Social Democratic Parties between Class and Organization*

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Through a survey of the literature the argument is presented that in both Marxist and Liberal debates the question of the relative importance of class-factors and party-factors emerge as dominant. The empirical confrontation of these perspectives has hitherto taken place at the national level. What is needed now is more local level research, which would give a more manageable unit in the exploration of the theoretical and empirical issues involved.

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However, any common substantive political denominators of these parties today are hard to pinpoint (Paterson and Campbell, 1974:X). The delineation of 'social democraticness' must, it seems, be based upon historical developments, with the split in the international labour movement after World War I as the starting point of the 'modern' social democratic party. What emerged were working class parties of increasing

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moderation, parties which placed themselves at a more definite distance from the communist left than from the liberals to the right. In the social democratic parties the politics of material class interest, gradualist change and institutional loyalty found a happy blend.

In the literature on post-World War II developments most authors writing about social democratic parties agree that this was a period of increasing moderation, of 'deradicalization'.[1] What they do not agree on, however, are the causes of this development, and it is to this debate – or perhaps more accurately, to this field of viewpoints – that I wish to direct attention. That this process of deradicalization has in fact taken place will be taken for granted here. I do not maintain that the change was of the dramatic character presupposed in expressions like 'the golden past'.[2] But it certainly has been a change away from the basic economic and collectivistic policies of the early inter-war years, a change to policies not requiring any fundamental transformation of existing social or economic institutions; that is to say, it was not a change made obsolete by the implementation of social democratic policies by social democratic governments, but a genuine shift in what social democratic parties considered to be the desired and necessary scope of change.

In the literature on the causes of this development, there are divisions separating 'pockets' of debate along political as well as analytical dimensions. The main *political* dimension separates a Marxist from a Liberal debate, even though this division in fact has become more blurred in the 1970s. But the main distinction of analysis I want to make runs through both political camps, and lies between that which seeks the main explanations in developments *internal to the party* and that which focuses on changes *in the working class*. The argument of this article will be that any attempt to wrestle with the question of social democratic deradicalization must bring the various debates and answers together – if not in integrated harmony, then in integrated confrontation. I will also argue that given the present stage of the debate the most promising arena for this confrontation of the class party perspectives is at the local level. The party branch constitutes the political nexus between the national party and the working class. In conjunction with the richer data potential at this level, this fact makes the local party and its organizational and social environment a strategic case for the exploration of the theoretical and empirical issues involved.

I start the presentation with an attempt to trace some lineages of the Marxist debate on the sources of working class politics and argue that the basic parameters may be found in the exchange between Lenin and Lux-

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emburg around the turn of the century on the 'organizational question'. Then I turn to the contemporary Marxist debate on the origins of reformism. The voluminous literature on deradicalization of social democratic parties, based on a liberal framework of analysis, will be briefly presented in part II. In conclusion I will examine the problems and potential of focusing upon the local branch in the study of deradicalization, sketch a simple model for this purpose, and indicate the kind of data needed to make use of it.

1. Some Marxist Lineages

Within the Marxist tradition the questions raised here are usually entangled in the debate on the preconditions for a socialist revolution, the emergence of a revolutionary class conciousness, and the factors influencing the transformation from 'class-in-itself' to 'class-for-itself'. The debate on the radicalization and deradicalization of working class parties is therefore an integral concern of Marxist theory. The core of Marx and Engels' position relates changes in the forces of production to the growth of the working class, its increasing concentration, and its greater homogeneity in terms of conditions of life and interests. The latter form the objective preconditions for class consciousness – the final catalyst for class consciousness, however, being the class struggle. To understand developments in working class politics within the analytic framework offered by early Marxism one therefore has to focus on *class* and *class confrontation*. The party was not central to the analysis, not because it was unimportant – without it the proletariat 'cannot act as a class' (Johnstone 1967: 141–145) – but because the party was nothing but 'an expression of the real subject of the revolution . . . For between the class as such and its political being, there is only a practical difference' (Rossanda, 1970:218). To Marx and Engels the party was the organization in which socialist theory fused with the labour movement – the coming together of consciousness and social being. Thus when Engels was to account for the failure of English workers to ensure working class dominance in Parliament after the extension of the Suffrage in 1867, he pointed to what he called the 'labour aristocracy', i.e. the buying off of the upper sections of the working class, rather than to the absence of efficient class organizations (Engels, 1963). This surprising innocence of early Marxism which assumed a necessary unity between class and party, and located the sources of working class politics in the class structure alone, was definitely dissolved by Lenin. In his analysis the elite party – the vanguard – was

