, he was a 'skilled and inflammatory speaker', and the two of them quickly made an effective platform partnership in support of the GLP.[7] Despite their differences—Blissert representing the politicized trade union movement and De Morgan a more populist anti-monopoly stance—the GLP, for the moment, provided a useful base for both of them.

The activities of De Morgan and Blissert will provide the basis for a deeper look at Kazin's 'frenzied' landscape.[8] Although they came from very different ideological positions, the two men frequently crossed each other's paths, sometimes collaborated, knew the same people, were involved with some of the same organizations, disagreed over particular issues and shared some common views. They were part of an extended network of radical activists working in New York that underpinned a range of organizations—including political parties—that waxed and waned in this period.

The Election of 1880

The GLP was a coalition of different reform groups, 'independent' parties and causes, originally promoting the idea that a paper currency would be better for business and farmers. In 1878, some national electoral success led to the broadening of its programme to cover other radical and labour interests.[9] Lause noted that no minor or third party in American history had 'ever mobilized support as ideologically diverse [drawing in] lesser Democratic and Republican politicians … the Socialistic Labor party … [as well as a] wide range of woman suffragists, African American militants, spiritualists, vegetarians, environmentalists and others ….'[10] After years in the third-party wilderness of the UK, De Morgan would have found this opportunity to practise his agitational skills enticing.

The GLP was not, however, the only minor national party seeking to have an impact upon the forthcoming election. During the 1870s, the Socialistic Labor party (SLP) had emerged from a base within the First International.[11] Despite an ongoing internal rift between the electorally oriented Lassalleans and the union-oriented Marxists, some tenuous unity had allowed the party to cautiously explore a tactical fusion with the GLP,

'to unite [and] make common cause against the common enemy'. This allowed the GLP to claim that it 'was ideally positioned to mount a serious challenge to the country's two old and corrupt parties'.[12]

The uneasy coalition was possible because most radicals (and much of the general population) held the view that the USA was ruled by 'bankers, stock-jobbers, land-grabbers and professional politicians to the exclusion of those whose labor produces its wealth and pays its taxes'.[13] The solution, it was claimed, was a stronger anti-monopolist intervention from a government of the 'people', which neither the Democrats nor the Republicans seemed willing or able to provide.[14] However, while 'anti-monopoly' provided a powerful unifying force for the Greenbackers, the accumulation of the wide range of different interests and causes meant that 'managing the combustible combination of visionaries, idealistic reformers, eccentrics and demagogues gathered under the Greenback banner would prove to be a much tougher challenge'.[15]

Land Reform

The turbulence in the political landscape was exacerbated by the recent rapid development of the Irish Land League movement on both sides of the Atlantic. De Morgan and Blissert were quickly drawn, as semi-professional agitators, into the briefly flourishing US branch of the movement. Established in Ireland in late 1879 to promote land reform and reduced rents, the league was launched in the USA with fundraising visits from the two Irish leaders—Charles Parnell and Michael Davitt. Although Parnell, the aristocratic MP, and Davitt, a former Fenian, were very different, they presented, initially at least, a unifying framework of reform with battle cries of 'Down with landlordism!' and 'The land for the people', which proved to be equally popular on both sides of the Atlantic.[16]

Their campaign was picked up by the radical weekly newspaper, the *Irish World*, which became the principal vehicle for distributing funds from the USA to Ireland.[17] However, the *Irish World* claimed that the issue went well beyond that of Irish land, arguing that:

> … while a comparatively few men have gotten possession of the wealth of Nature and labor, there are nine hundred millions of bare backs and as many millions of empty stomachs in the world …. It is not the Irish Land question, or the English Land Question, but the Land Question itself that we must study and solve…[18]

The Land League, like many organizations of this period, had inherent tensions, which were always near the surface. The national organization was tightly controlled by moderate nationalists, respectable representatives of the middle class, who would ultimately unite against the *Irish World*'s 'pernicious doctrines of communism', which saw Ireland 'as a means of working out a social revolution in other countries', notably the USA.[19] This linkage of Irish land reform to wider concerns about American capitalism and democracy became a central theme for many radical organizations. In particular, the work of the political economist Henry George—rapidly emerging as a prominent figure on both sides of the Atlantic as a result of his book *Progress and Poverty* and his views on land tax reform—provided a focal point for radical thinking.

Labour Reform

Blissert was also a prominent figure within New York's labour movement, not just through his general union activities but also because of his membership in the secret, fraternal and ritualistic Knights of Labor (KOL).[20] The Knights, now over a decade old, still had fewer than 10,000 members, but was, under its new leader Terence Powderly, going through a transformation that would see it become public, open and very large.[21] Powderly would attempt to make it into an organization that 'challenged corporate control at the workplace and the hegemony of two major parties at the polls'.[22] Rather than focussing on conventional trade union structures, concerns and activities, it sought to bring all workers (not just the skilled) 'into the fold', through the identification of common social and economic issues—such as the eight-hour day—and by developing a 'grand army of the discontented'.

Formally, the Knights considered that their District and Local Assemblies should be above electioneering. The Order, it was said, 'teaches MAN his duty by educating him on the great question of labor'.[23] It was made clear that while 'political action is absolutely necessary to secure the interests of labor … to have political action we must have education … ORGANIZE! EDUCATE!' At this time, many socialists in the USA had an evolutionary view of socialism in which the education of the workforce would be necessary before society could transition to a new form. At demonstrations, banners would pronounce 'Agitate, Educate, Organize' and 'Correct Ideas Must Precede Useful Action'.

However, the Knights, and specifically Powderly, encouraged individuals to explore other political opportunities.[24] In particular, they had much in sympathy with the emerging position of the GLP and its new socialist partner, and its most prominent activists and many of its members were connected to, even leaders of, these other organizations. These overlapping memberships meant that organizations were sometimes seen—on occasion correctly—as public fronts for the secretive Knights. While the Knights in New York were, until 1882, few in number, they featured individuals from what Phelan has called a 'stellar cast' of labour leaders in the region.[25]

In the months leading up to the 1880 presidential election the Greenback platform, as represented on the streets by De Morgan and Blissert, therefore provided an electoral umbrella for a number of organizations whose members preferred to sit outside the two mainstream political parties—including the Socialists, the Land League, the Knights and the trade union movement generally. The fragility of such a combination was, however, never far from the surface. As the election loomed, the *Irish World* commented that, 'Greenbackism is by no means a perfect and well-defined protest …. But as against the two great swindles that oppose it, it is the hope of the American people'.[26] The hope was to be thwarted. The electoral successes of the 1878 campaign were not repeated, with the party's presidential vote a paltry 3% of the total. *The New York Times* concluded, prematurely but not unreasonably, that the party was 'apparently dead'.[27]

Spreading the Light

De Morgan moved on from the GLP, prompted not just by electoral failure but by the need to earn money. In England, he had claimed that, while he was called a 'professional agitator', agitation always seemed to lose him money.[28] He now became editor of a new weekly paper called *House and Home: a Journal of Literature, Science, Agriculture and General News.* While aiming to be 'an advocate of all that tends to make the homes of people happy and contented', it wished to 'tear the mask from society' and 'show the hideous deformities beneath'. The paper's banner read 'Equal Laws! Equal Rights!! Justice to All!!!'[29]

The paper was in fact a vehicle for a new 'People's party' established by a retired businessman, Bradhurst Schieffelin.[30] Believing that neither the republicans nor the democrats could prevent the eventual downfall of

the Republic, Schieffelin advocated the need for a third party that would promote legislation to limit inheritance and prevent the accumulation of wealth by a small minority. De Morgan, while still writing and lecturing on the broader radical issues dear to his heart, effectively became the public face of Schieffelin's party.[31]

Blissert and De Morgan continued to encounter each other, for example, in early 1881 at the recently established Brooklyn Spread the Light Club. The Club, with the overt purpose of 'diffusing knowledge on social and scientific subjects among the masses to enable them to assert their rights against the universally felt influence of domineering corporations and monopolies', was based around weekly lectures from New York's prominent radicals, which attracted large crowds and significant press attention.[32] Party politics was tabooed. De Morgan and Blissert were both occasional lecturers. The committee members were principally socialists and Greenbackers, frequently Irish, and with a strong connection to the Knights.

The dominant theme at the meetings was the land question, and the club drew its name from the *Irish World*'s Spread the Light campaign, aimed initially at fundraising for Ireland but quickly becoming a more general banner for education and agitation. The first speaker at the club had been the land tax reformer Henry George.[33] The Club provided a weekly focal point for individuals with attachments to a range of political, ethnic, reform and labour groups, a crossover forum bridging the complex interconnections between the more formal organizations.

However, many regarded the Club as simply a front for Brooklyn's Local Assembly (LA) 1562 of the still-secret Knights. While the Club undoubtedly provided a public platform for the Order's members, it was neither a recruitment device for it (or if it was, a very unsuccessful one),[34] nor was it simply there to provide an alternative vehicle for the Order's programme. The Knights' local leaders themselves simultaneously belonged to a variety of organizations, while some of the Club's committee had no direct connection to the Order. In the weekly life of the leading members, the Club, the Order, a 'third' party, a trade union (and/or a trade union federation), the Land League and/or any of the numerous other clubs and organizations alive in New York could be featured.[35] Many, for example, including Blissert and De Morgan, attended the short-lived Brooklyn Church of Humanity, described in the press as a 'communistic church' which claimed 'the Lord Jesus Christ as a Communist, without a foot of land'. This was run by the somewhat eccentric Reverend Henry Kimball,

who was a prominent member of the Spread the Light Club but who had no evident direct connections to the Knights, the GLP or the SLP.[36]

The Changing Landscape

Through 1881, De Morgan became publicly preoccupied with the People's party which aimed to 'provide a remedy for … the demoralized state of the present parties'. At an 'anti-monopoly labor meeting' held by the party, De Morgan and Blissert both made speeches.[37] Elsewhere this theme of third parties, new and old, continued. The 'people', 'labor' and 'anti-monopoly' were dominant, sometimes overlapping, organizing principles. The GLP, supposedly dead, sought to relaunch itself within New York in order 'to rescue the liberties of the people from the grasp of the banking, railroad and other monopolies'.[38] Meanwhile, the KOL moved, in theory at least, to become a public organization, the beginning of a period of dramatic national expansion. The Spread the Light Club began to transform into the more overtly KOL-dominated Advance Labor Club, effectively a pseudonym for LA1562, which—disinclined either to give up secrecy or to support the central leadership—was creating discontent within the Knights. As this internal battle within the Order emerged, the Irish Land League began to crumble under its own internal and inherent tensions, principally between the supporters of the moderate Parnell and the radical Davitt.

At the end of 1881, prompted initially by the increasingly obvious gap between these two branches of the Irish movement, Blissert convened a meeting of representatives of over 40 trade unions to establish the Organization of United Trade and Labor Organizations of New York and Vicinity with the Brooklyn Knights prominently involved.[39] Twelve thousand men demonstrated against the 'tyrannous and dastardly action of the British Government' in suppressing Land League members.[40] With this success, Blissert saw an opportunity for a 'progressive labor federation' linking the interest in universal land reform with labour, and drawing in socialist, trade union and KOL principles.[41] This became the Central Labor Union (CLU) of New York and Vicinity in May 1882 and soon had over 50,000 affiliated members.

Retaining its commitment to land reform (and to the Irish cause), the CLU organized a mass meeting for Michael Davitt[42] who now tied labour unity and land reform to the theories of Henry George.[43] This commitment of Davitt's to George's land tax has been seen as 'the climax of the factional and ideological disputes within the American Land League'.[44]

The moderates now united against him and 'vented their deep-seated hostility to … social radicalism'.[45] Within three months, the *Irish World* stopped forwarding contributions to Ireland, complaining that 'there is no longer a Land League in existence' and that 'the heel has been put firmly down on the principle of the land for the people'.[46]

Labour United

The CLU platform quickly spread well beyond land reform, and the organization began to develop its own radical anti-monopoly campaign, ambitiously appealing 'to the labourers of the whole world'.[47] In June 1882, it took a big step and entered the political fray. At a 'monster mass meeting' Blissert announced that:

> … it is absolutely necessary that the industrial classes form a political party which shall legislate for the best interests of the whole of the people and regardless of class … we pledge our lives, sacred honor, and hearty support to the workingman's party.[48]

The following month it promoted 'political action under the title of the United Labor party [with] … every degree and kind of unity existing in the ranks of labor' … 'a starting point of a great victory for the working masses'.

Increasingly confident, the CLU was also planning the step that would put it, and its organizers, into the history books. In September 1882, it held a 'Mammoth Festival, Parade and Pic-Nic' attended by 20,000 people that is now held to be, in effect, the first USA Labor Day. This parade was deemed a great success.

The Election of 1882

The motives for the parade have been variously identified as part of the emerging battle between militants and the leadership of the Knights, as a wish of the CLU to impress New York with the power of the labour movement or as a more general attempt by activists to provide inspiration for improving the lot of workers.[49] The fact that the CLU had, several months earlier, entered the 1882 political campaign, nominally as a 'United Labor party', and had stated the wish to use the parade as a vehicle for that party, has been mostly overlooked.

However, it is clear that, whatever the original intention of the parade, the election had been a significant feature. The parade's Grand Marshall, William McCabe, stated specifically:

> Taking into account the importance of the coming election, the workingmen … ought to join in the parade. A large and imposing demonstration will strike more terror in the hearts of the monopolists and their political tools than anything else can do. It will demoralise our enemy and will insure our success in the near future.[50]

After the parade, the *New York Herald* noted that 'the Central Labor Union members paraded to convince the political world of their strengths …. determined to show their numerical strength in order to satisfy the politicians [that] they must not be trifled with'.[51]

The 'festival' drew together the disparate organizations, their leaders and members, and demonstrated that their differences as organizational forms could be briefly, but dramatically, subsumed. In doing this, the network of activists, based for this purpose within the CLU, but representing, through their multiple memberships (individually and collectively), a wide range of organizations were able to leverage the city's labour movement. It was this capacity to momentarily unify thousands in its events, which made the CLU very different.

