

“Cheap and Nasty”: German Goods, Socialism, and the 1876 Philadelphia World Fair*

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SUMMARY: At the World Fair in Philadelphia in 1876, the German goods on display were described as “cheap and nasty”, setting off a vigorous debate about the state of German industry. Social democrats attacked policies of increasing competitiveness of German exports through keeping wages low, and claimed that the quality of the goods produced by socialist workers was higher than those produced by others. An analysis of the debate shows the extent to which social democrats not only resorted to arguments stressing the “national interest”, but also the extent to which nominally Marxist socialists in this period were still attached to traditional artisanal values of pride in the quality of their work.

In 1876, the city of Philadelphia celebrated the centennial of the American Revolution, and of the Declaration of Independence adopted in that city on 4 July 1776, by hosting a World’s Fair, one of those international showcases of technological triumphs and commercial enterprise which regularly punctuated the late nineteenth-century “Age of Capital”.¹ The democratic and republican festival in the “city of brotherly love” provided an opportunity for the newly unified German *Reich* of Otto von Bismarck, after a mere five years of existence as a single nation, to display its wares and impress the world – and some ten million visitors to the Fair² – with its engineering prowess.

The correspondent of the conservative German family magazine, *Die Gartenlaube*, recorded for his readers the success of the machinery hall, which was crowded and full of life:

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1. See Evelyn Kroker, *Die Weltausstellungen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1975); Werner Plum, *World Exhibitions in the Nineteenth Century: Pageants of Social and Political Change*, transl. Lux Furtmüller (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1977); E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848–1875* (New York, 1979), p. 31.
2. For the figure, cf. Plum, *World Exhibitions*, p. 63; Kroker, *Weltausstellungen im 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 146.

And yet our view on entry through the main portal falls on a majestic sight, which seems to command silence from upon its high plinth. The spectator has the famous Krupp cannon before him, the highlight of the German section. It cost no small effort to bring the brown monstrosity across the wide seas [...]. The weight of the barrel is 58,580 kilos, and that of the carriage and wagon together is even greater. It is chiefly the length of the barrel which earns this gun our admiration, for the calibre is only 35.5 cm. The projectile weighs 540 kilos. The gun is supposed to achieve an especially long range, and the intention has been realized, for at a range of two English miles the shell can penetrate an armoured plate 24 inches thick, and at a distance of two German miles the shell still has the force to bore through a six-inch armoured plate.³

Die Gartenlaube was pleased to report that Krupp's giant was not alone, but accompanied by smaller mountain guns, which surpassed the artillery in the Russian section in their quality of material and precision of manufacture, before going on to mention that the German section of the machinery hall also included gas motors from Deutz, and machines from Berlin for the production of bricks and cement.⁴ The correspondent of *The New York Times* also testified to the fact that what he irreverently described as "two monsters, more resembling a domesticated married couple of the hippopotimus [*sic*] than anything else in creation" excited "a good deal of attention and some animated discussion".⁵

The patriotic self-satisfaction aroused among middle-class German newspaper readers by the contemplation of the mighty Krupp cannon received an unpleasant jolt from Professor Franz Reuleaux, the German commissioner for the World's Fair, an engineering expert who was already a veteran of international exhibitions in London, Paris and Vienna.⁶ In one of his regular "Letters from Philadelphia", published in the National-Liberal Berlin *National-Zeitung*, Reuleaux wrote that:

3. R. Elcho, "Weltausstellungsskizzen. 2. Die Maschinenhalle", *Die Gartenlaube*, 1876, p. 542. On *Die Gartenlaube* and its promotion of German national identity, see Kirsten Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in Die Gartenlaube, 1853–1900* (Lincoln [etc.], 1998), especially pp. 81–82 on the magazine's glorification of Alfred Krupp as a symbol of German technological and military strength, and pp. 103–116 on the magazine's coverage of international exhibitions as showcases for the same.
4. Elcho, "Weltausstellungsskizzen", pp. 542f.
5. A.P., "The Great Exhibition", *The New York Times*, 3 July 1876.
6. On Reuleaux (1829–1905) see Anton Bettelheim (ed.) *Biographisches Jahrbuch und Deutscher Nekrolog*, X. Band (Berlin, 1907), pp. 276–278 (entry by H. Fuchs), 234*; Hans-Joachim Braun and Wolfhard Weber, "Ingenieurwissenschaft und Gesellschaftspolitik. Das Wirken von Franz Reuleaux", in Reinhard Rürup (ed.), *Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Technischen Universität Berlin, 1879–1979* (Berlin, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 285–300; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Bd. 3: 1849–1914* (Munich, 1995), pp. 416, 564, 1227; entry by Hans-Joachim Braun in *Deutsche Biographische Enzyklopädie*, vol. 8 (Munich, 1998), pp. 254–255.

[...] it cannot be concealed, it must even be stated out loud, that Germany has suffered a heavy defeat at the Philadelphia exhibition. Our achievements, as far as the great majority of exhibits are concerned, lag behind those of other nations; only in a few do we appear equal to them on a closer inspection; and superior only in the rarest instances.

Reuleaux claimed that it would be disloyal of him to conceal Germany's undeniable defeat at the exhibition, as evidenced by the critical judgements in the local press, not least the German-American press. The "quintessence of all the attacks" was summed up in the phrase that the "fundamental principle" of German industry was "*billig und schlecht*", or, make it cheap and nasty. Reuleaux conceded that: "Unfortunately, our industry has, on average, followed this principle ruthlessly for the first part at least, and hence the second follows", despite the efforts of a few industrialists to counteract the dominant tendency. Reuleaux also reported complaints that the only motifs displayed by German arts and crafts at the exhibition seemed to belong to the genre of patriotic propaganda:

Indeed, once this had been said to us, a feeling of embarrassment overtook us when we wandered through the exhibition and contemplated, in our section, the marching battalions of Germanias, Borussias, Kaisers, Crown Princes, "Red Princes", Bismarck, Moltke, Roon, which confront us in porcelain, in potter's biscuit, in bronze, in zinc, in iron, in clay; painted, embroidered, printed, lithographed, and woven, on all sides and in every corner.⁷

In the light of these comments, it now also struck Reuleaux as embarrassing that Germany's display in the machinery hall was dominated by Krupp's "killing machines" (Reuleaux quoting the term in English), where other exhibitors emphasized the works of peace. Finally, critics pointed to a general lack of taste on the arts and crafts side, and a lack of progress on the purely technical side of things. Reuleaux again conceded that this judgement was: "harsh, but almost entirely true!"⁸