made the crucial agent in bringing revolutionary consciousness to the working class (Lenin, 1970). His theory of a centralized party of devoted communists must be seen against the background of a flourishing capitalism which made the revolution seem 'to require a strong subjective impulse which would, in a way, do violence to history' (Rossanda, 1970:221). Lenin based his argument on Karl Kautsky, who had claimed that a socialist consciousness could not be created through economic development and the class struggle alone. Lenin approvingly quotes his thesis that 'socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without, and not something that arose within it spontaneously', and goes on to argue his own thesis that left to itself the working class would only develop 'trade union consciousness', i.e. 'the spontaneous need of trade unionism to come under the wings of the bourgeoisie' (Lenin, 1970:45–47).

The force of the subjective element, i.e. the party, in creating class consciousness reappears frequently in later Marxist theory. Lukacs carries the argument to the extreme by asserting that the 'form taken by the class consciousness of the proletariat is the *Party*' (Lukacs, 1971:41). In a rather mystical way class consciousness is constituted through the party and not through the proletariat.

Conversely, the role of the party itself as a source of moderation has often been stressed. In early socialist debates both anarchists and syndicalists pointed to the 'corrupting' influence of organisation and leadership. At the extreme we find parallel arguments in the Comintern policy of equating social democracy with 'social fascism'. This policy was adopted around 1924 after the breakdown of the united-front policy, and it labelled the social democratic movement the 'moderate wing of fascism', putting the blame on the social democratic *leadership* (Claudin, 1975:152–159). More interesting though, are Trotsky's views on 'substitutionalism' emerging from his early critique of Lenin's elitist party model and later of the Stalinist practice.

For Trotsky the vanguard party would inevitably touch off a development in which the 'organization of the party substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally the 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee . . .'[3]. In much of his later work, particularly in his writings on Stalin, his central theme was the conservative, anti-democratic nature of the 'committee-men' (Trotsky, 1968). Trotsky's critique of the elite party, however, did not imply a return to class as the agent of political change. The party was still decisive in giving direction to change. But he wanted a

broadly based party in which the autocratic, conservative tendencies were checked, and with no dominant organization to suppress the different trends within socialism (Harman, n.d.).

A similar conclusion was reached through a very different analysis by Rosa Luxemburg and the so-called 'spontaneists' (Luxemburg, 1973). They shared the critical view of a centralized party, but placed their trust in the belief that the plan of history would unfold through the class struggle: a revolutionary class consciousness would emerge spontaneously in the working class when the time was ripe. Luxemburg emphasized that the need for an organized vanguard was not due to its capacity to *create* a class-conscious proletariat, but to the need for 'strategic unification' in the class struggle. The 'primacy of class' argument is highlighted in Luxemburg's polemic with Lenin when she argued that 'historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the best of all possible 'Central Committees' (Luxemburg, 1973:111). This is not to say that the 'spontaneists' discarded 'the notion of party . . . to return to the notion of class'[4] just as it is equally inaccurate to attribute to Lenin an analysis which overlooks class. In both lines of thought it is a question of *relative strategic emphasis.*[5]

