

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*«Les Belles Années du Plan»?*

*Hendrik de Man and the Reinvention of Western European Socialism,  
1914-36 ca.*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History of the  
London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
London, September 2017.

## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis discusses the trajectory of the Belgian socialist thinker and activist Hendrik de Man (1885-1953) between 1914 and 1936 ca, with particular attention to his endeavours to renew Western European social democracy after the Great War. The first half of the thesis deals with de Man's theoretical evolution. Having become convinced of the inadequacy of orthodox Marxism as a conceptual framework for the Left while serving as soldier and diplomat during WWI, de Man sought to overcome the split between reformism and revolutionary socialism by developing an ethical conception of socialism outlined in the book *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (1926) and, subsequently, by elaborating planism, a democratic socialist ideology supposedly more in tune with the socio-economic conditions of the 1930s. The second half of the thesis focuses on efforts to put de Man's ideas into practice. Due to his mounting desire to have impact on the social democratic movement, de Man became increasingly involved in politics and, in late 1933, launched the Belgian Labour Plan with the aim of bolstering the Belgian Labour Party and containing the spread of fascism. Planism won support from many young socialists all across Europe but was also met with suspicion and outright hostility by wide segments of the social democratic establishment, including prominent leaders such as Emile Vandervelde and Léon Blum. Eventually, de Man accepted to compromise on the full implementation of the Labour Plan and sought to accomplish the same goals by serving as Minister, without success. By examining his failure as well as the difficulties experienced by his followers in France and Britain, the thesis highlights the limits that Western European social democratic parties set to their own ideological renewal during the interwar period.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, Heather Jones and N. Piers Ludlow, for their guidance and relentless support during the last four years. I benefited enormously from their expertise, advice, and good humour. I am also indebted to my advisor, David Stevenson, who read all the chapters of the thesis and provided me with excellent feedback.

Throughout my doctorate, Antony Best, André-Luc Brunet, Vesselin Dimitrov, Mark F. Gilbert, Sönke Neitzel, and Alan Sked kindly accepted to read parts of the manuscript. Dirk Luyten, Janet Polasky, and Nicolas Roussellier enhanced my understanding of Belgian and French History. Gerd-Rainer Horn welcomed me as a visiting PhD student at Sciences Po Paris in 2015-16 and agreed to discuss de Man and planism in great detail. Without his suggestions, criticism, and constant help in locating obscure sources, this dissertation would have been much harder to complete.

This project would not have been possible without generous funding from the London School of Economics and Political Science and gracious assistance from many librarians and archivists across Europe. I am especially grateful to the members of staff of the Institut Emile Vandervelde in Brussels, the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine in Nanterre, and the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam, not to mention those of the LSE library, one of the best places in the world to delve into the history of the interwar Left.

Within my Department, I was fortunate to be surrounded by outstanding colleagues and invaluable friends, such as Bastiaan Bouwman, Alexandre Dab, Jonas Fossli Gjersø, Cees Heere, William King, Jim Li Lim, Alex Mayhew, Max Skjönsberg, Eline van Ommen, and Takahiro Yamamoto. Back in Italy, Lorenzo Piccoli, Luca Tinarelli and Giovanni Vezzani provided me with encouragement when I needed it the most.

Finally I must thank my parents, who backed me up from afar, and Irene, who never gave up. More than anyone else, she bore the burden of my research.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

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### **ARCHIVES**

#### **ABSO/AMSAB**

Archief van BWP-Bureau voor Sociaal  
Onderzoek, AMSAB-Instituut voor Sociale  
Geschiedenis, Ghent.

#### **ABWP/AMSAB**

Archief van Belgische Werkliedenpartij, AMSAB-  
Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Ghent.

#### **ACR/BNC**

Archivio Carlo Rosselli, Biblioteca Nazionale  
Centrale, Florence.

#### **AEV/IEV**

Archives d'Emile Vandervelde, Institut Emile  
Vandervelde, Brussels.

#### **AGL/ISRT**

Archivi di Giustizia e Libertà, Istituto Storico  
della Resistenza di Toscana, Florence.

#### **AHDM/AMSAB**

Archief van Hendrik de Man, AMSAB-Instituut  
voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Ghent.



<b>AHDM/IISG</b>	Archief van Hendrik de Man, International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.
<b>AKK/IISG</b>	Archief van Karl Kautsky, International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.
<b>ARJL/IEV</b>	Archives de Robert J. Lemoine, Institut Emile Vandervelde, Brussels.
<b>EDP/LES</b>	Evan Durbin Papers, London School of Economics and Political Science, London.
<b>FAMP/AN</b>	Fonds des Amis de Marceau Pivert, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FAP/AN</b>	Fonds André Philip, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FAT/AN</b>	Fonds André Tardieu, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FAT/ILO</b>	Fonds Albert Thomas, International Labour Office, Geneva.

<b>FEG/BPF</b>	Fonds Elie Gounelle, Bibliothèque du protestantisme français, Paris.
<b>FJC/AN</b>	Fonds Jean Coutrot, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FJZ/CHS</b>	Fonds Jean Zyromski, Centre d'Histoire Sociale du XXème Siècle, Paris.
<b>FLB/AN</b>	Fonds Léon Blum, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FLB/IEV</b>	Fonds Louis Bertrand, Institut Emile Vandervelde, Brussels.
<b>FLL/IHS</b>	Fonds Lucien Laurat, Institut d'Histoire Sociale, Nanterre.
<b>FLZ/IHS</b>	Fonds Ludovic Zoretti, Institut d'Histoire Sociale, Nanterre.
<b>FMD/OURS</b>	Fonds Maurice Deixonne, Office Universitaire de Recherche Socialiste, Paris.
<b>FP/AN</b>	Fonds Panthéon, Archives Nationales, Paris.

<b>FRB/IHS</b>	Fonds René Belin, Institut d'Histoire Sociale, Nanterre.
<b>FRP/AN</b>	Fonds René Pleven, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>FSA/NFRB/LSE</b>	Fabian Society Archives, New Fabian Research Bureau, London School of Economics and Political Science, London.
<b>FSA/SSIP/LSE</b>	Fabian Society Archives, Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, London School of Economics and Political Science, London.
<b>FVA/AN</b>	Fonds Vincent Auriol, Archives Nationales, Paris.
<b>GLP/LSE</b>	George Lansbury Papers, London School of Economics and Political Science, London.
<b>KMA/US</b>	Kingsley Martin Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton.
<b>LSIA/IISG</b>	Labour and Socialist International Archives, International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.

<b>PEB/UW</b>	Papers of Ernest Bevin, University of Warwick.
<b>PGDHC/NC</b>	Papers of G.D.H. Cole, Nuffield College, Oxford.
<b>PMC/NC</b>	Papers of Margaret Cole, Nuffield College, Oxford.
<b>PP/LSE</b>	Passfield Papers, London School of Economics and Political Science.
<b>PSC/WL</b>	Papers of Stafford Cripps, Weston Library, Oxford.

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## **ORGANISATIONS**

<b>BAP</b>	Bureau d'Action pour le Plan, Belgium.
<b>BBT</b>	Banque Belge du Travail, Belgium.
<b>BES</b>	Bureau d'Études Sociales, Belgium.
<b>CCEO</b>	Centre Confédéral d'Éducation Ouvrière, France.
<b>CGT</b>	Confédération Générale du Travail, France.
<b>CS</b>	Commission Syndical, Belgium.

<b>CSC</b>	Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens, Belgium.
<b>FCC</b>	Fédération des Cercles Catholiques, Belgium.
<b>GGD</b>	Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands, Germany.
<b>IFSYPPO</b>	International Federation of Socialist Young People's Organizations.
<b>IFTU</b>	International Federation of Trade Unions.
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office.
<b>ILP</b>	Independent Labour Party, United Kingdom.
<b>ISB</b>	International Socialist Bureau.
<b>ISO</b>	Institut Supérieur Ouvrier, France.
<b>IWA</b>	International Workingmen's Association.
<b>JGS</b>	Jeunes Gardes Socialistes, Belgium.
<b>LP</b>	Labour Party, United Kingdom.
<b>LSI</b>	Labour and Socialist International.
<b>NFRB</b>	New Fabian Research Bureau, United Kingdom.
<b>OREC</b>	Office de Redressement Economique, Belgium.
<b>PCF</b>	Parti Communiste Français, France.
<b>POB</b>	Parti Ouvrier Belge, Belgium.
<b>PSB</b>	Parti Socialiste Belge, Belgium.
<b>PSdF</b>	Parti Socialiste de France, France.
<b>PSI</b>	Partito Socialista Italiano, Italy.
<b>PSU</b>	Partito Socialista Unitario, Italy.

<b>SDAP</b>	Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij, The Netherlands.
<b>SFIO</b>	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, France.
<b>SFPE</b>	Swiss Federation of Public Employees, Switzerland.
<b>SL</b>	The Socialist League, United Kingdom.
<b>SPD</b>	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland, Germany.
<b>SSIP</b>	Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, United Kingdom.
<b>TUC</b>	Trade Union Congress, United Kingdom.
<b>USR</b>	Union Socialiste Républicaine, France.

## Introduction

### Hendrik de Man and the Challenge of Ideological Renewal

Every political judgment helps to modify the facts on which it is passed. Political thought is itself a form of political action.

Edward H. Carr, 1939<sup>1</sup>

Socialism is understood best as a dual phenomenon. That is to say, it must be studied both as an ongoing theoretical debate and as a programme of political action.

Jay M. Winter, 1972<sup>2</sup>

Devoting a chapter of his memoirs to his experience as Social affairs chief of staff at France's *Commissariat Général au Plan*, between 1962 and 1969, the civil servant, socialist politician, and former President of the European Commission Jacques Delors encapsulated the whole period as 'the beautiful years of the Plan' (*les belles années du Plan*).<sup>3</sup> Delors' recollections were informed by heartfelt admiration for a system he referred to as '*planification à la française*', which he still deemed useful, even indispensable, in the twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup> Planning – Delors contended – was an 'uncertainty reducer' by which his country had managed to successfully allocate scarce resources without neglecting the 'great parameters', such as demography, technological development, and the environment.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, planning allowed the building of a 'privileged framework for the social dialogue' between various interest groups while

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<sup>1</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1939), London, Macmillan and Co. 1961, 5.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912-18*, London-Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1974, 270.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Delors, *Mémoires*, Paris, Plon 2004, 48-73.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

making good use of the ‘work of intellectuals’.<sup>6</sup> ‘Modernisation’, ‘more harmonious development’, and ‘negotiation’ were all concepts Delors associated to planning.<sup>7</sup>

In 2004, when the book appeared, Delors was odd man out among progressives. Under Tony Blair, New Labour was launched on the assumption that ‘the old Left solution of rigid economic planning and state control won’t work’.<sup>8</sup> Bill Clinton had toasted the end of the ‘era of big government.’<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Schroeder in Germany and Lionel Jospin in France had also embarked on a market-oriented course: as a prominent scholar of the socialist movement observed in 1999, ‘all social democratic parties now concede that there are limits to the expansion of public expenditure, and that the era of nationalisation is over. Privatisation has become acceptable, even desirable.’<sup>10</sup> In that context, a call for planning sounded like the echo a distant past.

That past, however, was not so remote. Between 1945 and the mid-1970s, all mainstream parties in Europe had been supportive of the mixed economy, i.e. an economic regime in which the public sector was running a number of industries while governments took responsibility for ensuring high levels of employment through Keynesian demand management techniques. Although the term “consensus” fails to capture the underlying tensions between Left and Right during those decades<sup>11</sup>, it remains broadly true that, for the first time in history, a very wide range of political actors took for granted that the state would play a major role in the economy by

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>8</sup> T. Blair, ‘Power for a Purpose’, *Renewal*, 4, 1995, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in A. Mitchell, ‘State of the Union: Clinton Offers Challenge to Nation, declaring “Era of Big Government is Over”’, *New York Times*, 24.1.1996.

<sup>10</sup> D. Sassoon, ‘Introduction: Convergence, Continuity, and Change on the European Left’, *The New European Left*, G. Kelly (ed.), London, The Fabian Society 1999, 9. See also D. Sassoon, ‘Introduction’, *Looking Left: Socialism after the Cold War*, D. Sassoon (ed.), London-New York, I.B. Tauris 1997, 1-16.

<sup>11</sup> See, with reference to Britain, B. Pimlott, ‘The Myth of Consensus’, *The Making of Britain: Echoes of Greatness*, L. M. Smith (ed.), Basingstoke, Macmillan 1988, 129-141; *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-64*, H. Jones and M. Kandiah (eds.), Basingstoke, Macmillan 1996.



constraining but not replacing the market, and competing party programmes rested upon that axiom. By the late 1950s, the argument that ‘the Welfare State, combined with full employment and high earnings, had added to the freedom of the citizen’ was no longer anathema to most conservatives; the thesis that the coexistence of capitalism and democracy was possible, even though in a ‘state of antagonistic balance’, was accepted by most socialists.<sup>12</sup> As the French sociologist Raymond Aron observed in 1966, ‘the political systems of the advanced Western nations today represent an acceptable compromise between the characteristic values of the three schools of liberalism, democracy, and socialism. The fact that ideological quarrels in the West have become less intense [...] is, as it happens, due to the present success of this compromise.’<sup>13</sup>

The post-war settlement required good will, an inclination to find common ground, and a high degree of self-discipline to endure. It also required a distinct political culture, i.e. a set of core values and ideas to bestow legitimacy on its basic institutions. According to the distinguished historian Tony Judt, this was provided by the vision of social democracy, namely the Western European centre-left. Social Democrats maintained that ‘genuine improvements in the conditions of all classes could be obtained in incremental and peaceful ways’, and therefore rejected ‘the nineteenth-century paradigm of violent urban upheaval’; similarly, they distanced themselves from the Communists by refusing ‘to commit to the inevitability of capitalism’s imminent demise or to the wisdom of hastening that demise by their own political actions.’<sup>14</sup> In their view, which had been sharpened through the ordeal of the Great Depression, the

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<sup>12</sup> Quotations are drawn from the collective study by the British centre-right One Nation Group, *The Responsible Society*, London, Conservative Political Centre 1959, 34, and from the former Marxist intellectual J. Strachey, *Contemporary Capitalism*, London, Gollancz 1956, 255 respectively.

<sup>13</sup> R. Aron, ‘Fin des idéologies, renaissance des idées’, *Trois essais sur l’âge industriel*, Paris, Plon 1966, 198-199.

<sup>14</sup> T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, London, Pimlico 2005, 363.

paramount task of their movement lay in using ‘the state to eliminate the social pathologies attendant on capitalist forms of production and the unrestricted workings of a market economy: to build not economic utopias but good societies.’<sup>15</sup> Social Democrats did not excel in political theorising but developed a highly successful practice through which civil, political, and social rights were universalised as never before: the essence of their creed, which Judt proudly shared, could be condensed in the formula ‘the banality of good.’<sup>16</sup>

What Judt omitted to say, however, is that the social democratic wisdom, imbued with common sense and moved by a desire to fix, instead of dismantling, capitalism, was not the expression of a coherent intellectual baggage but the by-product of an excruciating, unsteady, unplanned, and sometimes even undeclared emancipation from the overriding system of thought that had permeated it since the mid-nineteenth century: Marxism. The full acceptance of the mixed economy was made possible by the release from that ideological straightjacket.<sup>17</sup> The Godesberg programme approved by German Social Democrats in 1959 may be taken as an emblematic turning point of this broader, pan-European trend.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> See T. Judt, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, New York, The Penguin Press 2012, 331-388.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, one could argue that the main weakness of Judt’s genealogy of the European social democratic tradition lies in his tendency to downplay its Marxist roots: it is indicative that his greatest heroes were two Liberals, Keynes and Beveridge [see T. Judt, *Thinking*, 333-334; T. Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, London, Allen Lane 2010, 81-40] Perhaps the most striking example of Judt’s propensity to minimise the strength of Marxism can be found in his portrait of the French socialist leader Léon Blum. According to Judt, Blum was not ‘a Marxist thinker’ although he, like other French socialists, did ‘pay frequent lip service to the unimpeachably Marxist character of their theory and practice. [...] Marxism was for Blum always an elective affinity not a way of thought.’ [T. Judt, ‘Léon Blum: The Prophet Spurned’, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century*, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press 1998, 52-53]. Assuming Judt was right – something most biographers of Blum would probably not concede –, one is left wondering why an outstanding leader as Blum would have professed faith in an ideology he did not believe in, had it not been for the resilience of Marxism as a political culture.

<sup>18</sup> See G. Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press 2002, 314-320; J.-W. Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press 2011, 125-132.

The fact that, with the exception of Britain and, to an extent, the Nordic countries, centre-left pragmatism grew out of the exhaustion of a revolutionary paradigm is not a minor detail in the study of the tortuous development of social democracy as a historical force, and explains much of its seemingly post-ideological character in the 1950s.<sup>19</sup> At least from the late 1890s till the outbreak of the Second World War, the lingering problem of how to cope with Marx's legacy drew conspicuous energies from nearly all the intellectual and political leaders of the socialist movement. For Marxism was not only the ideological cement of the various socialist factions which had founded the Second International: it was also, in its popular, vulgar form, a *Weltanschauung*, and the rock-solid faith of millions of people who had espoused the socialist cause. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that, other than a theory, Marxism was a secular religion, with its rites, its dogmas, and its clergy.<sup>20</sup> This is why revising Marxism during this period was a delicate and potentially dangerous task: it could put what Leszek Kolakowski called 'the spiritual certainty' of the masses in jeopardy, and weaken the trust they had placed on their institutional representatives, the trade unions and the socialist parties.<sup>21</sup> For the very same reason socialist intellectuals were fearful that revisions, however necessary, might be carried out in anarchic, destructive, or polarising way. In the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution, the high priest of German Marxism, Karl Kautsky, admitted to himself: 'If Lenin is right, then my whole life's work devoted to the propagation, application, and further development

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<sup>19</sup> 'The Exhaustion of an Utopia' is how the sociologist Daniel Bell summarised the trajectory of socialism in the third party of his most famous book: see D. Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Political Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1960), Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1988, 273-407.