Reuleaux' report from Philadelphia sparked a storm of outrage in the

7. F. Reuleaux, "Briefe aus Philadelphia" (dated Philadelphia, 2 June 1876), in *National-Zeitung*, no. 293, 27 June 1876. That Reuleaux was not exaggerating about the proliferation of patriotic kitsch is suggested by a report that just one maker of metal ornaments displayed thirty-five Kaiser Wilhelms, thirty-four copies of the Sieges-Säule (Berlin's Victory Column), thirty effigies of the Crown Prince, twenty-four Bismarcks, twenty-two examples of Frederick the Great, and eight Moltkes; "Das deutsche Reich auf den internationalen Ausstellungen", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 77, 7 July 1876.
8. F. Reuleaux, "Briefe aus Philadelphia", *National-Zeitung*, no. 293, 27 June 1876. The negative local press comments on the German display were also noted by the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt* (no. 176, 24 June 1876, *Morgenblatt*, article: "Die deutsche Ausstellungskommission in Philadelphia"): it quoted one paper as calling the German contribution "the poorest, least interesting and least instructive of all". According to the same article, Reuleaux' appointment as commissioner had been a belated attempt to remedy this situation.

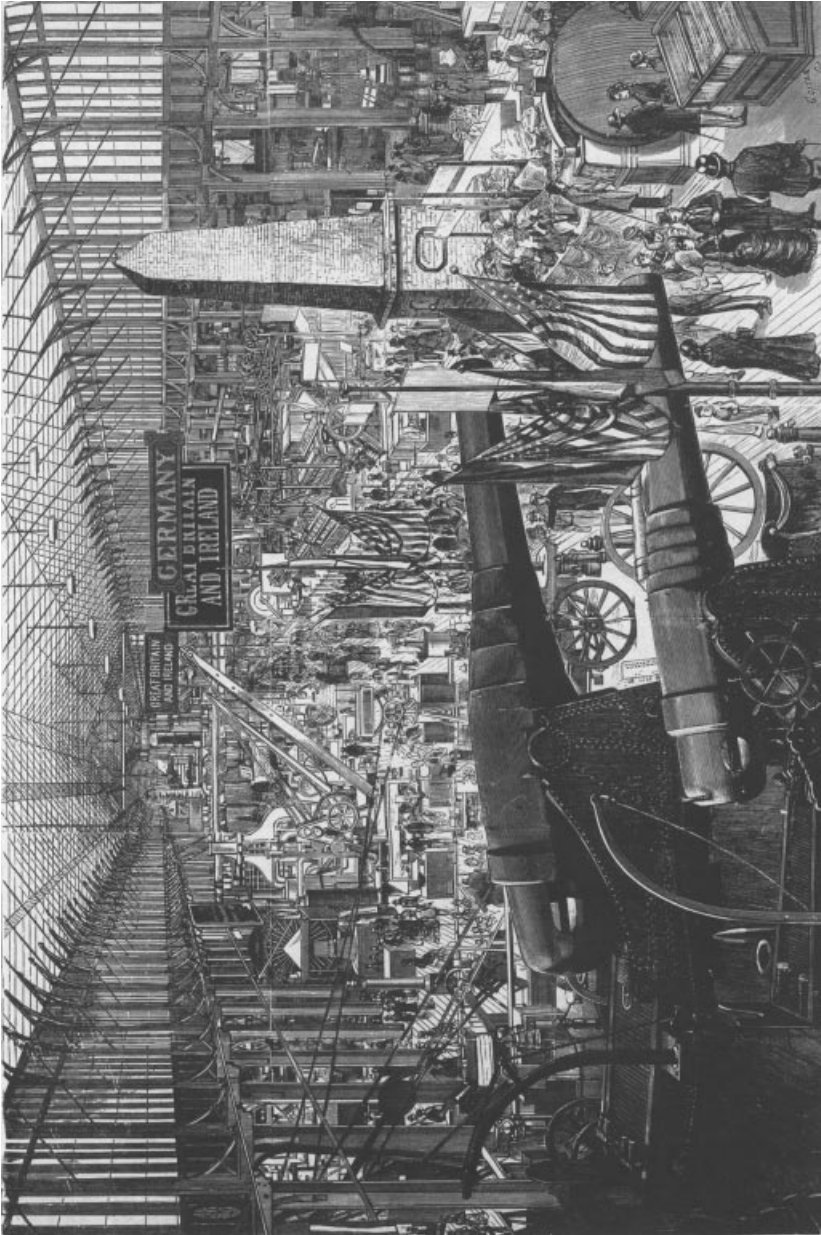


Figure 1. The German display in the machinery hall at the Philadelphia Exhibition, 1876, with the Krupp cannon in the foreground. *Frank Leslie's Historical Register of US Centennial Exposition, New York, 1877*

German press, the controversy also attracting international attention. The London *Times*'s Prussian correspondent told his readers that: "Most papers have discussed the letter of the outspoken witness. The excitement is getting more intense as it spreads to wider circles".⁹ The debate was remembered by the *Gartenlaube* three years later, when Reuleaux was entrusted with the German contribution to the 1879 World Fair in Sydney: "We haven't shown ourselves at contests between the peoples since Reuleaux branded us with the phrase 'cheap and nasty'".¹⁰ Indeed, the phrase "cheap and nasty" was remembered in Reuleaux's obituaries three decades after the scandal.¹¹ This now relatively little-remembered controversy is worth revisiting, as it quickly took on a political dimension, with capitalists and socialist workers holding each other responsible for the debacle of German industry. Not only does the 1876 debate about the quality of German goods prefigure subsequent arguments about national competitiveness down to the present, it casts an interesting light on the attitudes to work, craftsmanship, and national interests held by the spokesmen for the German social democrats, who, having just united to form a single party in Gotha a year earlier, were emerging as a political force to be reckoned with.¹²

The storm stirred up by Reuleaux's article arose rapidly, and persisted for several weeks. The newspaper which had published the Reuleaux letter reported by 6 July that it had achieved a:

[...] quite extraordinary resonance in the German press. Few papers will not have reproduced the brief, vigorous outlines of that picture more or less fully, and the reflections thereupon have been virtually innumerable. [...]. Whatever the political or social position of the judge, the spectacle remains the same. The factory owners accuse the workers, and the workers, particularly the Social

9. "German Trade", *The Times*, 24 July 1876. The story was also picked up by *The New York Times*, 7 August 1876 (article headed "German inferior manufactures"); cf. also the response of the *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt*, no. 209, 27 July 1876, *Morgenblatt* (rubric: "Großbritannien"). Reuleaux's series of articles was subsequently reprinted as a separate pamphlet under the title *Briefe aus Philadelphia* (Braunschweig, 1877). See also the account of the controversy in Kees Gispén, *New Profession, Old Order: Engineers and German Society, 1815–1914* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 115–121 (section entitled "the Reuleaux Episode"). Gispén's account focuses primarily on the controversy's implications for technical education and German industry's attitude towards technology.
10. Richard Oberländer, "Australien und die Weltausstellung in Sydney", *Die Gartenlaube*, no. 21, 1879, p. 354.
11. See H. Fuchs (note 6 above).
12. The Reuleaux debate raised a broad range of issues, including patent laws, tariffs, the improvement of productivity through greater mechanization, and improved technical education. There is insufficient space to explore all of these here. Rather, this article focuses principally on the resonance of the debate within German social democracy, which is one aspect of the Reuleaux controversy that has not been dealt with elsewhere.

