

The Birth-Strike Debate: Can Lysistrata Conquer Capital?

Every unborn proletarian child is...to be compared to a worker, who does and can strike throughout his whole life without enduring the suffering and afflictions of such a way of acting.¹

But the proletariat has learned a still more dangerous piece of wisdom than emigrating—not being born!²

The European socialist movement in the late nineteenth century not only had no comprehensive theory of population, but, beyond Marx's capital-accumulation-centered analysis of surplus population, lacked even coherent fragments from Marx or Engels to guide its public policy choices in countries in which it participated in legislative bodies. In the absence of theoretical direction, however, socialists were reduced to jabs at the remnants of Malthusianism in the economics of "timid governmental and clerical hemorrhoidists," and to dry assurances that the abolition of mass poverty through the elimination of the underlying antagonistic capital-labor relationship was the only effective remedy for modern overpopulation.³ At the same time, some revisionist members of the SPD adhered to Malthus's doctrine. Given the intimate linkage between population and copulation, the SPD's ambiguous and ambivalent relation to Imperial Germany's official cramped view of sex made it impossible for the party to develop its own unique position with regard to population matters.⁴

Socialist sexual political and intraproletarian controversy over the micro- and macrosocietal consequences of child-rich families reached its high point in the so-called birth-strike debate on the eve of World War I. This German debate focused on the question of whether the working class could improve its condition and simultaneously hasten the demise of capitalism by creating small families and, correlatively, limiting the size of the next generation of labor market competitors. Some advocated smaller families regardless of the macroeconomic impact in order

to relieve the poverty associated with large families for all members and the crushing physical and psychological burdens borne by mothers, thus enabling them to participate more fully in societal movements. Others envisioned such a radical drying up of recruits for the reserve army of the unemployed and of the real army of soldiers that capital's coercive economic and military power would be significantly curbed. Centrist SPD birth-strike opponents did not so much contest the legitimacy of birth control as challenge the notion that families' private ameliorist plans could ever add up to a revolutionary working-class strategy—in part because party leaders supported demographic growth for the socialist society of the future and in part because orthodox Marxists believed that a smaller supply of labor could not overcome the accommodating forces of capital accumulation to generate a higher overall wage level.

Early twentieth-century conflicts over agitation within the working class to limit its reproduction in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, must be understood against the background of the ruling classes' fears of the impact of declining fertility on the military and industrial reserve armies and their efforts to suppress various means of contraception. Their representatives expressed these concerns repeatedly in the Reichstag in 1913. Baron Knigge, for example, stated that births, which had declined in almost all capitalist countries since the mid-1870s, had declined from 40.1 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1870 to 31.9 in 1909 in Germany. Nevertheless, Germany's population had advanced so far beyond France's during that period that Count von Kanitz added that the population problem had attained such proportions in France that Germany's rival was having difficulty maintaining the size of its army.⁵

The conflict over the adequacy of German population growth, the causes of diminished fertility, and the measures proposed to increase the birth rate were sharpened by the publication in 1912 of a semi-official polemic by Dr. Jean Borntträger, a government and medical councillor in Düsseldorf. Following its publication in an official series, the Prussian Minister of the Interior authorized its republication the next year in book form. After presenting a number of demographic indicators of the declining birth rate and raising the specter that Germans would be unable to assert themselves "in the concert of peoples" and especially against Russia, whose growth was unencumbered by organized opposition, Borntträger launched into an attack against the SPD for its association with and promotion of fertility limitation. Two-fifths of the book were devoted to methods designed to combat birth control, and five pages to measures "to stem the emancipation of women." Although he could accept women as doctors, nurses, messengers, salespeople, and in certain other occupations, Borntträger found female clergy, police, lawyers, and chimney sweep masters a caricature: "As the men can never even come close to reaching the women e.g. in patient care, so too the women the men in all male occupations. The difference must remain." Among the repressive measures he proposed were the prohibition as pornography of popular publications recommending or even discussing birth control and the prevention of public lectures and meetings on the same subject by neo-Malthusian organizations,

feminists, the society against the alleged overpopulation of Germany, and others. He was willing to exempt “strictly scientific, not popular papers and treatises in technical journals,” but would have withheld discretion from the daily press to print excerpts from such articles.⁶

Without any supporting evidence, Borntträger charged that it was easier to assert than to prove that the working class suffered under the financial burdens of supporting large families, for although it might seem at first sight that people with little income might be in a better position to raise one or two than five or six children, the older children in fact soon helped take care of the younger ones and to earn money for the parents; they were, after all, “walking nest eggs.” Moreover, if small working-class families succeeded in sending their children to universities, they would create a danger that occupations requiring such an education would become overfilled with “inferior elements.” In spite of his proclivity for flight into folk adages instead of empirically tested reasoning, Borntträger did recognize that economic assistance for financially limited families was one of the main tasks in the struggle against birth control—especially because it was the focal point where economists, hygienists, Social Democrats, and neo-Malthusians converged. He therefore proposed a wide-ranging catalog of aids for (low-income) large families including tax exemptions, housing subsidies, exemptions from military and jury service, educational subsidies, preferential poor-relief and hiring in state employment, reduced railway fares, children’s premiums, and food subsidies; at the same time, bachelors would receive an incentive to marry and to procreate by means of special taxes and increased military and jury obligations.⁷

Given its extraordinary personal character, obvious “hysterical” party-political prejudices, and lack of scientific-medical learning, Borntträger’s book became easy prey for the SPD. Procapitalist economists struck themes similar to Borntträger’s. Julius Wolf, for example, noting the negative correlation between birth rates and the share of SPD votes in the 1907 parliamentary elections, pointed to a common cause: “The representative of a Weltanschauung that is atheistic and/or founded on egoistic motivations and emancipated in every direction will not and cannot give life to a large family....” Wolf also stressed that the fact that Germany’s fertility had far exceeded that of France and Britain during the previous several decades, had exerted a great impact on world politics, prompting France to seek an alliance with Russia, and had channeled so many millions of workers into German industry that it had recourse to industrial and colonial expansion in competition with Britain.⁸

Of greater political brisance were the German antisocialist parliamentarians’ charges that the SPD was consciously propagating fertility limitation as a tool in the class struggle. Knigge pointed to the high positive correlation between low birth rates and high proportions of SPD votes in Berlin and elsewhere. Several months after the birth-strike debates, the Reichstag returned to the subject in connection with its deliberations on a bill to amend the Industrial Code to prohibit pedlars from selling contraceptives; the bill was motivated by stories of pedlars who had obtained from the civil marriage registry newlyweds’ addresses, to which

they proceeded directly with their wares. Count von Carmer, a conservative representative, accused the SPD of propagating the restraints on fertility that were undermining Germany's military strength.⁹