<sup>20</sup> Milorad M. Drachkovitch persuasively argued that 'the energetic force of Marxism' lay in the 'alloy of rational, scientific elements and preconceived ideas of religious character.' [M.M. Drachkovitch, *De Karl Marx à Léon Blum: la crise de la social-démocratie*, Geneva, Droz 1954, 18] For further discussion of this point, see chapter I of this dissertation.

<sup>21</sup> L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution. Vol. III: The Breakdown*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1978, 526.

of the ideas of my great masters, Marx and Engels, has been in vain.’<sup>22</sup> What is truly remarkable in Kautsky’s words is not his assessment of the Leninist threat but the candid admission that his theoretical contribution to socialism had amounted to keeping the flame of Marxism alive. In the context of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Engels, Kautsky, and others set strict boundaries to the degree of ideological nonconformity that the socialist élite could tolerate. In their judgement, Marxism and socialism were woven together, and they wanted them to remain so even in the future.

This dissertation deals with – if one sticks to the analogy with religion – a heresy, namely an endeavour not to revise Marxism but to overcome it. It shows how a Belgian socialist, Hendrik de Man, left Marxism after the outbreak of the Great War and, building on that departure, sought to reinvent democratic socialism by laying down new philosophical and psychological foundations for it. It also explains how, amidst the Great Depression, relying on his previous insights and intellectual prestige, de Man launched a political project, the Belgian Labour Plan, as well as a doctrine, planism, with which he thought Marxism could be replaced, and social democracy be rescued from the rising tide of fascism. Finally, it investigates how de Man, despite achieving a prominent position within the Belgian Labour Party, did not manage to get the Labour Plan approved – a failure that contributed to pull him towards collaboration in 1940 –, and how his ideas were received and assessed in the two biggest European countries still committed to democratic rule after 1933, France and Britain.

This thesis argues that de Man’s ideas were shaped by his multiple experiences across the world (he lived in Germany, Russia, the United States, and Germany again before becoming a key player in Belgian politics during the 1930s) and that he was a

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<sup>22</sup> K. Kautsky, ‘Preface’, *Bolshevism at a Deadlock* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1930), London, George Allen & Unwin 1931, 16. This preface is not included in the original German edition.

truly innovative thinker insofar as he shrewdly blended together a variety of inputs from different strands of thought as well as from what he saw first-hand. However, this thesis also contends that de Man's success as an intellectual stemmed from a more widespread desire, especially within the socialist youth, to reinvent democratic socialism after the Great War, which had exposed the limitations of the Kautskian interpretation of socialism. Finally, this thesis argues that de Man's planism failed to gain further ground not only because of the external socio-economic and political constraints of the interwar period but also because of the relentless opposition of substantial parts of the socialist party establishment in Belgium and France, and its lukewarm reception in Britain. Largely because of that opposition from, or lack of interest by, other socialists, its accomplishments in the political sphere were far more limited than they might have been.

This dissertation is neither an exhaustive biography of de Man nor a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Western European socialism between the wars but a study of the intersection and subsequent entanglement between de Man's life and the trajectory of Western European socialism from 1914 to 1936 ca. In this period, the more the crisis of social democracy deepened, the more de Man's unorthodox views became potentially appealing to significant sections of the socialist movement. These dynamics made him less and less a peripheral figure and eventually provided him with a window of opportunity to become, albeit for a short time, a high-ranking national politician with an international network of admirers and followers. But the demise of the Belgian Labour Plan and the parallel rise of the French Popular Front overshadowed him once again. He remained an important player only in Belgium, and by 1937, he struggled for influence even in his own country. Eventually, his call for collaboration

with the Germans under the occupation shattered his reputation and made him an outcast within the socialist camp. Neither de Man as an individual nor Western European socialism as a collective movement, therefore, are placed squarely at the centre of this dissertation. The focus lies on de Man's efforts to reshape Western European socialism, first theoretically then practically, and how other Western European socialists reacted to his challenge.

The remainder of this introduction develops as follows. First, a succinct but critical overview of the existing literature will be delivered. Second, the elements of originality in this dissertation as well as the methodology employed will be clarified. Finally, the content of each chapter will be briefly outlined. At this stage, it would not come as a surprise to the reader that, unlike those celebrated by Delors, the years of the (Belgian Labour) Plan were neither joyful nor particularly rewarding for its architect. De Man's career ended in ruin: convicted *in absentia* for treason in 1946, he died in voluntary exile seven years later. It remains to be seen whether planism – a radical, non-Marxist ideology which stood for the creation of a mixed economy – did not anticipate some ideological changes which occurred after 1945, and whether de Man can be regarded as a forebear of post-war social democracy. Further remarks on this point can be found in the conclusion.

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The literature on Hendrik de Man, the Belgian Labour Plan, and planism can be roughly divided into six types of secondary sources: 1) general histories of Belgium; 2) biographies of, autobiographies of, and recollections by public figures linked to de Man; 3) political histories of Belgian socialism and/or Belgium in the interwar years; 4) studies centred on specific aspects of de Man's thinking and/or de Man's political

career; 5) full biographies of de Man; 6) comparative and transnational studies of planism.

By and large, general histories of Belgium help clarify the national context but, being often short surveys, tend to devote limited space to de Man.<sup>23</sup> In fact, some neglect him entirely.<sup>24</sup> More specific, and thus more valuable, information is contained in a few biographies of public figures close to de Man, such as Emile Vandervelde<sup>25</sup>, Paul-Henri Spaak<sup>26</sup>, Paul Van Zeeland<sup>27</sup>, and King Leopold III.<sup>28</sup> The relationship between de Man and the King became indeed a source of controversy among historians concerned with the so-called “Royal Question” as de Man’s influence on Leopold III, particularly with regard to the latter’s decision to surrender to Germany in May 1940 without the consent of the Belgian government, remains unclear.<sup>29</sup> Memoirs and recollections by socialists involved in the campaign for the Belgian Labour Plan, like Jef Rens<sup>30</sup>, Paul-Henri Spaak<sup>31</sup>, and Isabelle Blume<sup>32</sup>, are occasionally illuminating as only insiders’ accounts can be but they inevitably lack the critical detachment of a

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<sup>23</sup> See e.g. R. Avermaete, *Nouvelle histoire de Belgique*, Brussels, Antoine 1983, 545, 548, 557-559, 561; X. Mabilie, *Nouvelle histoire politique de la Belgique*, Brussels, CRISP 2011, 215, 240.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. A. de Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, London, Thames & Hudson 1962; V. Mallinson, *Belgium*, London, Ernest Benn 1969.

<sup>25</sup> See R. Abs, *Emile Vandervelde*, Brussels, “Labor” 1973; passim; J. Polasky, *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde: Between Reform and Revolution*, Oxford, Berg 1995, passim.

<sup>26</sup> See J. H. Huizinga, *Mr. Europe: A Political Biography of Paul Henri Spaak*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1961, esp. 57-65; J. Willequet, *Paul-Henri Spaak: un homme, des combats*, Brussels, La Renaissance du Livre 1975, esp. 38-42, 73-98; M. Dumoulin, *Spaak*, Brussels, Racines 1999, esp. 50-61, 91-98.

<sup>27</sup> See V. Dujardin and M. Dumoulin, *Paul Van Zeeland: 1893-1973*, Brussels, Racines 1997, esp. 44-48, 95-103.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. A. Fabre-Luce, *Une tragédie royale: l’affaire Léopold III*, Paris, Flammarion 1948, esp. 122-129; R. Aron, *Léopold III: ou le choix impossible, février 1934-juillet 1940*, Paris, Plon 1977, esp. 173-179, 299-330; R. Keyes, *Echec au Roi: Léopold III 1940-1951*, Paris-Gembloux, Duculot 1986, esp. 67-71.

<sup>29</sup> For an overview, see J. Gérard-Libois and J. Gotovich, *L’an 40. La Belgique occupée*, Brussels, CRISP 1971, esp. 216-232; E.J. Nachtergale, ‘Les relations Léopold III – Henri de Man (1938-1940)’, *Res Publica*, 1, 1978, 21-40.

<sup>30</sup> See J. Rens, *Rencontres avec le siècle: une vie au service de la justice sociale*, Gembloux, Duculot 1987, passim; S. P. Kramer, ‘Interview with Jef Rens’, *Socialism in Western Europe: The Experience of a Generation*, Boulder, Westview Press 1984, 91-130.

<sup>31</sup> See P.-H. Spaak, *Combats inachevés. Vol. I: De l’indépendance à l’alliance*, Paris, Fayard 1969.

<sup>32</sup> See I. Blume, *Entretiens*, J. Gotovitch (ed.), Brussels, Fondation Joseph Jacquemotte 1976.

scholarly treatment. Other memoirs – particularly those dealing with collaboration and/or written by opponents of de Man – must be taken with a grain of salt for their sometimes contentious claims.<sup>33</sup> This cautionary remark applies to de Man's memoirs too, the use of which in this dissertation will be clarified later in the introduction. Needless to say, biographies of, autobiographies of, and recollections by public figures offer, at best, insightful sketches of de Man, not a full picture of him.

Political histories of Belgian socialism and/or Belgium in the interwar years sometimes strike a very good balance between the overall setting and the leaders who occupied the main stage. An early example of this kind of historiography – written from a Catholic perspective but sympathetic towards de Man – is a tract by Xavier Legrand.<sup>34</sup> Mieke Claeys-Van Haegendoren's book on the Belgian Labour Party between 1914 and 1940 can be regarded as a robust piece of work in which strong emphasis is put on party strategies and parliamentary negotiations<sup>35</sup>, a feature common to Carl-Henrik Höjer's commentary on the Belgian parliamentary system between the wars.<sup>36</sup> Jean Vanwelkenhuyzen's close scrutiny of the events of 1936<sup>37</sup> as well as his masterful analysis of the 'disorder' of the 1930s<sup>38</sup> deserve mention for successfully blending domestic and foreign policy together. Official histories of the Belgian Labour Party, on

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<sup>33</sup> See e.g. R. de Becker, *Le livre des vivants et des morts*, Brussels, Éditions de la Toison d'Or 1942, esp. 178-185; L. Degrelle, *Le cohue de 1940*, Lausanne, Crausaz 1950, esp. 171-190; R. Van Overstraeten, *Albert I-Léopold III, vingt ans de politique militaire belge, 1920-1940*, Bruges, Desclee de Brouwer 1946, esp. 563-730; R. Van Overstraeten, *Au service de la Belgique. Vol. I: Dans l'étau*. Paris, Plon 1960, esp. 231-359; M.-L. Gérard, *Souvenirs pour mes enfants*, Brussels, Palais des Académies 2010, esp. 92-115.

<sup>34</sup> See X. Legrand, *Le socialisme belge et les problèmes d'aujourd'hui*, Brussels, L'Édition Universelle 1935.

<sup>35</sup> See M. Claeys-Van Haegendoren, *25 jaar Belgisch socialisme: evolutie van de verhouding van de Belgische Werkliedenpartij tot de parlementaire democratie in België van 1914 tot 1940*, Antwerp, Standaard Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij 1967, esp. 311-402. For an abridged version, see M. Claeys-Van Haegendoren, *Van werken krijg je vuile handen: geschiedenis van de Belgische Werkliedenpartij, 1914-1940*, Leuven, Acco 1989, esp. 85-141.

<sup>36</sup> See C. H. Höjer, *Le régime parlementaire belge de 1918 à 1940*, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri 1946.

<sup>37</sup> See J. Vanwelkenhuyzen, *1936: Léopold, Degrelle, Van Zeeland et les autres...*, Brussels, Racines 2004.

<sup>38</sup> See J. Vanwelkenhuyzen, *Les gâchis des années 30: 1933-1937*, Brussels, Racines 2007.



the other hand, are more problematic as they tend to mirror the alternate fortunes of de Man: in the 1930s, they placed him under a good light<sup>39</sup> whilst, after the Second World War, they relegated him to the background.<sup>40</sup> All these contributions, however, refer to de Man's thought only insofar as it had repercussions on his party and/or his country.

There are many notable studies centred on specific aspects of de Man's thinking and/or his political career. A long essay by Pierrette Rongère elaborates on de Man as an ethical socialist, and ties this in with André Philip and Christian socialism.<sup>41</sup> Antoine de Decker had a similar take<sup>42</sup> whereas both Peter Dodge and Adriaan M. Van Peski insisted on voluntarism as the key to explain de Man's departure from Marxism.<sup>43</sup> Influences on de Man have been also investigated quite thoroughly. De Man's lasting fascination with Jaurès has been underscored by Paul Aron.<sup>44</sup> Alfredo Salsano pointed to his prolonged interest in scientific management, and social engineering more generally.<sup>45</sup> Erik Hansen stressed his role in fleshing out planism<sup>46</sup> whereas Dick Pels

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<sup>39</sup> See E. Vandervelde, with the collaboration of J. Rens and J. Delvigne, *Le cinquantenaire du P.O.B (1885-1935)*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1936, esp. 100-111; M. des Essarts and S. Masy, *Histoire du Parti Ouvrier Belge*, Huy, Imprimerie Coopérative 1937, esp. 211-230.

<sup>40</sup> See M.-A. Pierson, *Histoire du socialisme en Belgique*, Brussels, Institut Emile Vandervelde 1953, esp. 189-236; G. Bohy, 'La période 1926-1939', VV.AA., *Les fastes du Parti: 1885-1960*, Brussels, Parti Socialiste Belge-Institut Emile Vandervelde 1960, 117-144; R. Abs, *Histoire du Parti Socialiste Belge (1885-1960): synthèse historique*, Brussels, Institut Emile Vandervelde-Fondation Louis de Brouckère 1974, 27-29; R. Abs, *Histoire du Parti Socialiste Belge de 1885 à 1978*, Brussels, Fondation Louis de Brouckère 1979, 50-58.

<sup>41</sup> See P. Rongère, 'L'apport de Henri de Man au socialisme contemporain', R. Reibel and P. Rongère, *Socialisme et éthique*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1966, 61-119.

<sup>42</sup> See A. de Decker, *Hendrik de Man: een ethisch socialisme?*, Kapellen, De Sikkel 1978.

<sup>43</sup> See A. M. Van Peski, *Hendrik de Man: ein wille zum sozialismus*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr 1963; P. Dodge, 'Voluntaristic Socialism: An Examination of the Implications of Hendrik de Man's Ideology', *International Review of Social History*, 3, 1958, 385-417.

<sup>44</sup> See P. Aron, 'Jaurès en Belgique', *Jaurès et les intellectuels*, M. Rebérioux and G. Candar (eds.), Paris, Les Éditions de l'Atelier /Éditions Ouvrières 1994, 267-278.

<sup>45</sup> See A. Salsano, 'Ingegneri e politici', *Ingegneri e politici: dalla razionalizzazione alla «rivoluzione manageriale»*, Turin, Einaudi 1987, 3-60.

<sup>46</sup> See E. Hansen, 'Hendrik de Man and the Theoretical Foundations of Economic Planning: The Belgian Experience, 1933-1940', *European History Quarterly*, 8, 1978, 235-257; E. Hansen, 'Decade Crisis: Social Democracy and Planisme in Belgium and the Netherlands, 1929-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2, 1981, 293-322.

has been intrigued mostly by his alleged attraction for fascism.<sup>47</sup> More recently, Paul Pierson selected de Man as a case study in a comparative analysis of intellectuals who left Marxism.<sup>48</sup> On the political side, despite not focusing on the interwar years, Marcel Liberman's two volumes on the origins of Belgian socialism<sup>49</sup> and Martin Conway's examination of collaboration in Belgium<sup>50</sup> make brief but insightful references to de Man's career. Finally, one can only praise the tireless commitment to research displayed by the *Association pour l'étude de l'œuvre d'Henri de Man*. Founded by a group of scholars, de Man's former friends and followers in the aftermath of an international conference held in Geneva in 1973<sup>51</sup>, the *Association* issued thirty-eight bulletins between 1974 and 2013. In addition, it published the proceedings of fourteen colloquia devoted to topics more or less closely linked to de Man as separate volumes. Altogether, this material is an invaluable source of information about de Man and his legacy.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, all the sources cited in this paragraph, including the articles in the bulletins, deliberately concentrate on certain parts of de Man's thinking and/or record only, and often have a narrow scope. None of them addresses the relationship between de Man and Western European socialism in full.

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<sup>47</sup> See D. Pels, 'Hendrik de Man and the Ideology of Planism', *International Review of Social History*, 3, 1987, 206-229; D. Pels, 'Treason of the Intellectuals: Paul de Man and Hendrik de Man', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 21, 1991, 21-56; D. Pels, 'The Dark Side of Socialism: Hendrik de Man and the Fascist Temptation', *History of the Human Sciences*, 2, 1993, 75-95.

<sup>48</sup> S. Pierson, *Leaving Marxism: Studies in the Dissolution of an Ideology*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 2001, 31-75.

<sup>49</sup> See M. Liebman, *Les socialistes belges, 1885-1914: la révolte et l'organisation*, Brussels, La Revue Nouvelle, Fondation Jacques Jacquemotte, La Vie Ouvrière 1979; M. Liebman, *Les socialistes belges, 1914-1918: le P.O.B. face à la guerre*, Brussels, La Vie Ouvrière 1986.