2. Present Position

In the classical Marxist tradition, the phenomena to be explained range from revolutionary class consciousness to the objective fascist character of the social democratic movement. It is not difficult to see, however, that these different questions revolve around the basic issue of human evolution in history, more specifically the importance of how people *organize themselves* (in a party) relative to how they *are organized* (in a social structure).[6] In the current debate on the deradicalization of the labour movement this difference in focus and the choice of 'prime mover' are reflected in ways which bring the debate little beyond the original discussion of the 'organizational question'.[7]

The class-based argument accounting for the deradicalization of social democratic parties presupposes a unity between class and party, but with class as the principal component. The political changes in the class produce equivalent changes in the party. What had often passed previously for the Marxist analysis, i.e. the focus on material well-being in the working class, does not, however, hold a prominent position within Marxist debate today. Too many of Marx's other works testify against this crude, 'mechanistic' materialist interpretation.[8] In fact, today one prima-

rily finds this argument, based on a process of 'embourgeoisification' of the working class, in the Liberal camp. An exception is Andre Gorz, who in 1964 argued that the disappearance of widespread material needs in the working classes of advanced capitalist countries had removed the 'natural base' for rebellions and radicalism (Gorz, 1967).

In the later contributions to the debate on changes in the nature of the working class, the emphasis has been not so much on the material *consequences* of capitalism, as on its changing 'internal' structure. The argument is that the actual structure of production in terms of size, technology and methods shape the perceptions of the working class, its organizational potential, and its degree of radicalism. Marcuse argues along these lines when he states that while the contradictions within capitalism are greater than ever, they are disguised in contemporary society because of first the massive, all-pervasive apparatus of production and distribution which creates, determines *and* satisfies needs, and second the 'flattening out' of the class structure as the productive system develops (Marcuse, 1964 and 1965). The lack of class consciousness in contemporary society, as well as his pessimism with regard to its development, is put down to factors such as the development of managerial hierarchies, increasing occupational stratification, the growing isolation that accompanies mechanization, the psycho-technical rather than physical nature of work, and finally 'the rhythm of the machines which mobilizes the workers' mind at work, in the street and on holiday' in which the alienated condition of the worker is made manifest (Wolpe, 1970:260).

Serge Mallet follows Marcuse in stressing the importance of the structure of the relations of production, and shares his pessimism over the traditional working class (Mallet, 1965 and 1975). Workers' demands have been diverted into the realm of consumption, a tendency strengthened by the labour movement's emphasis upon winning wage increases. But the very same changes in industry have also brought about a 'new' working class of researchers, technicians and skilled workers whose objective position causes them to demand more control rather than more money, which leads Mallet to a more optimistic outlook upon the future.[9]

A somewhat different line of thought is presented by Perry Anderson in his attempt to determine the parameters of British capitalist society in general, and of its working class in particular (Anderson, 1966). He sees the power structure in Britain as 'an immensely elastic and all-embracing hegemonic order' that accounts for the continuous lack of radicalism in both class and party. The Gramscian concept of hegemony delineates 'the dominance of one social block over another, not simply by means of force

or wealth, but by a social authority whose ultimate sanction and expression is a profound cultural supremacy' (1966:30). In the case of Britain the source of this hegemonic order is found in the origins of British capitalism, particularly in the partial character of its bourgeois revolution.

Of the writers focusing on *the party* as pivotal in the process of deradicalization, some rely on Lenin's directionist thesis, some on the inherent conservatism of the party apparatus implied in Trotsky's analysis, and others on the betrayal-argument of the Comintern. Sometimes the party is seen as gradually leading the class towards reformism, sometimes as taming the revolutionary fever of the class. In Abendroth's account, political developments in the labour movement are seen partly as a consequence of bureaucratization and partly as betrayal (Abendroth, 1972:63). Historically the organizational growth of the SPD created a large bureaucracy living not only *for* but also *of* the labour movement. The function of the leadership was to restrict the radical actions of the working class, to channel them into activities less dangerous for the labour movement organizations (1972:165).