Democrats, accuse the factory owners; both complain in unison about the public, and the latter return the complaints.¹³

The agrarian lobby blamed new liberal legislation, Catholics blamed Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, and the democratic *Frankfurter Zeitung* wrote that, for their part, the national liberal papers didn't tire of claiming that the organized labour movement was responsible.¹⁴ A few years later, the anti-Semites, such as Adolf Stoecker, would blame the Jews for the bad reputation of German products epitomized by the Philadelphia tag "*billig und schlecht*".¹⁵ Nonetheless, in July 1876, the *National-Zeitung* claimed that it had "very rarely encountered a fundamental objection to Reuleaux' claims": hardly anyone seemed willing to vouch for the quality of German goods.¹⁶

One attempt at explaining what seemed to be the generally acknowledged deficiencies of German manufactures appeared in the columns of the same newspaper. Engineer Schlickeysen, a Berlin building-construction machinery manufacturer, found the root of the bad reputation of German industry in the fact that it was content to imitate innovations made abroad. "Because the competition of good ideas in our industry is almost ruled out by this liberty [to 'steal ideas'], we are confined to the competition of prices, which naturally creates a general condition of bad work, scant earnings, and deception of the buyer". German industry's unwillingness to invest in innovation meant that people with new ideas tended to get nowhere. New ideas were also lacking in public life and social policy, and the "worker without means and the small artisan" lacked incentives to better their lot through innovation.¹⁷ This was close to Reuleaux' own views, especially given his activity in working for national patent laws in Germany, which subsequently eventuated in 1877.¹⁸ Faced with industry representatives' unapologetic justification of their aggressive policy of pursuing export markets through price-cutting, if necessary subsidized by

13. *National-Zeitung*, no. 310, 6 July 1876 (*Abend-Ausgabe*).

14. *Ibid.*; "Politische Übersicht", *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt*, no. 186, 4 July 1876, *Abendblatt*; the Catholic press was also ready to blame socialism as well as the *Kulturkampf*. See the comments of the *Rheinischer Kurier* (Wiesbaden) cited in *Der Volksstaat*, no. 81, 14 July 1876.

15. Reinhard Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus. Studien zur "Judenfrage" der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1987), pp. 111, 221, n. 35.

16. *National-Zeitung*, no. 310, 6 July 1876 (*Abend-Ausgabe*). Free-trade policies were blamed in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example. See *National-Zeitung*, no. 344, 26 July 1876 (*Abend-Ausgabe*).

17. E. Schlickeysen, "Philadelphia und die deutsche Industrie", *National-Zeitung*, no. 339, 1, *Beiblatt*, 23 July 1876; cf. also Gispén, *New Profession, Old Order*, pp. 117f.

18. See Braun and Weber, "Ingenieurwissenschaft und Gesellschaftspolitik", pp. 295–296. Werner von Siemens's account of the introduction of the 1877 patent law, in his *Lebenserinnerungen*, 5th edn (Berlin, 1897), pp. 260–261, notes the impact of the Reuleaux controversy on the campaign for the patent law.

the domestic market, Reuleaux also advocated competition through raising quality, rather than lowering prices; the former not only benefited consumers, but also enhanced the capacities of all involved in production. The path of ever lower prices, on the other hand, could not be followed indefinitely without the wares' quality declining and "the love for good honest work" suffering.¹⁹

The editorial writer of the liberal *Neues Berliner Tageblatt* diagnosed the cause of the malaise affecting German industry (with notable exceptions, such as Krupp) as a lack of official recognition and encouragement for technical innovation. According to this paper, the difficulty in getting innovative technical achievements recognized was in no small measure a result of the low esteem in which industry and technical education were held by the Prussian bureaucracy after the death (in 1853) of Peter Christian Wilhelm Beuth, who, as Prussia's leading official responsible for economic development and technical education from the 1820s to the mid-1840s, had been a keen promoter of industry as well as the patron of the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel.²⁰ The *Neues Berliner Tageblatt's* correspondent in America, however, considered Reuleaux' letter to be grossly overstated, arguing, among other things, that the Krupp cannon took up less space than Reuleaux had claimed, and that hundreds of the German exhibits served purely peaceful purposes. The correspondent suspected that Reuleaux' letter might be a signal for an antiliberal, free-conservative and protectionist backlash against current free-trade policies.²¹

Not surprisingly, Reuleaux found himself "in no little embarrassment" at the "quite unexpected reverberations" which his first letter from Philadelphia had caused, once news of the controversy got back to him. While qualifying his position on some points (e.g. pleading that the reproaches of "chauvinism" and "Byzantinism" had been raised by the foreign press, rather than being his own judgement), he reiterated his fundamental argument that German industry was mistaken in seeking to compete through lowering prices, rather than increasing quality.²² He also felt constrained to add that there were, of course, exceptions to his

19. F. Reuleaux, "Briefe aus Philadelphia III", dated Philadelphia, 19 July 1876, in *National-Zeitung*, no. 367, 9 August 1876 (*Morgen-Ausgabe*); cf. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Bd.3, p. 564.

20. Leading article "Die deutsche Technik", *Neues Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 171, 25 July 1876, and no. 172, 26 July 1876.

21. B.-Z., "Amerikanische Briefe xxiii", *Neues Berliner Tageblatt*, no. 182, 6 August 1876, 1, *Beiblatt*. Reuleaux' letter was not, of course, the sole topic of this and other reports from Philadelphia. Other matters reported on included the news of the Battle of Little Big Horn, a heatwave, and, from the point of view of German correspondents, the appalling success of American temperance activists in banning alcohol on Sundays from the exhibition grounds.