Meanwhile, the other minor parties were also gearing up for the election. The Greenbacks, after a 'battle royal over the land question', reaffirmed the party's 1880 platform, annexed the CLU's recently acquired platform, and laid claim to being the 'original anti-monopoly party'. However, many now took the view that the party had been hijacked by socialists[52] with a mixture of communism, anti-monopoly and land confiscation, which had 'succeeded in sinking the greenback theory of the party and substituting in its place their socialistic theories'.[53]

By October, the various campaigns had built up. At its 'first political mass meeting' of the 'CLU and the United Labor party'[54] Blissert said: 'It was the first time that ever workmen were organized on sound principles … [and] …. the CLU was the first party to recognize the democracy of labor'.[55] He told the party convention that, 'The time was coming when Greenbackers, Anti-Monopolists and Central Labor Unionists must stand on a common platform and unite their forces against both the old parties'.[56]

De Morgan was also campaigning, holding well-attended meetings for the People's party and gaining Schieffelin's nomination for

congressman-at-large. At one of the meetings De Morgan spoke of 'the evils arising out of the power of monopolies and corporations', supported by the ubiquitous Blissert who 'advocated the union of all independent parties on some broad platform and then success would be certain'.[57]

However, as in 1880, the optimism of the radical movement was quickly deflated. After the November election, the United Labor candidates met to discuss their performance at the ballot box. Blissert, attempting to make the best of the situation, said the Labor party 'should not be ashamed of the vote polled. They had made an advance from 600 [in 1880] … to 10,000', despite the 'poor management at the polls and against the Democratic tidal wave which swept over the country'. But for many, the poor management at the polls was the principal cause, with the CLU unable to provide the infrastructural machinery and sufficient people on the ground to gain success. One delegate said that 'unless the boxes were fully manned in the future the party would never elect a candidate'.[58] Others noted that it was not simply ballot management, but 'internal dissensions and unscrupulous leaders' that were the problem. The message was that the party, if it was to succeed, would have to operate like the other main parties, the very thing that worried such radicals most. The excursion into the political arena frightened most of them away—at least for the time being—from the establishment of their own party.

Being Organized

Between the presidential election of 1880, with its temporary coalition of socialists and Greenbackers, and the congressional mid-term election of late 1882 when, for the first time, labour attempted to bring together its own United Labor party, the radicals of New York engaged with a range of organizations that emerged, grew, flourished, declined or disappeared, or in the case of the Land League and the Spread the Light Club, did all of those things. The leading activists and agitators moved frequently and fluidly across the boundaries of these various organizations. Their individual centres of gravity may have been focussed around one (or a small number) of them, but between them the various organizations provided multiple and different opportunities for radicals to pursue their interests. Blissert, the unionist, and De Morgan the populist, wove their way through this complexity. As the organizations waxed and waned, it was to be such individuals, with their commonalities and differences (and their very different personalities and motivations) who provided continuity amidst the turbu-

lent organizational changes of the radical landscape. To them, a party, a club, a church, a trade union, a league, a federation and an assembly were all possibilities to influence and effect in different ways, at different times, to different purposes, with different constituencies.

This was helped by the fact that the organizations had much in common in terms of important issues. In these two years, they usually represented 'anti-monopoly', and the need for alternatives to the existing political parties, as central principles. Specific issues such as the eight-hour day were common to them. Increasingly the land tax reforms of Henry George provided a linking theme. A range of other smaller issues—antagonism to convict labour and the need for a professional civil service, for example—could supplement their programmes, but for the activists, there was sufficient in common for these organizations to be mostly acceptable to, and accepting of, them.

What did differ were the nature and scope of the organizations: size, culture, constituency, events, experience, public profile and impact. The Spread the Light Club, for example, provided an opportunity for leading radicals to 'educate' and an audience of several hundred to listen and, hopefully, learn; a trade union was a vehicle for specific, pragmatic, work-related issues and actions; the Knights offered an intense fraternal semi-masonic experience within a small local assembly but were principally devoted to nation-wide education and labour solidarity rather than pragmatism; the Land League was a unifying experience for the Irish bringing together the old and the new worlds; the CLU combined the world of unionism with that of large-scale political organization and action. The political 'party' threaded its way through these experiences.

So the experience of these organizations—in social and psychological terms as well as in relation to activity and impact—would have been very different. Some, like the GLP and SLP, had reasonably strong semi-permanent structures, with local, state and national bureaucracies and the paraphernalia of constitutions and conventions. But many of the clubs and local organizations were, in formal terms, unstructured, run by an ad hoc committee of varying membership and dependent on particular individuals to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. The more radical organizations often deliberately had no single formal 'leader' and would change the presidency or chairmanship on a rotating basis. The Spread the Light Club and the CLU were good examples. This approach was intended to ensure that organizations did not get captured by individuals or factions. Even in nationally based organizations, local level activity was often

fairly autonomous. For example, while the American Land League had a national bureaucracy, it was regarded by many as exactly that—a bureaucracy—and local branches quickly proliferated with their own emphases, 'brands', and often a defiantly independent approach to what they did, and how they did it.

The common existence of multiple organizational memberships inevitably brought together, within any one particular organization, people with very different histories, dispositions and demands. Tensions were inevitable. The CLU meetings in New York, for example, were constantly dominated by arguments about 'action' versus 'words', with trade union delegates infuriated by the inclination of others to make speeches, get into philosophical and political discussions, and generally refuse to act, and specifically to act in ways that would improve the short-term conditions of the members whom they were supposed to be representing. Intra- and inter-organizational battles sometimes seemed to occupy much of the energy and time of participants.

More positively, radical organizations were often more than just talking shops, political organizations or agitational vehicles. The lives of individuals, especially the prominent ones, were taken over by their radicalism, particularly as many of them were active in a number of organizations at any one point in time. To support this lifestyle, social activity was often integrated into the organization's activities, frequently embracing whole families. Demonstrations were often described as festivals, with attached picnics and entertainment. Music was a central feature of events, with glee clubs, choirs and concerts. The big events might have sports such as baseball and fireworks. Robert Weir noted that the KOL 'tried to rebuild community by constructing an entire KOL universe that embraced not only work and ideology, but also badges, parades, picnics, music, poetry, literature and religion'.[59]

The organizations were also a vehicle for the more personal and psychological needs of their members. The personalities of individuals were, not unexpectedly, a factor in the role they played in these organizations. De Morgan, throughout his career in radical politics on both sides of the Atlantic, needed to be on the platform and in charge. With no real capacity to be a team player or for organizational management, he moved through organizations—his own and others—briefly emerging as a 'star'—and then moving on.[60] Blissert, on the other hand, while always at the public front of an organization, looked to establish and construct organizations and used his undoubted skills to provide a framework for others to work col-

lectively around him. An example of this was his involvement with particularly prominent members of the New York radical fraternity at this time. These included Peter J McGuire—founder of the Carpenters' Union and of the American Federation of Labor (and a supposed 'father' of Labor Day)—who was, in his early career, a mercurial firebrand described as having blood 'at a temperature of 150 degrees in the shade'.[61] Like De Morgan he was happiest in the limelight and often appeared on the platform alongside Blissert. Another was Matthew Maguire, a machinist, with whom Blissert founded the CLU. Behind the public leaders were the many people who made the organizations work, ensuring that the meetings happened, the speakers were there, the handbills got printed, and the demonstrations occurred. Maguire was the archetype of that group, a perpetual secretary of organizations. Known as 'Faithful, good old Matt', he was in this period secretary to at least five organizations—the Brooklyn GLP, the Spread the Light Club, LA 1562 (and its pseudonymous Advance Labor Club) and the CLU.

For the ordinary members, the experience was very different in the various organizations. Most obviously, the esoteric rituals, as well as the secrecy, of the Knights provided a unique experience. In other organizations, it was the chance to hear speakers, debate issues, gain a sense of belonging or get something done that was important. Sunday was, inevitably, the busiest day in the radical calendar. In Brooklyn alone, there would have been over 50 meetings of one sort of another, running through the afternoon and evening. A major complaint from organizations was that, as a result, they were unable to get enough good speakers because of the competition. Blissert and De Morgan were among a group of itinerant speakers, who moved around the various organizations, sometimes paid for what they did (e.g. as with Land League activities). The meeting places were quite varied. Some were just commercially available halls, but others were dedicated facilities. The Spread the Light Hall, for example, while the base for the political activities of the club and its associated organizations, also played an important social function and membership provided, in addition to the lecture series, an informal meeting place, social and event space, and a library.

Women, while mostly absent from the formal organizational structures, and from the public platform, were frequently involved in the day-to-day social organization. Occasionally they did come into the limelight. For example, the fundraising activities of the Land League were very dependent on the establishment of the Ladies Land League in 1881, the leaders

of which—at least in Brooklyn—were related to the main male radical leaders within the city. Many branches of the League gave picnics and hosted weekend excursions, combining their fundraising activities with recreational outings.[62]

The significance of organizations therefore, particularly for the leading activists, was more than simply their political purpose. They were part of the construction of a radical lifestyle that supported and gave additional value to the activists' experience of their sometimes turbulent existence.

The 'Party'

The period covered in this chapter has been bounded by two sets of elections situated two years apart. Elections were events that provided a temporary, public, base that allowed the various radical organizations, party and non-party, and their constituent members, to express much of what they wanted, but without them having to fall into the clutches of the machine-based parties they so despised.

In the USA, the term 'party' was, during the late nineteenth century, very flexible. Usually utilizing the lower-case 'party', even within formal organizational designations, it could be applied to everything from a small local group, to a federation of such small groups pursuing a specific theme, to a full-blown party with regional or national aspirations and infrastructure. The term could be attached to single-issue organizations, often had no pretensions to state or national identity, and may have had little expectation of permanency or, indeed, electoral success. Other than the GLP, which for a few years appeared to be capable of crossing over into the mainstream, these minor parties resolutely presented themselves as intent on challenging and changing the system rather than joining it.

The nineteenth century was a period when third-party and independent candidates had much greater success at the ballot box than in the twentieth century. Richardson's mammoth four-volume series 'Others' tracks 1000 minor parties that have existed over 200 years—many in a single town, city, county or state, with the majority barely surviving one or two election cycles. A number of factors made them particularly prolific in the nineteenth century, including the inclination of newspapers to provide meaningful coverage to third-party candidates, the lack of burdensome ballot access barriers, and no government printed ballots and parties, with voters free to print and distribute their own.[63]

Therefore, while many radicals claimed antagonism towards political parties, the option of establishing, joining and voting for parties was always there and frequently used. The line between radical organizations and parties was fluid and ephemeral. Candidates might seek and receive nominations from a number of parties, and might move regularly between them. A party's nominating convention might attract a number of affiliated, even oppositional, groups. The 1880 GLP convention was, for example, described as 'a cacophony of discordant voices representing almost every reform movement in the country'.[64] Loyalty, exclusivity, chance of success and permanence were not necessarily important components of membership or support.

Ostrogorski took the view that 'third' parties at this time usually emerged 'in opposition to the existing economic regime, and as an expression of social discontent'. While they were generally ephemeral, they would reappear sometimes with different names but 'more or less analogous or kindred objects'. Although they took on different forms and structures, with different programmes, they shared the position that it was their role to 'rescue the country from the clutches of the corporations and the monopolists' and looked on the two main parties as 'accomplices of these latter and as an obstacle to reform'.[65] In the end, however, he took the view that such third parties were all doomed to 'fail' because 'one or another of the old parties was willing and anxious to coalesce with them, or to take the wind out of their sails by accepting or "capturing" their program'.

This notion that they always 'failed' can however be contested. It can be argued that, in this period and this place at least, these parties were not always intended, or at least expected, to 'succeed' in conventional electoral terms. Instead, they provided profile, impact, experience and activity before, and at, the frequent electoral events. They established a platform, displayed—physically and politically—on the streets and in the press, which allowed the presentation of the views of the activists to the broader public. They provided an intense political experience for the participants and, in the case of the very large parades, the observers.

Conclusion

The parties, and the elections, were but one of a number of organizational forms, activities and events—brought into being by a number of individual activists—that underpinned the overarching network of radicals within

New York, and the various interwoven strands of the radical platform. The parties in this period were as much about opportunities and events—fluid and ephemeral—as were the clubs, leagues, unions, federations through which they wove. All were embedded within the structures of the activist network, components of, rather than the primary vehicles for, radical activity. As the radicals in New York moved from the presidential election of 1880 to the mid-term elections of 1882, they explored the various channels and opportunities to take part in the electoral process through existing parties and organizations—relaunching the GLP, mostly discarding the SLP, establishing a fledgling United Labor party, promoting a nascent Anti-Monopoly party, playing with 'People's parties'. Meanwhile, they worked on a day-by-day basis within a wide range of other non-party radical organizations, pursuing the same interests but through different means.

Underpinning much of the activity of this radical network and their organizational vehicles was what Canovan has called the 'democratic pretensions' of popular activists. Seeing themselves as 'true democrats', their interest is in making sure that democracy keeps to its promise of 'power to the people'. They themselves claim to be the voice of 'the people', and the organizations established provide a range of outlets for that voice. That ensures that what Canovan terms the 'redemptive' face of democracy—the 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'—balances, and if necessary challenges, the 'pragmatic' face which provides the mechanics and machinery of a representative democracy. As such, says Canovan, popular political activity (populism in the broadest sense of that word[66]) accompanies, and is integrated into, democracy like a 'shadow'.