Hobsbawn raises the question of why the potential radicalism in Britain is so strong while the actual radicalism is so weak (Hobsbawn, 1968:330–342). The apparent paradox is explained from a Leninist, directionalist perspective. Under stable capitalism, he argues, a 'spontaneous' labour movement will allow the rank-and-file to drift to the right, while it actively propels the party leaders toward moderation. In this situation, there is – apart from rare times of revolutionary crisis – a need for 'a conscious socialist movement' to prevent the reformist trend: 'At this point only the firmest and clearest revolutionary theory or moral commitment can safeguard the labour cadre against mere reformism' (1968:336). Without it, as in Britain, a reformist policy would be 'natural'.[10]

This brief excursion into the abundant literature of Marxist writings has concentrated on the problem nourished though not originating in Bernstein's question in 'Evolutionary Socialism': Why didn't history go Marx's way? The common heritage of these writers in theory, concepts and politics does not give a common answer to the question. The main dimension along which the answers are grouped is that given in the Lenin – Luxemburg debate on the nature of the communist party: Is the party or the class to have priority in an analysis of changes in working class politics? What unites the party-directionists and the class-spontaneists, however, is their common legacy of historical materialism, i.e. a conscious attempt to evaluate the relative importance of both party *and* class within an integrated, holistic approach.

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3. From the Libera' Debate

We now enter a domain in which the questions remain but the theoretical perspectives and concepts are very different. The question of why social democratic parties turned increasingly moderate after 1945 is, of course, not exclusively a Marxist question, but one central to the understanding of post-war European politics regardless of approach. Within the academically dominant liberal tradition the question first became prominent in the 'end of ideology debate' around 1955 (Waxman, 1968), a debate from which the 'embourgeoisification thesis' emerged as the 'official' explanation of the deradicalization of working class parties among most of the sociologically inclined writers on the subject. Some of the 'purer' political analysts either saw its origin in the process of party bureaucratization with oligarchy as the operational concept, or in the pacifying effects of increasing influence and responsibility. The political sociologists focused on class, while the political scientists studied the party. In contrast to the Marxist debate, these explanatory spheres were often divorced from each other. Professional concentration and specialization were not checked by a theoretical demand for 'totality'. Or at least the functionalist emphasis on the *system* as a working whole was not in the same way paramount to the tradition.

In *party-based* explanations the obvious point of departure is the work of Weber and particularly Michels (Michels, 1962). This organizational focus was carried on in the post-war era through the works of Maurice Duverger (1964) and Sigmund Neuman (Neumann, 1956).

In a recent book Frank Parkin presents an argument which focuses on internal party processes. Class is clearly considered important, but the party is not simply a mirror of the views of its supporters. One should not, he argues, underestimate party influence in *shaping* working class consciousness (Parkin, 1972:99). Deradicalization of the social democratic parties must therefore be attributed not only to changes in the social and economic conditions of the working class: it is 'at least as much' attributable to the changing nature of the party and the party leadership (1972:136). What are these changes? First, there is the embourgeoisification of established working class leaders, the bureaucratization of the organization, and the consequent influx of new middle class leaders. Partly as a result of these changes, there has also been an attempt to broaden the electoral base of the party by appealing to the middle class vote. In Kirchheimer's term, the trend has been toward 'catch-all parties' (Kirchheimer, 1966). And thirdly, the experience of office and authority will 'bend' party politics

toward moderation. All these changes will have both a *direct* bearing on the politics of the party and an *indirect* through changing elite attitudes.