22. F. Reuleaux, "Briefe aus Philadelphia III".

strictures, notably the products of German heavy industry in iron, and German machinery, insofar as it was represented at Philadelphia.²³

Like other newspapers, the social democratic press responded to the Reuleaux controversy. Both *Der Volksstaat* and the *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, the organs respectively of the “Eisenacher” and “Lassalleian” wings of the recently unified party (at the 1875 Gotha party congress) took up the issues raised by the debate.²⁴

Der Volksstaat began its coverage of the subject with a front-page article entitled “Two Defeats”, linking the current crisis in the Balkans, which *Der Volksstaat* depicted as a reverse for Bismarck’s eastern diplomacy, with the “*economic-industrial* defeat, which is hardly less embarrassing for our ‘national pride’, and which will be hardly less damaging to our national interests”. *Der Volksstaat* quoted Reuleaux’ verdict on the “heavy defeat at the Philadelphia exhibition” suffered by Germany, and went on to reproduce the rest of his article, which substantiated the verdict. For *Der Volksstaat*, Reuleaux’ article showed that the chauvinism and militarism of Bismarck’s “Prusso-Germany” had been damaging to more peaceful artistic and commercial pursuits.²⁵

The following issue of *Der Volksstaat* devoted a second leading article to the Philadelphia debacle, this time seeking to rebut suggestions by a “chorus of national liberals” that German workers were to blame for it: “The usual litany starts up, the one about the excessive wage demands and the work falling below the corresponding standards, and the labour time cut and work motivation undermined by social democratic agitation”. *Der Volksstaat* used a lengthy extract from the *Deutsche Reichs-correspondenz* as the occasion for turning Reuleaux’ reproaches back against the national liberals, whom the socialists held responsible for the ruinous “Byzantinism and chauvinism” prevalent in Bismarckian Germany. *Der Volksstaat* reiterated its argument linking militarism and the deficiencies of German industry:

A *Reich* which year in year out sticks nearly half a million of its strongest workers in barracks and makes them unaccustomed to productive work; whose founders gave us three wars within six years and who have now brought us to the threshold of a fourth; which in the short span of its existence has spent billions on warlike purposes, and only the most minute sums on peaceful ends, not a penny on raising our capacities in trades, on the *technical* education (to say nothing of

23. F. Reuleaux, “Briefe aus Philadelphia IV”, *National-Zeitung*, no. 379, 16 August 1876 (*Morgen-Ausgabe*).

24. As a compromise between the two socialist groups, the two papers continued to appear separately after the party’s unification until their replacement in October 1876 by a single organ, *Vorwärts*. The united party bore the name Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands.

25. “Zwei Niederlagen”, *Der Volksstaat*, no. 77, 5 July 1876. Emphasis in the original.

general schooling) of the people – in short, a *Reich* which is best characterized by the fact that it has *nothing but a military budget*, is fundamentally hostile to industry, does not allow it to emerge, but rather crushes it under foot.²⁶

In the eyes of *Der Volksstaat*, it was “profit-hungry, ruthless, fraudulent capitalism” and its destructive “step-son”, militarism, which had caused the “fiasco of Philadelphia”. *Der Volksstaat* rejected any association with those who might take pleasure in the “abasement and humiliation” of the German people: “But let he who cares about the ‘honour’, the ‘good name’, the well-being and the future of the fatherland, join us in our struggle against capitalism and militarism!”²⁷

The bourgeois democratic *Frankfurter Zeitung* provided more ammunition for *Der Volksstaat*’s efforts to refute the “foolish attempt” to make the socialist movement responsible for the “Sedan” of German industry. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* argued that Germany’s best workers were in the ranks of the social democratic movement. As evidence, it cited the fact that textile products from Elberfeld and Barmen had been singled out as outclassing the foreign products at Philadelphia, and pointed out these were socialist strongholds, and had even returned a socialist deputy at the previous *Reichstag* elections.²⁸

Der Volksstaat welcomed the *Frankfurter Zeitung*’s suggestion of a comparison between the work performance of socialist workers and that of other workers, a comparison which *Der Volksstaat* was confident would fall out to the advantage of the former. For *Der Volksstaat*, it was beyond doubt that “on average the socialist worker is a better worker than the nonsocialist”. The two decisive factors in a worker’s personal performance were intelligence and pleasure in one’s work. The socialist paper was convinced that “socialist workers represent the intelligence of the working class”, as the socialist workers were those who had displayed the capacity to analyse their disadvantaged class situation and to develop the corresponding consciousness: “Only intelligent workers can be socialists, and every intelligent worker is a socialist or must become one”. The second factor, “pleasure in one’s work” (*Arbeitslust*), was more problematical, as the socialist worker could not develop any enthusiasm for wage labour as such. On the other hand, the intelligent socialist worker realized that, “despite his hatred for the unjust distribution of labour and

26. “Wer trägt die Schuld?”, *Der Volksstaat*, no. 78, 7 July 1876 (emphases in original). *Der Volksstaat*, always ready to instruct its readers in foreign-language terms, also pointed out in this article that the original English word “nasty” was stronger than the German “schlecht”.

27. *Ibid.*

28. “Politische Übersicht”, *Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt*, no. 186, 4 July 1876, *Abendblatt*; also quoted in “Politische Übersicht” in *Der Volksstaat*, no. 80, 12 July 1876. The Lassallean Wilhelm Hasselmann had won the *Reichstag* mandate for Düsseldorf 2 (Elberfeld) in the 1874 elections.

of the products of labour”, work was a general social obligation, which needed to be fulfilled for the good of all. Workers who had not yet attained the heights of the “socialist *Weltanschauung*” could, however, be forgiven for doing as little as their employer would let them get away with, as they were only acting in accordance with capitalists’ own standards of conduct, but *Der Volksstaat* still found the distinction between this behaviour and that of socialist workers a significant fact.

Der Volksstaat backed up its case with a list of factories which had been considered successful in Philadelphia. Among makers of tools, instruments, and knives, the successful concerns were from Berlin (in one case), Solingen, Ronsdorf and Hagen, “that is, places painted red thrice over with a core troop of socialist workers”, and the Wellmann firm in Altona, whose workers were social democrats. Among the goldsmiths, those from Pforzheim and Hanau had distinguished themselves, and the goldsmiths were claimed to be the main supporters of the socialist labour movement in these towns. The socialists were not to blame for the “‘Sedan’ of German industry”, but the bourgeoisie, and if anyone had saved the “honour” of German work in the midst of the defeat, it had been the German social democrats.²⁹

