

HÖLSCHER, LUCIAN. *Weltgericht oder Revolution. Protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich*. [Industrielle Welt, Band 46.] Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1989. 503 pp. Ill. Maps. DM 98.00.

All those who believe that the socialist labour movement can only be understood by recognizing its intellectual and especially its religious dimension will welcome as an achievement of the first order Lucian Hölscher's study *Weltgericht oder Revolution. Protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich* ("Last Judgement or Revolution. Protestant and Socialist Visions of the Future during the German Empire").

From the manifold issues raised in the context of this intellectual-religious dimension Hölscher selects the central one, namely the assumptions and perspectives about the future which motivated German socialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Visions of and blueprints for the future are not mere fantasy or idle speculation, but constitute the existential framework of human action. This is the case for individuals, and even more for collective movements.

In summary, I would say that the key findings of the study are presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

(1) *The expectation of revolution*

Lassalle held that capitalist society would eventually collapse, but he did not put a timescale on this prediction. The revolution would come, but at an unspecified time. This view did not survive his death, however. During the confrontation between the supporters of Lassalle and the supporters of the Eisenach programme both wings of the socialist labour movement wanted to be seen in the eyes of the proletariat as the more revolutionary, and their views on the timing of the revolution played a decisive role in their arguments. In the years leading up to the Franco-German war of 1870–1871, both wings shortened the timescale for impending revolution. In fact, the revolution seemed to be at hand with the proclamation of the Paris Commune, and even after it failed the Commune remained a milestone on the now calculable road to socialism. Typical of the new attitude was a report in the Leipzig *Volksstaat*:

The second socialist tidal wave [after 1848] has broken on the walls of bourgeois society. But new waves, mightier than the previous ones, are surging forward. Perhaps one more will be repelled, but no god and no man can ward off the collapse of this crumbling edifice.

In the following years it was still widely believed that the revolution would take at least another generation. It was the passage of the anti-socialist law in 1878 which once again shortened the timescale in the eyes of many. But in counterbalance to this expectation of imminent revolution a new body of opinion gained ground within the Social Democratic Party which cut right across the previous factions of Lassalleans and Eisenachians. Nor did it correspond to the opposition between reformists or moderates and Marxists or radicals, as was shown by the disagreements on the issue between Liebknecht and Vollmar.

After the repeal of the anti-socialist law in 1890 the revolutionary horizon once again receded, the expectation of an imminent upheaval faded. The writings of Bernstein and Kautsky on the one hand and autobiographical reminiscences of rank-and-file party members on the other provided the clearest evidence of this reassessment. However, there existed within this new horizon a wide range of views. On the shared basis of deferred expectation Bernstein and Kautsky nevertheless took up opposite poles in the revisionism debate, which Hölscher reinterprets in this context. There were also sharp differences in the testimonies of the rank and file: some described the phase of revolutionary optimism “wistfully as a bygone golden age”, while others saw it “more as a now abandoned illusion of youth”.

(2) *Socialist visions of the future*

Hölscher unfolds a great panorama of blueprints for a socialist future. (One rather wishes he would have been slightly less meticulous and left some outside the discussion.) They include: two anonymous articles in the *Volksstaat* (1876); *Die Forderungen des Sozialismus an Zukunft und Gegenwart* by Bruno Geiser (1875); *Die Lösung der sozialen Frage* by Johann Most (1876); *Der isolierte sozialistische Staat* by Georg von Vollmar (1879); *Die Zukunft der Sozialdemokratie* by Joseph Dietzgen (1878); *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* by August Bebel (1879); and several works by Karl Kautsky. Recognizing its significance and impact, Hölscher dwells at particular length on *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*. He shows, among other things, that Bebel in this work in effect disregarded Marx's prohibition on the formulation of utopias. Hölscher carefully traces the changes in the succeeding drafts and editions of the work, and thus reveals the related conceptual changes it underwent. As far as Vollmar's work is concerned, it is notable that he rejected Marx's assumption of a simultaneous revolution in all advanced industrial countries, and that he discussed the constellation of the international labour movement as it in fact emerged after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In addition to the studies mentioned above, Hölscher also discusses Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000–1887*, published in 1888. It provides an exception to the rule in two ways: the author is American, and the work is a science-fiction novel. Even so, Hölscher is right to include it in the list, for it had an appeal that went far beyond Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*. This was all the more astonishing because Bellamy presented the socialists as opponents of the social reform he advocated and considered them in the pay of reactionary monopoly capital. But this stance did not detract from the novel's popularity, no doubt primarily because of the overriding strong desire among many people for a flesh-and-blood representation of the ideal future and the fascination with the time travel to the “magical” year 2000. *Looking Backward* also prompted opponents of socialism like the liberal politician Eugen Richter to use the same literary form of the science-fiction novel to depict the socialist state of the future as a nightmare vision.