<sup>50</sup> See M. Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement, 1940-1944*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press 1993.

<sup>51</sup> See VV.AA., 'Sur l'œuvre d'Henri de Man: Rapports au Colloque International organisé par la Faculté de droit de l'Université de Genève, les 18, 19 et 20 juin 1973, sous la présidence du professeur Ivo Rens', *Revue européenne des sciences sociales: Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto*, 31, 1974; *Actes du colloque international sur l'œuvre d'Henri de Man: organisé par la Faculté de droit de l' Université de Genève les 18, 19 et 20 juin 1973, sous la présidence du professeur Ivo Rens*, Geneva, Faculté de droit de l' Université de Genève 1974, 3 vols.

<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately the Bulletin enjoyed limited circulation outside Belgium, especially after 1993.

For a comprehensive synthesis, one has to turn to biographies of de Man, two available in English, one in Dutch, and one in French.<sup>53</sup> Yet all these books, for different reasons, do not always do justice to the complexity of de Man's trajectory. Dodge's account is brilliant in summarising de Man's key insights but it relies almost exclusively on published sources, including de Man's memoirs. This approach has the obvious limitation of echoing de Man's own version of events.<sup>54</sup> Van Hagendoren's contribution is richer as the author took consulted de Man's private papers then located in Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Brussels. Yet his focus remains heavily national. A historian of Belgian socialism who wrote from a Flemish angle, Van Hagendoren provided important information about the Belgian political environment but paid little attention to the international significance of de Man's work. Much better in this respect is Michel Brélaz's 800-page, painstakingly researched volume, which charts de Man's evolution between 1914 and 1933. Brélaz – who devoted his entire academic career to the study of de Man – must be credited for having accomplished the arduous task of situating de Man's thinking in the context of ongoing theoretical debates within the socialist movement. Some of the chapters are impressive, and at times even groundbreaking, such as those comparing de Man to Gramsci or to the members of the Frankfurt School. Nonetheless, Brélaz was clearly more interested in the theoretical contributions made by de Man than in his political activism, as his decision to terminate his account in 1933 rather than in 1936, when the Labour Plan was finally abandoned, demonstrates. Consequently, de Man's involvement in party politics is treated only

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<sup>53</sup> See P. Dodge, *Beyond Marxism: The Works and Faith of Hendrik de Man*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff 1966; M. Claeys-Van Haegendoren, *Hendrik de Man: een biografie*, Antwerp, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel 1972; M. Brélaz, *Henri de Man: une autre idée du socialisme*, Geneva, Éditions des Antipodes 1985; D. S. White, *Lost Comrades: Socialists of the Front Generation, 1918-1945*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press 1992.

<sup>54</sup> This is equally true for Dodge's remarks in *A Documentary Study of Hendrik de Man, Socialist Critic of Marxism*, P. Dodge (ed.), Princeton, Princeton University Press 1979.

marginally, including its failure to implement the Plan, and the potential tensions between his thinking and his public role are not addressed.<sup>55</sup> Last but not least, Dan S. White authored a highly readable collective biography of the ‘socialists of the Front generation’, featuring de Man as one of the main protagonists, but did not make a compelling case for grouping diverse figures under such a vague umbrella term. Moreover, the necessity of shaping a single narrative encompassing a range of heterogeneous characters – besides de Man, Marcel Déat, Oswald Mosley, Carlo Mariendorff, and Theodor Haubach were chosen – forced White to overstate the similarities between them. In general, it is worth stressing that these biographies, except for White’s, overlook the impact of de Man’s Labour Plan outside Belgium. Because of this, they seem to suggest that such international influence was limited, or absent altogether. On the contrary, as this dissertation will show, the history of the Labour Plan was far from being a purely Belgian affair.

A latent inclination to pin down de Man as a purely national figure can also be found in Mario Telò’s otherwise sharp comparative study of different social democratic responses to the Great Depression. To him, the Labour Plans (plural) were a pan-European phenomenon but their roots lay in a set of distinct national traditions. Had Telò added France to his study of Britain, Belgium, and Sweden, he would have probably realised that de Man was *the* pivotal figure of that interwar pan-European planist turn.<sup>56</sup> This is indirectly confirmed by a wide range of authors who acknowledge

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<sup>55</sup> Brélaz touched upon this issue in M. Brélaz, *Léopold III et Henri de Man*, Geneva, Éditions des Antipodes 1988, esp. 19-39, and in M. Brélaz ‘Avant-Propos’, H. de Man, *Le “Dossier Léopold III” et autres documents sur la période de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, M. Brélaz (ed.), Geneva, Éditions des Antipodes 1989, 1-11. Yet he never really delved into de Man’s political record between 1933 and 1940.

<sup>56</sup> See M. Telò, *Le New Deal européen: la pensée et la politique sociales-démocrates face à la crise des années trente*, Brussels, Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles 1988, 18-26, 91-141.

de Man's ascendancy over French socialism during the 1930s: Philippe Bauchard<sup>57</sup>, Georges Lefranc<sup>58</sup>, André Philip<sup>59</sup>, Julian Jackson<sup>60</sup> and Michel Dreyfus<sup>61</sup> are among those who point this out in unambiguous terms.

Gaps created by national and comparative narratives have been frequently filled by transnational histories of the Left, which underscore the existence, and the relevance, of cultural transfers across countries, and have indeed spotted the international dimension of planism. This approach, though, is not without drawbacks. Sometimes this kind of history is written as if certain nations regularly outweighed others: in Sheri Berman's commendable endeavour to trace the development of post-war social democracy, for instance, Germany and Sweden are central whilst Britain is excluded.<sup>62</sup> In other cases, the need to craft loose, all-encompassing labels obscures what, at the time, were substantial differences: Donald Sassoon, for example, pigeonholed interwar left-wing advocates of economic planning, de Man included, as "Neo-Socialist Planners" only to admit that 'no single definition would do justice to the multifarious diversity of this catch-all category.'<sup>63</sup> A possible antidote can be found in combining multi-archival research with a focus on relatively small networks of interlinked people among which ideas circulated and exchanges were frequent and traceable.

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<sup>57</sup> See P. Bauchard, *Les technocrates et le Pouvoir: X-Crise, Synarchie, C.G.T., Clubs*, Paris, Artaud 1966, 51-89.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. G. Lefranc, *Histoire des doctrines sociales dans l'Europe contemporaine*, Paris, Aubier 1960, 258-266; G. Lefranc, *Le socialisme réformiste*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1971, 16-18. Other works by Lefranc are subsequently cited in this dissertation.

<sup>59</sup> See A. Philip, *Les socialistes*, Paris, Seuil 1967, 68-77.

<sup>60</sup> See J. Jackson, *The Politics of Depression in France, 1932-1936*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1985, 137-166.

<sup>61</sup> See M. Dreyfus, *L'Europe des socialistes*, Paris, Complexe 1991, 115-139.

<sup>62</sup> See S. Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2006.

<sup>63</sup> D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, London, I.B. Tauris 1996, 60. The category of neosocialism applied to de Man is inherently problematic as it suggests an identity of views between him and Marcel Déat: see S. P. Kramer, 'Néo-socialism: the Belgian Case', *Res Publica*, 1, 1976, 59-80, and the reply by M. Brélaz, 'Henri de Man et le néo-socialisme belge', *Res Publica*, 2, 251-266.

By adopting this approach, two books by Gerd Rainer Horn<sup>64</sup> and Gilles Vergnon<sup>65</sup> are truly outstanding, and proved a constant source of inspiration in writing this dissertation. Neither of these works are specifically about planism, as they deal with the competing strategies envisaged by left-wing parties in the aftermath of Hitler's seizure of power, and their time span is quite very limited. Nevertheless, both are based on extensive, multi-lingual archival work, including the private papers of the main actors discussed. Both recognise de Man's prominence during the interwar period, the reverberations of the Belgian Labour Plan abroad, and the ultimate incompatibility between a planist strategy (in which a socialist party produces a Plan with the aim of rallying voters around it) and a united front or Popular Front strategy (in which socialists join forces with other parties to win a parliamentary majority). However, an important difference lies in the fact that the main thread running through these books is the dichotomy between moderation and radicalism whereas this dissertation insists upon the dichotomy between continuity and discontinuity. To put it simply, Horn and Vergnon were interested in explaining how, and to what extent, the Left was radicalised by the events of 1933, and evaluated the Labour Plan accordingly, as part of this assessment. To them, therefore, de Man's decision to join the Van Zeeland government in March 1935 marked the demise of (radical) planism. By contrast, this thesis set out to explain how, and why, the events of 1933 allowed de Man to remould the agenda of the Belgian Labour Party, pushing ideological renovation further. Consequently, the failure of Belgian planism is not identified with de Man joining the Van Zeeland government, which was part of de Man's intended gambit to overcome resistance from his own party,

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<sup>64</sup> See G.-R. Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press 1996.

<sup>65</sup> See G. Vergnon, *Les gauches européennes après la victoire nazie: entre planisme et unité d'action, 1933-1934*, Paris, L'Harmattan 1997.

but with de Man's later disappointing record as Minister and the outcome of the 1936 legislative election. Apart from the different angle from which planism is discussed, as well as a different chronology, this dissertation builds on Horn's and Vergnon's previous research and corroborates, expands, and strengthens most of their findings.

The fundamental assumption on which this thesis rests is that de Man, between 1914 and 1936 at least, was, by all standards, a democratic socialist – a socialist 'of the West', as one of his Belgian associates would later argue –.<sup>66</sup> This would sound obvious to anyone having first-hand knowledge of de Man's writings and career but the clarification is made necessary by the claims of the historian Zeev Sternhell, according to whom de Man 'had developed a political ideology that in all respects was already fascist' well before the Second World War and his infamous manifesto in which he disbanded the Labour Party and urged its former members to collaborate with the German occupants in late June 1940 was 'merely the outcome of a process that had been in operation for nearly twenty years'.<sup>67</sup> Sternhell's interpretation of the origins of French Fascism is highly controversial, and several distinguished French historians have already taken on his 'very strange approach to history', marked by a highly selective use of primary sources, a decontextualized reading of texts, sweeping judgments, a teleological bias, and an almost complete indifference to evolving historical circumstances as well as to political events in general.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, thanks to Michel

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<sup>66</sup> See L. Moulin, *Socialism of the West: An Attempt to Lay the Foundations of a New Socialist Humanism*, London, Gollancz 1948, esp. 102. In Moulin's view, this strand of socialism, unlike Bolshevism, is inherently democratic, pluralistic, and rooted in humanitarian values.

<sup>67</sup> Z. Sternhell, *Ni droite ni gauche: l'idéologie fasciste en France*, Paris, Seuil 1983, 38. For Sternhell's interpretation of planism as a fascist, or proto-fascist, ideology, see *ibid.*, 136-159, 206-233. Sternhell equally presented de Man as a fascist in Z. Sternhell, M. Sznajder, and M. Asheri, *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste*, Paris, Fayard 1999, esp. 329-333.

<sup>68</sup> See S. Berstein, 'Un bien étrange approche de l'histoire', *Fascisme français? La controverse*, S. Berstein and M. Winock (eds.), Paris, CNRS Éditions 2014, 17-32. In addition, see esp. M. Winock, 'Les limites de l'idéalisme historique', *ibid.*, 33-51, and J. Juillard, 'Sur un fascisme imaginaire: à propos d'un

Brélaz, the mischaracterisation of de Man as a fascist in disguise had been debunked through a meticulous examination of Sternhell's assertions.<sup>69</sup> Confuting Sternhell here would therefore be redundant: for the limited purposes of this study, it should be enough to point out that not only de Man regarded himself as a socialist between 1914 and 1936 but that not even his harshest critics of the time called into question his commitment to the socialist movement. Hopefully, this dissertation will contribute to dispel the myth of de Man as a fascist that still has some currency in the Anglo-Saxon academic world.<sup>70</sup>

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This thesis offers an original contribution to the literature reviewed above in three important aspects.

First, it rejects any artificial separation between de Man's intellectual and political commitments as well as any attempt to categorise de Man as a figure relevant exclusively in and for Belgium. This dissertation argues that the problem that dominated de Man's life between the outbreak of the Great War and the mid-1930s was the reinvention of Western European socialism through severing its ties from what he thought was a crumbling and outmoded ideological Marxist framework. During the twentieth-century, few intellectuals came so close to governing a party and a country, and few politicians had a better grasp of the ideology to which their own party or movement adhered than de Man did. By the same token, this thesis contends that de

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livre de Zeev Sternhell', *ibid.*, 69-93. The book features twelve essays written by specialists in the field of political and intellectual history, all criticising Sternhell's findings and methodology.

<sup>69</sup> See M. Brélaz, *Un fascisme imaginaire*, Grand-Lancy-Geneva, Éditions des Antipodes 2000.

<sup>70</sup> See e.g. R. Griffiths, 'Fascism and the Planned Economy: "Neo-Socialism" and "Planisme" in France and Belgium in the 1930', *Science & Society*, 4, 2005, 580-593. Griffiths's initial stance is more sophisticated than Sternhell's as he acknowledged that "'neo-socialism" and "planisme" did not ineluctably lead to fascist beliefs and actions' [*ibid.*, 580-581] but his lack of engagement with primary sources, gross generalisations about the character of the "strong state" envisaged by de Man, and unsubstantiated conclusions about the support for the 'profoundly anti-socialist' and 'undemocratic' European Union [*ibid.* 592] being supposedly consistent with planist ideas are revealing about the kind of distortions that a Sternhellian approach to intellectual history can generate.



Man's thinking cannot be understood in a vacuum but only in close connection with the circumstances and constraints under which he operated, i.e. the surrounding environment that he sought to transform.<sup>71</sup> The fact that, as this thesis shows, de Man spent years working out a comprehensive critique of Marxism before developing his own doctrine and entering into politics is a further confirmation of the fact that ideologies operated as 'cognitive structures with legitimising functions' in left-wing twentieth-century politics.<sup>72</sup>

Second, this thesis relies on Belgian sources which are relatively new and have been scarcely used by scholars. The bulk of de Man's private papers, now held in Amsterdam and Ghent, has already been accessed, and widely cited, by other researchers. In contrast, the *Archief van Belgische Werkliedenpartij* and the *Archief van BWP-Bureau voor Sociaal Onderzoek*, both of which only became available in the 1990s, have been underutilised, despite casting new light on de Man's political activities and transnational connections.

Third, the thesis delves into the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan abroad and incorporates the United Kingdom as a case study, hence filling a lacuna which is present even in Horn's and Vergnon's work. Although de Man's brand of planism did remain marginal in Britain, the dissertation reveals connections between the Belgian Labour Party and the British socialist milieu, and sets out a new interpretation about why the Belgian Labour Plan did not become a major source of inspiration for British socialists.

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<sup>71</sup> This approach is broadly consistent with the fundamental principles of contextualism as set out by Quentin Skinner: see Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Vol. I: Regarding Method*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2002. For a concrete application of this method, see the analysis of de Man's use of the term "corporatism" in chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>72</sup> B. Str  th, 'Ideology and History', in *The Meaning of Ideology: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, M. Freeden (ed.), London-New York, Routledge 2007, 21.

In terms of methodology, the dissertation is based on the textual analysis of published and unpublished sources, including speeches and draft chapters of books, as well as on the examination of a wide array of letters, minutes of meetings, reports of party congresses, memoirs, and articles in the press. Whenever possible, texts have been consulted in the original language and quotations used subsequently translated into English (although comparisons between texts in German and Dutch and the respective English, French or Italian translations, when available, have been occasionally made). De Man's memoirs have been an important source of information but have not been regarded as completely reliable, particularly for the period 1933-1936. The fact that de Man revised them twice suggests that they should not be treated as neutral accounts but as linguistic acts by de Man aimed at projecting a certain image of himself.<sup>73</sup> For this reason, priority has been given to *Après Coup*, the first version of his memoirs and thus chronologically the closest to the events narrated. Yet, under no circumstances have de Man's claims, when politically sensitive or controversial, been accepted unless corroborated by other sources. This is noteworthy as *Après Coup* was published in 1941, during the German occupation of Belgium, and de Man may have had an interest in exaggerating his estrangement from the Labour Party during the interwar period in that context.

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This dissertation comprises of seven chapters.

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<sup>73</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup: mémoires*, Brussels, Éditions de la Toison d'Or 1941; H. de Man, *Cavalier seul: quarante-cinq années du socialisme européen*, Genève, Les Éditions du Cheval Ailé 1948; H. de Man, *Gegen den Strom: Memoiren eines europäischen Sozialisten*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1953.

Chapter one provides an overview of Western European social democracy before 1914, and highlights its theoretical foundations as well as its main weaknesses. This chapter underscores the tensions between social democratic theory and practice, pointing to the survival of a revolutionary mythology, an anti-statist rhetoric, and the tendency to understand the proletariat as an international unitary actor.

Chapter two introduces de Man and accounts for his ideological evolution throughout and immediately after the Great War. This chapter spells out the originality of de Man's war experience and his tentative conclusions about the impact of the war, which put him at odds with other socialists who chose to fight.

Chapter three is centred on de Man's *magnum opus* written in 1926, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, a comprehensive critique of the Marxist tradition. This chapter discusses how the book was attacked by distinguished socialist leaders such as Emile Vandervelde and Karl Kautsky but also highly appreciated by a group of young intellectuals, based in different Western European countries, who shared de Man's disenchantment with mainstream social democracy.