The word “honour” was prominent in a subsequent report, on 23 July, which commenced with the declaration: “The socialist workers have saved Germany’s honour in Philadelphia”. This time, *Der Volksstaat* drew its evidence from the reports in the *Neue Berliner Tageblatt*. The latter paper had singled out the jewellery (cufflinks, etc.) by the firm of Eduard Peine in Hamburg for praise. *Der Volksstaat* claimed that most of the workers in this firm were socialists. Likewise, the workforce of the firm of Heinrich Adolf Meyer, Hamburg, whose ivory products were praised at some length by the *Neue Berliner Tageblatt*, was said to consist almost entirely of socialists. When the *Neue Berliner Tageblatt* described the successful displays of A.W. Faber, from Stein near Nuremberg, and Schwanhäuser of Nuremberg, both makers of pencils and other writing and drawing materials, *Der Volksstaat* noted that these firms, too, employed mostly socialists. The same applied to Elberfeld textile manufacturers, Schlieper and Baum, and Gebhardt & Co., makers of high quality wares – “the workers of these firms are almost without exception socialists”, as were the workers of the firms F.E. Woller (Stollberg in Saxony, manufacturers of stockings of fine quality) and Heinrich Gulden (Chemnitz, makers of widely praised gloves). The Saxon lacemakers Dörffel Söhne and Hirschberg & Co., whose wares received honourable mention, had mainly socialist workers in their employment, and the socialist workers of the Eulengebirg district in Silesia, especially those of Emanuel Kohn, Wüstergiesdorf, were also said to have distinguished themselves. Finally, the

29. “Politische Übersicht”, in *Der Volksstaat*, no. 80, 12 July 1876.

Neue Berliner Tageblatt had found that the products of the mechanical weaving mill in Linden near Hannover “deserve the highest praise in every respect [...]. Germany has every reason to thank the Linden mill for what it has achieved here”. For *Der Volksstaat*, this crowned a list of products and firms which proved that “socialist workers, on average, were better workers than nonsocialist ones”.³⁰

That German workers and artisans were concerned about the Philadelphia debacle’s consequences for their international reputation was illustrated by a report, which *Der Volksstaat* took from the *Hamburg-Altonaer Volksblatt*, regarding a meeting by small *Handwerker* and wage-workers with the purpose of starting a subscription to support sending a delegation of German workers of various occupations to the World Exhibition.³¹

Over a month after it had first addressed the topic, *Der Volksstaat* was still occupying itself with the Philadelphia controversy. On 9 August, it once more tackled “the foolishness of the claim that social democracy is to blame for the decline of German industry”. This time it quoted a nonsocialist German emigré newspaper in America (the *Illinois-Staatszeitung*, in Chicago) as refuting an unnamed German newspaper’s claim that socialism had caused German workers to view their employers as enemies, and that this had inevitably resulted in a deterioration of quality in German industrial products. French workers, it was argued, were at least as “red” as their German counterparts, so the blame for the debacle must lie elsewhere, with Germany’s employers and technicians.³² A couple of days later, the Reuleaux debate was still good for a leading article which took up most of the front page, entitled “Who and what is ruining Germany?”. *Der Volksstaat* reprinted (with comments) an editorial from the *Nationalliberale Correspondenz* which had been written in response to the report in the *London Times*. The national liberals sought to refute any suggestion that a decline in quality of German goods might in some way have been linked to German militarism (for example, in the loss of skilled workers at their peak to military service). *Der Volksstaat* retorted by querying the national liberals’ satisfaction with the achievement of German unity (for the *Volksstaat*, the latter could just as well be viewed as the division of Greater Germany, separating Germany from Austria),³³ and by stating that the

30. *Der Volksstaat*, no. 85, 23 July 1876.

31. Quoted in *Der Volksstaat*, no. 87, 28 July 1876.

32. *Der Volksstaat*, no. 92, 9 August 1876.

33. For the Eisenacher social democrats’ position on the national question, see Werner Conze and Dieter Groh, *Die Arbeiterbewegung in der nationalen Bewegung* (Stuttgart, 1966); Andrew Bonnell, “Between Internationalism, Nationalism and Particularism: German Social Democrats and the War of 1870–71”, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 38 (1992), pp. 375–385; Dieter Groh and Peter Brandt, “Vaterlandslose Gesellen”: *Sozialdemokratie und Nation 1860–1990* (Munich, 1992), pp. 17–30.

national liberals' own calculations revealed a horrendous loss of workers' productivity through military service (far more than might be the case in a democratic people's militia). *Der Volksstaat* concluded that militarism was in turn only a product of the domination of one class over another.³⁴

Reuleaux' third letter from Philadelphia (dated 19 July), in which he amplified his earlier points, was reprinted over two issues by *Der Volksstaat*.³⁵ The letter was greeted by *Der Volksstaat* as a refutation of the "Camphausen–Achenbach recipe" for competition through cutting wages.³⁶ *Der Volksstaat* quoted Reuleaux and other authorities to show that German capitalists had caused the debacle by their reliance on imitating others' innovations and trying to compete by wage-cutting, only to try to shift the blame for their defeats on to their workers.³⁷ The emphasis of Prussian finance minister Otto von Camphausen's policies on cutting production costs by cutting wages was also attacked elsewhere by August Bebel, who blamed Camphausen's policy for increasing unemployment, millions of workers suffering hardship, and the fact that "at the World Exhibition at Philadelphia the German bourgeoisie was distinguished – on the admission of the official commissioner for the exhibition, Herr Reuleaux – by the fact that it lets 'cheap and nasty' goods be produced".³⁸

The *Neuer Social-Demokrat* was able to quote Werner von Siemens to the effect that "the mighty upswing which German industry has undergone in the last decades, is based essentially on two factors: the imitation of foreign inventions and cheap labour".³⁹ Subsequently, having previously based its coverage on other newspapers' reports, *Der Volksstaat* was able to print a two-part report on the exhibition from its own correspondent in Philadelphia, which confirmed the generally negative press given to the German display.⁴⁰

Reuleaux' return to Germany in September revived the topic, with *Der*

34. "Wer und was richtet Deutschland zu Grunde?", *Der Volksstaat*, no. 93, 11 August 1876.

35. "Ein neuer Brief von Reuleaux", I and II, *Der Volksstaat*, no. 95, 16 August, and no. 96, 18 August 1876.

36. A reference to the policies promoted by Otto von Camphausen, Prussian Finance Minister, and Heinrich von Achenbach, Prussian Minister for Trade, Industry, and Public Works.

37. "Ein neuer Brief von Reuleaux II", *Der Volksstaat*, no. 96, 18 August 1876.

38. *Die parlamentarische Tätigkeit des Deutschen Reichstages und der Landtage und die Sozialdemokratie von 1874 bis 1876* (originally published November 1876), in August Bebel, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, Bd. 1: 1863 bis 1878*, R. Dlubek et al. (eds) (Berlin, 1983), pp. 421–422 (quotation p. 422); cf. also "Die gesammte Nationalökonomie contra Camphausen", *Der Volksstaat*, no. 83, 19 July 1876: Camphausen had overlooked the fact "that if one tries to kill off the social question by screwing down wages, the first thing that happens is that German industry goes completely to the devil".

39. "Leitartikel", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 89, 4 August 1876.