The extended and highly energetic network of activists, supported by a large constituency of highly participatory followers, sought to use the different structures, cultures and experiences of the different organizations to gain traction and to maximize impact, but also to ensure continuity such that the organizations might disappear but the aims and purposes—general and specific—persisted. At a time when the mainstream political parties had yet to prove themselves and demonstrate long-term sustainability, it was the complex iteration between a highly active informal network and a multitude of organizational forms (including, but not principally, political parties) that provided the platform for the radical thinking and activity that would in a later period come to be accepted aspects of the platforms of established national parties. While the individual organizations grew, peaked and usually disappeared, over vari-

ous periods of time, the network of radicals continued on. The oft-noted disruption and dysfunctionality, impermanence and incoherence, within the radical movement were ameliorated by the enduring existence of the strong social networks that ensured the continuity of position, purpose and practice.

Notes

1. At this stage, New York City and Brooklyn were separate cities. For the purposes of this paper, 'New York' will refer to the five cities that would be incorporated in 1898.
2. *Evening Telegram*, 13 June 1880; *Irish World*, 12 June 1880; *Sun* 15 July 1880.
3. For a full study of De Morgan's life, in both the UK and the US, see R. Allen, "'The People's Advocate, Champion and Friend': the transatlantic career of Citizen John De Morgan (1848–1926)," *Historical Research* 86, nr. 234 (2013): 684–711.
4. M. Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History 1877–98* (New York, 1993), 27.
5. M. A. Lause, *The Civil War's Last Campaign: James B. Weaver, the Greenback Labor Party and the Politics of Race and Section* (Lanham MD, 2001), 29.
6. M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties: The United States*, edited and abridged by S. M. Lipset (New Brunswick NJ, 1982), xi.
7. R. H. Bayor and T. Meagher, *The New York Irish* (Baltimore, 1996), 178.
8. There were many other candidates for this focus, but the two men are sufficiently similar, different and interwoven to make their apparently random selection purposeful.
9. D. G. Richardson, *Others: Third Party Politics from the Nation's Founding to the Rise and Fall of the Greenback-Labor Party* (Lincoln NE, 2004), 478.
10. Lause, *The Civil War's Last Campaign*, iv.
11. The organization had been moved by Marx and Engels to New York City in 1872.
12. Richardson, *Others*, 497; *Irish World*, 26 June 1880; Richardson, *Others*, 513.

13. Robert B. Mitchell, *Skirmisher: The Life, Times and Political Career of James B. Weaver* (Roseville MN, 2008), 97.
14. Lause, *The Civil War's Last Campaign*, 169.
15. Richardson, *Others*, 513.
16. J. J. Green, "American Catholics and the Irish Land League," *Catholic Historical Review* 35, nr. 1 (1949): 19–42, there 28; *New York Times*, 20 May 1880.
17. P. Coleman, J. Byrne and J. King, *Ireland and the Americas: Culture, Politics and History* (Oxford, 2008), 349. Gladstone would later claim that without the *Irish World* and the money it collected, there would have been no agitation in Ireland.
18. *Irish World*, 5 June 1980.
19. E. Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York, 1980), 166.
20. Formally, *The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor*. Blissert was an organizer of the KOL's Local Assembly (LA) 1563 in New York City.
21. By 1886, it would peak at around 700,000 members.
22. R. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park PA, 1996), xviii; C. Phelan, *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor* (Westport, 2000), 1.
23. *Journal of United Labor*, 15 May 1880.
24. LA 1562 would become known as the Advance Labor Club and LA 1563 the Excelsior Labor Club.
25. Phelan, *Grand Master Workman*, 97.
26. *Irish World*, 30 October 1880.
27. *New York Times*, 14 November 1880.
28. Allen, "The People's Advocate, Champion and Friend," 691.
29. *House and Home*, 14 February 1881.
30. This was not, however, the only People's party being established. Simultaneously, another was set up in Brooklyn by a group of temperance advocates who wished to 'redeem our party from ring or boss rule [and] rebuke and put down the machinations, trickery and deception of party leaders'.
31. *House and Home*, 13 March 1881.
32. Most notably in the *Irish World* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The Spread the Light Club warrants a much fuller investigation and will be the subject of a further paper.

33. For a further discussion of the work of Henry George in this period, and specifically in relation to the Spread the Light Club, see R. Allen, "'We do hold that land, light and water are the free gifts of nature': the Spread the Light Club of Brooklyn, 1880–1882", *Academic Association of Historians in Australian and New Zealand Business Schools, 4th Annual Conference, 2012.*
34. During the period 1880–1885, LA 1562 always had fewer than 50 members. The Spread the Light Club attracted several hundred to its meetings. See J. Garlock, *Knights of Labor Assemblies: 1879–1889* (Ann Arbor, 1982).
35. For example, Blissert and De Morgan both lectured at the Somebody Club, a weekly lecture group.
36. *Brooklyn Eagle*, 15 March 1881.
37. *New York Herald*, 27 October 1881.
38. *New York Times*, 15 February 1881.
39. *New York Tribune*, 18 November 1881; J. Grossman, "Who is the father of Labor Day?" *Labor History* 14, nr. 4 (1973): 612–23, there 616.
40. M. A. Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880–1886," *Labor History* 16, nr. 2 (1975): 184–229, there 195–96.
41. Gordon, "The Labor Boycott," 198.
42. *Sun*, 6 July 1882.
43. Gordon, "The Labor Boycott," 199.
44. Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 189.
45. Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 189–91; Ely M. Janis, "Petticoat Revolutionaries: Gender, Ethnic Nationalism and the Irish Land League in the United States," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27, nr. 2 (2008): 5–27, there 22.
46. He also noted that that the *Irish World* had forwarded over $342,000 to Irish relief over three years, over 60% of the total sent from the US.
47. *Truth*, 9 February 1882.
48. *New York Times*, 6 June 1882.
49. Grossman, "Who is the father of Labor Day," 618. The literature on the 'first labor day' is extensive and regularly revisited. See, for example, Theodore F. Watts, *The First Labor Day Parade, Tuesday, September 5, 1882: Media Mirrors to Labor's Icons* (Silver Spring MD, 1983); and Michael Kazin and Steven J. Ross, "America's

Labor Day: The Dilemma of a Worker's Celebration," *The Journal of American History* 78 (March 1992): 1294–323.

50. Richard P. Hunt, "The First Labor Day," *American Heritage Magazine* 33, nr. 5 (1982): 109–12.
51. *New York Herald*, 6 September 1882.
52. *Brooklyn Eagle*, 20 July 1882.
53. *New York World*, 21 July 1882.
54. *Truth*, 6 October 1882.
55. *Truth*, 4 October 1882.
56. *New York Gazette*, 3 November 1882.
57. *Truth*, 10 October 1882 and 17 October 1882.
58. *Sun*, 13 November 1882.
59. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil*, xix.
60. Allen, "We do hold that land, light and water are the free gifts of nature," 621.
61. Phelan, *Grand Master Workman*, 100.
62. Janis, "Petticoat Revolutionaries," 14.
63. Richardson, *Others*, 9–10.
64. Richardson, *Others*, 508.
65. Ostrogorski, *Democracy*, 235.
66. M. Canovan, "Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy," *Political Studies* XLVII (1999): 2–16.

CHAPTER 12

Party Versus Party: Beatrice Webb and the Ascent of the British Labour Party

Hanneke Hoekstra

In January 1924, the British socialist and reformer Beatrice Webb joyfully noted in her diary that the press was beginning to mention that 'the Labour Party, with its usual foresight, has organized its own London Society'! She continued by gloating about how lucky it was that they had done so. However, the party, she realized, would need all their 'sense of solidarity and puritanism to keep some of the frailer vessels upstanding against the onslaughts of duchesses and millionaires against their integrity'.[1] In the well-known fashion of Britain's best circles, Beatrice Webb had started to organize political luncheons and fancy dress dances. Shortly before, her husband Sidney Webb had joined the first Labour Cabinet as Minister of Labour, and the Webbs found themselves unexpectedly in the centre of political power. Beatrice Webb, together with her husband Sidney, was commonly regarded in England as well as on the Continent as the intellectual leader of British socialism. One would hardly expect that their efforts to bring about true political change would include an

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imitation of what they must have considered as the corrupting influence of the upper classes, who through the manipulative power of the petticoats of marchionesses and duchesses had their way anyway. Early on in her life, she had found that personal vanity was an 'occupational disease' of London Society and that it should be avoided as the 'very Devil'.[2]

Yet, in addition to improving the rhetorical skills of Labour candidates, Beatrice Webb had been busy since 1921 polishing the social skills of Labour women as well. She did so by founding the Half-Circle Club, a society that organized lectures, luncheons and dances for the wives of Labour MPs. The object of this club was to prepare Labour women for an active role in British political life and to cultivate something like a socialist sociability. Apparently, the influence of Society was still strong enough for Beatrice Webb to worry about naïve Labour couples who would be vulnerable to the political game of the dinner table. She herself reluctantly assumed the role of political hostess to the new Labour Party but vowed to avoid London Society and Court functions, pleading ill health and old age. 'Also I want to give a lead against participation in London Society as a desirable part of the routine of a Cabinet Minister and his family'.[3] The Half-Circle Club should function as an alternative.

Her concern with the role of Labour wives in political life raises an intriguing question. Why now, would Beatrice Webb, a committed socialist who obviously abhorred the corruptions of Society, foresee a role for Labour women in political life modelled on a gendered tradition that looked backwards, rather than forward? Was not such a function wholly out of date in the era of democracy in which the professional organization of mass political parties had taken over the functions previously fulfilled by the aristocratic women incorporated in the political pursuits of their families? Had not the political hostess died a quiet but certain death with the arrival of democracy? The riddle of Beatrice Webb's apparently inexplicable pursuits touches upon the structure of British politics, the particular position certain women traditionally held in British political life and the nature of party politics.

Not everyone in Great Britain, not even those who considered themselves to be 'progressives', believed in the added value of party organization. There were other practices available for influencing the political process. When Beatrice Webb became a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, she did not find all committee members to be cooperative. 'Lord George gives me unhesitating support; my difficulty is with Sir Samuel Provis. But I had the most friendly chat with him this afternoon,

and he comes to dine to meet a carefully selected party on Wednesday'.[4] In England, the dinner table stood for the existence of a strong, informal political culture that revolved around Parliament. The informal setting in which much of the political process took place was gendered. Women had a pivotal role in the organization and hosting of social parties that brought politicians of various creed and ambition together. In general, historians have showed a tendency to concentrate on the male spaces in politics, such as Parliament, the electoral platform or the party convention. Yet it was in the female space of the salon, the dining room or the ballroom that reputations were wrecked or leaders were chosen.[5]

Shifting the historical camera to the paper trail of the political behaviour of women is a useful method to reveal this considerable informal side of British political culture. In this chapter, I will argue that, particularly in England, parties in the sense of a festive gathering were in fact an impediment to the development of political parties in the fashion of their Continental equivalents. The role of elite women in British political life around Parliament and party constitutes the framework of my analysis. I will test my case by employing the lens of the Labour Party for the same reason that Robert Michels chose to study the German SPD to argue his 'iron law of oligarchy'; socialist parties have the ambition to be democratic at every level.[6] In addition, after 1870 formal organization and seeking strength in numbers became intrinsic to socialism. Thus, Beatrice Webb's aristocratic manoeuvring on behalf of the poor will prove my case.

The Political Hostess

Recent historiography on the political influence of aristocratic women in the eighteenth century has significantly changed the received idea that women were devoid of political power before they won the vote. On the contrary, the dynastic nature of aristocratic politics allowed women of the nobility to have a significant role in Britain's ruling class.[7] Some privileged women were players to be reckoned with, as is evidenced in the considerable documentation they have left behind in the form of diaries, memoirs and letters. They entered the power game on an individual basis using 'ancien régime techniques of female influence'—that is, using their femininity to play upon the passions of powerful men. At the time of the accession of George III, duchesses, marquesses and viscountesses could, due to the familial nature of aristocratic politics, fulfil a significant role in

British political life. Elaine Chalus emphasizes the importance of the social dimension of politics during this era.[8]

In a society where bureaucracy and party organization did not yet completely govern the political process, the social rituals surrounding the political power game could be crucial to its outcome. Successful political women were invariably socially skilled, intelligent and well informed. Above all, their charm was vital in determining their degree of power.[9] As hostesses to the Tory or Whig elite they could become quite powerful, organizing balls and dinners to promote family interests. As canvassers, they could be instrumental in elections.[10] In general, the pivotal role of certain elite women was crucial to the culture of power in Britain's ruling elite and continued to be substantive until the Second World War.[11] The classical conception of a culture of power, in terms of patronage and familial and personal alliances, has allowed women in circles of political elites, hitherto always hidden behind the scenes of Parliament and party, to become visible as vital to the creation of a political culture and a political society, which proved to be remarkably stable.[12]

The perception of elite women as agents of power certainly adds to a vision of higher politics as governed by alliances and intrigue. Indeed, the eighteenth-century trope of 'petticoat government', as Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson have argued, suggests that contemporaries were well aware that women were capable of exploiting 'various sites of power'.[13] The role of elite women reveals the important relationship between informal and formal aspects of power, between private influence and public rule. Patronage, social influence, that elusive field, caught in the double meaning of the word 'party' and psychological support were aspects of female power that could make or ruin political careers. In addition, in the absence of professional party organizations, inside or outside Parliament, communication could assume only an informal character. It made no difference whether it concerned the exchange between front- and backbench or party-political communication with opponents or the press. The venues for communication with supporters outside parliaments or the press were even scarcer. The entertainment of the political hostess served all these functions.[14]

In the mid-Victorian age, Lady Palmerston held grand evening receptions for a politically diverse crowd. In fact, these parties reflected the change in the structure of politics and consequently also the altered status of these 'political parties'. In the period 1815–45, political allegiance often polarized around issues such as the Corn Laws, reform and so forth. The social consequence was partisan entertainment. However,

in the period 1846–65 entertainment became more inclusive of other 'parties' including quite a few backbench MPs. Lady Palmerston's large receptions across party lines were crucial to the unstable years of the mid-Victorian era marked by the government of shifting coalitions of weak parties. These informal social occasions ensured that the delicate political process of compromise and coalition continued. These gatherings reflected the party-political instability of these decades and allowed a broad spectrum of political opinion to literally stay on speaking terms. Had Lady Palmerston's parties remained more socially exclusive, it would have aggravated political relations. 'My parties are very popular and their success is chiefly due to the fact that all political factions are to be found there', Emily Palmerston wrote to Dorothea Lieven. The aristocracy confirmed its dominance, however, by the social exclusivity of an invitation to Cambridge House.[15]

Reynolds concludes, as a matter of course, that 'any increase in the electorate […], diminished the power of the aristocracy and muted the voice of the aristocratic woman'.[16] The great salons of Lady Palmerston or Lady Waldegrave with their connections to important newspapers such as the *Morning Post* and *The Times* had lost their political centrality. The implication is that the machinery of increased party organization, the hallmark of democracy, competing for votes took over many functions of the hostess. Even the extra-parliamentary practice of influencing decision-making could be said to be conducted through the institutions of national extra-parliamentary party organizations that pressured their representatives to execute the party-programme. However, contrary to the suggestion of Reynolds, the decline and fall of the aristocracy did not necessarily mean that the political hostess perished with it.