(3) *The methodology of socialist futurology*

Having analyzed the contents of the visions of the future, Hölscher goes on to examine them from a methodological angle. How were these predictions formulated? In part the authors relied on “common sense”, in part they described their blueprints as provisional contributions to an internal party process towards collec-

tive self-understanding, at the end of which there would emerge a consensual vision of the future socialist state. A number of writers dodged the vexed problem of predicting developments leading up to the revolution by hypothesizing that the revolution had already happened and then only concerning themselves with what was to be done subsequently. Kautsky in particular proceeded in this way time and again, and repeatedly rehearsed new variants of this mindgame. As far as the measures to be taken after the revolution are concerned, on the whole the writers made a distinction between basic principles guiding action, which were set out and explained, and specific measures, about which nothing could yet be said.

Let me note in passing that in another section of the chapter Hölscher deals firstly with the critique of utopian socialism by Marx and Engels, which was diametrically opposed to all these visions of the future; and secondly with the efforts by Kautsky and Bernstein to come to terms with the ambivalences and doubts in Marx's and Engels' futurology.

Hölscher devotes chapters 1 and 2 to the real theme of his study, a comparison of socialism and protestantism in all its varieties. He carries out the comparison initially at two levels. At the first level the two movements' expectations and visions of the future are contrasted: "revolution" with "the end of the world", "the socialist state of the future" with "the kingdom of God". Protestant expectations and visions of the future are elucidated using both texts of sermons and works of contemporary academic theology (divided into theological liberalism, an orthodoxy largely coloured by pietism, and the "eschatological revolution" initiated by Albert Schweitzer, which stressed the qualitative differences between the world and the kingdom of God).

If one takes socialism as a social movement, then its protestant counterpart can be found in the form of the millenarian movements. This is the second level of the comparison. In the second half of the nineteenth century social groups threatened by uprootal and proletarianization were seized by eschatological fervour. Some of them formed religious communities which remained within the established protestant churches; others formed sects and free churches (mennonites, baptists, methodists, irvingites, adventists), some of which were sharply opposed to the church establishment.

Hölscher does not let matters rest with a mere comparison. He goes on to claim that millenarian sects and social democracy were closely interlinked. He sees in both "the linking of an attitude of social protest with an expectation of imminent catastrophe and the subsequent establishment of a paradise on earth" (p. 126). Hölscher even claims that there existed "osmotic social relationships" between the two movements. He argues that both appealed to the same groups of people, and the ideological direction which social protest took depended "more on the coincidental presence of free, non-conformist or sectarian organizations than on the religious socialization of individuals" (p. 127). This is a claim for which Hölscher fails to provide a single piece of evidence. He points out that leaving the established churches "became an increasingly popular means for proletarian and petty-bourgeois groups [. . .] to express their dissatisfaction with the state church", and that both the millenarian sects and social democracy profited from this development and even sought to encourage it (p. 128). But all this proves is a certain correspondence,

not a “secret osmosis” (*ibid.*). The concluding phrase “differentiated exploitation of the same social and ideological mood of impending catastrophe” (p. 130) is no more than an elegant formulation; it does not explain why people turned to the one movement or the other, after all a decision of considerable magnitude for each individual.

In chapter 3 Hölscher raises the question whether the socialist world view was a secularized religion. I will not discuss this further here because it goes beyond the scope of the study (expectations, visions and predictions of the future), but would like to note that it contains valuable insights. This section deals with several different complexes, and contains: a theoretical discussion of the concept of “secularization” introduced by Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber; empirical studies on the relative decline of the churches in the nineteenth century, illustrated with tables and maps; an analysis of the ideological line of development from the “religious socialism” that was widespread in the pre-1848 period, via the combination of religion and political opposition among the protestant “friends of light” and the “German catholics”, to the confrontation between religion and socialism that became the norm after 1871; and finally a discussion of “secularization” in its various aspects, including the religious metaphors employed by social democracy (“resurrection” and “salvation” of the proletariat, socialism as the “new gospel”, and so on).