Chapter four investigates the emergence of the idea of the Plan in de Man's writings and speeches between 1930 and 1934, in reaction to the downfall of the Weimar Republic and the Great Depression. This chapter shows how de Man was able to merge a variety of themes and insights drawn from different sources into an original synthesis aimed at transcending both reformism and revolutionary socialism.

Chapter five deals with de Man's drafting of the Belgian Labour Plan and his endeavours to spread planism, both in Belgium and abroad, between 1933 and 1936. This chapter explores the difficulties and opposition that the campaign for the Belgian Labour Plan faced, both within and outside the Belgian Labour Party, and how the Plan was eventually discarded.

Chapter six analyses the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in France. This chapter focuses on three competing groups – the neosocialists, the SFIO planists, and the CGT planists – and how their separate calls for a French Labour Plan failed to win over the SFIO leadership, first and foremost Léon Blum.

Chapter seven examines the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in Britain. This chapter stresses the existence of a growing consensus within the Labour Party about the necessity of an immediate programme for action centred on extensive nationalisation after 1931 but also how the most influential left-wing pressure group, the Socialist League, decided to champion a more radical platform than de Man's.

The conclusion compares de Man's original planism to post-1945 developments within democratic socialism, highlighting similarities and differences between the two.

## I.

### Roots:

#### **The Paradox of European Social Democracy before 1914**

We no longer speak of socialism, and rightly so. [...] Moral epidemics, like physical epidemics, last for a while, and, when they have reigned in a country, move into another one.

Adolphe Thiers, 1877<sup>74</sup>

Even if the Marxian system be regarded as a tissue of errors, the fact that millions of men accept it makes it significant.

Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, 1908<sup>75</sup>

Reflecting on the period 1870-1914 in the aftermath of the Paris peace conference, John Maynard Keynes vividly portrayed it as an ‘economic Eldorado’ for Europe: an extraordinary, even unprecedented age of capital accumulation and increasing purchasing power.<sup>76</sup> Although, Keynes admitted, standards of comfort remained low for the great majority of the population, most people were, ‘to all appearances, reasonably contented’ with their condition; moreover, he argued, ‘escape was possible for any man of capacity or character at all exceeding the average into the middle and upper classes for whom life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comforts, and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchs of other ages.’<sup>77</sup> Despite mocking Victorian liberals for thinking that such state of affairs was natural and therefore everlasting, Keynes shared with them

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<sup>74</sup> M. [Adolphe] Thiers, ‘Aux électeurs du neuvième arrondissement de Paris’, *L’année politique 1877*, A. Daniel (ed.), Paris, G. Charpentier 1878, 432-433.

<sup>75</sup> V. G. Simkhovitch, ‘Marxism versus Socialism’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2, 1908, 193.

<sup>76</sup> J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, London, Macmillan 1919, 8. Keynes alludes to the deflation of 1873-1896, sometimes referred to as the ‘Great Depression’ in the literature – quite erroneously, considering that the European economy kept growing despite the general fall in prices and a series of brief recessions. For further reference, see S. B. Saul, *The Myth of the Great Depression, 1873-1896*, London, Macmillan 1969.

<sup>77</sup> J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences*, 9.

a complacent view of the *Belle Époque*, during which declining food prices and rising productivity purportedly boosted social mobility and spread prosperity. Around two decades later, the Austro-Hungarian-born writer Stefan Zweig observed – much more accurately – that the ‘golden age of security’ he believed he had lived before the First World War was but ‘a castle of dreams’ protected by the privileged status of his parents: ‘they were wealthy people, who had become rich gradually, even very rich, and that filled the crevices of wall and window in those times.’<sup>78</sup> Class divisions lay at the heart of European societies, and inherited money created barriers that individual initiative could rarely overcome.<sup>79</sup>

It remains true, however, that the economic landscape of Europe had changed remarkably during the forty-five years pinned down by Keynes. Estimates suggest that per capita growth was higher than in the period 1820-1870 (1.22 to 0.86), largely due to technological innovation and the industrial take-off in Germany and, to a lesser extent, France. On average, Europe’s GDP grew 2.15% per annum. The development of the steel and chemical industry, the diffusion of electricity, new discoveries in the field of combustion engines, the extension of railways as well as further improvements in communication systems increased output levels and generated better economies of scale.<sup>80</sup> The cumulative results of these transformations stood in stark contrast to the

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<sup>78</sup> S. Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers*, London, Hamish Hamilton 1941, 8, 12.

<sup>79</sup> See e.g. H. Kaelble, *Social Mobility in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Europe and America in Comparative Perspective*, Leamington, Berg 1985, esp. 12-13, 121-126; A. Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century England*, New York, St. Martin’s Press 1999. See also the data on wealth concentration recently provided by T. Piketty, *Capital in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2013, 339-345.

<sup>80</sup> Statistics are drawn from A. Carreras and C. Josephson, ‘Aggregate Growth: 1870-1914: Growing at the Production Frontier’, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe. Vol. II: From 1870 to the Present*, S. Broadberry and K. H. O’ Rourke (eds.), Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press 2010, 34, 36. On Germany’s and France’s economic performances, see A. Milward and S. B. Saul, *The Development of the Economies of Continental Europe, 1850-1914*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1977, 17-70, 71-141; M. Lévy-Leboyer and M. Lescure, ‘France’ and R. Tilly, ‘Germany’, *Patterns of European Industrialisation: The Nineteenth Century*, R. E. Sylla and G. Toniolo (eds.), London-New

‘unusually and visibly archaic’ earlier phase of industrialism.<sup>81</sup> In broad terms, continental countries – the latecomers – began to catch up with Britain, whose predominance in the financial sector was nonetheless unmatched.<sup>82</sup>

The main consequences of this long-term expansion of production were the increase in the overall population and a further shift towards urbanisation. Between 1870 and 1913, Europe moved from 314 to 471 million inhabitants, close to a third of the world’s population.<sup>83</sup> Greater London’s residents jumped from less than 4 million to more than 7 million; Paris’ and Berlin’s rose to over 4 and 3.7 million respectively, a process by which capitals absorbed neighbourhoods and turned into megacities.<sup>84</sup>

By the same token, the share of workers employed in agriculture declined everywhere, although regional differences persisted. In North-Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) it dropped from 31.7% to 20.9%; in Southern Europe (France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) from 58.6% to 49.3%; in Central and Eastern Europe (Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Switzerland) from 56.6% to

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York, Routledge 1991, 153-174 and 175-196 respectively. Thoughtful essays on technological progress in the second half of the nineteenth century can be found in *Technology in Western Civilisation. Vol. I: The Emergence of Modern Industrial Society: Earliest Times to 1900*, M. Kranzberg and C. W. Pursell, Jr. (eds.), New York, Oxford University Press 1967, 563-726. The best general overview of the 1870-1914 period is D. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1969), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003, 231-358.

<sup>81</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1969, 144.

<sup>82</sup> See S. Pollard, *Britain’s Prime and Britain’s Decline: The British Economy, 1870-1914*, New York, Edward Arnold 1989, esp. 260-271; P. L. Cottrell, ‘Great Britain’, *International Banking, 1870-1914*, R. Cameron and V. I. Bovykin (eds.), New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press 1991, 25-47.

<sup>83</sup> See C. Leonard and J. Ljungberg, ‘Population and Living Standards, 1870-1914’, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe. Vol. II*, 109; M.S. Anderson, *The Ascendancy of Europe: 1815-1914* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972), London-New York, Routledge 2013, 128-132.

<sup>84</sup> See J.-L. Robert, ‘Paris, London, Berlin on the Eve of the War’, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*, J.M. Winter and J.-L. Robert (eds.), New York-Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, 25-26; A. Lees and L. Hollen Lees, *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750-1914*, New York-Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2007, 136.

54.9%, with Germany and Switzerland experiencing the greatest reductions.<sup>85</sup> By 1913, more Germans were employed in the secondary sector than in the first one (37.9% to 34.5%), a pattern well established in Britain (44.1% to 11.8%), Belgium (45.5% to 23.2%) and other Northern countries.<sup>86</sup> In general, productivity was higher in manufacturing than in agriculture; industrialisation, therefore, resulted in an increase of the national income. Uneven growth rates throughout Europe, however, had political repercussions as they could sway the balance of power. The impressive economic performance of the German Reich, which displaced France as the most powerful Continental economy, was one of the most remarkable developments of the period 1870-1914, and a major source of instability for the international system.<sup>87</sup>

Industrialisation had social and psychological implications too. As Eugen Weber noted in his masterful account of the incorporation of the French peasantry into the modernising national community of the Republican state, ‘isolation [of countryside] made for ignorance, indifference, for rumors that spread like wildfire in contrast to the stubbornly low assimilation of current events’ but – he added – ‘it also made for local solidarity, which was reinforced for mutual aid – a practice that may have arisen out of sheer necessity in the absence of other alternatives but that had generally become ritualized by tradition.’<sup>88</sup> The physical concentration of workers in huge, increasingly mechanised factories deprived them of the safety nets entrenched in the rural order, and exposed them to new forms of discipline and social control. Between the late nineteenth

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<sup>85</sup> S. Broadberry, G. Federico, and A. Klein, ‘Sectoral developments, 1870-1914’, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe. Vol. II*, 61.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> See A. Milward and S. B. Saul, *The Development*, 17-21, 515-518; P. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914*, London, The Ashfield Press 1987, 464-465. For a comparative analysis of the economic strength of the great powers, see W. Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2010, 180-186.

<sup>88</sup> E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 1976, 43-44.



and the early twentieth century, sociologists Ferdinand Tönnies, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel all pointed to the different forms of solidarity that existed within agrarian and industrial societies, the latter being more much more individualistic and impersonal.<sup>89</sup> It is no accident that trade unions flourished in reaction to the disintegration of the cultural environment of the pre-industrial era, becoming not only useful instruments to protect or advance workers' rights but also self-conscious institutions, based on a common culture, shared values, and specific structures of feeling: some of the largest organisations – the German *Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands* (GGD), the French *Confédération Général du Travail* (CGT) – were set up between 1890 and 1900, and immediately gathered hundreds of thousands of adherents. In 1913, unionised workers in France were around one million, three million in Germany; Britain – the country with the oldest tradition of working class organisation – still dominated the rankings with more than four million.<sup>90</sup>

In general, trade unionism was ideologically heterogeneous and often driven by short-term, practical concerns. In most European countries, trade union leaders developed a relatively pragmatic attitude towards industrial disputes, and restrained the more radical impulses of the rank-and-file.<sup>91</sup> In the political sphere, on the other hand,

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<sup>89</sup> See e.g. F. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1887), Berlin, Karl Curtius 1922, esp. 3-7; E. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social: étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures*, Paris, Alcan 1893, esp. 142-147, 189-197, 375-385; G. Simmel, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', *Die Großstadt. Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung*, T. Petermann (ed.), Dresden, Zahn & Jänsch 1903, 185-206.

<sup>90</sup> Statistics are drawn from J. C. Docherty and S. van der Velden, *Historical Dictionary of Organized Labor*, Lanham, The Scarecrow Press 2012, 336. For an overview, see *The Formation of Labour Movements: An International Perspective, 1870-1914*, M. van der Linden and J. Rojahn (eds.), Leiden, E.J. Brill 1990, 2 vols. I am indebted to Karl Polanyi for the expression 'disintegration of the cultural environment' [see K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1944), Boston, Beacon Press 1957, 157] and to E. P. Thompson for 'structure of feeling' [see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, Gollancz 1963, 194].

<sup>91</sup> Evidence is mixed but insightful remarks about their moderating influence can be found in E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The "New Unionism" in Perspective', *Workers: World of Labor*, New York, Pantheon 1984, 152-175; F. Broeze, 'Militancy and Pragmatism: An International Perspective on Maritime Labour, 1870-1914', *International Review of Social History*, 2, 1991, 165-200.

workers increasingly embraced a doctrine that the ruling class, especially after the Paris Commune of 1871, tended to view as dangerously subversive: socialism. Not every worker became a convert, of course, and opposition to socialism *among* industrial workers was not negligible.<sup>92</sup> Still, the link between mass industrialisation and the growth of socialism remains a strong one. Socialism turned into a mass movement exactly because its advocates identified the working class, broadly defined, as the fundamental agency of political change and succeeded in getting backing from wide segments of it. This is tantamount to saying that, whereas socialist ideas circulated before the second-half of the nineteenth century, it was only under the peculiar socio-economic conditions of the industrial age that they gained enough popular support to become politically relevant.<sup>93</sup> By 1914, social democratic parties polling between 15% and 35% existed in all Western European countries, with the notable exceptions of Britain and the Netherlands.<sup>94</sup>

This chapter sets out to investigate the theoretical foundations of the European socialist movement between 1870 and 1914. First, it sketches out its ideology, essentially a crude and simplified version of Karl Marx's thought that took root in Germany and spread gradually throughout the rest of Europe. Second, it discusses three weaknesses of that ideology: its failure to penetrate in Britain, where the working class

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<sup>92</sup> For a dated but still useful account of the early stages of Christian trade unionism in Europe, see L. Riva Sanseverino, *Il movimento sindacale cristiano dal 1850 al 1939*, Rome, Cesare Zuffi Editore 1950, esp. 14-264. A thoroughly researched study focused on Germany is M. Schneider, *Die christlichen Gewerkschaften, 1894-1933*, Bonn, Neue Gesellschaft 1982, esp. 51-362. By 1890, the French *Syndicat des Employés du Commerce et de l'Industrie* was openly anti-socialist and deeply concerned about socialist infiltration [see T. B. Caldwell, 'The Syndicat des Employés du Commerce et de l'Industrie (1887-1919): A Pioneer French Catholic Trade Union of White-Collar Workers', *International Review of Social History*, 2, 1966, 228-266].

<sup>93</sup> For further discussion, see D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years*, 7; E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Making of the Working Class, 1870-1914', *Workers: World of Labor*, 194-213. The word 'socialism' was probably used for the first time in the British journal *Co-Operative Magazine* in 1827 [see M. Beer, *History of British Socialism. Vol. I*, London, G. Bell & Sons 1929, 187].

<sup>94</sup> D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years*, 10. For membership figures, see W. E. Paterson and A.H. Thomas, *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe*, London, Croom Helm 1977, 432.

was especially numerous and well-organised; its ambiguity in setting the limits of a fruitful, albeit circumscribed, cooperation with the bourgeoisie; its difficulty in adapting to new social and political conditions, with particular reference to the arguments advanced by Eduard Bernstein and Georges Sorel. Third, it highlights three major sources of tensions, or contradictions, between socialist theory and social democratic practice: a reiterated commitment to a palingenetic view of the revolution coupled with a gradualist conduct aimed at getting concessions from the ruling class; an anti-statist conception of the political order at odds with policies aimed at strengthening the State; a tendency to conceive of workers as an international unitary actor despite the socialists' difficulties in cooperating internationally and the resilience of nationalism. Fourth, it briefly explores the ultimate paradox of social democratic parties as an organised force by 1914. This paradox can be summarised as follows: the more the socialist movement grew in strength, the less its ideology could effectively steer its course. From this it does not follow that vulgar Marxism had become useless: quite the contrary. As a set of vivid images and inflammatory words, it remained a powerful tool to mobilise the militants, and there is no doubt that both the leaders and the rank-and-file were emotionally attached to it: in that sense, an 'ideological passion' – to cite François Furet's fortunate expression – existed well before the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>95</sup> Yet, by the very nature of vulgar Marxism, social democrats operated under theoretical constraints that made their statements increasingly untenable and their long-term expectations unrealistic. The outbreak of the Great War triggered a crisis in the socialist *Weltanschauung* whose seed had been planted in the previous half-century. It is against that background that Hendrik

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<sup>95</sup> See F. Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion: essai sur l'idée communiste au XXe siècle*, Paris, Robert Laffont/Calmann-Lévy 1995, 18.

de Man's subsequent endeavours to reinvent Western European socialism must be evaluated.

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Despite Karl Marx's relentless efforts to shape the international labour movement, and its German branch even more forcefully, his views were not immediately and uncritically shared by European socialists during his life. Nor was Marxism initially regarded as a clearly defined, self-standing set of ideas. Rather, the concept was polemical: Mikhail Bakunin was perhaps the first to lambast his opponents by using the word 'Marxist' during the 1870s, and Marx himself rejected the label, half seriously, half in jest, to disown some of his French disciples in 1882.<sup>96</sup> The dissemination of Marx's ideas and their subsequent articulation in a rigid template was a consequence of Engels' activism as well as of the parallel rise of German social democrats. It is hard to overestimate the 'immense and lasting influence' of Engels in defining Marxism: in 1878 he authored the *Anti-Dühring*, whose abridged version, published two years later under title *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft* (The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science), quickly became 'the most popular introduction to Marxism apart from the *Manifesto*.'<sup>97</sup> It is through the systematisation made by Engels that the ideologues of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland* (SPD), August Bebel and Karl Kautsky, managed to get access to the core of Marx's thinking, in which they injected a strong

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<sup>96</sup> For detailed accounts of the origins of Marxism as a concept, see G. Haupt, 'From Marx to Marxism', *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914*, Cambridge-Paris, Cambridge University Press and Éditions de la Maison de Sciences de l'Homme 1986, 1-22; M. Manale, 'Aux origines du concept de «marxisme»', *Economie et société*, 5, 1974, 1397-1430.