After the Second Reform Act (1867), the social structure of politics and the redistribution of power endowed the political dinner party with yet another function, namely the fusion of the aristocracy with new money-eyed power of the industrial magnates. The political hostess was crucial to the successful merger of disparate social groups in order to maintain an equilibrium still favourable to the aristocratic element. Reynolds has argued that the one characteristic that influential Victorian hostesses appeared to share was their eccentric social background. They were born into non-aristocratic families, were divorcees or were heiresses to new money.[17] Their ability to communicate and form relationships with people from widely divergent backgrounds made them ideal hostesses, acting as catalysts for the integration of the old nobility and new magnates on

terms that were agreeable to the traditional sociability of the aristocracy. Actually, the importance of hostesses as gatekeepers to power increased when the economic position of the aristocracy fell in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Traditionally, the social structure of power was determined by birth and family. Now, social prestige became accessible through the accumulation of capital and social success. This resulted in a remarkable increase in the complexity of rules of etiquette and access to Society in order to avoid the entrance of unwanted newcomers. Before, kinship ties determined membership of the British power elite. Now, the aristocracy could 'choose' their next of kin and exclude those members of the family they saw unfit for political functions. Networks developed based on the principle of 'kin by choice'.[18] Hostesses were clearly of use in a political culture otherwise ill-equipped to accommodate new groups of voters and members of the elite.

Certainly, the political conduct of nineteenth-century aristocratic women can be understood in terms of the precepts of their world, which had been, by and large, familiar to titled women for centuries, and in this respect they were not feminist heroines *avant la lettre*.[19] The prospect of political rights for women threatened their privileged position and substantial influence and may have inspired the staunch anti-suffrage stance of prominent patrician hostesses. However, the politicking of elite women would not remain untouched by feminism. The feminist claim to political rights and the spirit of democracy was bound to influence the expectations and behaviour of elite women as well.[20] In 1919, hostess and wealthy supporter of the Conservative Party, American-born Nancy Astor, seized the historical moment and entered the House of Commons as the first female MP. In a way, her election was the logical conclusion to the paradox that the age of democracy and reform saw the rise of political power of elite women.

Both Liberal and Conservative parties created their organizations outside Parliament deliberately to recruit voters among the mass electorate after the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867. It was never meant, however, that these mass organizations should come to rule Parliament as well. Representation remained a matter of distance between elector and elected. It was the task of parliamentarians to organize support without sacrificing their freedom of action in Parliament.[21] McKenzie points out that in the British context, political parties, including the Labour party, never became subject to direct control of its mass membership. The representative nature of Parliament requires that members of Parliament, and thus

parliamentary parties also, must hold themselves responsible only to the electorate and not to the organization of supporters outside Parliament. Thus, in Great Britain there will always be marked difference between the Parliamentary Party and the Political Party whose primary function it is to sustain competing teams of potential leaders in the House of Commons. All other functions, such as influencing policy or the emergence of leaders within the parliamentary parties, must remain subsidiary.[22] The distance between extra-parliamentary organization and parliamentary party left ample space for informal politics, and for pressure groups, to influence the parliamentary process.

Even though the British aristocracy was disintegrating, the political system retained its aristocratic form much longer. In fact, in Great Britain the rise of new social groups did not immediately affect and transform the political structure. The social reality of the aristocratic constitution forced the middle and working classes to accommodate in order to obtain positions. A. Lawrence Lowell concluded in *The Government of England* (1908) that British government was still mainly in the hands of the upper class, although the exact social composition of that class had changed. Old landed gentry had lost their prominence to make room for representatives of commercial wealth. But then, the British aristocracy was never a closed body. Its resilience and power can be attributed to the capacity to open its gate at times to achievement and money. 'The connection of fashionable society with politics is still very close, perhaps on the whole not less close than at other times'.[23] The (kinship) networks of the ruling class covered the entire country. They met constantly at country houses and at entertainments in London. According to Lowell, such a 'constitution' created a sustainable Society, which could wield considerable influence. The early twentieth century also witnessed an increase in political weight at the cost of Parliament. It is in the cabinet that the governing class was most strongly represented. It was an effect of the practice that leadership developed in Parliament through social intercourse, by ties of blood or friendship in order to avoid the risk of misrule by appointing 'strangers'.

Seen in this light, the position of the hostess increased not only because of the extension of the franchise but also because of the continued importance of society for the informal politics around the cabinet. The role of society was key to the maintenance of the balance of power. Ultimately, in the female space of the political hostesses the relationships and social bases that make possible the operation of efficient government were forged. As Reynolds argued, the days of the grand Whig hostesses might have been

over by 1867, an inevitable sign that the end of aristocratic rule was near, yet the political structure proved to be resilient. The Conservative Party continued to rely much longer on the discreet social skills of the spouses of the rich and the powerful.[24]

Bourgeois women partly took over their functions of social gatekeepers and manipulators of power. In the period before the First World War, Society was dominated by the political ambition of nouveaux riche heiresses such as Nancy Astor and Margot Asquith. 'Dollar Princess' Nancy Astor, wife of Waldorf Astor, heir to an immense American fortune, had revitalized her country house Cliveden as a popular place for political parties. Once one of the homes of the Whig hostess Harriet Duchess of Sutherland, the patroness of Gladstone, it now functioned as the court of the Conservative Party. The purpose was to promote a political career for her husband.[25] His fortune was most convenient for the Conservative Party, anxious for millions in order to finance their election campaigns. Actually, the extension of the suffrage created space for revitalized role of the political hostess. Nancy Astor would receive not only Conservative leaders like Arthur Balfour and Lord Curzon but also the Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his wife Margot. Years before Nancy had befriended Margot on horseback during the hunting season, when Margot was enjoying the fox hunt and Nancy was hunting for a husband.[26] Both Margot Asquith and Nancy Astor personified the new money which literally had married old power. As 'Prime Ministress', as Margot Asquith would call herself, she surpassed every previous prime minister's wife in terms of notoriety and fame.[27] Lady Palmerston had become but a quaint memory.

The social style of Nancy Astor and Margot Asquith was equally fitted to the new challenges of the traditional parties in either meaning of the word. Margot, wild, humorous and unconventional, had livened up Society with her quick wit and subversive behaviour. She would not hesitate to dance a passionate cancan on the landing of the country house where she was staying. Asquith, already widowed, had fallen madly in love with her.[28] Nancy Astor was equally unconventional. She liked to impersonate her famous acquaintances during her dinner parties. Margot was among her favourites. Nancy would imitate Margot's stiff upper lip with a pair of false teeth. The presence of the Asquiths at the Astors' house parties must be understood in terms of the inter-party civility the Asquiths wished to represent. However, soon after, when political relations deteriorated due to the constitutional crisis as a result of Lloyd George's Budget, congeniality

between the two hostesses suffered accordingly. In 1912, Margot Asquith wrote an angry letter to Nancy Astor after finding out she was denied an invitation to a weekend at Cliveden:

> I will say one thing to you (as a much older & far wider-ranged woman than you by education & inclination can ever be.) You will never be a leader in any society or have authority influence or first-rate society if you xclude yr [sic] political opponents or have not the intellectual temper or social grandeur to be able to argue on big political points […][29]

The question regarding the extent to which these hostesses really influenced the course of politics is not relevant. It is sufficient that they perceived themselves as powerful and that they were crucial to the sociability of British politics. The pressures on traditional power demanding political and social reform, however, were persistent and increasingly radical around the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. But the demand for radical change did not necessarily change political culture in radical fashion, on the contrary. The politics of knife and fork were adopted by new political groups wishing to influence existing political parties.

Grosvenor Road

Beatrice Webb's diary entry of 29 July 1897 included a map of the dinner table she was seated at that very night. The dinner was hosted by Beatrice's friend Richard Burdon Haldane, a prominent Liberal MP. The Webbs found themselves in the company of, among others, Asquith and his wife Margot, the prominent Conservative Lord Curzon and Lady Rothschild, a member of a family then believed to possess the largest private fortune in the world. To Beatrice, Haldane's dinner table represented his ambition to be part of every set (his weakness) and his capacity for friendship which enabled him to bring about non-party measures (his strength).[30]

To her, her seat amidst the political elite meant access to power and the opportunity to influence the liberal powerholders with her socialist ideas. In 1892, Beatrice Potter had married Sidney Webb, a bright but physically unattractive civil servant who shared her commitment to the Co-operatist Movement. Her inherited income enabled him to give up his clerical job and concentrate on his political and scientific activities. Their marriage meant the merger of different worlds. For years, Beatrice had acted as hostess to her wealthy father, entertaining the leading politicians of the

day. She had known many, and a few intimately. She fell deeply in love with Joseph Chamberlain, the famous initiator of the Caucus, who was 20 years her senior. Both dominant personalities, they soon clashed after a brief period of courtship, and Chamberlain married the daughter of an American politician. For Beatrice, the marriage to Sidney meant in addition to a farewell to passion in favour of an equal intellectual partnership, a considerable descent down the social ladder. Webb came from a lower-middle-class background and gained his prestige through hard work and discipline. In the year of their marriage, he became a member of London City Council by courting liberal votes. He aspired to a career in Parliament and as minister if only he could afford to do so. Beatrice's plan for Sidney Webb was clear. She would use her money, her wide political knowledge and influence to introduce him in parliamentary circles. She would pull wires for him in her most intelligent capacity in order to make him the 'politician of the future'.[31] She could not possibly imagine a direct role for herself in politics since women were excluded from formal functions. A role as hostess was the only model available for her to wield political power within the political elite.

Sidney Webb was a prominent member of the Fabian Society, this curious British socialist club, which rejected the traditional socialist methods of mass organization and revolutionary propaganda. Instead, Fabians hoped through patient and plodding penetration of the seats of power to change the body politic in England. And so they did. Through their persistent, informed and practical advice to the men of power, Fabians were instrumental in the promotion of the Local Government Act of 1888. Fabians did not want power for themselves. Although not indifferent to charisma and leadership, they thought that they should use these figureheads, not worship them. Through their trained knowledge and reason, Sidney Webb, Bernard Shaw, Graham Wallas and others meant to neutralize and subvert the 'untrained' rhetoric of political leaders like Haldane. The Education Acts of 1902 and 1903 were based on a tract written by Sidney Webb. In addition, through incessant public agitation (in 1891–92 378,281 tracts were distributed), Fabians tried to make the existing political system absorb their ideas for reform.[32]

In general, in countries normally dominated by two parties, like Great Britain and the United States, the natural thing to do for advocates of a new great cause is not to organize a new party, but to bring organized influence to bear on the old. That is what the Anti-Corn Law League did in Britain, or the Prohibitionists in America. Influencing and pressuring

opinion was sometimes directed towards both parties. At other times, the emphasis was on infiltrating the preferred party and establishing as many supporters of the cause. In a third stage of influencing, those with positions inside the party which held their political sympathies may deem it fruitful in order to carry out a particular policy (or to obstruct one) to work through the rival party by making friends with its leaders. The British socialist Fabian Society labelled this practice 'permeation' from about 1886 onwards.[33] The Fabians, originally radical in their political views, tried to permeate the Liberal Party with their socialist ideas. After 1886 when the Party lost direction after the split over Home Rule, the radical wing was open to new ideas. Beatrice Webb, former hostess of the ruling class, would elevate permeation to an entirely new level of influence. 'We are always abusing the Liberal Party for not knowing its own mind—it would be more to the purpose if we made it up ourselves!', she noted in her diary at Whitsun 1896.[34]

It hardly was a coincidence that the first residence of the Webbs was at 41 Grosvenor Road. The address was a short walking distance from Parliament. If Sidney Webb were to become an MP, this would have given him an enormous advantage in a time before the advent of motorcars. The house enabled Beatrice to lure her parliamentary friends to lunch and dinner. She did so simply to advance the political career of her husband. Thus, the famous Webb *salon* began. In the post-Victorian age, Beatrice became an impressive but strict hostess who exploited her connections to the elite without reserve to promote Webbian politics. She was also bright and beautiful with dark and sharp features, and a nonchalance that made some men think of her as a gypsy. Her friendship with Richard Burdon Haldane provided her with entrance into the highest circles of the Liberal Party. He cared for her before her marriage and might have married her.[35]