The thesis of institutional integration recurs throughout the literature and is in fact another argument based upon the pivotal position of the party leadership[11] The leadership is constrained and integrated through increasing influence, and the leaders will have to fill the positions of power won through party successes. A classical analysis along these lines is found in Schumpeter's account of social democratic reformism in the inter-war years (Schumpeter, 1974:264–366). The socialist 'administrators' were brought to power in the upheavals following the First World War. They came to power through a political breakdown and not, as predicted in Marxist theory, because of economic collapse. Thus they came to govern an essentially capitalist world and so were compelled to administer capitalism. Schumpeter's argument, therefore, is that it is in this fact, rather than in 'stupidity' or 'treason' that the sources of deradicalization are to be found. The leadership had no choice.[12]

The *class-based* explanation of embourgeoisification of the working class – the increase in material well-being which gives it more than its chains to lose – first appeared in its present formulation to account for the conservative period in many countries during the 1950s. And when the more moderate social democratic parties regained their strength around 1960, the two processes were linked.

One of the most influential and sophisticated versions of the thesis is Lipset's article on 'The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics' (Lipset, 1971). He maintains that the United States, lacking a strong socialist movement, does not represent a 'cultural lag' in comparison to Europe. Rather, the most advanced industrial country in the world is showing Europe its future – which, according to Lipset, one should expect on the basis of 'Marxist sociology' if not of 'Marxist politics'. The core of his argument is that as the wealth of a country increases, one tends to get 'a more equitable distribution of consumption goods and education – factors contributing to a reduction of intra-societal tension'. Lorwin had earlier formulated the same point: 'Economic growth produced a margin of well-being and facilitated the compromises and generosity which reconciled groups to each other in most of the liberal democracies' (Lorwin, 1971:32). Other major trends pressing for political moderation were according to Lipset the integration of the working class into society and polity, and a greater acceptance of 'scientific thought and professionalism'. This weakened class tension did not, however, lead to fewer votes for the social democratic parties. Instead, the leftist parties have

'become more moderate, less radical in the economic reforms they espouse'.

This conception of a sated working class as the electoral basis for increasingly moderate social democratic parties has been strongly contested on a theoretical as well as an empirical level in the subsequent debate. One of the most important critical studies is the 'affluent worker' study from the mid-sixties. Here Goldthorpe et al. argue *against* the thesis that the working class has lost its identity in terms of life-style, culture and status in society. Their data did not bring out that the working class had drifted into the bourgeoisie. However, changes had nevertheless taken place which might contribute to an explanation of working class politics: 'the understanding of contemporary working-class politics is to be found, first and foremost, in the structure of the worker's group attachment and not, as many have suggested, in the extent of his income and possessions' (Goldthorpe et al., 1968b:82). The 'affluent worker' had not become a 'middle class worker' but had adopted a more 'privatized' life-style. This might move him towards 'a conservative and individualistic, rather than a radical and collectivist, outlook on economic and political isues' – or, alternatively, he may be an increasingly alienated worker who is 'objectively, even if not yet subjectively, in fundamental opposition of the system' (1969:165). Moved by this apparent inconclusiveness of their data, they consequently argue that the political significance of changes in the nature of the class is in a sense 'open', and that developments in working class politics depend to a considerable degree on *political leadership*: 'While at one level of analysis the new working class must obviously be seen as a product of economic and social structural changes of a long-term kind, what it becomes as a socio-political force could well be critically influenced by what the Labour Party seeks to make of it' (1969:190). This, however, is a rather careful *opening* towards the party directionist approach at the end of a study which had class as its dominant focus.

4. Question and Answer

What emerges from this excursion into Marxist and Liberal debates on the origins of reformism is, first, the indeterminate state of the present arguments over causal priorities. Second, what one is left with resembles more a 'check-list' of relevant variables than conclusive arguments. And third, it appears that the distinction between class-based and party-based explanations conveniently summarizes the literature. Underpinning this last

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distinction one can find many of the 'classical ' issues involved – the question of the autonomy of the political and the voluntarism – determinism debate.