The Social Democratic Reichstag members tried to parry these allegations largely by means of sarcastic countercharges. Among these were the fact that aristocrats had smaller families than proletarians and the claim that one of the reasons the propertied classes limited their families was the (mothers') fear of ruining their figures.¹⁰ While arguing that capitalists opposed birth control because they saw the threat that in the future "the working hands will furnish a more valuable object," the SPD also expressed its own regret concerning the decline in population growth because in the future social-democratic society an increase in the labor force would bring in its wake a smaller quantum of labor per capita. Later the party attacked the proposed legislative suppression of contraceptives as "state birth compulsion."¹¹

The SPD leadership saw both left-wing birth-striking and right-wing birth-compellers as methodological individualists who, in their zeal to generalize from individual motives for reduced fertility, overlooked the societal causes that guided the will of many individuals.¹² Thus the party was hardly blind to the specific ways in which capitalism shaped poverty for proletarian parents or to the latter's efforts to ward off the worst consequences; the leadership merely sought to combat illusions that intentionally diminished fertility constituted a revolutionary act or strategy. Although the SPD stood between the bourgeois neo-Malthusians on the one side and the representatives of the state and capital on the other, which demanded more military and industrial recruits, the party was unable to adopt a fully independent position because it too regretted the decline in fertility as an unfavorable trend for the future socialist society. The party was also caught between its traditional principled macrosocietal anti-Malthusianism and the fact that a large and increasing proportion of its membership "privately acted Malthusianly."¹³

The concept of the "general birth strike" was introduced in Germany in the first decade of the twentieth century by a Social Democratic doctor in Zurich, Fritz Brupbacher. Without propagating it or even proposing family limitation as a party program, and recognizing that such conduct was "not a means of doing away with capitalist society," he supported proletarian women's efforts to limit their procreancy for "private-economic reasons" and to foster the development of the personality of the living generations. Such motivations were especially relevant for the working-class woman, whose total preoccupation with pregnancies and how to avoid them had made her "a walking uterus, who thinks with the uterus. Without interest in her class interest...she...becomes...unreceptive...for everything that does not relate to her uterus."¹⁴

At the time of the birth-strike campaign in Germany, neo-Malthusian Social Democrats adapted a quasi-bourgeoisification approach to explain the trend toward smaller families in large cities:

During his bachelor period, the worker becomes accustomed to

attending the theater, concerts, and other public events, which he does not want completely to forgo in marriage. That of course is possible only if he limits the number of children.... A worker who takes part in cultural goods easily decides to tolerate a reduction of pleasurable sensations in marital intercourse through the use of preventive means rather than to destroy his higher standard of living through too large a number of children.¹⁵

The leading theoretician of Social-Democratic revisionism, Eduard Bernstein, expressed this same thought jocularly when he observed that: "Having many children doesn't go with modern furniture." The explosion of the wage-fund doctrine—which saw wage rates as determined by the labor supply since the amount of capital earmarked for wages was fixed at any given time—undermined in Bernstein's view whatever macroeconomic logic had ever inhered in Malthusianism. Family limitation might aid individual households economically, but monster meetings were not needed to enlighten workers as to these private benefits. The decline of large working-class families, was, instead, in large part a result of the labor movement's agitation to extend the scope of compulsory education and to prohibit child labor. Moreover, the movement, anticipating the culture-of-poverty thesis (and taking up Engels' view), educated the worker "not to seek the enjoyments of life in grossly sensual intoxication"; instead, it "induces him to think beyond the day, prevails upon him to have the best possible care bestowed upon his children," and consequently to limit family size. Since a universal tendency toward intentional reduction of fertility set in at a certain cultural stage, Bernstein concluded that it could not represent a "socialist *solution of the social question*."¹⁶

That supporters and opponents of the birth strike split along many intersecting and overlapping axes was illustrated most prominently by Ludwig Quessel. A revisionist SPD member of the Reichstag and Malthusian, Quessel nevertheless rejected the neo-Malthusian birth strike on racial grounds: if the German proletariat declined appreciably, a massive influx from the "Slavic East" would fill the gap, bringing about a lower standard of living and dooming the nation to decline and fall. Only from the standpoint of some "misunderstood internationality" would it be "a matter of indifference whether German or Slavic workers supply German capital with the next generation of proletarians." And even if it were possible to close the German borders to "the importation of the Slavic human commodity," Quessel would still have rejected the birth strike because it would so dangerously reduce the military fitness of the German people that it would threaten the latter's national existence. Although he was constrained to concede to Eduard Bernstein that the racial differences among nations belonging to "the white cultural circle" were theoretically not great enough to preclude the cultural assimilation of Slavs, the clinching argument for Quessel was that it remained "incomprehensible how a person who does not know the language of Kant and Goethe can be drawn into the culture of the German people."¹⁷

Kautsky, German Social Democracy's leading centrist theoretician, offered a somewhat different perspective on the birth-strike controversy. Until the

recent decline in fertility, proletarian wives, “the most patient pack animals,” had never had the leisure to think through their excessively burdensome procreational role—unlike the “ladies” of the propertied class, who limited their conceptions because it was impossible to delegate the travails of pregnancy and birth to their “service slaves.” Since small families had become synonymous with affluence and large families with poverty, some economists had come to regard the recent decline in fertility as a sign of mass prosperity. For Kautsky, however, this development merely meant that poverty had, in the wake of the increasing incorporation of married women into the wage-labor force and their increasing independence, begun to change phenomenologically. In combination with advances in medical science and the proliferation of safer forms of birth control, the new objective position and consciousness of women made the decline in fertility inevitable. Where the advocates of a birth strike erred, according to Kautsky, was in believing that the “private matter” of how individual proletarian women acquiesced in this inevitable turn had anything to do with “politics and party,” let alone qualified as a weapon of class struggle. The birth-strikers had committed the ecological fallacy of assuming that the beneficial effects on the microlevel would replicate themselves in society at large; but if the individual proletarian’s correct conclusion that he could fight more easily without a family were adopted by the working class as a whole, the class would be doomed to extinction. Finally, Kautsky cautioned that any untoward effect that fertility limitation might exert on the size of the military or industrial reserve army would take place so far in the future that it would become meaningless as a political weapon.¹⁸

Several weeks before the birth-strike meeting, the SPD press began a campaign attacking the movement. In the party’s chief women’s periodical, *Die Gleichheit*, Mathilde Wurm published a very hard-line piece. Although low fertility among the wealthy had never been of concern to the ruling classes, she argued, a decline in the potential supply of soldiers, workers, and strikebreakers caused them alarm. Whether a smaller number of pregnancies reduced the exhaustion of the individual woman and mother was of importance for the public only if it also improved the socioeconomic condition of women and the working class in general. The proliferation of the two-child system in France unaccompanied by improvement, however, undermined any such conclusion. Thus even if the individual couple could feed and raise two children better than six, both the parents and the children remained “subject to the very same capitalist regime of exploitation.” Claiming that the working class had never achieved any successes through abstention, Wurm reminded her readers that limiting the number of their children would mean a significant renunciation of “present joys and future hopes.” Finally, Wurm rejected as “bourgeois” any notion that the road to proletarian progress ran through material improvement for individual families or that women could secure equality by producing smaller families rather than more energetic struggle.¹⁹