Fellow-Fabian George Bernard Shaw, also a good friend of the Webbs, originally suggested the idea for a socialist salon. He wrote to Sidney: 'Webb, me boy a wurd wuz yis. I am seriously of the opinion that what is wanted is a salon for the cultivation of the Socialist Party in Parliament. Will Madame Potter-Webb undertake it?'[36] In the absence of a modern party organization, Shaw resorted to a form reminiscent of the old regime, although Shaw must have had the French example in mind. In France, the salons of Early Modern and Revolutionary France played an integral role in developing the pre-revolutionary spirit and culture. In the intimacy of the Rococo salon, brilliant women hosted the members of the Republic of Letters. Manners were cultivated and ideas were born.[37] Shaw's original

idea was that the socialists who had a seat in Parliament on behalf of the Liberal Party needed to be educated through conversation and debate in order to fulfil their roles. Beatrice Webb, however, did not gain fame for cultivating socialist conversation but was notorious for her talent for political intrigue. The secret of Fabian success (and failure) could be attributed to Beatrice's permeation tactics. Much of their impact came about through private contacts in clubs and country houses, in smoking rooms and exclusive social gatherings. The Webbs became popular in Society. They received every bit of attention, not as reformers but as representatives of a new form of unconventional 'chic'.[38]

'Winston Churchill dined with us last night', wrote Beatrice Webb in a typical diary entry on 11 March 1908. '…We talked exclusively shop. He has swallowed whole Sidney' s scheme for boy labour and unemployment, had even dished it up in an article in *The Nation*'.[39] Her diaries are full of these reports on her and Sidney's informal politics. Beatrice Webb enjoyed these evenings of 'Bright talk with paradoxes and subleties, sentiments and allusions, with the personal note emphasized'. Yet her feelings of guilt over her own perceived 'vanity' would surface the next morning:

> One wonders whether all this manipulating activity is worthwhile, whether one would not do so just as much by cutting the whole business of human intercourse and devoting oneself to thinking and writing out one's thoughts. It would certainly be a far pleasanter because a far less complicated life, with fewer liabilities against personal dignity, veracity and kindliness. It is so easy to maintain these qualities in a vacuum! In rubbing up against others, one's vanity, one's self-will and any strain of spite gets uncovered and revealed in all their ugliness to oneself, one's friends and one's opponents. But someone has to do this practical work, and possibly it is just as well that it should be done by those who have the 'other life' to withdraw into so as keep up their standard of thought and feeling.[40]

Their 'salon' in time became a parlour in which they figured as spiders, tempting political spies into their web. Asquith, Balfour, Churchill, Lloyd George, Haldane, almost all leading Liberal politicians and quite a few Conservatives came under the Webb influence and came to their dinner parties where the menu of mutton and rice pudding was decidedly not the main attraction. Permeation had become a doctrine instead of a party-political practice. The Webbs developed as good intellectuals a theory of permeation, and permeated incessantly in the London City Council at soirees and diners, including at other people's houses. Beatrice's influence

became a serious impediment to Webb's political career. She discouraged him from accepting a constituency because, as she confessed to her diary, 'A Parliamentary career would destroy our united life'.[41] Sidney's conversion to the backstairs politics of his wife did contribute to his image of being unreliable and prevented him from realizing Beatrice's initial ambition for him to become 'the politician of the future'. Yet Fabians were successful and, through their leaders and the connections and charm of Beatrice Webb, they were able to have a say in the legislation of the nation.

The Labour Party Machine

Fabian membership continued to be small and metropolitan. Fabians never aspired to become part of a broad popular movement. When in 1896 Ramsay MacDonald suggested using the society's funds to establish provincial branches, Beatrice Webb haughtily interjected: 'Do we want to organise unthinking persons into Socialistic Societies, or to make the thinking persons Socialistic? We believe in the latter process'.[42] To be sure, Fabians entertained a rather 'weak' view of democracy. Fabians found the parliamentary system and 'The British Constitution' in general a sound system, only in need of minor reform. Their view of democracy was perhaps best summarized in words attributed to Shaw as 'true democracy does not mean that people rule themselves but that they have the power to choose who rules them'.[43] Their rival, the Social-Democratic Federation was, however, opposed to permeation, favoured direct democracy and preached joining a socialist party.

Fabian ideas were clearly out of step with the declared ideas on direct democracy of the international socialist movement. By the 1900s, socialist parties on the Continent favoured the referendum and initiative. In 1896, Sidney Webb delivered a series of lectures on the 'machinery of democracy' in which he dismissed mass meetings, the rotation of office and other practices as primitive expedients. This view would also explain their distrust of party organization since this would bring the 'apathetic mass of routine toilers', according to the Fabian resolution to the Socialist International, to power.[44] In November 1893, Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw had published the historic Manifesto 'To your Tents, O Israel' (afterwards issued as 'A Plan of Campaign for Labour'). In this pamphlet, they proposed that the working classes should abandon their support of Liberalism—as the Fabians at this point would do—and form a Party of their own. They should raise 30,000 pounds to finance 50 candidates for

Parliament.[45] The Fabians wanted an independent working-class party supported by the trade unions. However, the Trade Union Congress would not financially back the new party.[46] In the end, Webb's liberal allies in the London City Council felt severely betrayed by his change in tactics. It would greatly damage his prospects for becoming, ironically, 'the London Chamberlain'.[47]

After the founding of the Labour Party, the Webbs worked less closely with Liberal and Conservative politicians but would not fundamentally change their outlook. 'We staked our hopes on the organized working class', Beatrice Webb wrote, 'served and guided, it is true by an *elite* of unassuming experts who would make no claim to superior social status, but would content themselves with exercising the power inherent in superior knowledge and longer administrative experience'. The Fabians, suspicious of party organization, were nevertheless able to make the establishment receptive to their message of a socialist transformation because they accepted the rules of the political game and revered the English Constitution. Fabians overtly rejected the traditional socialist methods of mass organization and revolutionary propaganda. G.M. Trevelyan called the Fabians 'intelligence officers without an army who influenced the strategy and even the direction of the great hosts moving under other banners'. The Fabians never became a political party, and no candidate ever stood for Parliament as a Fabian; Fabian speakers never called on the public to join the Society.[48] The Fabian Society was influential in shaping the climate of social and economic change in Great Britain. The society also contributed to the philosophy of the nascent Labour Party. Historians agree, however, that the Fabians had no decisive role in the creation of the new party.[49] My point here rather is that the expressed reverence of the Fabians for the existing political structure in Britain indicates that the evolution of the Labour Party was very much a process of adaption to the formal—and informal—institutions of British politics. British trade unions equally were convinced of the desirability of the parliamentary method.

In 1900, the Labour Representation Committee (LCR) had been founded, an organization whose constituent parts, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the trade unions and the Fabian Society, were to form a distinct Labour group in Parliament 'who shall have their own whips and agree upon their own policy'.[50] Until after the First World War, the Labour Party would remain a loosely knit alliance which could be joined only through membership of the aforementioned organizations. It lacked most features of political party such as a programme. Its machinery was

distinctly immature. It benefited, however, from the zeal and enthusiasm of the local rank and file of the affiliated organizations such as the ILP. The future party chairman Fenner Brockway later recounted the revivalist mood of the gatherings of his local ILP branch gathering in 1907:

> On Sunday nights a meeting was conducted rather on the lines of the Labour Church Movement—we had a small voluntary orchestra, sang Labour songs and the speeches were mostly Socialist evangelism, emotion in denunciation of injustice, visionary in their anticipation of a new society.[51]

While these meetings may have spurred socialist spirit, politically they became less important when the need to win elections became vital.[52] The electoral defeat of 1895 had hastened the establishment of centralizing and anti-democratic practices within the ILP and concentrated power within the National Administrative Committee, including hegemonistic control over crucial matters such as electoral decisions and relations with other parties. The ILP leader Keir Hardie, a former miner, was an ardent supporter of a 'Labour alliance' between trade unionists and socialists.[53] The subsequent formation of the LCR was not the uprising of a class, but primarily a new phase in the struggle of the trade union movement for the right to negotiate on equal terms with employers and apply sanctions, such as strikes when negotiations failed.[54] The organizational principle of the trade unions would determine the evolution of the Labour Party. It was the bloc voting of trade union leaders that had the determined the pro-war policy of the Labour Party and to which the party leader Ramsay MacDonald had been fiercely opposed. He resigned the chairmanship in 1914. Influenced by the famous study of the former German socialist Robert Michels, which was translated into English in 1915, he blamed the British trade unions for 'stifling the spirit of man in a mechanical machine and in formal order…It was the rebellious spirit, caught in the wheels of this party machine but vital to the survival of the socialist idea, which needed to be saved'.[55] No wonder that to the pacifist MacDonald, for a brief moment that is, Lenin and Trotsky seemed kindred spirits.[56] The Fabian point of view as well as MacDonald's response to Michels showed that socialist leadership in Britain held serious reservations regarding the machinations of mass political parties. Fabians, who were essentially liberal radicals, increasingly defined their socialism not as the collective political party fist of the working classes but in terms of the development of collective institutions. For MacDonald, Michels's

'iron law of oligarchy' meant the death of socialist spirit. Fabians feared that on a local level, the Labour Party would bring incompetent administrators to power.[57] This was in their view not an effect of machinery but of political motive, including the lack of knowledge and true public spirit.

Conclusion: The Strange Death of the Political Hostess?

For Beatrice Webb, the development of a party machine meant a threat to democracy, since it made the rise to power of the wrong leaders possible. In 1914, Beatrice Webb still found that 'the Labour members (in Parliament) are a lot of ordinary workmen who neither know or care about anything but the interests of their respective trade unions and a comfortable life for themselves'. Labour men were in the view of Beatrice Webb lacking good manners. The Labour MPs hated to be invited to dinner to talk politics; they preferred to sit smoking in the lounge in the House of Commons and vote against the government. Moreover, she found that the middle-class socialist members were hampered by their pledge to the Labour Party in the Fabian policy of permeation of all parties. 'But to go back on the creation of a Labour Party would be to admit failure'.[58] Although Beatrice Webb's political views were decidedly progressive and scientific, her political practice remained informal and rested upon a firm sense of the resilience of the old political culture continued by the Conservative Party, Labour's political opponent. What's more, she endorsed this culture out of reverence for the parliamentary system. She espoused something like an aristocratic socialism, which included an active role for certain women in the game of higher politics.

Because of her own elitist upbringing and convictions, Beatrice was fully aware of the powers of Society and particularly the influence of women who stood at its gate. She herself had been a hostess who had enjoyed considerable political impact. How persistent the female aristocratic element in the British political world remained becomes evident in Beatrice Webb's report in her diary of a visit by Margot Asquith. In 1918 when a Labour government was an option, Margot rushed from Cavendish Square to Grosvenor Road to solicit the support of Beatrice's husband for a coalition between the Liberal leaders and the Labour Party. 'Would Mr. Webb come and see my husband?', Margot asked. Beatrice refused, however, to intervene. 'The Liberal leaders have always taken us

up when they are in opposition and have always dropped us when they are in office. The policy of permeation is played out and labour and socialism must either be in control or in wholehearted opposition…'[59] However, it was exactly the recollection of the part played by Margot Asquith and other brilliant hostesses that made Beatrice Webb decide in 1920 that the women of the Labour Party needed educating for politics even more than the men. Moreover, the most influential Conservative 'petticoat in politics' Nancy Astor had been elected in 1919 as the first woman in to become a member of Parliament. She continued as hostess in the House.[60]

Beatrice Webb must have felt that Labour needed to counter the Conservative Party and the menace of its 'aristocratic embrace' by its own means.[61] In her view, the parties of hostesses were a practical alternative to party machinery. But Labour women were often 'singularly ill-equipped' and too shy to hold their own in a setting of even moderately high politics.[62] Therefore, the spouses of Labour politicians needed to be trained in the social graces not only to conduct polite conversation but also to develop their techniques of female influencing. Beatrice Webb's Half-Circle Club may now appear as strangely out of touch with political reality. However, the prominent political presence of upper-class women even in the history of the Labour Party, such as Beatrice Webb (and later on Lady Cynthia Mosley), rather shows that like the Liberal Party, the political hostess, the informal predecessor of the party machine, was 'dying with extreme reluctance and considerable skill'.[63]

Beatrice Webb's persistent belief in the festive party as a base for politics is another illustration of the current historiographical view that in England socialism was not necessarily bound to result in a class-based mass political party. Political tradition (not only intellectual) and 'situated agency' determined the political response to the challenge posed by the arbitrariness of the market.[64]

Notes

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3. Ibid., 435.
4. Margaret Cole, *Beatrice Webb* (London: Longman, 1946), 98.

5. John Charmley, *The Princess and the Politicians. Sex, Intrigue and Diplomacy, 1812–40* (London: Viking, 2005), xvi.
6. Robert Michels, *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1911) (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 15.
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8. On the political influence of noble and patrician women in Georgian England, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754–1790* (Oxford, 2005), 12. Chalus employs the concept of 'sociability' to highlight the involvement of women in politics.
9. Ibid., 8.
10. See Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana the Duchess of Devonshire* (New York, 1998).
11. Patricia Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860–1914* (Oxford, 1986); Esther Simon Shkolnik, *Leading Ladies. A Study of Eight Victorian and Edwardian Political Wives* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987); K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998); J. Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London, 2000); Diane Urquhart, 'Peeresses, Patronage and Power. The Politics of Ladies Frances Anne, Theresa and Edith Londonderry 1800–1959', in: A. Hayes and D. Urquhart (eds), *Irish Women's History*, (Dublin, 2004), 43–59. For a general overview of the debate on the participation of elite women in British politics, see also Katherine Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds), *Women in British Politics, 1760–1860. The Power of the Petticoat* (Houndmills, Basingstoke 2000), 1–18 and Amanda Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power 1750 to the Present* (Stanford, 2001), 1–55.
12. Chalus, *Elite Women*, 10.
13. Katherine Gleadle and Sarah Richardson, 'Introduction. The Petticoat in Politics. Women and Authority', in: Gleadle and Richardson (eds), *Women in British Politics*, 8.
14. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 71.

