The SPD held its annual party congress at Chemnitz in September 1912, just weeks before an Extraordinary International Socialist Congress was to convene at Basel. The party meeting occurred against the background of a triumph in the Reichstag elections of 12 January 1912. Social-Democratic candidates received approximately 4,250,000 votes (34.8 per cent of the total), dramatically increasing the party’s representation from the 43 Reichstag members of the 1907 ‘Hottentot elections’ to 110 deputies. This victory served to reinforce the hope of centrists and

1. The interest generated by the Chemnitz congress can be gauged by the fact that it drew commentary from as far away as America. The New York Times predicted a ‘bitter fight’ and reported that a ‘miracle’ would be required to save the SPD from its ‘warring factions’: the revisionist wing was intent on imposing ‘more practical common sense’ in its struggle against ‘extreme radicals on the left’, while stalwarts of the middle ground, including Bebel, were struggling to ‘maintain a semblance of peace’. See ‘German Socialists in a Bitter Fight; Annual Congress, Which Opens at Chemnitz To-day, Likely to Tear the Party Apart. Three Groups Now Exist. Marxists, Revisionists and Extreme Radicals so Antagonistic that Union Seems Impossible.’ The New York Times, 15 September 1912.

The Extraordinary International Socialist Congress convened at Basel on 24–5 November 1912, shortly after the outbreak of the first Balkan War in October 1912. Attended by 545 delegates from 22 countries, it was more significant in the history of socialism than the Chemnitz congress of the SPD but added little to development of the theory of imperialism and is therefore less relevant for the purposes of this book. See the preparatory documents of the congress at Quellen zur Entwicklung der sozialistischen Internationale (1907–1919): Der X. Internationale Sozialistische Kongress in Wien on the Bibliothek der Friedrich Ebert Stiftung website.
revisionists alike that the imperialist drive towards world war could be thwarted by proletarian activism, including co-operation with bourgeois pacifists in promoting limitations on the arms-race.

The principal theoretical support for this view came from Rudolf Hilferding’s *Finance Capital*, which many party leaders understood to mean that capitalism’s next step would be formation of international cartels to avoid war and jointly exploit foreign markets. That theme recurs throughout the speeches that we have translated here and was only decisively challenged, on the level of general theory, by Rosa Luxemburg’s *Accumulation of Capital*, which appeared in the spring of 1913. For that reason, the following four documents that we have included in this volume are reviews of Luxemburg’s work.

Several issues were debated at Chemnitz, but the most contentious was a proposed resolution on imperialism. The *rapporteur* on this subject was Hugo Haase, chairman of the Reichstag delegation, who, together with Friedrich Ebert, a prominent member of the Kautskyist Centre, later co-chaired the SPD after Bebel’s death in August 1913. Haase condemned imperialism as the

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2. Hugo Haase (1863–1919) was born in Allenstein (Olsztyn), a Province of Prussia, the son of a Jewish shoemaker. He studied law in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), was the first Social Democrat in the Königsberg city council, and became a Reichstag deputy in 1897. Haase belonged to the ‘centre’ wing of the party, led by Karl Kautsky. In July 1914, he organised the antiwar rally of the SPD, and on 31 July and 1 August he fought unsuccessfully against the SPD-majority’s decision to support the war-credits. Haase’s plea to reject the credits was rejected by a vote of 78 to 14. Haase became increasingly vocal in resisting the policies of the SPD-faction and was forced to resign as a party chairman in 1916. In March 1916, he took over the leadership of the Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, founded by war-critics in the SPD. In 1917, he became chairman of the newly founded Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), which split the so-called ‘Majority Social Democrats’ group and advocated immediate peace negotiations. With the German Revolution of November 1918, Haase and Friedrich Ebert (leader of the majority Social Democrats) headed the provisional government known as the Council of People’s Representatives. After the violent repression of the Revolution, Haase and the two other USPD-representatives, Wilhelm Dittman and Emil Barth, abandoned the government on 29 December 1918. The Haase-led USPD received only 7% of the vote for the Weimar National Assembly on 19 January 1919. On 8 October 1919, Haase was shot by Johann Voss, a leather-worker who apparently was mentally ill. Voss was severely injured and died on 7 November 1919.

Leon Trotsky’s assessment of Haase can be found in the sixteenth chapter of his autobiography:

Bebel’s fond hopes for a successor centred in Haase. The old man was doubtless attracted by Haase’s idealism – not broad revolutionary idealism, which Haase did not possess, but a narrower, more personal, everyday sort of idealism; one might