Two weeks later, *Gleichheit* published a similarly dogmatic piece by Heinrich Vogel, who traced the movement for smaller families to the recent inflation and the German Reich’s antipopular (*volksfeindlich*), proagrarian and large-

capitalist economic policies of increasing tariffs and indirect taxes on mass consumption commodities. Vogel also focused on another cause of the decline in births—capitalistic exploitation of women, especially those employed sewing clothes on pedal-driven machines, which subjected the female organism to dangers and damage that reduced their ability to give birth to healthy children. His position culminated in the aggressive slogan that: “The working people should not allow the whip of exploiting capitalism to dictate to them how many progeny they may have. If today they must maintain countless loafers in luxury and debauchery, then they can also demand for themselves and their flesh and blood a decent existence.”²⁰

The party’s main newspaper, *Vorwärts*, published a two-part article attacking the birth strike as calculated to mislead workers as to how to bring about socialism. The article sought to refute the efficacy of the birth strike empirically by asserting that in countries, such as France, where proletarian fertility had declined significantly, the condition of the working class had not improved. On the programmatic level, the article chided advocates for confusing a sign of capitalist degeneration with a weapon of class struggle.²¹

The high point of the German birth-strike controversy was the two debates that took place on two successive Friday evenings, August 22 and 29, 1913, in Berlin under the auspices of the Union of Social-Democratic Election Associations of Greater Berlin and chaired by the leader of the Berlin party organization, Eugen Ernst.²² The party convened the meeting ostensibly to deal with the movement headed by two Berlin family physicians and Social Democrats, Alfred Bernstein and Julius Moses, who were reacting to the consequences of large numbers of births for working-class women whom they had treated in their practices.²³ As another Social Democratic physician speculated, it was understandable that doctors, who are professionally concerned with individual patients, would project this perspective onto social policy and adopt a neo-Malthusian “symptomatic doctoring about....”²⁴ The SPD advertised extensively what it with manifest bias called a large public meeting in which Comrade Clara Zetkin would speak on the subject, “Against the Birth Strike.” The party announced that women were especially invited and in fact a large majority of those attending were women—the first time in the history of the German labor movement that the SPD was confronted with a large mass crowd of women. The crowds were so large at the large New World hall in Hasenheide, that even after all the tables were removed, every seat was taken and the police had to close off the overfilled arena. The meetings were widely reported on in the bourgeois press.²⁵

Zetkin, a leftist and the party’s leading spokesperson on women’s issues, unleashed a wave of invective against the birth strike, calling it both “bourgeois quackery” and “bourgeois-anarchistic” in its individualist orientation, and nothing but a “very reactionary utopia.” Against the macroeconomic extrapolations of the birth-strikers, who claimed that a smaller supply of labor would bring about an increase in the wage level, Zetkin brought to bear Marx’s theory of capital accumulation and its quasiautomatic accommodation of capital’s need for surplus-value producers.²⁶

For Zetkin there was no doubt that the main cause of misery was “capitalist exploitation” and not the number of children. The fact that the proletarian woman was overburdened by the number of children was not caused by the number of children per se, but by the circumstance that “capitalism does not give her enough of that which (including house servants) the loafing women of the bourgeoisie had prodigally.” She also lamely denied that caring for a large number of children necessarily interfered with working women’s participation in the labor movement; individual character, mental alertness, and health also played a role, although she conceded that a woman’s participation would increase if her husband abandoned the philistine habit of having her wait hand and foot on him. These claims were continuous with the uncharitable view that Zetkin had nourished for more than a decade that neo-Malthusianism was merely an expedient for egotists, in particular among the SPD’s educated members, who wanted to enjoy the comforts of life. Zetkin also came close to imputing a culture-of-poverty mentality to the proletariat in general. She noted that the “more intelligent strata” had fewer children and a lesser incidence of alcoholism than “the mentally backward” strata because schnapps and sexual intercourse were all that bourgeois society had left to the workers. Her conclusion, however, was not that preventive measures were called for, but that it was necessary “to lead workers to a higher mental stage. If greater demands are made of the brain, then the lower drives will be repressed.”²⁷

In response to Zetkin’s keynote speech, Dr. Moses criticized the party leadership for failing to title the evening’s discussion, “For or Against the Birth Strike?” He credited himself with the spiritual authorship of the protest meeting, although for a decade the audience had been practicing the birth strike, which he denied having tried to elevate to the status of “the revolutionary weapon”; rather, it was merely one of the possible remedies for the proletariat’s physical recovery.²⁸

Luise Zietz, one-time radical and now centrist member of the party directorate with responsibility for political agitation among women, after expressing her distress that Malthus could still find resonance among Social Democrats, also criticized Zetkin’s refusal to tolerate propagation of birth control, which was not *the*, but *a* means to increase women’s participation. Zietz also pointed to one factor that deterred women from controlling their fertility, at least to the extent that they had moved beyond fatalism—that in certain areas in which homework flourished children began work by the age of three. By the same token, Zietz rejected the notion that individually justifiable fertility limitation was a Social Democratic weapon.²⁹

Perhaps the debate’s most pungent remarks came from Rosa Luxemburg, the left-wing’s most prominent theoretician and, together with Rudolf Hilferding, the party’s most important political economist. Contrary to the claims of the parliamentary antisocialists, “Frau Rosa Lübeck alias Luxemburg” strenuously criticized the birth strike.³⁰ Unconcerned with women’s issues as separate from class struggle, Luxemburg, obviously disgusted even by the need for a debate, found it a humiliating sign of the backwardness of Social Democratic enlightenment in Berlin that a slogan such as the birth strike could find such resonance: “That slogan appeals to the superficiality, stupidity, and mental indolence among the masses”

which diverted attention from the struggle for economic and political liberation: "With humiliation one has to ask where then the great masses, who are there today, were when it was a matter of protesting against militarism." Luxemburg also reminded her audience shortly before midnight that socialists "fight for the living and not for those who are not born thanks to the advice of Dr. Moses."³¹

When the debate resumed the next week, Dr. Bernstein announced that the decline in births was sapping capitalism's vital strength: "If we do not recruit the objects of exploitation, if we do not increase the army, then capitalism is at an end." Wurm, recapitulating her article in *Die Gleichheit*, urged that the whole matter be confined to its proper place—the physician's office and the married couple's bedroom. Zetkin agreed, including birth control along with love, religion, and literary taste as private questions.³²