40. "Von der Weltausstellung zu Philadelphia", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 98, 23 August; no. 99, 25 August 1876.

Volksstaat reporting that Reuleaux had defended his criticisms of German industry as being in the latter's own best interests.⁴¹ Finally, a week before it ceased publication (to be replaced by *Vorwärts* as the unified party's newspaper), *Der Volksstaat* reproduced a report on the Philadelphia exhibition, sent to the *Süddeutsche Volkszeitung* by an emigré German socialist in the United States. The correspondent reiterated all the complaints about the militarism and chauvinism in the German art works on display, the shortcomings in taste and quality of most of the wares, and the way in which Krupp's guns dominated the German machine display.⁴² The story had run, on and off, for nearly three months.

The Reuleaux controversy received equally intensive coverage from *Der Volksstaat*'s Lassallean sister-paper, and erstwhile rival, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat*. While some of the older literature on German social democracy in the 1860s and 1870s, especially in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, stressed the ideological differences between the Eisenacher and Lassallean wings of the party, the difference between them lay less in the extent to which they had assimilated Marxian theory and more in their different attitudes to the "national question", with the Eisenacher taking a much more critical view of the Bismarckian solution to national unification than the more Prussian-oriented Lassalleans.⁴³

Even before *Der Volksstaat* took up the theme, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* responded to Reuleaux's first letter from Philadelphia with the claim "that it is socialist workers, who have saved the honour of German industry in the few better-quality branches", singling out the achievements of socialist Wuppertal (Barmen and Elberfeld) textile workers. The *Neuer Social-Demokrat* also claimed that most of the workers of Siemens & Halske, the Berlin electrical firm, which had been successful in the field of telegraph technology, were socialists, and that the "world-renowned Krupp works in Essen", whose achievements, as we have seen, were impossible to overlook at the exhibition, "count among their workers a significant number of socialist-minded men". For the *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, the exhibition demonstrated that politically active workers' determination to secure shorter working hours and adequate wages created conditions under which workers could apply more intelligence and care to their work – a strong argument against trying to boost the competitiveness of German industry by cutting wages and opposing organized labour.⁴⁴ Like *Der Volksstaat*, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* also claimed the cutlery

41. *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 108, 15 September 1876; also "Politische Übersicht", no. 110, 20 September 1876.

42. "Ueber die Weltausstellung in Philadelphia", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 112, 24 September 1876.

43. See note 33 above.

44. "Leitartikel", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 75, 2 July 1876.

and instrument manufacturers of Berlin, Solingen, Ronsdorf, and Hagen, the Wellmann factory in Altona, and the goldsmiths of Hanau and Pforzheim as successful examples of social democratic workforces.⁴⁵ The *Neuer Social-Demokrat* gave the full list of firms named by *Der Volksstaat* (on the basis of the *Neue Berliner Tageblatt*'s reports) in which social democrats could claim to have achieved success in Philadelphia. In slightly more colourful language than the other socialist newspaper, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* wrote of how social democratic workers had "saved the honour of German work": "just as in the midst of a wild, disorderly rout, a battalion of the old guard stands fast here and there and saves the flags".⁴⁶

Like *Der Volksstaat*, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* also reprinted Reuleaux' third letter, welcoming its riposte to his critics, albeit with the qualification that "we do not, as he does, see the salvation of German industry in the 'competitive striving to make the better products', for the egoistic struggle only leads to a dissipation of strength"; rather, the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* considered that communal work and socialist cooperation were preconditions for industry to achieve its greatest potential. But if Reuleaux could not be claimed for socialism, his criticisms of attempts to increase competition via cutting quality and wages were still welcome.⁴⁷

The political capital which social democrats were able to make out of the Reuleaux controversy is also illustrated by August Bebel's report on the parliamentary activity of the party for the period 1874–1876, in which he referred to the large-scale emigration of young men seeking to avoid military service. According to Bebel, over 130,000 young men went missing when called up for military service in 1874, with large numbers of the fit and healthy leaving the *Reich* to avoid conscription, and this constituted a catastrophic drain of manpower and talent: "How much this contributed to the disaster in Philadelphia remains an open question".⁴⁸

The response of the social democratic press to the Reuleaux controversy raises the questions: how valid were social democrats' claims that the best quality goods came from the firms and localities where socialists were strongest, and what do these claims about the link between socialism and quality products tell us about the culture of the Social Democratic Party in the mid-1870s?

45. "Das deutsche Reich auf den internationalen Ausstellungen", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 77, 7 July 1876.

46. "Die Social-Demokraten und die Welt-Ausstellung", *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 83, 21 July 1876.

47. *Neuer Social-Demokrat*, no. 93, 13 August 1876. The Reuleaux controversy continued to occupy the editorial writer of the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* in subsequent issues: see no. 96, 20 August and no. 100, 30 August 1876.

48. August Bebel, "Die parlamentarische Tätigkeit 1874–1876", in *idem*, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, Bd.1, p. 359. (Footnote on this page incorrectly gives date of Philadelphia exhibition as 1875.)

It may, for example, seem surprising to see the Krupp firm listed as a socialist stronghold. The Krupp concern is best known for a combination of patriarchal rule within the firm, disciplining its workforce in order to suppress any irregular conduct or industrial unrest, and highly-developed company-based welfare measures to keep workers loyal to the concern.⁴⁹ In the mid-1870s, however, support for social democracy in Essen was growing appreciably, and did not stop at the factory gate of the Krupp works. In early 1877, the regional government authorities made their concern known to the Krupp firm over the extent of social democratic agitation among the Krupp workers, both in their residential colony and in the factory, where agitation was apparently tolerated by some supervisors. Alfred Krupp reacted to the increasingly open socialist activities of his workers with a wave of dismissals, chiefly among lathe operators (*Dreher*) and fitters (*Schlosser*) from the mechanical workshops, and with a formal proclamation to the workforce, exhorting them to behave virtuously and to resist the blandishments of social democracy, and reasserting the prerogative of the proprietor to dispose of the means of production as he saw fit.⁵⁰ The claim of the *Neuer Social-Demokrat* that the Krupp works “count among their workers a significant number of socialist-minded men” as of 1876 was therefore justified.