Despite their obvious differences marxists and liberals nevertheless have produced essentially the same strategic question: what is the relative weight of *party* and *class* in the explanation of social democratic deradicalization. The way they have tried to answer it, however, differs. The marxist approach is based mainly upon its core theoretical presumptions and marshals the evidence through its basic categories. In the Liberal debate the point of departure is often a substantive interest in class structure, obligarchy, and party bureaucracy, and the argument is based on empirical material confined to that particular sphere.

On what kind of analysis and on what type of data are the different studies based? Here they are united in a *comparative approach* with the *nation state* as their basic unit. The data employed are therefore national level data on national institutions and organizations. The discussion is carried on with references to the German case, the British case, etc., and the strategic factors are compared with reference to national similarities and contrasts. Hobsbawn, for example, when discussing the need for a 'special' factor, i.e. the communist party, argues that if the working class attaches itself to such a movement at the crucial phase of its development, it will have a built-in guarantee against drifting into reformism. But if, 'as in the British case', it attaches itself to a movement largely formed in the pre-Marxist mould, it will not have this protection (Hobsbawn, 1968:335).

On this level of analysis the data informing it tend to be fairly simple, something which easily leads to employing ambiguous concepts at a high level of generality. A case in point is Lipset's article where he, for instance, argues that 'nations with a high level of industrialization and urbanization tend to have a low level of conflict' (Lipset, 1971:155). What kind of 'industrialization'? And what kind of 'conflict'? But clearly the complexity of concepts and analysis is partly constrained by the available data, which is, of course, a general problem in comparative research.

This is clearly not an argument against a comparative approach. Rather, it points to some problems which can be avoided at other levels of analysis. Studies at these levels certainly have their own problems, but may supplement the comparative perspective. The affluent worker study in Luton with its complexity of concepts, arguments and data is a relevant case in point.

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5. The Local Nexus

A study at the local level of social democratic deradicalization might therefore be a step towards theoretical and empirical clarification of the issues involved in this debate. The value of bringing questions originally formulated on the national level down to a local setting from time to time has recently been impressively demonstrated by the work of John Foster. His theme is the rise and fall of revolutionary class consciousness in three English towns in the Chartist era (Foster, 1974). The radical leaders of Oldham successfully induced a real class consciousness in the working class, something which did not happen in the other two towns. They succeeded because they managed to secure mass leadership and thereby 'achieve a mass realization of its ideas' (1974:99). The precondition for this success, however, was to be found in the particular industrial experience of Oldham. But, the very success of Chartism in threatening the ruling class into making some material concessions coupled with changes in industrial authority at the time brought about a 'labour aristocracy'. The emerging labour aristocracy split the ranks of the working class, pacified it, and removed its potential for renewed revolutionary class consciousness. The important point *here*, however, is not Foster's thesis, but the way he is able to base his Leninist-type theoretical argument on empirical research of sufficient detail to specify the causal links and directions. Foster is able to handle the material on changes in social structure and the operation of the class leaders, as well as actions of the bourgeoisie and structural changes in industry, because of the size and relatively homogeneity of his unit of analysis. This is one of the reasons why Foster's study was so favourably received as a contribution to the *general* debate.[13]
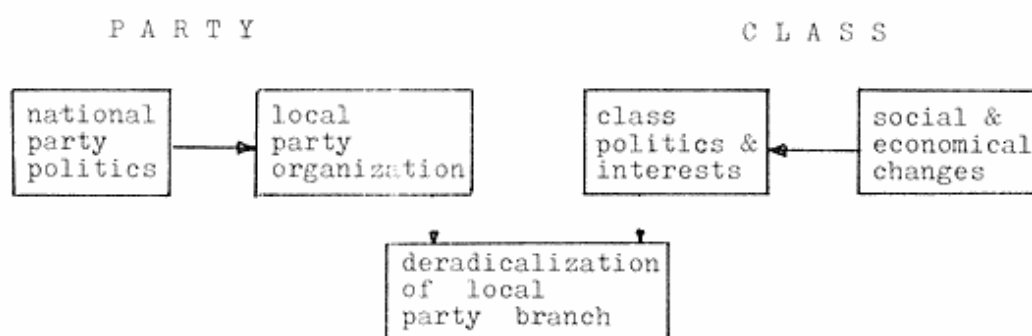
These are also my basic reasons for favouring a study of social democratic reformism at the local level. It is at the local level that party and class meet through the local party branch. At this level it would be practically possible to conduct detailed historical research concerning the relative balance between party and class. But I hasten to add that the limitations of this approach would, in this case, be even greater than in Foster's and the 'affluent worker' study. In the latter a critically important local case was selected for its relevance to the theoretical argument involved. Foster on the other hand selects his three towns on the basis of their different forms of economic organization and tempos of economic and social change, but can not of course deal with all the interesting constellations through three towns alone.