<sup>97</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 'Ritratto di Engels', *Storia del marxismo. Vol. I: il marxismo ai tempi di Marx*, E.J. Hobsbawm (ed.), Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore 1978, 319, 320. See also F. Andreucci, 'La diffusione e la volgarizzazione del marxismo', *Storia del marxismo. Vol. II: il marxismo nell'età della Seconda Internazionale*, E.J. Hobsbawm (ed.), Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore 1979, 5-58, and Engels' own assessment in F. Engels, 'Introduction', *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1892, vii.

dose of positivism that they drew from Charles Darwin.<sup>98</sup> In some cases, popularisation came at the expense of quality. In France and Italy, the works of Marx and Engels were less read and known than those, often shallow and poorly written, of Paul Lafargue, Gabriel Deville, or Wilhelm Liebknecht.<sup>99</sup> In Central and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, Kautsky's reputation grew enormously, also thanks to the echo generated by his journal, *Die Neue Zeit*.<sup>100</sup> Whether Marx would have been entirely comfortable with Engels' and Kautsky's rearrangement of his thought remains an open question.<sup>101</sup> For sure, they succeeded where Marx had failed: their brand of Marxism, often referred to as vulgar or orthodox, became the intellectual bedrock of the European socialist movement, and through public and private interventions – Engels, for instance, issued detailed guidelines to German, French, Italian, and Austrian parties by mail – they had a direct and immediate impact on how social democratic politics unfolded.<sup>102</sup>

In a nutshell, vulgar Marxism boiled down to a handful of theoretical propositions, coupled with a few prescriptions. First, a theory of knowledge: men's consciousness is determined by the mode of production of material life. Second, a theory of historical development: the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history

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<sup>98</sup> As Kautsky would later recall, around 1870 he was 'a zealous Darwinist as much as a socialist' [K. Kautsky, *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen*, B. Kautsky (ed.), The Hague, Mouton & Co. 1960, 377]. Some scholars even argued that 'a substitution of Darwin for Marx' occurred among German workers during the 1880s [A. Kelly, *The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press 1981, 124]. For a more balanced assessment, see G. Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration*, Totowa, The Bedminster Press 1963, 159-192 and S. Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Working-Class Mentality in Germany, 1887-1912*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1993, 60-69.

<sup>99</sup> See N. McInnes, 'Les débuts du marxisme théorique en France et Italie (1880-1897)', *Études de Marxologie*, 3, 1960, 5-51; F. Andreucci 'Occasioni e veicoli della circolazione delle idee socialiste', *Il marxismo collettivo: socialismo, marxismo e circolazione delle idee della Seconda alla Terza Internazionale*, Milan, Franco Angeli 1986, 93-131.

<sup>100</sup> See G. Haupt, 'Model Party: The Role and Influence of German Social Democracy in South-East Europe', *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914*, 48-80. Haupt calculated that, between 1880 and 1916, sixty-eight translations of Kautsky's works were released in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Rumania, seven more than Marx's and Engels' together [*ibid.*, 70].

<sup>101</sup> See the opposing cases made by M. Rubel, *Marx critique du marxisme: essais*, Paris, Payot 1974 and D. Settembrini, *Socialismo e rivoluzione dopo Marx*, Naples, Guida 1974, 149-154.

<sup>102</sup> So claims, very convincingly, G.P. Steenson, *After Marx, Before Lenin: Marxism and Socialist Working-Class Parties in Europe, 1884-1914*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press 1991.

of class struggles; the capitalist society is a transient social order that will be undermined by its inherent contradictions. Third, a theory of exploitation: under capitalism, wages are lower than they ought to be, for the owners of capital appropriate the surplus value generated by the workers. Fourth, a theory of pauperisation: capitalism tends to increase the misery of the workers. Fifth, a theory of concentration: the means of production fall in the hands of a continuously decreasing number of capitalists, until a full concentration is achieved and expropriation by the working class takes place. The main task for socialists was, therefore, to organise the working class in independent political parties, fight for reforms that would make living conditions more bearable, and develop class consciousness in preparation for the inevitable collapse of the capitalist system.<sup>103</sup>

However well-crafted, effectively propagandised, and generally effective in superseding older strands of socialism – those that Marx and Engels had categorised as utopian or bourgeois<sup>104</sup> –, vulgar Marxism faced obstacles that hindered its advancement. To begin with, even in its rough form, it was not unanimously accepted. Most notably, the British working class showed little interest in vulgar Marxism as in any other rejectionist ideology that implied the overthrowing of the parliamentary system. Several factors might explain that attitude – from the fragmentation of the patterns of employment to alienation, from the persistence of communitarian loyalties to the attachment to the monarchy –, including the lack of a revolutionary intellectual

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<sup>103</sup> I drew these theses from the sketch of vulgar Marxism made by O. Bauer, 'Die Geschichte eines Buches', *Die Neue Zeit*, 26, 1, 1908, 23-33 and, partly, from the propositions outlined by L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution. Vol. II: The Golden Age*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1978, 4-6.

<sup>104</sup> See D. Leopold, 'Marx, Engels and Other Socialisms', *The Cambridge Companion to The Communist Manifesto*, T. Carver and J. Farr (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2015, 32-49. For a brief but comprehensive overview, see G. Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969.

class.<sup>105</sup> Virtually all British thinkers, it has been noted, ‘aimed not at *fusing* the classes but at *reconciling* them by rebuilding the human relations which had been destroyed by the growth of industrial, urbanised ways of living’, consistently with an ethical and religious outlook strikingly at odds with the materialism that underpinned vulgar Marxism.<sup>106</sup> Equally important was the emphasis on efficiency that permeated the most distinguished socialist circle of the 1880s and 1890s, the Fabian Society. Its most active members, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, were not only committed to gradualist methods but steeped in an empiricist culture that, after an early interest in the subject, led them to dismiss Marx’s thought as an obscure and convoluted example of German metaphysics.<sup>107</sup> In *The Fabian Essays in Socialism*, published in 1889, Marx is mentioned only three times, and Engels publicly complained about ‘the Fabian Church of the Future’ being built on economic foundations that contradicted Marx’s labour theory of value.<sup>108</sup> When a Labour Party finally came to light, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it secured an electoral alliance with the Liberals – a strategy that was anathema to many Continental socialists – and pressured the Asquith government to pass major pieces of social legislation. The accomplishments of the Liberal-Labour alliance were far from negligible and ended up strengthening the pre-existing evolutionary inclinations of British socialists.<sup>109</sup> However peculiar, the British exception

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<sup>105</sup> For an overview, see R. McKibbin, ‘Why Was There No Marxism in Great Britain?’ in *The English Historical Review*, 99, 391, 1984, 297-331; J.D. Young, *Socialism and the English Working Class: A History of English Labour 1883-1939*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1989, 19-35.

<sup>106</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought. Vol. III, Part I*, London, Macmillan 1956, 182.

<sup>107</sup> See e.g. S. Webb, ‘Rent, Interest & Wages: Being a Criticism of Karl Marx and a Statement of Economic Theory’, manuscript dated 1886, PP/LSE/7/1/4.

<sup>108</sup> See F. Engels, ‘Preface’, K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. III* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1894), Harmondsworth, Penguin 1991, 100. Engels’ remarks targeted another prominent Fabian, George Bernard Shaw, who endorsed the marginal theory of value formulated by William Stanley Jevons.

<sup>109</sup> See K.D. Brown, ‘The Labour Party and the Unemployment Question, 1906-1910’, *The Historical Journal*, 3, 1971, 599-616; D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1990, 19-43. On Labour’s ‘devotion’ to the parliamentary system, see R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1961, esp. 17-38.

– largely acknowledged by Continental socialists, including Marx – was a powerful reminder that the degree of organisation of the working class and its acceptance of revolutionary means did not necessarily go hand in hand.<sup>110</sup>

Secondly, vulgar Marxism did not always set clear boundaries of acceptable political behaviour, as the highly contentious issue of ministerialism demonstrated. In principle, most socialist leaders favoured parliamentary cooperation with bourgeois parties to improve the living standards of the workers; on the other hand, they felt that allowing individual party members to serve in non-socialist cabinets was a step too far for any credible revolutionary party; plus, it would undermine efforts to coordinate with socialists abroad. In 1899, the French socialist deputy Alexandre Millerand sparked outrage by entering a Radical-led cabinet. Kautsky officially censored him, although he subtly argued that, under exceptional circumstances, government participation could be authorised, as long as socialist ministers were given a specific mandate by their party and promptly resigned in case the government took an anti-labour stance.<sup>111</sup> Millerand used his position to achieve substantial reforms, such as the reduction of working hours and the creation of labour councils, but his insubordination made him a political outcast. Rather unfairly, *millerandisme* became synonymous with opportunism, and some pragmatic reformers, including the former trade unionist and future Prime Minister Aristide Briand, severed their ties with the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO), the unitary socialist party founded in 1905, after the Marxist faction headed by Jules Guesde and like-minded anti-participationists gained a position of

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<sup>110</sup> In 1872, Marx held that in Britain, the United States, and maybe Holland the labour class could conquer 'political supremacy' by peaceful means: see 'Minutes of the Fifth General Congress of the International Workingmen's Association at the Hague, September 1872', *The First International: Minutes of the Hague Congress of 1872*, H. Gerth (ed.), Madison, University of Wisconsin Press 1958, 236.

<sup>111</sup> On the 'Millerand case', see L. Derfler, *Alexandre Millerand: The Socialist Years*, The Hague, Mouton & Co. 1977, esp. 191-219. Kautsky's position is effectively summarised by M. L. Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880-1938*, London, Verso 1990, 71-73.



strength within it. Even then, ideological tensions lurked beneath the surface, as Guesde's heavily materialistic and almost sectarian type of socialism remained controversial, but thanks to the energetic campaigns that he and his followers waged throughout the 1890s and 1900s the language of class struggle was absorbed into the French socialist mainstream and reduced the room of manoeuvre for the moderate wing.<sup>112</sup>

A third, much greater problem for vulgar Marxism was its difficulty in adapting to evolving historical circumstances. Kautsky insisted that Marx never intended to develop an ossified doctrine; in practice, however, the core propositions of vulgar Marxism were often regarded as articles of faith by militants and sympathisers.<sup>113</sup> Particularly deep-seated was the confidence in the inescapable downfall of capitalism, an argument that lent socialism an aura of inevitability.<sup>114</sup> Because of that, and the high level of systematisation provided by Engels, Kautsky, Bebel and other propagandists, the line between suitable adjustments and apostasy was blurred, especially when key components of Marx's thought underwent scrutiny.

The revisionist debate that took place in 1896-1899 between the most distinguished theoreticians of the SPD, Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein revealed the

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<sup>112</sup> On Guesdism and its limited success in imposing a Marxist straightjacket on French socialism, see C. Willard, *Le mouvement socialiste en France (1893-1905): les guesdistes*, Paris, Éditions sociales 1965, 595-602; R. Stuart, *Marxism at Work: Ideology, Class and French Socialism during the Third Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1992, 492-502. On Briand's departure from the SFIO, see D. Müller Hofstede, *Aristide Briand und der französische Sozialismus: Die Frühzeit des Politikers, 1883-1906*, Münster, Lit 1996, 221-234.

<sup>113</sup> The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci would later lament that Marxism lost 'a huge part of its capacity for cultural expansions among the top layers of intellectuals' while gaining ground 'among the popular masses and the lower-rate intellectuals' in the form of an 'economic superstition.' [A. Gramsci, 'Quaderno 13 (XXX)', *Quaderni del carcere. Vol. III: quaderni 12-29*, V. Gerratana (ed.), Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore 1975, 1595]

<sup>114</sup> For Marxists, Eric J. Hobsbawm pointed out, 'political decision was inserted into a framework of historical change, which did not depend on political decision' [E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Marx, Engels, and Politics' (1<sup>st</sup>. ed. 1982), *How to Change the World: Marx and Marxism, 1840-2011*, London, Little, Brown 2011, 86]. A former communist, Jules Monnerot, once described Marxism as 'a doctrine of sociological predestination' [J. Monnerot, 'Est-ce l'avènement du prolétariat?', *De Marx au marxisme, 1848-1948*, R. Aron (ed.), Paris, Flore 1948, 198].

limits of public dissent within the movement. A former editor of the newspaper *Der Sozialdemokrat* and Engels' literary executor, Bernstein had impeccable Marxist credentials. Furthermore, he was a party loyalist: an exiled activist during the anti-socialist repression carried out by Otto von Bismarck, he co-authored with Kautsky the most succinct and widely circulated Marxist statement in German history: the SPD programme of 1891, named after the city of Erfurt.<sup>115</sup> At that time, Bernstein still agreed with Engels and Kautsky about the party's commitment to a revolutionary transformation of society. His paramount concern, however, was developing an effective parliamentary action, and the realisation that the SPD – whose seats in the *Reichstag* increased steadily during the 1890s – could play a greater role in passing social legislation prompted second thoughts about the relationship between long-term and short-term goals. By 1896, Bernstein had become convinced that overemphasising the need to suppress capitalism to usher in an entirely new society was a liability to the socialist movement, and a serious theoretical revision of Marxism was required. To that overriding task he devoted a series of articles he started publishing in *Die Neue Zeit*, under the heading 'Probleme des Sozialismus' (Problems of Socialism).<sup>116</sup>

At first, Bernstein criticised the theory of concentration by claiming that, the growth of monopoly notwithstanding, medium and small ownership was likely to survive both in industry and agriculture. That position did not cause any uproar.<sup>117</sup> Much more contentious was the idea, fully expressed in another piece released in

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<sup>115</sup> See V. L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1966, 129-154; S. Miller and H. Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy from 1848 to the Present*, Leamington, Berg 1986, 38-40, 240-242.

<sup>116</sup> On Bernstein's trajectory, see H. Tudor, 'Introduction', *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate, 1896-1898*, H. Tudor and J. M. Tudor (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1988, 6-11.

<sup>117</sup> See e.g. E. Bernstein, 'Der gegenwärtige Stand der industriellen Entwicklung in Deutschland', *Die Neue Zeit*, 15, 1, 1896, 303-311; E. Bernstein, 'Die neuere Entwicklung der Agrarverhältnisse in England', *Die Neue Zeit*, 15, 1, 1897, 772-783.

January 1898, that socialism could triumph in the absence of the ‘great, all-embracing economic crisis’ that social democrats believed would surely break out at some point, as the result of ‘an absolute law of nature’. On the contrary, Bernstein suggested that a ‘piecemeal realisation of socialism’ was possible under capitalism, through a steady increase in economic regulation, the consolidation of public management, and the democratisation of local government. Even worse, he argued that ‘any celebratory work worthy of the name of “scientific socialism” would have to examine how far the actual development of things has departed from the assumptions made in the *Manifesto* and its associated literature, as well as establish which of its forecasts have been proved correct’, hence implying that the works of Marx contained serious flaws.<sup>118</sup> Although Bernstein maintained that he intended to amend Marx’s thought, not discard it, and considered himself a Marxist for the remainder of his life, the doctrinal changes he proposed were profound. The most problematic was the replacement of the crucial pillar of Marx’s system, the dialectic, with an evolutionary philosophy which abolished finalism: this move would result in abandoning the prospect of a revolutionary transition to socialism.<sup>119</sup> Such an argument could not pass under silence. Rosa Luxemburg, George Plekhanov, Jean Jaurès, and Max Adler were among the many who weighed in against Bernstein, whose almost complete isolation among the international socialist intelligentsia was soon apparent.<sup>120</sup> In an extended version of his case, he

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<sup>118</sup> E. Bernstein, ‘Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik’, *Die Neue Zeit*, 15, 1, 1898, 548-557, translated as ‘The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution: 2. The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy’, *Marxism and Social Democracy*, 160, 168, 165.

<sup>119</sup> See P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein’s Challenge to Marx*, New York, Collier 1962, 141-151; J. Reese, *The Algebra of Revolution: The Dialectic and the Classical Marxist Tradition*, London, Routledge 1998, 129-135.

<sup>120</sup> See M.B. Steger, *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, 151-157. Arguably, Bernstein found some of his stronger supporters in Italy, such as the former anarchist Francesco Saverio Merlino. See E. Santarelli, *La*

relinquished some of his most provocative claims, including the one about the irrelevance of final goals for socialism, and tried to back up his views with evidence from Engels' writings, a clear sign of yielding to the orthodoxy.<sup>121</sup> That was not enough, however, to persuade Kautsky, who believed that reformism – as Bernstein's views were dubbed – could succeed only in Britain, and was disturbed by his colleague's inclination to question Marx's authority.<sup>122</sup> During the Stuttgart conference, held in October 1898, the SPD delegates enthusiastically received Kautsky's speech, hence shattering Bernstein's hopes for a revision of the Erfurt programme. Bernstein's reputation within the party never fully recovered from that defeat, although his ideas remained popular among pragmatic party functionaries, members of the cooperative movement, and trade unionists.<sup>123</sup>

Other socialists were expressing dissatisfaction at the deterministic trappings of vulgar Marxism. The implications of arguing, as Kautsky did, that an economic catastrophe was bound to happen at some point in the future regardless of human will were ambiguous. On the one hand, that position could lead to dismissing parliamentary activity as a merely tactical device while awaiting the Armageddon, as Bernstein had feared; on the other hand, it could be used to justify passivity. From the latter perspective, Kautsky's predicaments entailed the risk of driving social democrats

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*revisione del marxismo in Italia*, Milan, Feltrinelli 1964, 29-32; G. Berti, *Francesco Saverio Merlino: dall'anarchismo socialista al socialismo liberale*, Milan, Franco Angeli 1993, 324-343.

<sup>121</sup> See E. Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, Stuttgart, J. H. W. Dietz 1899, 168-88.

<sup>122</sup> See K. Kautsky, *Bernstein und das Sozialdemokratische Programm*, Stuttgart, J. H. W. Dietz 1899.

