

## The Integration of the Modern Industrial Proletariat into Bourgeois Society

### 13.1 Paul Göhre's Study on the Heterogeneity of Social Democratic Common Sense

The intellectual 'digestion' of Marxism Alfred Weber attributed to the 'younger' generation of social politicians (see above, Chapter 8) shapes a new type of social policy that is clearly distinct from the social-conservative opposition to socialism. I wish to demonstrate this, initially, by reference to Max Weber's interventions into the debates of the Evangelical Social Congress, which had been founded in the spring of 1890, mainly on the initiative of the former court chaplain and anti-Semitic politician Adolf Stöcker. The foundation of the Evangelical Social Congress was rendered possible by a declaration issued by the Kaiser in February, in which he announced an intensification of national industrial safety programmes and an international conference on industrial safety.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently to this, the Protestant High Consistory, a body directly subordinate to the head of state, issued a decree calling upon the clergy to continue combating Social Democracy while recognising the justified social needs of the workforce. 'Repression of the Social Democratic movement was now to yield to stronger socio-political efforts to solve social problems, especially those of the industrial workforce.'<sup>2</sup> But since the announced era of socio-political reform was not immediately successful in curbing Social Democracy's influence on the workforce, it was abandoned, both by the government and by the leadership of the Protestant church, in 1894/95.<sup>3</sup>

1 It 'reassured the rightists that in participating in the Congress they were not on the wrong track' (Marianne Weber 1975, p. 132). On the founding of the Evangelical Social Congress, see for example Göhre 1896, pp. 136ff; Apel 1939, pp. 30–1; Schick 1970, pp. 76–90, and Kouri, who emphasises the large number of government officials among its members (1984, pp. 99ff, 117ff, 120).

2 Aldenhoff 1988, p. 286.

3 Minister of Trade Berlepsch, who passed a law banning the employment of children younger than 13, was sidelined from 1894 onward, at the instigation of Saarland industrialist von Stumm, and resigned in 1896 (Wehler 1995, p. 1088). A decree issued by Prussia's Protestant High Consistory on 16 December 1895 banned pastors from participating in any kind of 'socio-political agitation' and threatened them with disciplinary measures if they failed to

The Evangelical Social Congress suffers from internal tensions similar to those within the Association for Social Policy. Weber, who attends the annual assemblies regularly until 1897, numbers among the ‘younger’ members, along with Naumann and Göhre; the ‘young’ opposed to the initially dominant ‘state socialist’ positions of Stoecker and Wagner an ‘English conception of social policy’.<sup>4</sup> The Protestant controversies about the ‘labour issue’ are sparked by the general secretary of the Evangelical Social Congress, Paul Göhre; in 1891, Göhre published a study on the industrial workforce, written after he had spent three months working incognito at Chemnitz’s engineering works (in what follows, I quote from the 1913 ‘popular edition’, which is identical to the original edition).

What was offensive in Göhre’s book was his demonstration that any strategy aiming to separate the workers from Social Democracy is doomed to fail: the entire workforce of Chemnitz and its environs is tied up with the Social Democratic Party and ‘lives and breathes its ideas’.<sup>5</sup> The workforce is ‘held together by the glue of Social Democratic agitation’, and Social Democracy will continue to be its expression and representation within the foreseeable future; ‘in fact today, Social Democracy is this movement itself’.<sup>6</sup> To eliminate Social Democracy would be neither sensible nor possible, ‘but what is possible, desirable and necessary is that Social Democracy be educated, ennobled and sanctified’.<sup>7</sup> This presents engagement with Social Democracy with new challenges: on the one hand, one needs to ‘break and remove the materialist backbone’ of the Social Democratic worldview;<sup>8</sup> on the other hand, one must not overlook that the moral sensibility of the workers influenced by Social Democracy continues to be shaped by Christianity, and that Social Democratic agitation continues to arouse a number of ‘ideal forces’.<sup>9</sup> It needs to be recognised ‘that a Social Democrat can also be a Christian, and that a Christian can

---

comply; this led to numerous clergymen withdrawing from the Evangelical Social Congress (see Göhre 1896, pp. 172–3).

4 Apel 1939, p. 85. Apel’s 1939 dissertation attempts to portray the Evangelical Social Congress as a precursor of the National Socialist ‘new era’ (Apel 1939, p. 122); accordingly, Apel sympathises with the ‘state socialist’ position, without however rejecting the ‘English’ position of the ‘young’ out of hand.

5 Göhre 1913, p. 108.

6 Göhre 1913, pp. 142, 214.

7 Göhre 1913, p. 215.

8 Göhre 1913, p. 216.

9 Göhre 1913, pp. 191, 194.