15. Emily Palmerston to Dorothea Lieven [Feb. 1840], Lord Sudley (ed.), *Lieven-Palmerston Correspondence 1828–1856* (London: J. Murray, 1943), cited in Reynolds, 163. Also, John Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1856–68* (Middelsex: Penguin, 1972), 59.
16. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 221.
17. Ibid., 158.
18. Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, 27.
19. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 2.
20. Cf. K.D. Reynolds, 'Politics Without Feminism. The Victorian Political Hostess', in: C. Campbell Orr (ed) *Wollstonecraft's Daughters. Womanhood in England and France 1780–1920* (Manchester, 1996), 94–108.
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22. McKenzie, *Political Parties*, 645.
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24. E. Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli* (London: Arnold, 2000), 169. William F. Monypenny and George Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (VI) (London: John Murray, 1920), 237–8.
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26. Christopher Sykes, *Nancy. The Life of Lady Astor* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1984), 74–5.
27. On Margot Asquith's political role, see Shkolnik, *Leading Ladies*, 459–543.
28. Colin Clifford, *The Asquiths* (London: John Murray), 1922.
29. Margot Asquith to Nancy Astor, 12 August 1912, Astor Papers, MS. 1416/1/4/21.
30. Beatrice Webb's diaries are available online through the LSE digital library, 'Beatrice Webb's manuscript diary, 16 July 1895–March 1898':http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:hus734mos#page/128/mode/2up, consulted 26 December 2013.
31. R.C.K. Ensor, 'Permeation' in: Margaret Cole (ed), *The Webbs and Their Work* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1974), 63.

32. Anne Fremantle, *This Little Band of Prophets. The British Fabians* (New York: The New American Library, 1960), 96.
33. Ensor, 'Permeation', 57–74.
34. Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 133. See also Margaret Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 78–88.
35. Cole (ed.), *The Webbs and Their Work*, 66.
36. George Bernard Shaw to Sidney Webb, August 11 1892 in: Alex C. Michalos and Deborah C. Poff (eds.), *Bernard Shaw and the Webbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), also Kitty Muggeridge and Ruth Adam, *Beatrice Webb. A Life* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1967), 171.
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40. Ibid., 290.
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46. Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 211.
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48. Fremantle, *This Little Band of Prophets*, 13.
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54. Ibid., 12.
55. In Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism after the War* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, 1918), 17–18 also cited in Marquand, 227–8.
56. Pugh, *Speak for Britain!*, 10.
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CHAPTER 13

The Domestication of a Machine. The Debate About Political Parties Around 1900

Henk te Velde

The library is full of books about particular political parties in Europe, but histories of the emergence of 'the party' as a general phenomenon are rare. The general history of the emergence of party organizations and their critics has not often been the subject of historical research.[1] This is strange because modern party organizations struck contemporaries as something new and puzzling already at the end of the nineteenth century itself. It was then still too early to write a proper 'history' of what was happening, but a number of scholars went to great pains to get the information they needed to write comprehensive contemporary surveys. Organization as such was not new in politics, of course, but now, extra-parliamentary forms of organization were included in the definition of

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formal politics for the first time. Until then, extra-parliamentary organizations could be part of civil society but not of what was regarded as politics proper. Even if many historians today regard single-issue movements as political movements, contemporaries thought differently. For the first time, something that scholars and also members of the government or parliament saw as 'politics' was happening outside the state and outside parliament. Earlier forms of organization, such as single-issue movements, had already changed the conception of politics, but they were considered as attempts at influencing politics from without, not as part of the state. Now, the state and the established political system itself seemed to be changing.

This contribution looks at the consequences of this new analysis and puts it into perspective by assessing it in light of some other contemporary forms of public politics. The new parties could have been regarded as dynamic and fleeting moral communities that roused enthusiasm and commitment as single-issue movements had done previously. They could have been seen as part of a social movement or as a social movement in their own right.[2] And in fact they were, but this interpretation was subservient to the analysis of the new parties that dominated in the twentieth century and that saw them primarily as instruments of modern government politics. As a result, political parties that were often at first designed to stimulate the *participation* of the people were mostly analysed as instruments for the *administration* of the state. For participation, a measure of discipline was already needed, but the government demanded a really disciplined machine. This final chapter retraces how and why analyses of political parties started to underline administration and government instead of participation. The debate about parties and party organization around 1900 was in fact a discussion about the nature of 'democracy', a form that already existed as a political system in the United States but was still new in Europe. Political scientists were looking for ways to domesticate democracy, a form of government that had traditionally been regarded as fickle and unreliable. If party organizations fell into the wrong hands, the political system was in great danger, but if managed properly, it could lend stability to democratic politics. Seen in this light, 'organization' was not primarily a tool in the hands of the people to put pressure on the political system—as it had earlier been in single-issue movements—but a tool of the government.

The Study of Political Parties

At the end of the nineteenth century, cultural anthropologists were introducing the new method of participant observation for studying indigenous peoples. Probably unaware of this development, political scientists were discovering the same method for their study of the new parties. In 1896–1897, the young Frenchman Edgard Milhaud visited German cities such as Leipzig, Berlin and Stuttgart in order to study the social democratic party's life in practice, including electoral campaigns, demonstrations and programmes, party conferences, public meetings, celebrations like May Day, Trade Unions and cooperative associations or associations of women, popular education, newspapers and brochures and private conversations. For the research visits, Milhaud—who sympathized with socialism—was introduced by the prominent social democrat Wilhelm Liebknecht, and he was welcomed by members of the party everywhere. In 1902, he was appointed to the chair of professor of political economy in Geneva on the recommendation of the French socialist leader Jean Jaurès. It caused a row, but he became a well-reputed academic.[3]

In the introduction to his book about the German social democratic party, *La démocratie socialiste Allemande* (1903), Milhaud emphasized that he had gone to great lengths to check his sources. He almost seemed to apologize for his participant method of using 'les sources diverses de mes *impressions*'.[4] His colleague as a student of political parties, the Russian political scientist Mosei Ostrogorski, was even more apologetic in his much more famous *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties,* which appeared at almost the same time (1902). 'I owe the public an account of my method', he wrote in the introduction to his book because he could not rely on 'authorities'. He had to piece together his material of 'facts and impressions' in 'a long and minute enquiry' and based 'on personal testimony and on direct observation of political life in general and on the working of party organization in particular'. It was difficult to achieve his objective of 'a scientific observation', 'calm, unbiased' view of 'political phenomena' 'amid the perpetual flux of things as difficult to grasp as the running stream'.[5] His type of participant observation was clearly more distant and critical than Milhaud's. Ostrogorski wrote in fact a long and consistent indictment of the modern type of party organization. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that he was the first scholar 'to go beyond the analysis of formal political institutions, to study the

actual political behavior of men and institutions outside the governmental sphere'.[6] This was, of course, true only when seen from the perspective of twentieth-century political science.

It could be argued that the first phase of the study of the new modern parties was concluded by Robert Michels's study of the German social democratic party of 1911. His *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie* (or *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*) was hailed by Carl Schmitt as the beginning of a new scientific sub-discipline of party sociology.[7] Michels for his part shared Ostrogorski's criticism of the party as an organization. There has been some discussion as to whether he was influenced by Ostrogorski, whose work he quoted but at first does not seem to have known.[8] He also quoted Milhaud but only once: he was much more critical of the socialist party than Milhaud, and he resembled Ostrogorski in his critical attitude towards political parties in general. His book was also closer to Ostrogorski's in other respects. Ostrogorski's second volume was about the American party system. His first volume was about the 'liberal Caucus' in Great Britain, but the title of his book reflected his more general interest in the tendencies of modern party politics. Michels's book was mostly about the German social democratic party, but its title showed his interest in the 'sociology' of political parties in the plural (the English title) or in the nature of parties (*Parteiwesen*, in the German title). Like Ostrogorski, he pretended to be an impartial scientist. The state and the individual had always been there, but now, the new element of the political party had emerged in between the two—this was his object of study. Michels wrote that almost every political party in Europe already had its own party history, but a more general 'Analyse des Parteiwesens' was lacking.[9] His analysis resulted in his famous iron law of oligarchy. This was, of course, not a dispassionate and unprejudiced analysis but a long and bitter goodbye to the social democratic party, to which Michels had belonged for quite some time. He moved on to anarchism and later to fascism and finally taught at the University of Perugia in Mussolini's Italy.

Michels's book is brilliant and thoughtful, but it is the work of a renegade looking back at the world he had left and lost. It was written by someone who had been an insider but had turned into an outsider. It is significant that the modern image of political parties was framed by outsiders such as Michels and Ostrogorski (who had never even sympathized with the parties he was studying) and that Milhaud was forgotten. In the twentieth century, formally organized political parties rapidly became

part of established politics, and for critical observers, their organizations seemed to have become vehicles for career politicians that stifled idealism rather than social movements of the people. There was now much more interest in a critical and negative general analysis of organizations than in a sympathetic study of the commitment of a specific party community.

The Future of Democracy and American Political Parties

It is no coincidence that the titles of both Michels's and Ostrogorski's books contain the word 'democracy'. Around 1900, democracy was the great question of European politics. Both France and Germany had general male suffrage, even though the German Empire was not really functioning as a parliamentary democracy. Great Britain went from one electoral reform to another and was already considered as a 'democracy'.[10] Belgium was experimenting with a combination of general male suffrage and plural voting and was seen by some as a laboratory for Europe.[11]

Europe was experiencing a kind of paradigm shift in politics, a change with Copernican dimensions, from liberal parliamentarianism to parliamentary democracy with organized parties. Ostrogorski studied the new democracy, but from an outsider's perspective, the view of someone who still held on to the liberal values of the world of elite parliamentarianism. Because of his criticism of parties and his sympathy for older liberal values the book contained, according to a critic, 'a series of conscientious observations of the Copernican heavens by a loyal but saddened believer in the Ptolemaic astronomy'.[12] Whether this image of Ostrogorski is correct or not, it draws our attention to the fundamental changes in politics that he and his European contemporaries were facing.

This background determined the analysis of political parties. Democratic politics apparently needed a new sort of organization. Even though 'parties' in the sense of a current of thought or a loose combination of parliamentarians had existed for a long time, the new extra-parliamentary organizations were seen as novel inventions. They changed the nature of what a 'party' was and even the nature of politics in general. Their emergence engendered a lot of debate in many countries. Each country had its own peculiarities, but the debate as such was an international phenomenon. Many of the main participants had an international background. Milhaud was a Frenchman who wrote about Germany and became a professor in Switzerland. Michels was German but studied in

France—he had a French mother—and in Italy where he later became professor. Ostrogorski was a Russian liberal, who later studied in Paris and spent a long time in Britain and in the United States conducting his research. This international orientation was perhaps what it took to be able to look beyond the history of a single party and concentrate on 'parties' as a new phenomenon. Often, international analysis was also easily accepted; Ostrogorski was criticized by British scholars for what he wrote about Britain but praised abroad and Michels writes in the introduction to the second edition of his book that most reviewers liked his book, but many took exception to his treatment of politics in their own country. For German critics, 'oligarchy' was a feature of Latin countries, French critics thought that it was the result of the German authoritarian spirit and English critics would have preferred a separate treatment of British 'selfgovernment'.[13]

In the analysis of parties, one frightening example was always looming in the distance: the American experience. The United States had already been a 'democracy' for a long time, and many people thought they could study the future of democracy by looking at that country, as Alexis de Tocqueville had done. At least they could use the American example to frighten the public about the prospects of European party democracy. Tocqueville had noticed the American political parties but had written little about their form of organization. This lack of detailed attention changed at the end of the nineteenth century. The prominent British political scientist, professor, Liberal Member of Parliament (MP) and minister James Bryce gave an authoritative overview in his *The American Commonwealth* (1888/1889). Its second volume contains many pages about 'The Machine' and its 'Bosses'.

Bryce was trained as a lawyer, and he was primarily interested in government and constitutional matters. However, in the case of the parties, he had to rely for his information on 'the conversation of American acquaintances' and 'impressions formed on the spot from seeing incidents and hearing stories and anecdotes'. This was only a part of his book project, so he did not feel he really needed new methods of research as Milhaud and Ostrogorski did, but his remarks show that he was already sympathetic to their approach. In fact, he encouraged Ostrogorski to pursue his studies and wrote an introduction to the book—in which he disagreed with Ostrogorski's pessimistic picture of British party politics. As someone studying the American government, he was primarily interested in the party as a political tool for governing the country. His metaphors show

this rather abstract interest. According to Bryce, 'the spirit and force of party has in America been as essential to the action of the machinery of government as steam is to a locomotive engine'. The American parties had lost their ideological content and their principles, but their organization was all-powerful; they had retained their machine: 'The mill has been constructed, and its machinery goes on turning'.[14]

Politics had become a (profitable) profession, and the parties were based on organization and discipline, if not on corruption. The 'bosses', the political professionals par excellence, did not try to mobilize the masses on the platform but worked in backrooms, in the 'committee-room'.[15] Bryce accepted parties as part of the reality of modern democratic politics, but he was rather pessimistic about their influence. The party organization obstructed 'the free play of public opinion'. The question was, however, whether the American practice predicted the future of European or, more precisely, British politics. As his preface to Ostrogorski shows, Bryce thought it did not.[16] One can understand that he wanted to make that point clear because, according to Ostrogorski, the most obvious manifestation of 'Americanizing' tendencies in British politics was found in Bryce's own Liberal Party.

Ostrogorski and the Caucus

Ostrogorski's book was published in 1902, but he had written the volume about Britain around the middle of the 1890s.[17] According to Ostrogorski, the new National Liberal Federation, organized by Joseph Chamberlain from Birmingham, was a pernicious 'Caucus', an American type of closed organization, disciplining, manipulating and using the masses. It was the importation of American politics into Britain, the beginning of the end of freedom in British politics, more frightfully so as it was beginning to dominate British politics. In the past, the great changes of Catholic emancipation (1829), the first Reform Bill (1832) and the abolition of the protectionist Corn Laws (1846) had been achieved as the result of the pressure of 'extra-constitutional organizations' on Parliament. Now, the traditional parties 'had laid hands on the very weapon which was being used against them, extra-parliamentary organization'.[18] They had become the cynical instrument of career politicians in the established parties. The parties seemed to stimulate the participation of the people in politics, but they had become means in the hands of ambitious politicians who wanted to control the state.