The final chapter, chapter 7, is also heterogeneous. In it Hölscher describes, first, how the faith in the future socialist state reached its greatest intensity in the 1870s and 1880s, how it was propagated, and how it subsequently flagged and then became stereotypical; second, how the opponents of socialism fought against this faith (discussing the contents of writings and the means used to achieve aims); and third, how the protestant church and social democracy came into confrontation (discussing both a critique of the socialist state of the future and the organizational means used to achieve aims, with specific reference to internal mission work). In this third section Hölscher once again departs from the main theme of the study. In addition the chapter also contains an appendix (not identified as such) on catholicism.

Hölscher’s study is a great achievement, the extent of which can only be hinted in very general terms in this review. And I should also say that enjoyment of the work is enhanced by its elegant and unpretentious style. Nevertheless, the study has its flaws. I would like to mention three criticisms.

(1) The study frays at the edges. The introduction seems like a neverending runup. In it Hölscher develops, among other things, a typology of futurology; discusses the question whether predictions can be falsified; discusses the difference between utopia and prediction; outlines the connection between the modern conception of the future and industrialization. In a further section (chapter 1, part 1) he describes the “discovery” of the future in the early modern age, its differentiation from the expectation of the day of judgement, and “*futurum*” as distinguished from “*adventus Christi in iudicium*”; develops, following Reinhart Koselleck, the conceptual difference between “prevision” (*Voraussicht*) and “providence” (*Vorsehung*); explains how the future is “conquered” scientifically and reflected in the philosophy of history. The final sections of the book degenerate into an increasingly insubstantial outlook, ending in a consideration of the concepts of industrialization,

democratization and modernization. All this no longer has anything to do with the subject matter: the study has lost its way.

(2) It is in my view misguided to try to draw conclusions about the intellectual climate of the German empire on the basis of a partial analysis of social democracy and protestantism. Hölscher's first effort in this direction mixes elements which do not belong together (such as an avowedly "general mood of decline", fin-de-siecle art, and the policies "aimed at preventing and avoiding the socialist revolution" that finally failed on 9 November 1918, see pp. 280f.). Later on he declares that "the period of empire was, particularly after 1890, one of ideological upheaval, of looking forward to the future". Everything was dominated by the "consciousness of belonging to a new age, which had irretrievably left behind the ways of life and ways of thinking of the old world" (p. 441). Such statements cannot be justified on the basis of an analysis of social democracy and protestantism, only two elements contributing to the intellectual climate of the times.

(3) The theme is approached in a very academic fashion. Hölscher depicts the contents of conceptions of the future, shows how they differ from each other or overlap, and outlines the methodology of predicting the future, including its weaknesses, contradictions and ambivalences. Occasionally he also refers to the circumstances surrounding the development of socialist futurology, noting, for instance, that not a few socialist visions of the future were written down in prison. But at no point does he address the fact that specific expectations, hopes and fears attached to the different visions, that they contained a determining ethical element, and that they spawned new forms of community organization.

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PELED, YOAV. *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale. The Political Economy of Jewish Workers' Nationalism in Late Imperial Russia.* Macmillan, Basingstoke, London 1989. xii, 171 pp. £ 29.50.

There is hardly a Jewish labour leader who, at some stage, did not feel compelled to put down his life-experience in writing. And the loving care with which a party such as the *Bund* nursed its archives, despite persecution and repression in several countries, is amazing. Obviously, there is a typically Jewish penchant for history at work here. All the Jewish political organisations had at least one thing in common: they cherished their own history and felt that it was incumbent upon them to transmit the memory of things past to future generations. No wonder therefore that social historians find the Jewish labour movement to be a goldmine of information. It ranks as something like a favourite among them.

Mr Peled is the last in a long row to have delved this fertile soil. His purpose, though, is not to bring us a new outline of the history of the Jewish labour movement but to use the history of Jewish socialism as a demonstration for his theses on "ethno-class consciousness". In order to make his point, the author successively sketches the historical setting, describes the evolution of the *Bund's* national programme, and analyzes the various interpretations which have been proposed to