The textile industry of Barmen and Elberfeld was also a strong recruiting ground for social democracy. In 1876, the electoral district Düsseldorf 2 (Elberfeld) was represented by the Lassallean, Wilhelm Hasselmann. At the 1876 congress of the united Social Democratic Party, Ignaz Auer cited Barmen-Elberfeld as an example of a party stronghold which had reached the stage where it did not require assistance from the party in the form of outside agitators, but which was now capable of giving assistance itself to other areas.⁵¹ As for Solingen, centre of knife, cutlery, tools, and instruments manufacture, the support for social democracy was strong enough to elect a socialist candidate, Moritz Rittinghausen, in Düsseldorf 3 (Solingen) in the January 1877 Reichstag elections.⁵² Rudolf Boch’s study of Solingen workers has shown that while skilled knife-grinders (*Schleifer*) made up the core of the local Social Democratic Party in 1876, they continued to maintain a strong craft-union orientation at odds with the over-arching *Richtungsgewerkschaft* model preferred by the

49. See Gerhard A. Ritter and Klaus Tenfelde, *Arbeiter im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871 bis 1914* (Bonn, 1992), pp. 414–419.

50. Johann Paul, *Alfred Krupp und die Arbeiterbewegung* (Düsseldorf, 1987), especially pp. 205–211, 219–229; see also Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

51. *Protokoll des Sozialisten-Congresses zu Gotha vom 19. bis 23. August 1876* (Berlin, 1876; reprinted Glashütten, 1971), p. 61.

52. Dieter Fricke, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1869 bis 1914. Ein Handbuch über ihre Organisation und Tätigkeit im Klassenkampf* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 532, 556.

Party, and their industrial action campaigns were still premised on defence of their status as skilled craftsmen against attempts to introduce a more industrially rationalized division of labour.⁵³

Hamburg and its close neighbour Altona were also social democratic strongholds, with the Reichstag electorate of Schleswig Holstein 8 (Altona) held by the Lassallean, Wilhelm Hasenclever, in 1876.⁵⁴ In Hamburg and Altona, the Social Democratic Party membership in the 1870s also still consisted largely of skilled craft workers.⁵⁵ On a more modest scale, the social democrat newspapers were also justified in claiming that the Party was well represented among the goldsmiths of Pforzheim.⁵⁶

That the German Social Democratic Party in the 1860s and 1870s largely recruited its active membership from skilled craftsmen, journeymen, and artisans, rather than from an unskilled factory proletariat, has been well established in the scholarly literature. Some writers, like Gerhard A. Ritter, have suggested that this indicates a “premature” separation of the socialist labour movement from bourgeois democracy.⁵⁷ Ritter identifies the principal bases of support for early social democracy as weavers suffering from the dislocation caused by the transition from craft to factory production in Glauchau-Meerane, around Chemnitz and in Crimmitschau, the southern Oberlausitz, Wuppertal (i.e. Barmen and Elberfeld), and Aachen; tobacco workers and printers, and increasingly, from the 1870s, workers in the machine industry, with miners and unskilled labourers only gradually gravitating towards the party from around 1890.⁵⁸

Although originally writing from quite different theoretical backgrounds, both Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr have persuasively

53. Rudolf Boch, *Handwerker-Sozialisten gegen Fabrikgesellschaft: Lokale Fachvereine, Massengewerkschaft und industrielle Rationalisierung in Solingen 1870 bis 1914* (Göttingen, 1985). According to Boch (pp. 42, 309f.) nearly fifty per cent of Solingen social democrats in 1876 were *Schleifer* (skilled knife-grinders).

54. Fricke, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1869 bis 1914*, p. 556.

55. See Günter Trautmann, “Das Scheitern liberaler Vereinspolitik und die Entstehung der sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung in Hamburg zwischen 1862 und 1871”, pp. 164–176, 169; and Helga Kutz-Bauer, “Arbeiterschaft und Sozialdemokratie in Hamburg vom Gründerkrach bis zum Ende des Sozialistengesetzes”, pp. 179–192, 186; both in Arno Herzig *et al.* (eds), *Arbeiter in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1983); Helga Kutz-Bauer, *Arbeiterschaft, Arbeiterbewegung und bürgerlicher Staat in der Zeit der Großen Depression* (Bonn, 1988), pp. 179–184.

56. See the report from Pforzheim under the rubric “Correspondenzen”, in *Der Volksstaat*, no. 37, 29 March 1876.

57. Gerhard A. Ritter, *Arbeiter, Arbeiterbewegung und soziale Ideen in Deutschland* (Munich, 1996), p. 184.

58. *Ibid.*

argued that a significant qualitative change was occurring by, or in, the mid-1870s as far as the formation of the German working class was concerned. Both have identified the mid-1870s as the period by which a class identity transcending earlier craft-based identities was making itself felt, as shown not only in the emergence of the social democratic labour movement, but also in such social phenomena as greater social integration and intermarriage outside the boundaries of older occupational groups, but within the broader working-class.⁵⁹

Without wishing to detract from the significance of the transition described by Kocka and Zwahr, given the extent to which the early Social Democratic Party consisted largely of workers from craft backgrounds, there is still scope for more work on how this social composition was reflected in the *mentalité* of the German labour movement in the 1860s and 1870s.⁶⁰

In his memoirs, August Bebel, himself a qualified woodturner, characterized Germany at the start of the 1860s as:

[...] still predominantly a country of petits bourgeois and small farmers. Over three-quarters of workers in trade and industry were craft workers. With the exception of heavy industry proper – mining, the iron and machinery industries – factory work was looked down on by the journeymen craftsmen. Factory products were considered cheap, but also as poor quality [*schlecht*], a stigma that Geheimrat Reuleaux, Germany's representative at the World fair in Philadelphia, stamped on German factory work sixteen years later. The journeyman craftsman

59. H. Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats als Klasse: Strukturuntersuchung über das Leipziger Proletariat während der industriellen Revolution*, (Berlin, 1978). See also the essays in Hartmut Zwahr (ed.), *Die Konstituierung der deutschen Arbeiterklasse von den dreissiger bis zu den siebziger Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1981); for a more recent summary, Hartmut Zwahr, "Class Formation and the Labor Movement as the Subject of Dialectic Social History", *International Review of Social History*, 38 (1993), Supplement, pp. 85–103; cf. also V.L. Lidtke, "The Formation of the Working Class in Germany" (review article), *Central European History*, 4 (1980), pp. 393–400; Jürgen Kocka, *Lohnarbeit und Klassenbildung* (Berlin [etc.], 1983); *idem*, "Problems of Working-Class Formation in Germany: The Early Years, 1800–1875", in Ira Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), pp. 279–351.