Ostrogorski argued that the new political parties threatened democracy because their 'machinery' was a bureaucratic instrument in the hands of a small group of manipulators. His description of the development of the English Caucus and the National Liberal Federation contains the clichés that were used for American party politics: 'to strengthen the hands of the leaders, the wire-pullers set the machine of the Organization in motion'.[19] However, he conceded that the Caucus provided a kind of political education for the masses and that its oratory was meant 'to convince the audience' instead of just contributing to the 'political carnival' that elections had formerly been. But, according to him, it was still bread and circuses in the end. Because 'the English masses are still unable to take an intelligent interest in political questions', politics had to be presented as amusement. Noisy mass meetings served to turn on 'enthusiasm', and 'the more impressionable voter' became a 'hypnotized subject'. It was not only the masses who fell victim to the Caucus but also members of Parliament. They had become 'legislators in the second place only; their main function is to be commercial travellers for their party'. Instead of independent 'representatives', they had become the 'clerk' of the party: 'delegates' who had to do what the party wanted.[20]

If this sounds rather ominous, it was nothing compared to what had happened in the United States. At the end of the first volume of his book, Ostrogorski writes that the 'English Caucus' was 'still in the growing stage'. In the second volume, he painted an extremely dark picture of American politics. 'What appeared to us in England as a germ, blossoms in the United States'. 'Politicians' danced 'round the golden calf', and corruption had pervaded politics. The Machine and the Bosses were everywhere, and the professional politicians were not statesmen but only 'experts in the art of organization' who played the part of 'the political machinist'.[21]

At the end of his book, Ostrogorski asked if there was a way out. Surprisingly, he argued that the solution to the problem of parties was obvious and rather simple. What was needed was another type of organization: 'a combination of citizens formed specially for a particular political issue', with a 'single aim'.[22] Such an organization would remain in existence only during the campaign for such a cause, as one of a number of 'temporary single issue parties'. Ostrogorski thought that these single-issue movements would dissolve once their original goal had been

achieved—as had happened with the Anti-Corn Law League. The temporality offered a solution to the problem of the wire-pullers because there would be no opportunity for professional politicians to buy or sell politics. Parliament would become 'a real deliberating assembly, instead of an arena of the parties, a theatre of civil war'. It was clear: 'Political society will be transformed into a vast school, and democratic government will become really a government of discussion'. 'Down with party and Up with league', he exclaimed, and he quoted the examples of the Catholic Association and the league of leagues, the Anti-Corn Law League, with which he had also started his first volume to explain what he meant.[23]

The reaction to Ostrogorski's magnum opus was mixed. Its enormous empirical base, and its comparative ambitions impressed all readers. From the first reviews until the reception in political sociology much later, however, commentators wrote that the book exaggerated the power of party organization, both in the United States and, more particularly, in Britain.[24] Ostrogorski was not original in his use of the word Caucus either. The conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli, among others, had started to accuse Chamberlain's liberal organization of being a Caucus. And already in the 1870s, Chamberlain himself had proudly used the word—which Disraeli had introduced as a term of abuse—for his own organization. He made fun of the accusations of 'wire-pulling', 'manufactories of public opinion', 'machinery' and bosses and argued that it would have been impossible to manipulate independent English citizens in such a way.[25] In the late 1870s and in the 1880s, a debate raged in England about the nature of this organization. The Caucus was much criticized, and many people did not like Chamberlain's style of politics, but by 1890, most had drawn the conclusion that it would remain a passing and minority feature and that there were many differences between the English or British situation and the American one.[26]

Bryce had encouraged Ostrogorski to write his book, but he was disappointed by his treatment of the English Caucus. On the whole, Ostrogorski's book was not very well received in Britain. Since then, almost all reviewers have expressed doubts about the rigidity of the thesis of the book, and recent scholarship has confirmed their doubts. Moreover, the ideas about the leagues that Ostrogorski himself thought were most important have been dispelled as unconvincing or even 'naïve' and inconsistent.[27]

Popular Participation

It is true that Ostrogorski's ideas about the leagues sound a bit odd, after two large volumes about the power of party Caucuses. But they are not so strange, if we read them in the context of the 1880s when he did his research and the 1890s when he wrote his book. In 1892, Henry Jephson's *The Platform. Its Rise and Progress* had appeared—in fact with Ostrogorski's publisher MacMillan. Jephson was almost as ambitious as Ostrogorski; his book also consists of two volumes, and it also is 'an attempt at a solution of the great problem of popular [democratic] government which has in recent times come into such commanding prominence'. Jephson defined the Platform as 'the spoken expression of public opinion outside Parliament'.[28] His book is a still useful comprehensive history of political speech and debate in mass meetings in the British extra-parliamentary public sphere. After dealing very briefly with the Birmingham Caucus, Jephson argues that the pressure of public opinion had turned Parliament into 'the executive of the Platform', *not* the executive of parties. The Platform was 'able, by its controlling function, when collectively employed, to impose its will on the House of Commons'. Jephson presented his book as an analysis of 'the Platform, as an institution of government'. Jephson applauded the pressure of the Platform that turned MPs into 'delegates from the constituencies' and the mouthpiece or the voice of the people.[29] In that sense, the book seems to be the very opposite of Ostrogorski's, for whom the independence of the MPs was an article of faith. Also in concentrating on free public speaking instead of wire-pullers, Jephson seems to contradict Ostrogorski.

However, there are striking resemblances too. The new democracy was the starting point for Ostrogorski as well as Jephson, and Jephson also wanted to show the consequences of the corresponding broadening of the concept of established politics. Both authors admire the Anti-Corn Law League as the prime example of a disciplined and democratic pressure group that had shown how democratic politics should work, as for instance opposed to the quasi-revolutionary, unrespectable movement of Chartism that both men did not like. Moreover, Jephson was also convinced of the importance and power of organizations in democratic politics. He writes 'that in any great popular struggle the Platform, to be successful, requires a powerful organisation at its back'. In fact, the 'agitation against the Corn Laws is the most perfect example which our history affords of the action of the Platform as an engine of political warfare'. And, like Ostrogorski,

he thought that 'the strength of the League was the singleness of its aim' and that it was befitting that the Anti-Corn Law League and leagues of that nature were dismantled as soon as the goal was reached, as had in fact happened.[30]

Ostrogorski quotes Jephson a few times, but he was not inspired by his political views. Jephson was not a well-known scholar. His work was noticed at the time—and one of the heroes of the book, Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone, wrote a review—[31] but Jephson was not an academic or an influential politician, and his work has been almost forgotten since. Historians have only occasionally referred to him, and his political views do not seem to have made an impression. His book is not important for its role in a historiographical debate, but it was a sure sign of the times, an expression of the prevalent liberal and democratic spirit. The 1880s were not only the years of debate about the Caucus but also the years of intense general public discussion about politics. For a moment, it seemed certain that democracy would engender a massive and also serious popular interest in politics.

Ostrogorski did not really take this interest seriously because he thought that it was only a superficial lust for entertainment, comparable to sports or music halls. It is true that the 'theatre of politics' attracted a lot of attention, but this was more than just entertainment alone. The wide ramifications of the 'duel' between the Liberal leader William Gladstone and the Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli and the broadening of the suffrage gave many people the impression that there really was a choice to be made. People followed politics as if they were following a sports game, but this also meant that they were really interested in the issues at stake and knew something about them.[32] The prestige of parliamentary politics added to the attraction of politics. People everywhere were copying the parliamentary model of politics in order to be able to participate themselves. Around 1880, 'mock' or 'local parliaments' mushroomed. They meticulously imitated the procedures of Parliament and discussed the issues that were debated there. Some of the London local parliaments comprised more than a thousand members, and they enthusiastically engaged in the debates, either as public in the 'galleries', as 'Speaker' or as ministers or front benchers. Historians have mainly concentrated on the socializing and educational functions of the local parliaments.[33] Ostrogorski also saw them as a form of 'political education', although this useful role was, according to him, somewhat jeopardized by the theatricality of it all.[34] For a few years, however, the local parliament movement promised to become

much more than that. According to a thorough overview of the movement in 1883, it was 'the newest and most important factor of public opinion which has appeared in recent years'.[35] Its advocates were convinced that it would become a sort of organized democratic public opinion in action influencing Parliament, more or less what Jephson thought the Platform would do.

It did not happen, and in the 1890s, the political ambitions of the local parliament movement evaporated quickly. However, the attempt at popularizing parliamentary forms in order to give a voice to the people appealed to a lot of people. In an often-quoted phrase, Joseph Chamberlain presented the meetings of the National Liberal Federation as the manifestation 'of what will be a really Liberal Parliament outside the Imperial Legislature [the House of Commons], and, unlike it, elected by universal suffrage'.[36] Certainly in Britain, parliament was a much more prestigious and popular model than party organization as such. It enhanced the prestige of the Caucus if it could be presented as a modern form of parliament. But parliamentary forms of debating were then popular in other countries as well, in particular when adjusted to mass meetings. Even among German socialists, who lived in a country with a much less impressive parliament and had the most impressive party organization that existed in Europe, 'a widespread consensus demanded that public meetings should proceed in a "parliamentary" manner'. This meant that the public should decide who would chair the assembly, what the agenda would be and how much time would be allotted to each speaker.[37] The attraction of socialism in Germany was based on the power of collective action, but at first, this power was felt most strongly in free debates in mass meetings.[38] Democracy was attractive because it showed that it mattered what ordinary people thought and said. It was active participation that mattered, not just agreeing with bureaucratic leadership or being member of a formal, institutionalized organization.

So Chamberlain simply *had* to argue that his Caucus was a form of real participation, expressing popular opinion instead of manufacturing it: 'It cannot be too strongly insisted on that *the caucus does not make opinion, it only expresses it*'.[39] Even though the Caucus seemed to outsiders to be a form of 'disciplined control of a mass electorate by a tightly organized party apparatus',[40] and even though the executive power of the board dominated in practice, it was conceived as a democratic organization in the first place. That was the only possible way because it lacked the resources it would have needed to organize the powerful Machine

Ostrogorski thought it was. Ironically, it also drew heavily on the experience of leagues and associations such as the National Education League that Ostrogorski had presented as its opposite and as the alternative that would be the remedy for the cynicism and materialism of the Caucus.[41]

The question was, however, what democracy meant in practical politics and for the administration of the country. For Chamberlain, this was simple. It was the rule of the majority instead of aristocratic and oligarchic minorities. The purpose of this majority, he felt, was not popular participation as such but to get things done.[42] In this sense, majority rule could be used as a legitimation for populist and Caesarist leadership and as a tool of executive government. Chamberlain would have liked to use the new organization in this way. His National Liberal Federation incorporated two seemingly incompatible things at the same time: an 'autocratic electoral "machine"' and a 'democratic assembly'.[43] These were the two most common conceptions of democracy at the time, but most people thought that it was the one *or* the other.

Max Weber and the Domestication of Democracy

Jephson thought that organizational structures would help to give the democratic assemblies of the Platform an even more important role. According to Ostrogorski, organization would destroy liberty and democracy. Ostrogorski argued that 'democracy had ceased to have the substantive purpose of deliberating on the common good and had become a purely formal and mechanical procedure of popular endorsement'.[44] Moreover, he was a liberal rather than an unqualified democrat. He was certainly not in favour of a popular democracy in the sense of an unpredictable participation of the common people. The practice of democratic deliberation had to be respectable and responsible. Ostrogorski had had his education as a political scientist at the liberal and conservative Institut d'Études Politiques (Sciences-Po) in Paris and had never distanced himself from the criticism of democracy that was common there. In fact, his ideas about wire-pullers and professional politicians were completely in line with what was being taught about democratic politics at Sciences-Po, for instance, by its founder, political scientist Émile Boutmy, who put Ostrogorski in touch with James Bryce and who wrote a lot about British and American politics.[45]

It was this side of his book that made the most lasting impression. Ostrogorski received much praise from 'scholars and politicians, who found

their fears confirmed in the book'. Politicians of a number of countries used his book to demonstrate the dangers of the organizations of mass parties.[46] For instance, when general male suffrage and proportional representation were being introduced in the Netherlands around the First World War, Prime Minister Cort van der Linden quoted Ostrogorski in the parliamentary debates, in order to show the dangers of a democracy that was not managed well.[47] Cort van der Linden's resigned attitude towards democracy—whether you liked it or not, it would come, and you had better prepare for it carefully—resembled the spirit of Max Weber in Germany. No doubt, his famous lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' has contributed a lot to the authority of Ostrogorski. By presenting the negative images of American machine politics, Weber summarized what was already common knowledge about American politics in Germany.[48] However, he chose to derive it from Ostrogorski's book, quoting him as his only and authoritative source, whom he also used (uncritically) to characterize British machine politics.

Most interestingly, Weber did not use Ostrogorski to denounce political parties but to argue what positive goals they could serve: 'Far from undermining democracy, party organisation made it possible'.[49] If used appropriately, political parties could help to manage democracy. Weber drew in fact the logical, though somewhat cynical, conclusion from the analysis of the party organizations by political scientists. Most of them had been interested in political parties as tools of government. For Weber, this was their obvious purpose. At the beginning of his lecture, he had defined politics as 'leadership, or the exercise of influence on the leadership, of a *political* organization, in other words a *state*'.[50] Seen in this light, it was no problem that parties were instruments in the hands of politicians. On the contrary, parties *should* be efficient machines, provided the politicians were responsible statesmen, committed to a cause.