<sup>123</sup> Some scholars argue that, in practice, revisionism had the upper hand before 1914 due to the strength of those factions within the SPD: see e.g. P. Angel, *Eduard Bernstein et l'évolution du socialisme allemand*, Paris, Marcel Didier 1961, 362-385. From an ideological viewpoint, this is inaccurate. It is worth stressing, that the Erfurt programme remained in place until 1921, and then was fundamentally restored four years later. Only between 1920 and 1925 had Bernstein still play a prominent role in the SPD, and his comeback was short-lived.

towards the acceptance of the capitalist system.<sup>124</sup> Hostility to fatalism and quietism inspired the writings of George Sorel, a French eclectic engineer-turned-philosopher heavily influenced by the Germanist Charles Andler. A lonely, self-proclaimed socialist with no party, Sorel aimed at demolishing dialectical materialism, which he regarded as a forgery, the arbitrary connection of ‘a few sentences’ from Marx’s works ‘commented on as the evangelical texts are by theologians.’<sup>125</sup> The author of *The Communist Manifesto*, Sorel boldly claimed, never formulated any law of historical development, not even the one about the inevitable collapse of capitalism: maybe he ‘simply wanted to give some practical advice to the revolutionaries, inducing them not to pursue dangerous attempts and highlighting which conditions might be favourable for undertaking popular action.’<sup>126</sup> He lauded Bernstein for having questioned the ‘dogma of social palingenesis’ and exposed Kautsky’s hypocrisy.<sup>127</sup> Yet his tendencies were far from reformist. To him, Marxism as a closed, all-encompassing system of thought had been consciously fabricated by German social democrats to strengthen their party machine: all considered, the revisionist controversy was less about theoretical disagreements than internal factionalism, as the entire SPD was but ‘a workers’ organisation under the direction of vehement orators’, ‘an *oligarchy of demagogues*’

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<sup>124</sup> See E. Matthias, ‘Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus. Die Funktion der Ideologie in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vor dem ersten Weltkrieg’, *Marxismus Studien. Vol. II*, Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr 1957, 151-197. For a more positive assessment of revolutionary attentism, see D. Groh, *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus: die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des ersten Weltkrieges*. Frankfurt, Propyläen 1973. In 1909 Kautsky famously described the SPD’s relationship with the revolution as follows: ‘It is not our task to instigate a revolution or to clear the way for it. And since the revolution cannot be arbitrarily brought about by us, we cannot say anything whatever about when, under which conditions, or what forms it will come’ [K. Kautsky, *Der Weg zur Macht: Politische Betrachtungen über das Hineinwachsen in die Revolution*, Berlin, Buchhandlung Vorwärts 1909, 44].

<sup>125</sup> G. Sorel, ‘L’avenir socialiste des syndicats’, *L’humanité nouvelle: revue internationale*, 1, 1898, 294. On Andler, see E. Tonnelat, *Charles Andler: sa vie et son œuvre*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres 1937, esp. 87-96; E. Josse, *Réviser le marxisme? D’Edouard Bernstein à Albert Thomas, 1896-1914*, Paris, L’Harmattan 2007, 193-215.

<sup>126</sup> G. Sorel, ‘La necessità e il fatalismo nel marxismo’, *La riforma sociale*, 1898, 708-732, reprinted in G. Sorel, *Saggi di critica del marxismo*, V. Racca (ed.), Palermo, Sandron 1903, 66.

<sup>127</sup> G. Sorel, ‘Les polémiques pour l’interprétation du marxisme’, *Revue internationale de sociologie*, 4, 1900, 276.

which aimed at controlling the working class and stifling the trade unions.<sup>128</sup> Sorel, who understood socialism not as doctrine but as an act – ‘the emancipation of the working class that organises itself, educates itself, and creates new institutions’ – started developing a radical theory of direct action that he finally set out in *Réflexions sur la violence* (Reflections on Violence), published in 1908.<sup>129</sup> In order to retrieve Marx’s original spirit and rescue socialism from philistinism and decadence, Sorel contended, a new myth was needed, ‘a set of images capable of evoking intuitively and all together, before any well-thought analysis, the mass of sentiments that correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by Socialism against modern society.’<sup>130</sup> That myth was the general strike, namely an abrupt insurrection carried out by the proletariat aimed at destroying the bourgeois State. Sorel refrained from explaining how the general strike would occur – although he was surely familiar with the activities and propaganda of *La Federation des Bourses du Travail* headed by the anarchist Fernand Pelloutier, one of his few friends – but insisted on its merits as a mobilising tool: ‘In virtue of this idea, Socialism remains ever young; attempts made to bring about social peace seem childish; the desertions of gentrifying comrades, far from discouraging the masses, only excite them still more to rebellion; in a word, the line of cleavage is never in danger of disappearing.’<sup>131</sup> In Sorel’s view, the general strike would have an apocalyptic character, and pave the way for a new society resting upon the ‘ethics of the

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<sup>128</sup> G. Sorel, ‘Les dissensions de la socialdémocratie en Allemagne: A propos des écrits de M. Bernstein’, *Revue politique et parlementaire*, 25, 1900, 44.

<sup>129</sup> G. Sorel, ‘La crise du socialisme’, *Revue politique et parlementaire*, 1898, 612.

<sup>130</sup> G. Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1908), Paris, Rivière 1936, 173.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 193. On Pelloutier and Sorel, see J. Juillard, *Ferdinand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d’action directe*, Paris, Seuil 1971, esp. 116-168; K. H. Tucker, *French Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996, 131-158.

producers', a heroic, self-governing breed of workers freed from 'democratic superstition' fuelled by 'financial and political parasites.'<sup>132</sup>

Sorel's visionary claims rested on a poor knowledge of the reality of the labour movement. After Pelloutier's death, in 1901, revolutionary syndicalism had lost traction in France as much as elsewhere, and trade unionism became increasingly moderate. Until 1909, Sorel wished to convert the CGT to his ideas; when he realised that the organisation leaned towards a stable cooperation with the SFIO, albeit refusing to give up its independence, he quickly moved to the opposite side of the spectrum and sought a highly unlikely alliance with the royalist movement *Action Française*.<sup>133</sup> That choice is indicative of Sorel's distaste for representative democracy and humanitarian values: in his erratic search for 'primordial forces to destroy the old order and to create the new', he would end up praising both Lenin and Mussolini, and being heralded by Italian Fascists as a mentor.<sup>134</sup> Following the publication of his *Réflexions* and his flirtation with the monarchists, he was no longer perceived as a respectable socialist – most of his admirers, such as the publisher Georges Valois, came from the anti-parliamentary Right – but his itinerary sheds light on the endless opportunities for blending Marx with other thinkers, such as Nietzsche or Bergson, once the theoretical framework built by Engels and Kautsky had been dismissed.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> G. Sorel, *Réflexions*, 331, 340, 342.

<sup>133</sup> See F.F. Ridley, *Revolutionary Syndicalism in France: The Direct Action of Its Time*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1970, 249-255; P. Mazgaj, *The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press 1979, 113-127. On the disconnection between revolutionary syndicalism and real trade union practices, see P. N. Stearns, *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor: A Cause without Rebels*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press 1971, esp. 103-107; P. Schöttler, "'La Commune ouvrière en formation'? Georges Sorel et les Bourses du Travail", *Georges Sorel et son temps*, J. Juillard and S. Sand (eds.), Paris, Seuil 1985, 53-73.

<sup>134</sup> J.J. Roth, *The Cult of Violence: Sorel and the Sorelians*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1980, 258. On Sorel's lasting influence, see also I. Berlin, 'Georges Sorel', *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, H. Hardy (ed.), Princeton, Princeton University Press 2001, 296-332.

<sup>135</sup> On Sorel's contamination, see L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution. Vol. II*, 149-154.

However contrasting in their conclusions, the reflections of Bernstein and Sorel originated from the same problem, namely the difficulty of reconciling vulgar Marxism as a set of theories with social democratic practice. Since the 1870s, the gap between what *was done* and what *could be said* – to cite Ignaz Auer’s private views on social democratic tactics – had widened so spectacularly as to put theory under strain.<sup>136</sup> In retrospect, three major sources of tension – not to say contradictions – caused by that gap can be easily nailed down.

The first lay in sticking to a commitment to revolution while getting involved in a prolonged, and largely successful, confrontation with the upper classes to extract concessions and expand the role of workers in public life. Of course, a conflict of attrition with a fluctuating pattern is not inconsistent with the prospect of an all-out victory: in that sense, social democratic parties could still claim to be working for the long-term overthrowing of the capitalist system even when they compromised with the enemy.<sup>137</sup> Yet, some of their battles objectively decreased the chances of victory for socialism in the short term. A clear example is the fight for universal suffrage. The introduction of equal political rights ranked among the most urgent demands of social democratic parties, as severe restrictions based on gender, wealth, and ethnicity still applied in all European countries. Socialist mobilisation was highly effective in that respect: the extension of manhood suffrage in Belgium (1893), Austria-Hungary (1897

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<sup>136</sup> Auer, a co-founder of the SPD and deputy, wrote to his long-time friend Bernstein amid the revisionist controversy: ‘Do you think it is really possible that a party which has a literature going back fifty years, an organisation going back forty years and a still older tradition, can change its direction like this in the twinkling of an eye? For the most influential members of the party to behave as you demand would simply mean splitting the party and throwing decades of works to the winds. My dear Ede, one doesn’t formally decide to do what you ask, one doesn’t say it, one does it’ [E. Bernstein, ‘Ignaz Auer der Führer, Freund und Berater’, *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 1, 1907, 345-346, cited in J. Joll, *The Second International: 1889-1914*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1968, 93-94].

<sup>137</sup> On the basic principles of the strategy of protracted war, see M. Zedong, ‘On Protracted War (May 1938)’, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung. Vol. II*, Peking, Foreign Language Press 1965, 113-194; R. Strausz-Hupé, W.R. Kintner, J.E. Dougherty and A.J. Cottrell, *Protracted Conflict*, New York, Harper & Brothers 1959, 1-6.



and 1907), Norway (1898), Finland (1906), Sweden (1909), and Italy (1912) took place under significant pressure from below.<sup>138</sup> The consequences of a sudden increase in the number of people eligible to vote, however, were mixed. Social democrats advanced everywhere, and in some countries managed to elect deputies for the first time, but – also due to the overrepresentation of rural districts – failed to gain the majority of votes or, for that matter, seats. Being too powerful to disregard representative assemblies but not enough to control them, socialists were now stuck in an uncomfortable position. Furthermore, bourgeois parties could play on deep ethnic and cultural cleavages to remain in power. Left-wing anticlericalism, for instance, led many working-class Catholics to support either a conservative Catholic party (in Belgium) or moderate Liberal candidates who pledged to defend Catholic values (in Italy).<sup>139</sup> Even in urban areas, where social democratic parties were expected to have the upper hand, conservative candidates could rely on racial prejudices, demagoguery and anti-liberal economic platforms to appeal to previously disenfranchised sections of the population: Karl Lueger's successful building of a middle and lower-class power bloc in Vienna allowed him to serve as Mayor for fourteen years.<sup>140</sup> But the implications of running for office ran deeper than that, and revolved around the issue of legitimacy. Assuming the Parliament would cease to be a purely bourgeois institution, and faithfully reflect the balance of power between the classes – e.g. by embracing proportional representation –,

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<sup>138</sup> See D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years*, 20-21. General strikes were particularly important in the Belgian case: see J. Polasky, 'A Revolution for Socialist Reforms: The Belgian General Strike for Universal Suffrage', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3, 1992, 449-466. For an overview on suffrage discrimination between 1850 and 1913, see R.J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, London, Croom Helm 1983, 3-33.

<sup>139</sup> See C. Strikwerda, *A House Divided: Catholics, Socialists, and Flemish Nationalists in Nineteenth-Century Belgium*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield 1997, 271-282; G. De Rosa, *Storia del movimento cattolico in Italia. Vol. I: Dalla Restaurazione all'età giolittiana*, Bari, Laterza 1966, pp. 551-576.

<sup>140</sup> See J.W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1981, 316-410; J.W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1995, 1-110.

could Socialists still claim the right to suppress it? The Russian Revolution of 1905 marked a turning point in this respect. The constitutional concessions made by the Czar, which included the establishment of a multi-party assembly, exacerbated the split between those, such as Julius Martov, who wished to use legal methods, including parliamentary rule, to advance the socialist cause, and those, like Vladimir Lenin, who dismissed them as deceptive.<sup>141</sup> In Germany, being pressed by unionists radicalised by Russian events, Bebel sought to escape the dilemma by arguing that a revolution might still be necessary as a defensive means after an electoral victory, to protect what had been achieved through the ballot box from the bourgeois reaction.<sup>142</sup> It was a subtle attempt to have it both ways – many social democrats would reiterate the point throughout the 1920s and 1930s<sup>143</sup> – but Bebel’s argument could hardly exhaust the issue, already raised by Bernstein, of whether the development of mass democracy was making revolution superfluous.<sup>144</sup>

The second contradiction within the socialist movement was the adherence to an anti-statist view of the future socialist order while pushing for an agenda that expanded the role of the State. Socialist anti-statism predates Marx’s writings, and can be traced

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<sup>141</sup> See I. Gerzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1967, 113-115; R. Service, *Lenin: A Political Life. Vol. I: The Strength of Contradiction*, London, Macmillan 1985, 151-155. In Summer 1917, Lenin still lambasted the ‘the petty-bourgeois democrats, such as our Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and also their twin brothers, the social-chauvinists and opportunists of Western Europe’ who ‘instil into the minds of the people the wrong idea that universal suffrage “in the *modern* state” is really capable of expressing the will of the majority of the toilers and of ensuring its realization’ [V. Lenin, ‘The State and Revolution’ (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1918), *Essential Works of Lenin: “What is to be done and Other Writings*, H.M. Christman (ed.), New York, Dover Publications 1987, 279].

<sup>142</sup> See C.E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*, Harvard, Harvard University Press 1955, 42-45; E. Schraefer, *August Bebel: Sozialdemokrat im Kaiserreich*, Göttingen, Musterschmidt-Verlag 1966, 70-76.

<sup>143</sup> See e.g. the party platform of Austrian social democrats approved in November 1926: *Protokoll des sozialdemokratischen Parteitages 1926, abgehalten in Linz vom 30. Oktober bis 3. November 1926*, Wien, VGA 1926, 173-177.

<sup>144</sup> For two diametrically opposed cases, see R. Luxemburg, *Sozialreform oder Revolution?* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1899), Leipzig, Verlag der Leipziger Buchdruckerei Aktiengesellschaft 1908, esp. 38-44; Viscount P. Snowden, *Socialism and Syndicalism*, London, Collins’ Clear Type Press 1913, esp. 130-139. For an excellent overview of that debate, see G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought. Vol. III, Part II*, 941-976.

back to nineteenth-century anarchists. One of them, the French author and journalist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, was among the first to explicitly identify socialism properly understood, which he preferred to call ‘mutualism’, with a stateless society. In his own words: ‘Whether direct or indirect, simple or compound, the government of the people will always be the deceit (*escamotage*) of the people.’<sup>145</sup> For this reason, he vehemently objected to any form of centralised control over property. When, following the 1848 revolution, Republican Minister Louis Blanc stood for the nationalisation of railways and the creation of State-sponsored social workshops, measures that other revolutionaries applauded, Proudhon was outraged. To his mind, only the federal union of workers and families, based on the principle of voluntary association and exchange, would safeguard their dignity and independence: ‘Here, the worker is no longer a State servant, swamped by the ocean of the community; he is a free man, truly his own master, who acts on his own initiative and personal responsibility, sure that he will get a fair and rewarding price for his products and services, and that his fellow citizens will offer him the maximum degree of loyalty and the best guarantees for the goods he will consume.’<sup>146</sup> Although Marx did not share Proudhon’s sympathy for small-property holders and farmers, he surely agreed with his view of the bourgeois State as an exterior entity, a constraint on the proletariat’s ability to govern itself. As he and Engels famously wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*: ‘The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie’, whose society

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<sup>145</sup> P.-J. Proudhon, *Idée générale de la révolution au dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, Garnier Frères Libraires 1851, 140.

<sup>146</sup> P.-J. Proudhon, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières*, Paris, Dentu, 1865, 92-93.

was to be replaced by ‘an association (*eine Assoziation*) in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.’<sup>147</sup>

Truth be told, some passages in Marx’s writings, albeit ambiguously, suggest a more positive role for the State, especially in the transition from capitalism to communism, during the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>148</sup> Yet Marx’s anti-statism was subsequently underscored, and probably accentuated, by Engels. In the *Anti-Dühring*, he set out to elucidate the relationship between socialism and the State by pointing at the dissolution of the latter under communism. Historically, Engels explained, the State had been the ‘official representative of the entire society, the gathering of it together (*Zusammenfassung*) in a visible body; but it was this only in so far as it was the State of that class which itself represented, in its time, the whole society’; with the ultimate disappearance of classes, ‘the State makes itself superfluous (*überflüssig*). As soon as there is no longer a social class to be held in subjugation [...] there is nothing more to repress, and a special repressive force, a State, is no longer necessary.’<sup>149</sup> He also contended that communism would be essentially post-political: ‘The government over persons is replaced by the administration of things and the management of the process of production. The State is not “abolished”; it *withers away*

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<sup>147</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1848), Munich, Wilhelm Fink 1978, 72, 89. On Proudhon’s anti-statism, see R.L. Hoffman, *Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.-J. Proudhon*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press 1972, 168-196; S. K. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press 1984, 127-165.