The chairman was compelled to withdraw the resolution before the house because it had failed to obtain a binding vote; he therefore suggested that the question be resumed in the election associations. One such discussion took place the next month in Berlin at which Zietz was the main speaker. She emphasized that fertility limitation, which retarded economic development and thus the advent of socialism as well, instead of undermining capitalism and militarism, thwarted socialist efforts to raise and educate "in our sense" the next generation of fighters. The main speaker for the birth-strikers, Dr. Bernstein, argued that the small families that fertility limitation made possible enabled Social Democrats to produce "better and more noble" people. Dr. Moses denied ever having viewed birth control as a solution of the social question; rather it was a means of diminishing a source of need, misery, and indifferentism among working-class women. Confirming every suspicion ever raised that the movement was Malthus-inspired, Moses virtually quoted Malthus and Mill: "There is nothing more ethical than preaching to the workers: Do not place any more children into the world than you believe you are able to feed." In the same vein, he recommended birth control as a tool against unemployment. After conceding that a large number of children multiplied the privation caused by capitalism, Zietz in her concluding salvo declared that the party had never objected to the birth control advice that Bernstein, Moses, and other physicians had dispensed on an individual basis; only when they sought to stylize it as a revolutionary weapon, did the party intervene in order to insure that working women's attention was not diverted from the fundamental class economic facts.³³

The debate also continued in party journals. Therese Schlesinger, though no adherent of the birth strike, attacked Wurm for characterizing fertility limitation and class struggle as mutually exclusive. One way of attaining an accommodation she saw in a deepening division of labor and development of technology that would relieve mothers of much of their overburden by placing children during the day "under expert supervision." Wurm's sharply worded reply merely repeated her position that it diverted attention from class struggle to preach egotistical personal life arrangements. Apodictically she also claimed that a reduction in the number of able-bodied "always" expressed itself in general societal decline. *Die Gleichheit* also published a contribution by a midwife, Luise Eichhoff, for whom the ideal of

womanhood was the happiness of the high woman's occupation of motherhood. Her practice instructed her that working-class women did not limit their fertility in order to join the proletarian women's movement, but to avoid economic privation. She reported that working-class women were animated to improve their economic position by comparing their own wretchedness with the luxury and idleness of the women of the propertied classes who practiced birth control. But the working woman who acted from such motives would be found at afternoon coffee-circles and cheap entertainments—not at a union or party meeting. Such women disqualified themselves in Eichhoff's eyes because they lacked the self-sacrifice to serve the interests of the working class; she contrasted them sharply with the women with large families whom she did see at such meetings and who were motivated by a mother's love, although she did concede that that same love deterred some women from giving birth to still more children when their already living ones existed in a vale of tears.³⁴

In the wake of the debate, Oda Olberg, writing in the beginning of 1914 in the SPD's chief theoretical—and arguably the world's premier Marxist—journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, supported the party's leadership with atypical arguments while conceding some points to the opposition. Unlike her comrades, Olberg evaluated as untoward that, in light of the proletariat's growing importance as mass consumer and of children's status as pure consumers for 12 years, a decline in births would bring about massive shifts, especially among mass-consumption food items, in demand precipitating long-term economic crises. Noting that the party agreed that it was barbaric to expect women to bear 10 or 15 children, Olberg admitted that birth control was desirable, but argued that three to five children were more appropriate than one or two. A principal reason for this party preference was rooted in the claim that people grew with their tasks; by the same token, because parents' sense of responsibility for one child was as great as for five and parents never risked their economic existence lightheartedly the way childless people did, she saw no greater potential for participation in class struggle by parents with one than with five children. But, once again, unlike the party leaders, Olberg asserted that fertility decisions were not merely private matters or ones to be resolved by physicians. Rather, considering the pervasive societal consequences, a societal standard was required. Olberg's conclusion therefore read that the party should openly declare that it valued that party comrade higher who raised five children to become fit workers like himself [*sic*] than the member who has his one pitiful delicate child study at the university.³⁵

The response from outside the SPD to the debate was lively. That extreme reactionaries joined Rosa Luxemburg in attacking the birth strikers gave the controversy, as Franz Pfemfert, the editor of *Die Aktion*, Germany's leading oppositional literary journal, noted, a comic aspect. Other political observers pointed out that the birth-strike debate was the first occasion on which the masses of radical Social Democrats in Berlin had rebelled against such popular leaders as Luxemburg and Zetkin. The birth-strike debate was also followed closely in socialist circles outside Germany. In the United States, William Walling reported on it critically in the

Masses. An American physician active in the birth control movement who had attended the second, three-and-one-half-hour, meeting, and who was decidedly in favor of the birth strikers, reported in the *International Socialist Review* that the sense of the crowd was that “though Clara Zetkins and Rosa Luxemburgs and all other literal and figurative old maids” might have correctly disparaged the efficacy of limiting fertility in eliminating militarism and capitalism, it remained “a wonderful measure” for individual families and women’s health.³⁶

Perhaps substantively even more interesting because more pointed than the German debate was the exchange conducted in 1913 and 1914 in the main journal of Austrian Social Democracy, *Der Kampf*. The most sustained contribution stemmed from Otto Bauer, one of the leading Austro-Marxist theoreticians, who, like Kautsky in Germany, represented the orthodox rejection of the birth strike. Convinced that only a rapid increase in population would lead to proletarian victory, Bauer argued that a limitation of births was compatible with the promotion of socialism only if it accelerated population growth. Bauer then outlined what has since come to be known as the stages of the demographic transition: (1) high fertility matched with high mortality leads to slow population growth; (2) a decline in the number of births is exceeded by the decline in mortality, leading to quickened population growth; and (3) fertility declines while mortality falls more slowly, resulting in a slower increase in population. Whereas the transition from the first to the second stage, characterized by a proliferation of birth control, a fall in infant mortality, and a reduction in the burdens of frequent pregnancies, constituted enormous progress, Bauer asked whether the transition from the second to the third stage was also progressive. For the individual worker, Bauer conceded, there was no doubt that a smaller family alleviated the struggle for existence. “However we are not individualists, but *socialists*.” And as socialists, whose goal was to smash the capitalist world, it was insufficient to make the worker’s lot “a little friendlier” in it.³⁷

Unlike most Marxist contributors to the birth-strike debate, Bauer was theoretically *parti pris*: in connection with a larger debate between Bauer and Luxemburg on the limits to capital accumulation and the nature of crises, Bauer had taken the position that population growth was the independent variable to which capital accumulation must and did accommodate itself.³⁸ Indeed, Bauer found this relationship to be societally invariant: in any society with positive population growth the production apparatus would have to be expanded; the only difference between socialist and capitalist societies lay in the fact that planning agencies in the former would insure that that expansion kept pace with population growth, whereas capital accumulation depended on individual capitalists’ arbitrary will.³⁹