Weber followed Ostrogorski's analysis of British politics that was much criticized in Britain itself but much more appreciated elsewhere.[51] Ostrogorski had concentrated exclusively on Britain and the United States because they seemed the most advanced countries in politics. Weber wrote to Robert Michels about the German socialist party that it was 'outside the Anglo-Saxon realm, the only one which is technically fully developed'. He thought that in socialist parties, the bureaucratic apparatus would (and should) eventually prevail over ideology too.[52] He was implicitly supported by the socialist leader August Bebel who wrote in 1911 to his Austrian colleague Victor Adler: 'There is little trace of the old willingness to make sacrifices. Today all services are to be paid, and paid well at that'.[53]

This was exactly what Michels was arguing, albeit for different purposes. While Michels was pessimistic because he wanted to defend direct democracy against party bureaucracy, Weber was trying to domesticate democracy. Michels's work could, however, be used to support the point Weber was trying to make.[54] In the first chapter of his book about 'democratic aristocracy' and 'aristocratic democracy', Michels argues that democracy by its nature tends to be fickle and changeable and that the principle of conservatism is stability. This was in fact the classic and ancient perception of the nature of democracy as a principle of government, which was only slowly changing during the nineteenth century. Weber, to whom the first German edition of Michels's book was dedicated, could use Michels (and Ostrogorski) to argue that democracy needed an elite or a certain aristocratic element that could stabilize and manage it. In his final book, *Modern Democracies* (1921), James Bryce reached the same conclusion. As Michels proudly notes in the second edition of his book, Bryce was praising him. However, on the same page, Bryce wrote that 'organization is essential for the accomplishment of any purpose' and that it would be absurd 'to attempt to govern a country by the votes of masses left without control'. The people were fit to express what they did not want, but government 'By the People' was impossible; the best one could get was government 'For the People'.[55]

Conclusion

Even though Ostrogorski and Michels were critical of political parties, leading political scientists such as Weber and Bryce used their work to argue that democracy needed guidance, and could be guided, by party organizations in particular. They interpreted organization as an instrument of government, not as an instrument of protest against government politics. Political organization could be used to domesticate democracy. That was the correct way to use political parties and that is why their interest in parties was rather one dimensional. The organizational side of the parties was almost the only thing that interested them. Ostrogorski had realized that a modern party was not only an instrument in the hands of its leaders but also a cultural community. However, he saw only drawbacks: noise, superficial entertainment and amusement for the masses or an oppressive 'church' with a 'religion' of its own.[56] Weber wrote that the sophisticated organization of the German socialist party was akin to the elaborate machine of American parties, but he knew, of course, that

the socialists also had a 'Weltanschauung'.[57] However, that was not what interested him in the first place, and he thought that the machine would prevail over the ideology anyhow. Significantly, Milhaud, the biographer of German socialist party life, was seen as 'plutôt un historien du mouvement social', which suggests that his type of analysis was still seen as belonging to social history instead of political science.[58]

Michels advocated direct democracy, but his book is much more about the leaders and the party elite than about the followers and the voters. Nevertheless, he writes about socialism as a sort of family tradition, which was inherited and passed on from father to son, as a form of cultural identity.[59] That was not what interested Weber in the first place, but seen in this light, the party could even be useful as an ideological and moral community. In due course, this aspect of parties would be seen as an essential strength of socialist and other established democratic parties as opposed to the Caucus Ostrogorski was describing.[60] By the 1960s, Lipset was arguing that the 'uncritical permanent loyalty to parties, akin to religious affiliation, that Ostrogorski bemoaned, may also be viewed as contributing to the stability of the democratic process'.[61]

The condition was, of course, that these parties were pillars of government. In such a situation, democratic participation would serve government and administration. On the one hand, political parties offered professional politicians the necessary support to do their work; on the other, identification with the party gave citizens the conviction that their (stable) choice mattered. Around 1900, however, scholars still doubted whether the new parties could fulfil that role. They first wanted to be sure that the 'organization' would be directed in the right direction. Seen from the perspective of established politics, this was the main issue, and this explains not only why prominent scholars were interested in organization but also why exactly these scholars achieved a worldwide reputation. Democratic participation was unpredictable, unless guided by a strong organization that was part of established politics.

After the Second World War, mass parties had become pillars of government, and it was an important part of their work to bridge the gap between government and society. They should be part of the state as well as of civil society. Today, scholars note the disappearance of this latter part of the job and conclude that parties have become parts of the state.[62] Seen in this light, party organization has been directed at integrating the people into the political system and administrating the state, but this is a twentieth-century story. If we revisit the nineteenth century and

reconsider the early history of parties in relation to the earlier development of the species of single-issue movements, we get another picture.[63] Then, organization was an instrument for opposition, for people who advocated a radical change of society and the state. 'Organization' did not yet hold a promise for professional politicians in search of a stable basis but for common people and for new men and women who wanted to right a wrong in society.

It was only in the course of the twentieth century that political parties became inextricably intertwined with the state. Around 1900, political 'organization' was not new at all in Europe but the idea that a political party machine would become part of the state was. Here lies the origin of the eventual teleological analysis of the party as a bridge between society and the state, a means to integrate the population into the nation state and the starting point of 'real' political organization. That was the twentieth-century outcome, but the nineteenth century tells a much more varied story.

Notes

1. One of the exceptions is Paolo Pombeni, *Introduction à l'histoire des partis politiques* (Paris: PUF 1985); the more recent extended Italian second edition: Id., *Partiti e sistemi politici nella storia contemporanea (1830–1968)* (Bologna: Il Mulino 1994).
2. See for instance Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004* (Boulder: Paradigm publishers 2004).
3. Edgard Milhaud (1873–1965) studied at the Sorbonne and went subsequently on a study trip to Germany (1896–97) which was the basis of his book *La démocratie socialiste Allemande* (Paris: Félix Alcan 1903); on the row surrounding his appointment in Geneva, see G. Busino and S. Stelling-Michaud, 'La nomination manquée de Luigi Einaudi', *Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto* 6 (1965) 67–80. See also Pombeni, *Partis politiques*, 176–7.
4. Milhaud, *Démocratie socialiste*, iii.
5. M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* 2 vols. (1902; New York/London: MacMillan 1922) I, lv–lvi.
6. Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Introduction: Ostrogorski and the Analytic Approach to the Comparative Study of Political Parties' in: M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* II (Transaction 2009) xi.

7. Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (1911; Stuttgart: Kröner 1989) liii and footnote three.
8. Paolo Pombeni, 'Starting in reason, ending in passion. Bryce, Lowell, Ostrogorski and the problem of democracy', *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994) 319–41; 336, footnote 75, denies influence and criticizes Lipset for assuming that there was some; others still maintain at least some influence, such as Cristiana Senigaglia, 'Analysen zur Entstehung der Massenparteien und zu ihrem Einfluss auf das Parlament: Ostrogorski, Michels, Weber', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 15 (November 1995) 159–84; 172 footnote 55. A nuanced discussion in Gaetano Quagliariello, *Politics without Parties. Mosei Ostrogorski and the Debate on Political Parties on the Eve of the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1996) 220–1.
9. Michels, *Soziologie des Parteiwesens*, xliv–xlv.
10. Cf. Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the vote in British politics, 1848–1867. The making of the Second Reform Act*, (Farnham/ Burlington: Ashgate 2011).
11. See, for this last instance, Joseph Barthélemy, *L'organisation du suffrage et l'expérience belge* (Paris: Giard & Brière 1912); Belgian political parties (social democrats) were also seen as extremely developed organizations: A. Esmein, review of Ostrogorski in *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* 37 (1903) 118.
12. This often-quoted image is in the work of the British socialist, social psychologist and founder of the LSE Graham Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (1908; New Brunswick/London: Transaction 1981) 143.
13. Michels, *Soziologie des Parteiwesens*, xlix.
14. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* 2 vols. (London/New York: MacMillan 1889) II, 3–5.
15. Ibidem, 23, 56, 72, 109.
16. James Bryce, 'Political organization in the United States and England', *The North American Review* 156 nr 434 (January 1893) 105–18 (118). See however Ibid., p. 105: 'those who in the old world seek to forecast the course of their own popular governments must look for light beyond the Atlantic. This is especially the case as regards the organization of political parties.'

17. Quagliariello, *Politics without Parties*, 30.
18. Ostrogorski, *Democracy* I, 132, 135.
19. Ibidem I, 520.
20. Ostrogorski, *Democracy* I, 386, 388–9, 400, 435, 465, 499. The notion of the commercial traveler was at the time also used for the French Republican leader Léon Gambetta, 'commis voyageur' for the Republic in the 1870s.
21. Ibidem I, 627; II, 42, 566, 603.
22. Ibidem II, 658.
23. Ibidem II, 667, 685, 690, 725.
24. For the first reviews, see Pombeni, 'Starting in Reason' and even Lipset, 'Introduction', xvii, who is a fan of Ostrogorski's book, notes his exaggerations.
25. J. Chamberlain, 'The Caucus', *Fortnightly Review* (1878) 721–41. Cf. the contribution by Anne Heyer (Chap. 10) to this volume.
26. For example, Pombeni, 'Starting in reason'; Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876–1906* (Cambridge UP 2007) chapter 4.
27. Lipset, 'Introduction', lxvii.
28. Henry Jephson, *The Platform. Its Rise and Progress* 2 vols. (London/New York: MacMillan 1892) I, v–vi, xx.
29. Ibidem I, vi; II, 572–3.
30. Ibidem II, 158, 293, 354, 351.
31. *The Nineteenth Century* 31 (April 1892) 686–9.
32. See for example H.C.G. Matthew, 'Rhetoric and politics in Great Britain, 1860–1950', in: P.J. Waller (ed.), *Politics and social change in modern Britain* (Brighton/New York: Harvester/St Martin's 1987) 34–58; Henk te Velde, *Het theater van de politiek* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek 2003); Id., *Sprekende politiek. Redenaars en hun publiek in de parlementaire gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus 2015).
33. For example, Ross McKibbin, 'Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain?', in: idem, *The ideologies of class. Social relations in Britain 1880–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon 1990) 1–41, c. 22. But see Jaap van Rijn, *De eeuw van het debat. De ontwikkeling van het publieke debat in Nederland en Engeland 1800–1920* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek 2010) chapters 3 and 5.
34. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the organization of political parties* I, 416–19.

35. The journalist Blanchard Jerrold, 'On the manufacture of public opinion', *The Nineteenth Century* 13 (January–June 1883) 1085. Cf. for the fullest account of the local parliament movement: Jaap van Rijn, *De eeuw van het debat. De ontwikkeling van het politieke debat in Nederland en Engeland 1800–1920* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek 2010) chapters 3 and 5.
36. Annual Report about the conference of 31 May 1877, quoted in Biagini, *British Democracy*, 208, footnote 202.
37. Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy. Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton UP 2000) 300.
38. Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie zwischen Vormärz und Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn: Dietz 2000).
39. Chamberlain, 'The Caucus', 734; see, for this argument in more detail, in this book by Anne Heyer.
40. Trygve R. Tholfsen, 'The Origins of the Birmingham Caucus', *The Historical Journal* (1959) II, 161–84; 161.
41. Biagini, *British Democracy*, 170, 181.
42. Chamberlain, 'Caucus', 724: 'The aim of the caucus is essentially democratic: it is to provide for the full and efficient representation of the will of the majority, and for its definite expression in the government of the people.'
43. Biagini, *British Democracy*, 371.
44. Richard Bellamy, 'The advent of the masses and the making of the modern theory of democracy', in: Id. and Terence Ball (eds), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (2003; Cambridge UP 2010) 70–103; 85.
45. For example, Quagliariello, *Politics without parties*, passim; 122: his French background was crucial for Ostrogorski's work; Bellamy is making him too much a modern democrat.
46. Quagliariello, *Politics without Parties*, 4, 176, and ff.
47. Jasper Loots, *Voor het volk, van het volk. Van districtenstelsel naar evenredige vertegenwoordiging* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek 2004) 125–6. Ostrogorski was quoted dozens of times in Dutch newspapers: http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten/results?query=ostrogorski&page=2&sortfield=date&coll=ddd (1 May 2016).
48. Thomas Mergel, 'Gegenbild, Vorbild und Schreckbild. Die amerikanischen Parteien in der Wahrnehmung der deutschen politischen Öffentlichkeit 1890–1920', in: Dieter Dowe et al. (eds), *Parteien*

im Wandel vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik (Munich: Oldenbourg 1999) 363–95.

49. Bellamy, 'Advent of the Masses', 98.
50. Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures. 'Science as a Vocation'. 'Politics as a Vocation'* ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company 2004) 32; 63 ff.: Ostrogorski.
51. See also the review by the prominent French constitutionalist Adhémar Esmein in *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* 37 (1903) 117–32; 357–68.
52. Lipset, 'Introduction', xiii.
53. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy*, 358.
54. See for the relationship between Michels and Weber, for instance, Lawrence A. Scaff, 'Max Weber and Robert Michels', *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (1981) 1269–86.
55. Michels, *Soziologie des Parteiwesens*, xlix; James Bryce, *Modern Democracies* 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan 1921) II, 546, also footnote, 550.
56. Cf. Pombeni, *Partis politiques*, 181: 'Il est curieux de noter que l'auteur [Ostrogorski] comprend très bien que la forme-parti est un instrument d'acculturation anthropologique mais qu'il juge cette dimension totalement négative.'
57. For example, Scaff, 'Weber and Michels', 1274.
58. Busino and Stelling-Michaud, 'La nomination manquée de Luigi Einaudi'.
59. Michels, *Soziologie des Parteiwesens*, 236.
60. Cf. Biagini, *British Democracy*, 207, about the downside of a lack of a community or Weltanschauung.
61. Lipset, 'Introduction', lxi–lxii.
62. See the classic Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics* 1 (1995) 5–28.
63. Bellamy, 'Advent of the masses', 103, suggests that Ostrogorski's conclusion about the leagues might, after all, offer 'a model for how politics needs to evolve in the twenty-first' century.