<sup>148</sup> For instance, in the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels laid out a ten-point programme aimed at making ‘despotic inroads on the rights of property’, such as progressive taxation and centralisation of credit [see K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifest*, 88]. In general, as David L. Lovell convincingly argued, ‘Max’s socialism was state-less only in so far as the state was an expression of class society. Marx did not share the anarchists’ indiscriminate prejudice against leadership. His conception of socialism had a place for leadership, authority, and for “politics” in a non-class sense’ [D. W. Lovell, *From Marx to Lenin: An Evaluation of Marx’s Responsibility for Soviet Authoritarianism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1984, 32].

<sup>149</sup> F. Engels, *Herrn Eugen Dühring Umwälzung der Wissenschaft („Anti-Dühring“)* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1878), Stuttgart, Dietz 1910, 262, 262-263.

(*er stirbt ab*).'<sup>150</sup> Arguably, Engels' remarks reflected the need to steer a middle course between the anarchists, such as Bakunin, who never stepped claiming that Marx was a Jacobin in disguise<sup>151</sup>, and the followers of the German lawyer and activist Ferdinand Lassalle, who thought only the State could ensure the 'training and development of the human race to freedom', including the working class.<sup>152</sup> In the following decades, anarchists were expelled from nearly all social democratic parties, whereas Lassalle's reputation – which was still remarkable twelve years after his death, at the foundation of the SPD<sup>153</sup> – was slowly overshadowed by that of Marx and Engels. In his commentary to the Erfurt programme, released in 1892 and reprinted eight times until 1909 without changes, Kautsky confidently held that 'The State will not cease to be a capitalist institution until the proletariat, the working-class, has become the ruling class; not until then will it become possible to turn it into a socialist co-operative Commonwealth (*Genossenschaft*).'<sup>154</sup> In 1918, the leader of the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (POB) Emile Vandervelde went so far to produce a substantive theoretical work – partly conceived before 1914 – entitled *Le Socialisme contre l'État*. 'In the economic as well in the political order, and in general in all the spheres of collective life' Vandervelde argued, 'socialism is not statist, is anti-statist', for under socialism 'the great cooperative of social work, having achieved its full autonomy, governs itself, without any

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>151</sup> See e.g. M. Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1873), M.S. Shatz (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1990, 142-143, 182.

<sup>152</sup> F. Lassalle, *Arbeiterprogramm. Über den Besonderen Zusammenhang der gegenwärtigen Geschichtsperiode mit der Idee des Arbeiterstandes*, Zürich, Meyer & Zeller, 1863, 41.

<sup>153</sup> In 1875, Marx wrote the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* – which remained unpublished until 1891 to avoid internal controversies – to criticize the acceptance of Lassalle's core ideas by the SPD: see D. McLellan, *Karl Marx, His Life and Thought*, London, Macmillan 1973, 430-438.

<sup>154</sup> K. Kautsky, *Das Erfurter Programm in seinem grundsätzlichen Teil erläutert*, Stuttgart, Dietz 1892, 130.

governmental interference.<sup>155</sup> Even though Vandervelde made a distinction between the State as the organ of authority (*l'Etat organe d'autorité*) and the State as an organ of management (*l'Etat organe de gestion*) – with the latter supposed to remain in place –, it is highly significant that anti-statist themes were still present in socialist discourses in the aftermath of the Great War.<sup>156</sup> Reconciling that approach with social democratic programmes advocating more regulations and higher taxes to fund a wide range of welfare policies, from labour insurance to old age pensions, however, was not an easy task – especially in the light of social and economic trends that suggested capitalism was not on the verge of implosion. It is no coincidence that Bernstein, in his call for a revision of vulgar Marxism, argued that the *Anti-Dühring*'s definition of the State had become obsolete and that, 'however decentralised an administration we envisage, there will always be a large number of tasks which are incompatible with the notion of the autonomous activity of society', such as the administration of transport or the maintenance of public order.<sup>157</sup> Yet, by sticking to Kautsky's interpretation of Marxism, social democrats failed to complement their libertarian conception of the political order with a credible theory of State intervention.

The third contradiction within the socialist movement consisted of fuelling the myth of the working class as an inherently international actor despite the social democrats' chronic difficulties in cooperating internationally. The fierce contest for the leadership between Marx and Bakunin plagued the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), later known as the First International, and caused its split in

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<sup>155</sup> E. Vandervelde, *Le socialisme contre l'État*, Paris, Berger-Levrault 1918, 169-170. See also Vandervelde's first version: E. Vandervelde, *Le socialisme contre l'État*, Ghent, Société Coopérative 'Volksdrukkerij' 1911.

<sup>156</sup> E. Vandervelde, *Le socialisme*, 75-77.

<sup>157</sup> E. Bernstein, 'Die sozialpolitische Bedeutung von Raum und Zahl', *Neue Zeit*, 15, 2, 1897, 100-107 and 138-143, translated as '5. The Social and Political Significance of Space and Number', *Marxism and Social Democracy*, 84, 88.

1872.<sup>158</sup> The World Socialist Congress held in Ghent in 1877 proved that anarchist positions were losing ground, but anti-socialist laws in Spain, France, Germany, and Switzerland as well as the mushrooming of regional and factional gatherings prevented the reunification of social democratic parties under a single framework for nearly two decades. Because of that, the new International – established in 1889 – came to light when socialism had already assimilated national peculiarities, thus being much more diversified and fragmented than in the 1860s.<sup>159</sup> The general acceptance of vulgar Marxism, facilitated by the strength of the SPD vis-à-vis the other founding members, was the only source of internal cohesion.<sup>160</sup> Still, its motto ‘Working Men of all Countries, Unite!’ was hardly appropriate for an organisation that included the nationalisation of the means of production among its core aims and solemnly proclaimed that the permanent relations between socialist parties could not ‘violate the autonomy of national groupings, which are the best judges of the tactics to be adopted in their own country.’<sup>161</sup> Given these premises, the Second International was bound to remain a consultative forum for highly independent parties: the permanent Bureau, established in 1900, ensured some institutional continuity and enhanced internal coordination among members but was not bestowed with executive powers. In a typical fashion, its secretary Camille Huysmans felt he could not intervene as a mediator in the

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<sup>158</sup> See P. Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1980, 249-340; G.M. Bravo, *Marx e la Prima Internazionale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza 1979, esp. 52-63.

<sup>159</sup> For an overview, see M.M. Drachkovitch, *Le socialisme français et allemand et le problème de la guerre, 1870-1914*, Geneva, Droz 1953, 307-312; L. Valiani, ‘Dalla I alla II Internazionale’, *Questioni di storia del socialismo*, Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore 1958, 168-263.

<sup>160</sup> On the SPD as a ‘model party’ as well as ‘dynamic core’ of the Second International, see A. Kriegel, ‘Le parti modèle: la social-démocratie allemande et la IIème Internationale’, *Le pain et les roses: jalons pour une histoire des socialismes*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1968, 159-173.

<sup>161</sup> See J. Braunthal, *History of the International, 1864-1914*, London, Nelson 1966, 195-200. The resolution cited above, originally passed by a faction of French socialists named ‘les Possibilistes’ at their congress and adopted by the International at its foundation, can be found in B. Malon, ‘Les Congrès socialistes internationaux de Paris en 1889’, *La revue socialiste*, 56, 1889, 129-138 and *Les Congrès socialistes internationaux. Ordres du jour et résolutions publiés par le Bureau Socialiste International*, Ghent, Société coopérative Volksdrukkerij 1902, 43-44.

ongoing dispute between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks within the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party unless both wings authorised him to arrange a reconciliatory meeting.<sup>162</sup>

The feebleness of the International originated from a greater underlying problem, which social democrats tended to downplay: the resilience of nationalism. Neither Marx nor Engels completely overlooked its strength or the necessity to come to terms with it: the latter even claimed, in 1893, that ‘without restoring the autonomy and unity of each nation, it will be impossible to achieve the international union of the proletariat, or the peaceful and intelligent cooperation of these nations towards common aims.’<sup>163</sup> Both of them, however, understood nationalism as a transient phenomenon inextricably linked to a particular stage of capitalist development. Socialists could therefore exploit calls for national self-determination tactically, so to advance the cause of world revolution, bearing in mind that the increasing integration between previously separate national markets would inevitably result in weakening, and finally undermining, the appeal of nationalism.<sup>164</sup> Kautsky admitted, privately as well as publicly, that Marx’s views on the matter had been occasionally simplistic or superseded by events.<sup>165</sup> He nevertheless maintained – in one of his few, scattered

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<sup>162</sup> See e.g. ‘Lette d’Oulianov’, 24.7.1905; ‘Réponse de C. Huysmans (Résumé)’, 5.8.1905; ‘C. Huysmans à Oulianoff (Résumé)’, 8.8.1905, ‘Lénine à Huysmans’, 16.8.1905 in ‘Correspondance entre Lénine et Camille Huysmans (1904-1914)’, G. Haupt (ed.), *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 3, 4, 1962, 600-604.

<sup>163</sup> F. Engels, ‘Al lettore italiano’, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1893), P. Togliatti (ed.), Rome, Editori Riuniti 1964, 50.

<sup>164</sup> See S. Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*, New York, Oxford University Press 1988, 169-192; M. Kasprzak, ‘To Reject or not to Reject Nationalism: Debating Marx and Engels’ Struggles with Nationalism, 1840-1880s’, *Nationalities Papers*, 4, 2012, 585-606.

<sup>165</sup> See letter from Kautsky to Adler, 12.11.1896 in V. Adler, *Briefwechsel mit August Babel und Karl Kautsky*, Vienna, Wiener Volksbuchhandlung 1954, 220-222; K. Kautsky, ‘Vorrede des Uebersetzers’, K. Marx, *Revolution und Kontre-Revolution in Deutschland*, Stuttgart, Dietz 1896, VII-XXX.



contributions on the topic – that economic centralisation would settle the issue of nationalities ‘painlessly’, by blending peoples together in a world polity.<sup>166</sup>

The most perceptive voices of social democracy were aware that nationalist surges could endanger the prospect of international socialism, especially outside Western Europe. As Rosa Luxemburg warned in 1896, the consequences of backing demands for national self-determination from Central and Eastern European minorities could be calamitous: ‘Rather than a working class organized in accordance with political realities, there would be an espousal of organization along national lines, which often goes astray from the start. Instead of political programs, nationalist programs would be drawn up. Instead of a coherent political struggle of the proletariat in every country, its disintegration through a series of fruitless national struggles would be virtually assured.’<sup>167</sup> Still, most social democratic parties preferred not to address the issue openly, or do it under the highly dubious postulate that nationalism was a dying force. Living under an increasingly polarised empire, Austrian social democrats were the most thoroughgoing in investigating the relationship between socialism and national self-determination. Drawing on the works of his comrade Karl Renner, the young theorist Otto Bauer controversially argued in *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907) that national autonomy was a ‘necessary demand’ for any section of the working class waging the class struggle within a multinational state.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> K. Kautsky, ‘Die moderne Nationalität’, *Die Neue Zeit*, 5, 1887, 451.

<sup>167</sup> R. Luxemburg, ‘The Polish Question at the International Congress of London’ (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1896), *The National Question – Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg*, H. B. Davis (ed.), New York-London, Monthly Press 1976, 58. On Luxemburg’s contribution, see also G. Haupt, ‘Dynamisme et conservatisme de l’idéologie: Rosa Luxemburg à l’orée de la recherche marxiste dans le domaine national’, *L’Historien et le mouvement social*, Paris, François Maspero 1980, 293-341.

<sup>168</sup> O. Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1907), Minneapolis-London, University of Minnesota Press 2000, 258. See also Rudolf Springer [Karl Renner], *Der Kampf der österreichischen Nationen um den Staat*, Wien, Franz 1902. On Austro-Marxism and the role of nations, see A. Agnelli, *Questione nazionale e socialismo: contributo allo studio di K. Renner e O. Bauer*, Bologna, Il Mulino 1959; H. Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im*

And yet, for all his non-conformism, Bauer too confidently concluded that ‘the international division of labor will necessarily lead to the unification of national polities in a social structure of higher order.’<sup>169</sup> Without grasping that quasi-religious faith in the virtues of economic interdependence and in the spontaneous growth of international solidarity among workers, it is impossible to understand why social democrats grossly underestimated the risk of a major war between imperialist powers before 1914. Grounded in the strictly Marxist assumptions that nationalism was above all an expression of bourgeois false consciousness and the world was marching towards an ever-closer economic unity, they miscalculated about the possibility that workers would fight against each other. In that spirit, it seemed reasonable to argue, as the French socialist leader Jean Jaurès did in 1910, that replacing standing armies with popular militias would make conflicts much less likely for offensive war ‘in the world of democracy and labour is completely outdated, absurd, and criminal.’<sup>170</sup>

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In his last book devoted to political messianism, historian Jacob L. Talmon compared the trajectory of Marxism from 1848 to World War I to a process of psychological relaxation: since ‘messianic expectations’ had failed to materialise, local parties ‘began to feel more like members of a loose international federation than sections of a church militant – the socialist international. They were fighting the class enemy at home according to the parliamentary rules of the game, and were trying to become the national party which shaped the character of the nation liberated from class rule, instead of waiting for the call from a revolutionary GHQ to man a concerted

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*habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat. Vol. I: Das Ringen um die supranationale Integration der zisleithanischen Arbeiterbewegung (1867-1907)*, Wien, Europa-Verlag 1963, esp. 314-338.

<sup>169</sup> O. Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities*, 415.

<sup>170</sup> J. Jaurès, *L'organisation socialiste de la France: l'armée nouvelle*, Paris, Publications Jules Rouff & Cie, 7.

assault laid down by an international proletarian strategy.’<sup>171</sup> Talmon’s analogy is impeccable except for the fact that it fails to convey the buoyancy and sense of fulfilment that socialists experienced between 1870 and 1914. Industrialisation was breeding a huge working class, on whose numerical expansion the success of social democratic parties ultimately depended; national economies were more and more integrated; technological progress was boosting productivity; social reform was moderating the effects of capitalist exploitation. In that context – whether through an endless process of reforms or a sharp revolutionary break – the advent of a classless society seemed only a matter of time, even though it would probably begin in the most advanced economies. An American activist, Isador Ladoff, captured the spirit of the age by triumphantly proclaiming, in 1901, that ‘the economic structure of our modern society is clearly drifting towards the socialization of industry, and Socialism is preparing the people for this revolutionary change.’<sup>172</sup>

Considering that mood, it is easy to realise why social democrats could carry on their ordinary tasks without feeling a pressing need to unpack at least some of the concepts, or revisit some of the arguments, on which vulgar Marxism rested. Ideology was no longer able to offer any detailed or compelling insight to dictate politics; rather, its function was now twofold: first, to provide a framework of legitimacy within which marginal differences in convictions and lines of conduct could be accommodated; second, to encompass crystallised symbols and rites in order ‘to keep up the enthusiasm of the troops and to transform the prosaic nature of everyday political claims.’ by which

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<sup>171</sup> J.L. Talmon, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution: The Origins of Ideological Polarisation in the Twentieth Century*, London, Secker & Warburg 1980, 10.

<sup>172</sup> I. Ladoff, *The Passing of Capitalism and the Mission of Socialism*, Terre Haute, Debs Publishing Co. 1901, 5.

the enthusiasm of the militants could be aroused or kept alive.’<sup>173</sup> The ultimate paradox of social democracy before 1914 lies in this disconnection between theory and practice, or more specifically, in the growing reluctance to reconcile the two by producing a comprehensive assessment of the limitations of Engels’ and Kautsky’s systematisation of Marx’s thought. Subsequent, traumatic events would lead some socialists to undertake that thoroughly critical analysis of Marxism which had been delayed for so long.

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<sup>173</sup> R. Aron, ‘From Marxism to Stalinism’ (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1944), *The Dawn of Universal History: Selected Essays from a Witness of the Twentieth Century*, Y. Reiner (ed.) New York, Basic Books 2002, 205. In 1896, Bertrand Russell had acutely observed that ‘Social Democracy is not a mere political party, nor even a mere economic theory; it is a complete self-contained philosophy of the world and of human development; it is, in a word, a religion and an ethic’ [B. Russell, *German Social Democracy* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1896), Nottingham, Spokesman 2000, 1].

## II.

### Shockwaves:

#### Hendrik De Man and the Legacy of the Great War

War is the creator of all great things. All that is meaningful in the stream of life has emerged through victory and defeat.

Oswald Spengler, 1922<sup>174</sup>

Neither do I intend to tell you so-called "trench stories", of which a number of people seem to be very fond. There are two sorts of trench stories, those that are beautiful and those that are not. Beautiful trench stories are not usually true, and the true trench stories are seldom beautiful.

Hendrik de Man 1918<sup>175</sup>

The killing of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, on June 28, 1914, is usually credited for unleashing the chain of events that culminated in the outbreak of the First World War. Yet, in the perception of many European socialists, another murder came to symbolise the passing of an age, about one month later. In that case, the victim was Jean Jaurès, shot at point blank range in the back by a nationalist student, Raoul Villain, while sitting at the *Café Le Croissant*, in Paris, on July 31.

Jaurès was not only the most distinguished and authoritative leader of the SFIO, which he had helped to found, but also a great orator, a defender of Alfred Dreyfus, and an outspoken advocate for Franco-German reconciliation after the crushing defeat of

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<sup>174</sup> O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse Einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte. Zweiter Band: Welthistorische Perspektiven*, München, Oskar Beck 1922, 448. De Man would later comment about *Der Untergang*: 'I have never read a book in which I found so many things that struck me as true, or so many things that I disagreed with; which means that it stimulates one to think, and to think anew, on practically every subject within the pale of human knowledge' [H. de Man, 'Germany's New Prophets', *The Yale Review*, 12, 4, 1925, 675].