Taking a view that bourgeois economists would also later ascribe to Marx, Bauer started from the assumption that the accumulation of capital presupposes the growth of the working class in order to staff the new factories and the expansion of existing ones. Where the growth of the population seeking work exceeds that of capital accumulation, the resulting emigration of labor is a consequence of the underaccumulation of capital. Where capital accumulates faster than the growth

of the working population, as in France, domestic capitalists must invest their capital for which there are no available domestic workers in other countries; this emigration of capital was a consequence of its overaccumulation. With the transition from the second to the third demographic stages, economic development is not impeded in countries characterized by underaccumulation because the primary reaction is merely a decline in emigration. In countries, such as Germany, however, where an approximate equilibrium between accumulation and population growth had obtained, the advent of the third demographic transition stage would result in the same phenomena of overaccumulation-driven outflow of capital. Consequently, Bauer concluded, slower population growth does not improve the working class's position in the labor market because the demand for labor declines in proportion with the decline in supply.⁴⁰

Bauer illustrated his point on the national level:

To be sure, the French worker, who has two children, lives better with the same wage than the German workers with his four or five children. But the nation, industry, socialism grow much faster where population growth is great enough to carry out the accumulation of capital in its own country than there where capital, since it does not find enough workers in its own country, must flow off to foreign economies.

Bauer's syllogistic thinking proceeded along these lines: "The whole hope of socialism is based on economic development. But economic development comes to a standstill where the population does not grow." Moreover, the working class can neither conquer nor retain power as long as it is not the majority of the population: "The working class becomes the majority, however, only through the growth of population; it becomes the majority so much the faster the population grows! The slowing of population growth therefore has a counterrevolutionary effect: it lengthens the duration of the capitalist mode of production!"⁴¹ Bauer then built toward an astounding demographic determinism:

The working class feels that very precisely. In France, where the population does not grow, the working class sees no hope of becoming the majority. It therefore vacillates between weak-hearted reformism, which seeks the alliance of the bourgeois parties, and violent syndicalism, which fancies it is able to defeat the bourgeois majority through the terror of a proletarian minority. In the German Empire with its so enormous population growth the working class goes its way certain of victory, calm; it knows that the course of social development itself, which augments the number of workers every year by hundreds of thousands, must finally lead it to victory.⁴²

Here Bauer, one of the best Marxist political economists of the first half of the twentieth century, fell victim to the mechanistic, quantitative-progress thinking that was to prove the downfall of Social Democracy in Europe in 1914 and 1933.⁴³ Bauer then imparted a strange twist to his argument by admitting that:

“Of course, in Great Britain, in the German Empire, in Belgium, the proletariat is already today the majority of the population. There it can be victorious without a growth in its numbers.” Bauer, however, immediately trumped his own argument by adding that no proletariat could “maintain its victory if the rule of capital endures in overpowering neighboring countries.” The specific demographically centered process then ran as follows: Because of its falling fertility, France, which feared Germany’s numerical superiority, had become a pillar of reaction in Europe by seeking an alliance with tsarism. The same demographically driven process was at work on the economic level: because excess labor was lacking in France, French capitalists were compelled to make their billions available to tsarism. Thus if the Central European proletariat was eventually successful, it might be crushed by Eastern European barbarism: if only the Russian peasant continued to increase his numbers, “then Europe would not become republican, but cossack...”⁴⁴

Bauer seemed to wax even more pessimistic when he also admitted that—but failed to explain why—no ideology (including, implicitly, socialism) could motivate people to increase their birth rate and no law could successfully prohibit all contraceptives. With this path blocked, the only remaining strategy from the orthodox social-democratic perspective was yet a further reduction of mortality, and particularly of infant mortality; and here, given the much higher rate in Austria than in Germany, for example, there was ample possibility. Ironically, however, to achieve this reduction, Bauer had recourse to the same catalog of measures that the mere “bourgeois social policy maker, who wishes that the worker could live somewhat cosier within the capitalist world,” would have proposed—combating alcoholism, venereal disease, and tuberculosis, raising the workers’ standard of living, expanding public health care, instruction of mothers, and assisting mothers through public welfare institutions.⁴⁵

More forcefully and straightforwardly than the Germans, Social Democrats in Austria argued that workers with large families forfeited much of the freedom that was required to remain “ready for battle” against employers. This position was advanced with the greatest poignancy by a laborer with only four years of school, who dared challenge the rejection of the birth strike that had been offered by Bauer. Karl Kirschleder of Rainfeld explained how difficult it was to rouse from their “lethargy” those workers with large numbers of children who had neither the energy to participate in meetings nor money to buy a newspaper or to pay membership dues let alone to endure a strike. Employers knew well how to terrorize such workers who, in their anxiety to feed their families, frequently wound up lowering their co-workers’ wages. In his brief reply, Bauer was forced to concede that quality was as important as quantity and that workers who had to feed eight to twelve people were generally incapable of participating in the class struggle. Bauer therefore proposed a procreational golden mean—a fertility rate not so great as to immiserate the working class but nevertheless sufficient to guarantee a rapid increase of the working class. Bauer’s conclusion was similarly ambiguous, poised halfway between patronizing and appreciative. Although for “Rainfeld on the Gölsen the artificial limitation of the number of births may be a

new art, the spread of which is desirable,” the workers in large cities and in Europe’s industrial areas were delaying their victory by refraining from increasing their numbers.⁴⁶

In yet another Austrian contribution to the debate, Otto Janssen stressed that although the utopian political illusions of the birth-strikers that imperialism and militarism could be overcome without any personal sacrifices by workers needed to be combated, the neo-Malthusian decline in fertility was apparently a universal phenomenon of high capitalism that also permitted the individual worker to increase his ability to take part in labor resistance and to better prepare the next generation for the “struggle for life.” Janssen therefore called for “limitation of births and class struggle.”⁴⁷

Once the world war began, the SPD leadership squelched the birth-strike debate and threatened reprisals against members who continued to agitate on the issue.⁴⁸ (Bourgeois opponents of the very short-lived Munich Soviet Republic in 1919 charged that “neomalthusian...communist propaganda for the birth strike” in support of world revolution had resurfaced there.)⁴⁹ The claim, however, that “[p]arty leaders—male and female—had decided that individual or family needs in this case were immaterial for the working class as a whole” is overdrawn insofar as the SPD did not oppose individual acts of procreational self-restraint. A decade later, the SPD’s theoretical journal characterized the birth strike as having played a not very gratifying role in the party press before the war. And the philosopher Max Scheler, speaking at a population policy congress in 1921, contended that only a “mass-hysterical atmosphere of obstinacy” could have prompted the birth-strike movement, which was a transfer of the French syndicalist theory of direct action to the social-sexual sphere. It was a “haughty phrase which passes over God, nature, and the will of the husband and contradicted all reality.” Scheler therefore found it a good sign of the SPD leadership’s “circumspection and sobriety” that it had rejected this slogan, which had been introduced by “little hysterical French men and women.”⁵⁰

In summary, the claim that the SPD’s identification of the substance of the birth-strike movement with Malthus’s population theorem was demagogic and absurd would be difficult to maintain. Equally untenable, however, is the assertion that the birth-strike’s goal of combining improvement of working women’s condition with “an upward movement in wages” represented the “most extreme logical conclusion of the wage-fund theory.”⁵¹ The birth strikers emphasized both the economic advantages accruing to individual families and the political power accruing to the working class as a whole from smaller families and a smaller proletariat, but they did not use a macroeconomic wage-fund argument.