60. For a good introduction to the discussion on continuities and discontinuities between older craft traditions and the German socialist labour movement in the 1870s, see Jürgen Kocka, "Craft Traditions and the Labour Movement in Nineteenth-Century Germany", in Pat Thane *et al.* (eds), *The Power of the Past: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (Cambridge [etc.], 1984), pp. 95–117. See also Boch, *Handwerker-Sozialisten gegen Fabrikgesellschaft*; Wolfgang Rensch, *Handwerker und Lohnarbeiter in der frühen Arbeiterbewegung* (Göttingen, 1980); Gerhard Schildt, *Tagelöhner, Gesellen, Arbeiter. Sozialgeschichte der vorindustriellen und industriellen Arbeiter in Braunschweig 1830–1880* (Stuttgart, 1986); Friedrich Lenger, *Zwischen Kleinbürgertum und Proletariat. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Düsseldorfer Handwerker, 1816–1878* (Göttingen, 1986).

considered the factory worker to be his inferior, and to be called a worker, rather than a journeyman or apprentice, was regarded as an insult by many.⁶¹

In Bebel's account, such attitudes were a symptom of the low level of political and class consciousness of working men around 1860, prior to the foundation of separate socialist parties or unions.⁶² As Bebel suggests, much of the outlook of the skilled craft worker remained in the Social Democratic Party of the mid 1870s, which had moved towards Marxist ideas, even if these were imperfectly understood by the leadership, as shown by the well-known shortcomings, from Marx's point of view, of the 1875 Gotha Programme. One of the points of the Gotha Programme with which Marx immediately took issue was the first article, which stated: "Labour [*Arbeit*] is the source of all wealth and of all culture".⁶³

The early trade unions took over such key functions of craftsmen's associations and guilds as providing support to members in case of illness or infirmity and giving assistance to members on journeys. In addition, the craft traditions of corporate honour and solidarity can be traced in the discourse of the early trade union movement.⁶⁴ A fundamental component of what Andreas Griessinger has characterized as "the symbolic capital of honour" for eighteenth-century German skilled craft workers was the consciousness of their indispensable qualitative contribution to the process of production. The high value the craft worker put on his own skills and qualifications was a crucial component of the "moral economy" of the German artisan, and was tied up with the discourses of "honour" which characterized collective action on the part of artisans' guilds.⁶⁵ Echoes of this outlook can still be heard in the language of the social democratic responses to the Philadelphia controversy.

61. August Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin, 1980), p. 51.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

63. Karl Marx, "Randglossen zum Programm der deutschen Arbeiterpartei", in Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* [hereafter *MEW*], Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (ed.) (Berlin, 1982), vol. 19, pp. 15f.

64. Schildt, *Tagelöhner, Gesellen, Arbeiter*, pp. 426–430. See also Kocka, "Craft Traditions and the Labour Movement". Mühlberg offers the example of Berlin brewery workers, whose union still obliged its members in 1885 to attend fellow members' funerals wearing a dark suit and a tall hat, and bearing a wreath with the association's symbol; Dietrich Mühlberg (ed.), *Proletariat: Culture and Lifestyle in the 19th Century*, transl. Katherine Vanovitch (Leipzig, 1988), p. 176. Note also the strong continuities in customs and corporate identity among miners, described in Klaus Tenfelde, "Mining Festivals in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), pp. 377–412. On continuities in gender attitudes from craft workers' culture to the socialist labour movement, see Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten, "'Er war ein Mann, nimmt alles nur in allem'. Geschlechterbilder in gewerkschaftlichen Nachrufen", *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 34 (1998), pp. 316–342, 321f.

65. Andreas Griessinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre. Streikbewegungen und kollektives Bewußtsein deutscher Handwerksesellen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt [etc.], 1981), especially ch. 8.

In her “social history of ideas”, examining attitudes to work in Germany from 1800 to 1945, Joan Campbell has traced the emergence in Germany of a “national self-image” which “came to involve the conviction that Germans possessed a special, and indeed superior, approach to work, one centered on the idea that work is its own best reward, and is alone capable of giving meaning to human existence”.⁶⁶ Turning to the discourse of the social democratic labour movement, Campbell finds:

When the German Social Democrats turned to Marx in the last decades of the nineteenth century, they virtually ignored that strain in Marxism which sought to transform work itself into a free creative activity, “life’s prime want”. Forced to fight for tolerable conditions of employment and basic civil rights, their Marxism had little room for the notion of joy in work. [...].

Whatever their reasons may have been, by failing to espouse the ideal of unalienated labor the Social Democrats contributed to the decline in revolutionary fervour within the German labor movement. [...].

All in all, the German socialists by the turn of the century put democracy before socialism, preferred reform to revolution – and longed for liberation from, rather than through, work.⁶⁷

However, Campbell, who does not mention the Reuleaux controversy, overlooks the survivals of a craft worker outlook in the social democratic labour movement of the 1870s. For Friedrich Engels, writing in 1880, the verdict of Philadelphia, “*billig und schlecht*”, was nothing but the logical consequence of German industry’s latecomer status vis-à-vis British and French competitors, and Germany’s consequent need to compete in available niches for cheap and low-quality products, from which Engels drew the conclusion that German industry needed free trade to retain access to cheap raw materials.⁶⁸ For a good many organized workers in social democracy, however, it was not just a matter of Marxian economics, but a matter of honour, based on a code which derived from pre-industrial labour practices. Nor did social democrats during the Reuleaux controversy make much of the *Communist Manifesto*’s diagnosis that “The labour of the proletarians has, through the expansion of machinery and the division of labour, lost all independent character and thereby all charm for the workers”.⁶⁹

As noted above, the controversy over Reuleaux’ articles on the Philadelphia exhibition can be seen as prefiguring more contemporary debates

66. Joan Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate, 1800–1945* (Princeton, NJ, 1989), pp. 5, 3f.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26, 27.

68. Friedrich Engels, in “Der Sozialismus des Herrn Bismarck”, first published in *L’Égalité*, no. 7, 3 March 1880, in *MEW*, vol. 19, p. 170.

69. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, in *MEW*, vol. 4, p. 468.

over the “*Standort Deutschland*”, with employers and wage-earners holding each other responsible for Germany’s competitive disadvantages with other industrialized countries. The 1876 debate also indicates a great deal about the cultural identity of the socialist labour movement in Germany at that time. It shows that social democracy was willing to claim to be representing the national interest, even if this conception of the national interest did not necessarily, at least among former *Eisenacher*, involve an endorsement of the legitimacy of the Bismarckian *Reich* as constituted in 1871. Perhaps the most interesting finding is the extent to which the strong proportion of skilled artisans within the ranks of the party in the 1870s left its mark, not surprisingly, on the values and culture of the Social Democratic Party in the 1870s. Conceptions of the honour of the artisan, in which the assertion of the quality of one’s work played a central role, were still strongly prevalent elements in socialist discourse at this time, and had not yet been superseded or eclipsed by a more Marxian vocabulary of alienation and the expropriation of surplus value. For skilled workers from artisanal backgrounds, alienation from the product of one’s labour was still something to be resisted and did not yet constitute the premiss for a revolutionary rejection of older conceptions of work.