More seriously, however, Foster faced, first, the problem of represen-

tativeness and, second, the problem that even representative local units do not simply 'aggregate' to the national level. The institutions, organizations and process which take place only at this level will necessarily be missing from the analysis. In this sense, therefore, studies at different levels are logically different. Foster probably fails at the first and cannot help failing at the second. But neither destroys the impressive nature of his argument nor makes it irrelevant to the debate. It remains an important study that is able to explore and redirect the themes and questions involved in a critical and empirical informed manner.

I would consequently argue that the study of the sources of deradicalization of social democratic parties at the present stage of the debate needs more exploratory, local-level research. In selecting some party branches from 'kommuner' (municipalities) with varied industrial experiences I believe it would be possible to explore in detail *some* of the issues involved in the debate over the causal ties in this process.[14] In operating at the local level, however, the effects of the national process of integration, bureaucratization and leadership transformation must be demonstrated along the organizational center-periphery axis, through the flow of influence between the national headquarters and the local branch. They would have to be indirectly rather than directly represented. Another major limitation would be that causal factors confined to the national institutions and historical developments would easily be overlooked and blurred at this level. They would not be highlighted through comparisons with other national entities.

In crude schematical form the model that could be tested is presented below.

P A R T Y   C L A S S

national party politics	→	local party organization		class politics & interests	←	social & economical changes

deradicalization of local party branch

The crucial question would be whether the organizational web of the party or the class surrounding it, is dominant in the process of deradicalization. To study their relative strength at the local level, time-series data

on three main sectors would be necessary. First, on the relationship between the branch and the national party. Second, on the politics and organization of the local branch and, third, on the local working class.

The internal centre-periphery connection is the key to the question of whether or to what extent the political profile of the branch is defined from above. If deradicalization predominantly is a top-level party affair one should expect recurring conflicts between the levels, or at least a certain lag in the local branch. Material tapping this dimension could be branch resolutions, local newspaper editorials and branch delegate's speeches and voting at the national party conferences. If there appears to be no sign either of friction or lag, the branch could at least not have been pushed towards its present position – and one might even consider the possibility that the branch had taken a lead.

Within the local party branch the search for factors conditional to increased moderation may follow two major developments. The first is the growing institutionalization of the party, the second the declining organizational vitality. The institutionalization of an organization denotes the process whereby it acquires a value in itself beyond its practical purpose: the goals of the organization are in a sense devalued and the norms of attachment and loyalty take precedence (Selznick, 1957). In this process the organization becomes more distinct from its surroundings, more autonomous and removed from its immediate clientel (Polsby, 1968 and Kjellberg, 1975). This institutionalization of the party with its concomitant bureaucratization, emergence of local chieftains or 'oligarchs', slowdown in elite circulation, and integration into the established elites, according to one story clears the way for deradicalization.

Another party branch dimension underpinning its political development towards moderation may be its level of organizational vitality. The argument is that when the level of involvement from rank and file members is high, one will have a potent force in the party which is not exposed to the moderating stimuli impinging on the elites. The degree of radicalism, however, will certainly not be tied to the level of 'vitality' in any simple way. The kind of activity as well as the kind of activitists will complicate the relationship. If activity mostly centres around the social and formal aspects of party life, it is unlikely to have much effect on party politics. Further, if the activists are predominantly middle class careerists, it is questionable to argue that their activism functions as a bolster against deradicalization. On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility that precisely middle class involvement may be the most radical (Parkin, 1968).