The birth-strike debate grew, on the one hand, out of the ruling classes’ dissatisfaction with the reduced rate of population increase and, on the other, out of proletarian women’s dissatisfaction with the unequal and physically and psychologically destructive burdens associated with giving birth to and raising large numbers of children. In Germany, as elsewhere, larger socioeconomic forces were leading to the production of smaller families independently of such sharply ideo-

logical discussions. What is of interest here is the contribution that the birth-strike debate may have made to resolving the question as to whether a visible hand was a more reliable guide to optimal macrodemographic trends than millions of uncoordinated microdecisions.

Significantly, neither side in this intrasocialist debate proposed a visible-hand solution. Most supporters of the birth strike focused on the benefits accruing individually to families from reducing their own procreativity. Ironically, despite the grandiloquent strike rhetoric, even those who dwelt on such class-wide benefits as the higher wages associated with a smaller labor supply and the more intensive political involvement resulting from less demanding child-care obligations did not advocate collective action, but left the decision to have fewer children up to the individual parents. Since supporters envisioned individual families as benefiting from their reduced fertility regardless of other potential procreators' decisions, the birth "strike" was metaphorical in the sense that self-regarding motives could be relied on to impel parents to limit family size without direct political coordination of such decisions.

Party centrists such as Kautsky believed that even if a coordinated birth strike were organized, small families' advantages would not be translated into macrodemographic benefits because the strength of the working class would be undermined while the impacts on the military and industrial reserve armies were too long-term to be politically effective. By the same token, despite the party leadership's pronounced anti-Malthusianism, it implicitly trusted in overarching macro-societal processes to guide population in the direction most favorable to the advent of socialism.

NOTES

1. Anton Menger, *Volkspolitik* 49-50 (1906).

2. Otto Ehinger, "Der Gebärstreik," *Der Zeitgeist, Beiblatt zum Berliner Tageblatt*, Oct. 6, 1913 (unpaginated [at 2, col. 1]).

3. H[einrich]. C[unow]., "Review of Fritz Brupbacher, *Kindersegen und kein Ende?*," in *Neue Zeit*, 22/III: 572-74 at 572 (1903-04) (quote); Max Schippel, *Das moderne Elend und die moderne Uebervölkerung: Zur Erkenntnis unserer sozialen Entwicklung* 242 (1888). For an admission that "socialists have given no satisfactory refutation of" Malthus's theory, see P. Maßloff, "Droht der Menschheit eine Übervölkerung?" *Neue Zeit*, 29/I: 583-87 at 583 (1911).

4. Ludwig Quessel, "Karl Kautsky als Bevölkerungstheoretiker," *Neue Zeit*, 29/I:559-65 (1911); R. P. Neuman, "The Sexual Question and Social Democracy in Imperial Germany," *J. Social Hist.* 7 (3):271-86 (Spring 1974); Christiane Dienel, *Kinderzahl und Staatsräson: Empfängnisverhütung und Bevölkerungspolitik in Deutschland und Frankreich bis 1918*, at 170, 183-84 (1995).

5. James Woycke, *Birth Control in Germany 1871-1933* (1988); Peter Marschalck, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Deutschlands im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* 41-67, tab. 3.1, 3.2, & 3.4 at 156-58, fig. 4 at 186 (1984); *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, XIII. Legislaturperiode, I. Session, vol. 287: Stenographische Berichte, 3299 (Jan. 28, 1913); *Verhandlungen des*

Reichstags, XIII. Legislaturperiode, I. Session, vol. 289: Stenographische Berichte, 4548 (Apr. 8, 1913)

6. J. Bornträger, "Der Geburtenrückgang in Deutschland: Seine Bewertung und Bekämpfung," *Veröffentlichungen aus dem Gebiet der Medizinalverwaltung*, 1: No. 13 at 631-794 (1912); J. Bornträger, *Der Geburtenrückgang in Deutschland: Seine Bewertung und Bekämpfung* 22-23, 43, 82, 154, 119-20 (1913).

7. Bornträger, *Geburtenrückgang* at 91-92, 105-19.

8. Julius Wolf, *Die Volkswirtschaft der Gegenwart und Zukunft: Die wichtigsten Wahrheiten der allgemeinen Nationalökonomie* 290-96, 203-205 (quote at 293-94) (1912).

9. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 287:3298-3300 (Knigge); Entwurf eines Gesetzes betreffend Änderung der §§ 56, 56c der Gewerbeordnung, Aktenstück No. 1179, *Anlagen zu den Stenographischen Berichten der Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, 303:2373-75 (1914); *Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 291:6035-36 (Nov. 27, 1913) (Carmer).

10. *Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 291:6078 (Nov. 29, 1913) (Stolle); *ibid.* at 6028 (Nov. 27, 1913) (Brey). For a Social Democratic concession that even among the propertied classes in the vast majority of cases limitation of fertility was not the product of egotism but of the increasing difficulty of meeting the economic and psychological demands of raising a large family, see Oda Olberg, "Über den Neo-Malthusianismus," *Neue Zeit*, 24/I:846-54 at 847 (1905-06).

11. *Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 291:6090 (Nov. 29, 1913) (Fischer); for a broader-based critique, see Luise Zietz, "Gegen den staatlichen Gebärzwang," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (15):227-28 (Apr. 15, 1914); *ibid.* 24 (16):242-43 (Apr. 29, 1914).

12. "Gebärzwang und Gebärestreik," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (14):209-10 (Apr. 1, 1914); *ibid.* 24 (17):257-59 (May 13, 1914); *ibid.* 24 (19):289-91 (June 10, 1914). At the very same time, Lenin was taking a position similar to that of the SPD leadership, denouncing neo-Malthusianism while defending freedom of medical propaganda. V.I. Lenin, "Rabochii klass i neomal'tuzianstvo," in *idem*, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 23: 225-57 (1961 [June 16, 1913]).