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The third field of data on which to test the model is the local working class. The question is whether this was leading or led in the process of deradicalization: Did the party adjust to the class or the class to the party? The question may be approached by seeking for changes in the social and economic situation relevant to the 'class-theories' above: Standard of living, unemployment, class homogeneity and condition of work. But most crucial would be whatever evidence existed on autonomous manifestations of class politics.[15] Electoral response, industrial disputes and demonstrations would possibly yield more direct data on the lead or lag of the working class as compared to the party branch.

But the potential virtues of the 'local nexus' in the study of social democratic deradicalization remains to be demonstrated in practice.

NOTES

1. This is clearly not the first period of deradicalization in the history of Labour parties. Note the debate on the origin of reformism at the turn of the century. On the post 1945 developments see the literature referred to in this article.
2. A critical examination of the tendency to view Labour's politics (in Britain) as substantially more radical is given in Miliband (1964).
3. See the discussion and references in Cliff (n.d.).
4. This is Sorel's expression to characterize the Marx and Engels position (Johnstone, 1967:141).
5. Thus when, for example, Luxemburg was looking for the sources of 'opportunism' in working class parties, she traced it to the inevitable influx of bourgeois elements into the mass-based parties as well as to the nature of the class struggle in capitalist society (Luxemburg, 1973:109). Class and party were both important; the debate was on the degree of autonomy possible for a communist party.
6. To Lukacs the distinction between voluntarism and determinism apparently is 'transcended' within Marxism. Only opponents 'succumb to the bourgeois dilemma of voluntarism and fatalism' (Lukacs, 1971:332).
7. For a similar perspective on the achievements of later 'Marxist sociologists' see Kumar (1971:38).
8. Epitomized in his 'Theses on Feuerback'.
9. The debate on 'optimism' vs. 'pessimism' is presented in Herkommer (1965).
10. It must be added though, that this 'lack-of-direction'-thesis on British reformism is operative on the basis of two historical factors. The first was the creation, by means of British world supremacy, of a 'labour aristocracy' and a generally well-off working class, and the second was the formation of the labour movement at a time 'when the dominant tradition was that of a reforming liberal-radicalism, whose stamp it still bears' (Hobsbawn, 1968:341).
11. For an analysis isolating political integration of the Labour movement as the critical factor in explaining their different degrees of radicalism, see Lafferty's study on Scandinavian labour movements (Lafferty 1971).
12. Interestingly, the very same argument is found in Engels, 'The peasant war in Germany': 'The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of

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the class which he represents, and for the realization of the measures which that domination implies . . . What he *can* do contradicts all his previous actions, principles, and the immediate interests of his party, and what he *ought* to do cannot be done. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whose domination the movement then is ripe' (Fever, 1959:435).

13. See for example the reviews by G. Stedman Jones in *New Left Review*, No. 90 (March–April 1975) pp. 35–69 and J. Saville in *Socialist Register* 1974, pp. 226–240.

14. There are of course local studies focusing more or less on the problem of deradicalization, but none to my knowledge which contrasts the relative importance of party and class. In Britain, Hindess (1971) argues, for instance, his case on the basis of party changes alone, notably the decline of working class personnel at all levels in the party organization. Most of the points raised here in relation to the strength and weaknesses of a local study on this problem are represented in the debate following Hindess's book. See Baxter (1972), Beackon (1976), and Forester (1976). What seems to me still to be the most solid study of local working class politics in Britain, Bealey et al., (1965), has a focus very different from the present.

15. Different indicators on working class ideology are proposed and discussed in Foster, 1974:ch. 4.

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