13. Ulrich Linse, "Arbeiterschaft und Geburtenentwicklung im Deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 12:205-71 at 238 (1972); Dienel, *Kinderzahl und Staatsräson* at 176 (quote). The fact that R. P. Neuman, "Working Class Birth Control in Wilhelmine Germany," *Comp. Studies in Society & Hist.* 20 (3):408-28 at 427 (July 1978), relies heavily on secondary sources in discussing the birth-strike debate may explain the author's overinterpretation of the claim that the SPD leadership mistook the fall in fertility as an expression of bourgeoisification.

14. Fritz Brupbacher, *Kindersegen—und kein Ende? Ein Wort an denkende Arbeiter* 17, 38, 50, 30 (enlarged ed., 1909 [1903]). See generally Karl Lang, *Kritiker, Ketzer, Kämpfer: Das Leben des Arbeiterarztes Fritz Brupbacher* 59-69 (n.d. [1975?]).

15. Ludwig Quessel, "Das Zweikindersystem in Berlin," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 17:253-60 at 259 (1911).

16. Eduard Bernstein, "Geburtenrückgang, Nationalität und Kultur," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 19:1492-99 at 1493-94, 1499 (1913). Although Bernstein characterized this method as without old or neo-Malthusian elements, it clearly includes the moral restraint that Malthus urged in later editions of his *Essay*. See, e.g., Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (7th ed.), in *idem*, *On Population* 588-89 (Gertrude Himmelfarb ed., 1960 [1872]). On Engels' view, see letter from Engels to Kautsky, Feb. 1, 1881, Karl Marx [&] Friedrich Engels, *Werke* 35:151 (1967).

17. Ludwig Quessel, "Die Ökonomie des Gebärstreiks," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 19:1319-25 at 1324-25 (1913); *idem*, "Die Philosophie des Gebärstreiks," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 19:1609-16 at 1615 (1913).

18. K. Kautsky, "Der Gebärstreik," *Neue Zeit* 31/II:904, 905-909 (1913). Kautsky's argument that a birth strike can exert only a long-term impact was later echoed by a bourgeois critic; Fritz Burgdörfer, "Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung während des Krieges und die kommunistische Propaganda für den Gebärstreik," *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift* 66:433-35 (1919). Three decades earlier, before he had become a Marxist, Kautsky had argued that remaining free of family obligations would benefit an individual only so long as the practice was not generalized—at which point everyone would be in the same position as at the outset except the population would be smaller. Karl Kautsky, *Der Einfluss der Volksvermehrung auf den Fortschritt der Gesellschaft* 193 (1880).

19. Mathilde Wurm, "Der Geburtenrückgang in Berlin," *Die Gleichheit*, 23 (22):338-40 (July 23, 1913).

20. Heinrich Vogel, "Eine Ursache des Geburtenrückgangs," *Die Gleichheit*, 23 (24):374-75 (Aug. 20, 1913); *idem*, "Eine Ursache des Geburtenrückgangs," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (4):50-52 at 52 (Nov. 12, 1913) (quote).

21. "Gebärstreik," 1. *Beilage des "Vorwärts" Berliner Volksblatt*, July 31, 1913 (unpaginated [at 3]); *ibid.*, Aug. 7, 1913, 3. *Beilage des "Vorwärts" Berliner Volksblatt* (unpaginated [at 1]). Linse, "Arbeiterschaft und Geburtenentwicklung" at 245, speculates that Clara Zetkin was the author.

22. Demographers have repeatedly referred to these debates as the Party's 1913 Congress. They in fact had nothing to do with the latter, which took place in Jena in September. Alfred Sauvy, "Les Marxistes et le malthusianisme," in *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 30 (n.s.):1-14 at 7 (July-Dec. 1966); *idem*, "Marx et les problèmes contemporains de la population," *Information sur les sciences sociales* 7(4): 27-38 at 31 (Aug. 1988); William Petersen, "Marxism and the Population Question: Theory and Practice," in *Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions* 77-101 at 84 (Michael Teitelbaum & Jay Winter eds., 1989).

23. Alfred is not to be confused with the aforementioned Eduard Bernstein as is done by Gerhard Mackenroth, *Bevölkerungslehre: Theorie, Soziologie und Statistik der Bevölkerung* 317, 355, 505 (1953). On Moser, see Kurt Nemitz, "Julius Moses und die Gebärstreik-Debatte 1913," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte* 2:321-35 (1973); Daniel Nadav, *Julius Moses (1868-1942) und die Politik der Sozialhygiene in Deutschland* (1985).

24. Georg Wagner, "Ist der Neomalthusianismus vom ärztlichen Standpunkt aus zu empfehlen?" *Die Gleichheit* 24 (6):81-84 at 83 (Dec. 10, 1913). As the birth-strike movements in Germany and France show, Michael Katz & Mark Stern, "History and the Limits of Population Policy," *Politics & Society* 10 (2):225-45 at 243 (1980), apodictically but incorrectly assert that "at no time in history has a general reduction in the birthrate emerged as a working-class demand."

25. 2. *Beilage des "Vorwärts" Berliner Volksblatt*, Aug. 21, 1913 (no pagination) (quote); *Vorwärts*, Aug. 29, 1913, 2. *Beilage* (no pagination [at 4]) (advertisement); Anneliese Bergmann, "Frauen, Männer, Sexualität und Geburtenkontrolle: Die Gebärstreik-debatte der SPD im Jahre 1913," in *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte: Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* 81-108 at 94 (Karin Hausen ed., 1983); "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" 1. *Beilage des "Vorwärts" Berliner Volksblatt*, Aug. 24, 1913 (no pagination [at 2]); "Ein Gebärstreik?" *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Abendblatt), Aug. 23, 1913, at 2, col.2; "Die Debatte über den Gebärstreik," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Abendblatt), Aug. 30, 1913, at 1, col. 4.

26. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" (no pagination [at 2]). The speakers are quoted here according to various contemporary newspaper accounts, which differ from one another. As Zetkin's argument and other contributions—e.g., Otto Janssen, "Geburtenbeschränkung und Klassenkampf," *Der Kampf* 7:212-14 (1913-14)—show, the assertion that the birth strike debate was remarkable for the fact that neither side based its position on Marx's analysis of the relationship between population and surplus labor or wages is erroneous. Jean Quataert, "Unequal Partners in an Uneasy Alliance: Women and the Working Class in Imperial Germany," in *Socialist Women: European Socialist Feminism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* 112-45 at 144 n.43 (Marilyn Boxer & Jean Quataert eds., 1978).

27. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" (no pagination [at 2]) (quote); "Gebärstreik?" *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 3. Beilage, Aug. 26, 1913, reprinted in Karl Heinz Roth, "Kontroversen um Geburtenkontrolle am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs: Eine Dokumentation zur Berliner 'Gebärstreikdebatte' von 1913," *Autonomie* 9 (12):78-103 at 90 (1978); Heinz Niggemann, *Emanzipation zwischen Sozialismus und Feminismus: Die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung im Kaiserreich* 267 (1981) (citing unpublished correspondence from Zetkin to Kautsky from 1902); "Die Debatte über den Gebärstreik," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Aug. 30, 1913 at 2, col. 1 (quote).

28. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" (no pagination [at 2-3]). In a text that dates from later in 1913, Moses in fact did call the birth strike a "weapon with a revolutionizing effect vis-à-vis the ruling circles...." Julius Moses, "Der Gebärstreik," published in Roth, "Kontroversen" at 87-89 at 88.

29. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" (no pagination [at 3]). On Zietz, see Dieter Fricke, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1869-1914: Ein Handbuch über ihre Organisation und Tätigkeit im Klassenkampf* 284-45, 291, 329-30 (1976).

30. *Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Reichstags* 291:6086 (Nov. 29, 1913) (Dr. Werner). David Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* 21, 110 (1970), also attributes to Luxemburg the position she vigorously opposed. Stalinists, too, distorted the record. See, e.g., V. Smulevich, *Burzhuaznye teorii narodonaseleniia v svete marksistko-leninskoi kritiki* 172 (1936), who undifferentiatedly asserted that "Social-Democrats, depicting neo-Malthusianism as a means of class struggle of the proletariat, recommend limiting the number of children as a means of reducing the number of unemployed and thus of improving the economic position of the masses, and also as a means of depriving the imperialist state's army (!)."

31. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" *Vorwärts*, Aug. 24, 1913 (no pagination [at 3]) (quote); "Gebärstreik?" *Leipziger Volkszeitung* at 91 (quote).

32. "Gegen den Gebärstreik!" *Vorwärts*, 3. Beilage, Aug. 31, 1913 [no pagination [at 1]]. Richard Evans, *Sozialdemokratie und Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Kaiserreich* 248 (W. Sebald tr. 1979), incorrectly states that Zetkin spoke out against any kind of family planning.

33. "Die Debatte über den Gebärstreik," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Aug. 30, 1913, at 2, col. 1; "Die Geburteneinschränkung," *Vorwärts*, 1. Beilage, Sept. 25, 1913 (no pagination [at 1-2]) (quotes).

34. Therese Schlesinger, "Der Geburtenrückgang in Berlin. I," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (1):6-7 (Oct. 1, 1913); Mathilde Wurm, "Der Geburtenrückgang in Berlin," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (1):7-8 (Oct. 1, 1913); Luise Eichhoff, "Zur Frage des Geburtenrückgangs," *Die Gleichheit* 24 (3):36-37 (Oct. 29, 1913).

35. Oda Olberg, "Zur Stellung der Partei zum Gebärstreik," *Neue Zeit*, 32/1:47-55 (1914). On the party leaders' view regarding fertility decisions, see Wally Zepter, "Frauenbewegung," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 19:644-46 (1913).

36. Franz Pfemfert, "Der Zeugungsstreik," *Die Aktion*, 3, Nr. 46, at 1063 (Nov. 15, 1913); "Gebärstreik und Sozialdemokratie," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*, Oct. 16, 1913, reprinted in Roth, "Kontroversen" at 93; William Walling, "The World-Wide Battle Line," *Masses* 5 (1):20 (Oct. 1913); *idem*, "The World-Wide Battle Line," *Masses* 5 (2):20 (Nov. 1913); William Robinson, "The Prevention of Conception," *New Rev.* 3 (4):196-99 (Apr. 1915) (on birth control); William Robinson, "The Birth Strike," *International Socialist Rev.* 14(7):404-406 (Jan. 1914).

37. Otto Bauer, "Volksvermehrung und soziale Entwicklung," *Der Kampf* 7:322-29 at 324, 328 (1913-14). See Otto Leichter, *Otto Bauer: Tragödie oder Triumph* (1970).

38. Otto Bauer, "Die Akkumulation des Kapitals," *Neue Zeit*, 31/1:831-38, 862-74 at 869-73 (1912-13); Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals oder was die Epigonen aus der Marxschen Theorie gemacht haben: Eine Antikritik* 71-101 (1921). E. Varga, "Wanderungen der Arbeiter und des Kapitals," *Der Kampf* 7:408-11 (1913-14), who did not touch on the birth-strike debate, argued that comparative location costs as determined by natural-geographic endowments, rather than demographic movements, explained labor and capital migration. For the reply see Otto Bauer, "Kapitalvermehrung und Bevölkerungswachstum," *Der Kampf* 7:411-12 (1913-14).

39. Bauer, "Die Akkumulation des Kapitals" at 835.

40. Samuel Hollander, "Marx and Malthusianism: Marx's Secular Path of Wages," *Am. Econ. Rev.* 74 (1):139-51 at 150 (Mar. 1984); Bauer, "Volksvermehrung und soziale Entwicklung" at 324-25 (quotes).

41. Bauer, "Volksvermehrung und soziale Entwicklung" at 326, 327.

42. *Ibid.* at 327-28.

43. Walter Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen," in *idem, Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften* 268-79 at 273-74 (1961 [1950]): "There is nothing that has corrupted the German working class like the opinion that it is swimming with the current."

44. Bauer, "Volksvermehrung und soziale Entwicklung" at 328.

45. *Ibid.* at 328-29.

46. I. Gründorfer, "Die Stellung der Partei zum Gebärstreik," *Der Kampf* 7: 116-23 at 119, 123 (1913-14) (quote); Karl Kirschleder, "Volksvermehrung und soziales Elend," *Der Kampf* 7:468-70 (1913-14) (quote); Otto Bauer, [untitled reply], *Der Kampf* 7:470-71 (1913-14) (quote).

47. Janssen, "Geburtenbeschränkung und Klassenkampf" at 212-14.

48. Quataert, "Unequal Partners" at 128; *idem, Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917*, at 98-99 (1979). On the fading of the debate, see Linse, "Arbeiterschaft und Geburtenentwicklung" at 250-56.

49. Burgdörfer, "Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung während des Krieges und die kommunistische Propaganda für den Gebärstreik" at 433; Max Nassauer, "Zum Gebärstreik," *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift* 66: 544-45 (1919).

50. Quataert, "Unequal Partners" at 128 (quote); Alfred Grotjahn, "Proletariat und Geburtenrückgang," *Neue Zeit*, 41/II:164, 168 (1923); Max Scheler, "Bevölkerungsprobleme als Weltanschauungsfragen," in *idem, Schriften zur Soziologie und Weltanschauungslehre* 290-324 at 318 (1963 [1921]). On Scheler's contribution to the consolidation of bourgeois society in Germany following the post-World War revolutionary turmoil, see Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* 416 (1962).

51. Roth, "Kontroversen" at 85; D. Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate* 159 (1959) (quote).