<sup>175</sup> H. de Man, Talk on War Experiences at Lake Placid Club, manuscript dated 6.6.1918, AHDM/AMSAB/116.

1871. *Revanchisme* was alien to him. Spellbound by German culture, he had even devoted his doctoral dissertation – in Latin – to the study of the early foundations of socialism in the works of Luther, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.<sup>176</sup> His homicide could thus be viewed as an act against some of the core values of the Enlightenment: tolerance, solidarity, cosmopolitanism, peace. Writing to a friend in 1916, the French historian and philosopher Élie Halévy, who never indulged in apocalyptic rhetoric, held that ‘the day Jaurès was assassinated and the fire of Europe was kindled, a new era has begun in the history of the world.’<sup>177</sup> Instinctively, many Parisians felt the same way – and reacted accordingly, driven by a sense of imminent doom and despair. A large crowd gathered in Montmartre, grieving and shrieking *Ils ont tué Jaurès, c’est la guerre*. Hundreds of militants, some asking for vengeance but many more dumbstruck, surrounded the headquarters of the socialist newspaper *L’Humanité*, whose journalists could barely find the strength to speak. In Belleville, police charged and dispersed spontaneous demonstrators while in the *Élysée* the Ministry of the Interior, Louis Malvy, informed the rest of the cabinet that the city was on the brink of revolution. The news of Jaures’ death rapidly spread across the country. Awakened by the doorbell in the middle of the night, the wife of the socialist parliamentarian Marcel Sembat thought a declaration of war had been issued. Once informed, she burst into tears.<sup>178</sup>

Around noon the following day, a 28-year old Belgian socialist who had just arrived in the French capital, Hendrik de Man, witnessed not riots, as Malvy had feared,

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<sup>176</sup> See J. Jaurès, *De primis socialismi Germanici lineamentis apud Lutherum, Kant, Fichte et Hegel: thesim facultati literarum parisiensi*, Toulouse, Chauvin et Fils 1891. The best biography of Jaurès in English remains H. Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaures*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press 1962. On Jaurès’ philosophical background and understanding of Marxism, see also L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution. Vol. II*, 115-140.

<sup>177</sup> Letter from E. Halévy to X. Léon, 24.3.1916, in E. Halévy, *Correspondance et écrits de guerre, 1914-1918*, V. Duclert and M. Scot (eds.), Paris, Armand Colin 2014, 132.

<sup>178</sup> See J. Rabaut, *Jean Jaurès*, Paris, Perrin, 1971, 270; F. Fonvieille-Alquier, *Ils ont tué Jaurès! (31 juillet 1914)*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1968, 207; J.P. Rioux, *Jean Jaurès*, Paris, Perrin 2005, 11; M. Sembat, *Les Cahiers Noirs, Journal 1905-1922*, Paris, Viviane Hamy 2007, 567.

but a full, disciplined mobilisation of troops, very similar to the one he had bumped into at dawn, in his own country. De Man had got up early in the morning, in Brussels, determined to ignore the reservists, go fishing, and enjoy some rest after a few busy days. Yet, as soon as he learned about Jaurès, his priorities shifted dramatically. Once in Paris he felt wrapped in an uncanny, dream-like atmosphere. 'The weather was hot and sultry, there was not a breath of air, nature itself seemed to be waiting in suspense. Huge clouds of a lurid sulphurous colour threatened thunder, which never came', he would later recall. 'Men and women walked about almost in silence with the ghostlike detachment of people who have suddenly lost their own volition and henceforth obey the will of a fate which they do not understand, but the hostility of which is brought home to them by everything around them.'<sup>179</sup> Much like his French comrades, the Belgian now realised how real was the ongoing downhill slide towards war. Unlike most of them, he had experienced first-hand how little Socialist leaders had done to stop it.

De Man had just taken part in the extraordinary meeting of the International Socialist Bureau (ISB) held in Brussels, within the offices of the Workers' Education Committee that he directed, on July 29-30. The 'most fateful conference'<sup>180</sup> in the history of the International was attended by many of its prominent members, including Jaurès, Édouard Valliant, Jules Guesde, Hugo Haase, Karl Kautsky, Victor and Friedrich Adler, Rosa Luxembourg, Angelica Balabanoff, and Pieter Jelles Troelstra. Notable absentees were Friedrich Ebert and Vladimir Lenin. Being fluent in four

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<sup>179</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking of a Mind: A Soldier's Thoughts on War and Reconstruction*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919, 23.

<sup>180</sup> J. Braunthal, *History of the International: 1864-1914*, 351. For a detailed account of the conference see G. Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International*, Oxford, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1973, 195-215.

languages, de Man served as interpreter. In this guise, he was present at the debates marking, in his subsequent assessment, the ‘moral bankruptcy’ of the organisation.<sup>181</sup>

Austria’s ultimatum to Serbia had been delivered six days before and British pressures on the Kaiser to mediate had had no effect. Still, the delegates reached Belgium lacking a sense of immediate danger and believing that, at worst, a minor conflict in the Balkans would occur. Jaurès sided with the most confident. According to Charles Rappoport, then representing Argentina, ‘until the last minute [he] thought reason and common sense would prevail’, largely due to his deep-seated conviction that France and Germany would recoil from the prospect of a massive bloodbath.<sup>182</sup> The President of the LSI, Vandervelde, similarly recalled ‘the steadfastness of his optimism’. When leaving, Jaurès predicted that ‘this crisis will pass as the others’ and asked Vandervelde to accompany him to an art gallery to see some Flemish paintings.<sup>183</sup> Vandervelde himself stunned Paul Hymans, a Belgian liberal he met on July 30, with his relative cheerfulness. Both he and Jaurès believed it was not too late to exert effective pressure on national governments, putting the bit – in the latter’s words – in Attila’s trembling horse’s mouth.<sup>184</sup>

Jaurès and Vandervelde, though, were in good company: no delegate seems to have been quite prescient of the upcoming disaster. On July 29, the German social democrat Haase proudly reported that in Berlin, the day before, thousands of workers had demonstrated for peace in twenty-seven different gatherings, proving that the

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<sup>181</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 31.

<sup>182</sup> C. Rappoport, *Une vie révolutionnaire, 1883-1940: les mémoires de Charles Rappoport*, H. Goldberg and G. Haupt (eds.), Paris, Éditions des Sciences de l’Homme, 1991, 295.

<sup>183</sup> E. Vandervelde, *Jaurès*, Paris, Alcan, 1929, 5.

<sup>184</sup> E. Vandervelde, ‘Jaurès au Bureau Socialiste Internationale’, *L’Humanité*, 31.7.1915; P. Hymans, *Mémoires. Vol. I*, Brussels, Institut de Sociologie Solvay 1958, 81. Jaurès referred to Attila’s trembling horse at the ISB meeting: see Jean Jaurès, ‘La volonté de paix de la France’, *Œuvres de Jean Jaurès. Vol. IX*, M. Bonnafous (ed.), Paris, Rieder, 1939, 394. The most thoughtful analysis of Jaures’ peace strategy has been offered by A. Kriegel, ‘Jaurès en juillet 1914’, *Le pain et les roses*, 107-124.



German proletariat was immune to chauvinistic attitudes. He helped Jaurès in drafting a joint resolution, and stood close to him during a crowded rally on July 30, after the closing of the official ISB session, to stress the socialists' determination to stay united.<sup>185</sup> The debate often revolved around minor issues. Plunged into administrative problems, British delegate Dan Irving and Valliant bickered about the location of the forthcoming Congress whereas Troelstra questioned its extraordinary character. Participants finally agreed to meet up in Paris on August 9 to address the topic "The Proletariat and the War". However pained and gloomy to the point of annoying Rosa Luxembourg when he portrayed Austrian socialists as powerless in preventing the escalation against Serbia, Victor Adler too ruled out the possibility of a general war.<sup>186</sup> The passivity displayed by him and the Bohemian Anton Nemec baffled de Man: 'Even the most radical elements were struck with amazement and awe when they saw how the huge cruel machinery of mobilisation began to move.'<sup>187</sup> Leaders in Brussels, lulled by official declarations, were grossly underestimating the gravity of the situation and failed to produce a coordinated strategy when it was needed the most.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> These symbolic gestures were not new in the history of the International: in 1904 the delegates Plekhanov and Katayama famously shook their hands in Amsterdam during the Russo-Japanese war [see B. Naarden, *Socialist Europe and Revolutionary Russia: Perception and Prejudice, 1848-1923*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1992, 152]. On Haase, see Appendix – Official Record of the ISB Session Held at Brussels on 29-30 July 1914 in G. Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, 252-253; H. de Man, *Après coup*, 102-103; J. Joll, *The Second International, 1889-1914*, 167-168.

<sup>186</sup> See Appendix – Official Record of the ISB Session Held at Brussels on 29-30 July 1914 in G. Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, 252-253, 255, 257, 259-260, 251-252; on Adler's mood, see A. Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel*, London, Hamish Hamilton 1938, 131-132; J. Braunthal, *Victor und Friedrich Adler: Zwei Generationen Arbeiterbewegung*, Wien, Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung 1965, 211; on Luxembourg's reaction, see A. Fabra-Ribas, 'Jean Jaurès à Bruxelles les 29 et 30 juillet 1914', *La vie socialiste*, 219, 1.8.1931, 11-13. The ISB final resolution and the speeches given by Jaurès and Haase were reproduced in W. E. Walling, *The Socialists and the War: A Documentary Statement of the Position of the Socialists of All Countries*, New York, Henry Holt 1915, 125-128.

<sup>187</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 32.

<sup>188</sup> As Gerard Haupt retrospectively argued, 'with the meeting of the ISB, the International had already ceased to exist [...] After that, national sections left without directives, without common and concerted tactics, were to act all alone, in accordance with the wishes and judgements of their leaders.' [G. Haupt, *Les congrès manqué: l'Internationale à la veille de la première guerre mondiale*, Paris, François Maspero 1965, 115-117].

The killing of Jaurès shattered most of those illusions and increased the urgency of hammering out a common position for French and Germans alike. For that reason, de Man, on the morning of August 1, travelled to Paris along with Camille Huysmans, secretary of the ISB, and Hermann Müller, the SPD politician and future Weimar Chancellor. That afternoon, with the mobilisation for war well under way, the three met a group of French socialists at the Palais Bourbon and later in the offices of *L'Humanité*. The mood was grim and tense, epitomised by the 'pale face and the tired suffering eyes' of Pierre Renaudel, a long-time associate of Jaurès who had been sitting close to him when Villain opened fire.<sup>189</sup> Müller's main task was to gather information about French attitudes, in view of the SPD meeting scheduled for August 3: he had no mandate, therefore, to speak on behalf of his party. He nevertheless reassured the audience that German social democrats were split between a majority willing to vote against war credits and a minority inclined to abstain: casting a vote in favour was not even considered an option. He wished French socialists would take a similar stand and stressed the Kaiser's determination to avoid war.<sup>190</sup> One point he made, though, proved controversial. To a French spokesman arguing that, in case of a deliberate act of aggression, socialists of victim states would be right in siding with their country, Müller replied that any distinction between aggressor and attacked states was 'out of date', for the present dispute originated from 'capitalist Imperialism, and the responsibility for it recoils upon the governing classes of all the countries concerned.'<sup>191</sup> That answer,

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<sup>189</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 24. See also 'L'assassinat', *L'Humanité*, 1.8.1914.

<sup>190</sup> When, in hindsight, Müller's good faith was called into question, de Man backed him up for 'he described the actual situation as it seemed at the moment of his departure from Berlin; he had no idea of the already ongoing shift in the mood of his party, which took place between July 31 and August 4.' [H. de Man, 'Pariser Sendung. Die letzte Aktion im August 1914', *Vossische Zeitung*, 22.3.1931] De Man and Müller stayed in touch after the war, and they met at least once to discuss militarism in Germany: see H. de Man, 'New Germany', *Living Age*, 316-4022, 1921, 355-358.

<sup>191</sup> H. de Man, 'Une confirmation', *L'Humanité*, 4.3.1915. See also T. Wolff, *The Eve of 1914*, London, Gollancz 1935, 502.

framed in stiff Marxist terms, sparked a lively debate. Having no binding force, the meeting ended with a vague pledge to hold further bilateral consultations, after which de Man, Huysmans, and Müller took the last train east, already packed with soldiers. In Brussels, which they reached after a troubled trip, ‘the last connecting link between the socialists of the two groups of powers’ was severed, with Müller heading on to Berlin, where his party was succumbing to the fear of Russia striking first.<sup>192</sup> On August 3, German troops invaded Belgium. The day after, Hugo Haase – the very man who had worked side by side with Jaurès in Brussels – addressed the *Reichstag* and explained, echoing Müller’s arguments, that imperialist policies were to blame for the crisis but also announced that his party refused to leave ‘the Fatherland in the lurch in the hour of danger.’<sup>193</sup> At the defining moment, the SPD swung in favour of war credits; French socialists did the same. The dispute over self-defence de Man had heard in Paris now affected him personally: were all powers to be regarded as equally responsible for the outbreak of the war? Was German foreign policy driven by overriding structural factors that prevented its government from pursuing a fundamentally different course? Were Belgian socialists morally entitled to resist? All of a sudden, de Man’s commitment to neutrality vanished: ‘There was a decisive impulse at last I felt such an overmastering movement of repulsion against cowardly brutality, of active sympathy with the victim of an unprovoked aggression, of instinctive desire to share the sacrifice of those who willingly gave up everything for honour’s sake, of admiration for the little plucky one against the big brute, that I could not doubt a minute that this call came from what was

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<sup>192</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 45.

<sup>193</sup> Cited in F. Osterroth and D. Schuster, *Chronik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, Hannover, Dietz, 1963, 157. For an account of the SPD’s vote and how it contributed to fuel the myth of the German people enthusiastically welcoming the war, see J. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilisation in Germany*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2000, 157-161, 166-169.

good and true in me, and had to be obeyed.’<sup>194</sup> Propelled by such a ‘resurrection of combative instincts’<sup>195</sup>, the self-proclaimed pacifist Hendrik de Man abruptly joined his national army to fight against Germany, to which he owed ‘the essentials’ of his ‘scientific and socialist culture.’<sup>196</sup>

Examining the week between July 29, when the ISB met in Brussels, and August 4, which saw the capitulation of German social democrats, is essential to understand not only de Man’s reaction to the unfolding of the events but also the backdrop against which he analysed the Great War. Regrettably, no diary and only a few letters written by de Man in 1914-1918 are left in the archives and it is therefore impossible to trace the step-by-step evolution of his views. Nevertheless, *The Remaking of a Mind: A Soldier’s Thoughts on War and Reconstruction*, a book he published in English in 1919, and *La leçon de la guerre*, the collection of articles released in French in 1920, are a useful proxy and provide a clear picture of the ideological transformation de Man underwent during the conflict.

This chapter focuses on that transformation, which can be summarised as an outright rejection of vulgar Marxism, the strand of thought that had dominated European socialism until 1914.<sup>197</sup> First, it briefly discusses de Man’s pre-war views and his early involvement in socialist activism. Second, it analyses the impact of the war on de Man’s thinking through his twofold experience, as a soldier and as a diplomat. Third, it assesses the originality of de Man’s departure from Marxism as well as the peculiarities of his new approach, being a hybrid variant of democratic socialism built

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<sup>194</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 50. An interesting parallel may be drawn between de Man and the later British prime minister Clement Attlee, another pacifist who volunteered immediately after the invasion of Belgium [see N. Thomas-Symonds, *Attlee: A Life in Politics*, London, I.B. Tauris 2010, 21-22]. Unfortunately, there is no account of Attlee’s emotional reaction to the event.

<sup>195</sup> H. de Man, *Après coup*, 106.

<sup>196</sup> H. de Man, *La leçon de la guerre*, Brussels, Librairie du Peuple, 1920, 5.

<sup>197</sup> See chapter I of this dissertation.

on loathing for communism, faith in the egalitarian potential of capitalism – if wisely managed and properly reformed –, and an interest in social psychology. Although de Man would subsequently revise some of the arguments made in 1919 and challenge the theoretical foundations of Marxism from a different angle after having returned to Europe from the U.S. in 1920, the key themes outlined in his early post-war writings continued to loom large on his intellectual journey. Because of that, *The Remaking of a Mind* and *La leçon de la guerre* can be seen retrospectively as the first salvo in de Man's offensive aimed at reinventing Western European socialism.

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Born in Antwerp in 1885, Hendrik de Man grew up in a well-to-do, cosmopolitan family steeped in the values of the austere, industrious Flemish upper class. At the age of sixteen, however, the young Hendrik started displaying a rebellious temper which, coupled with an increasing awareness of the appalling gap between his prosperity and the miserable condition of the Belgian working class, led him to challenge the alleged hypocrisy and aloofness of his peers. He joined the *Jeune Garde Socialiste* (JGS), the socialists' youth organisation, in 1902, soon becoming the leader of its anti-militaristic wing.<sup>198</sup> When, in 1905, he was expelled from a prestigious institute in Ghent for his participation in an anti-czarist rally in the aftermath of the Bloody Sunday massacre, he broke with his parents and moved to Leipzig.<sup>199</sup>

Germany was the right place to sharpen a socialist mind: the SPD had recently renewed its commitment to Kautsky's brand of Marxism against Bernstein's attempts to revise it.<sup>200</sup> De Man could not agree more. A thoroughgoing supporter of revolutionary

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<sup>198</sup> His first publication, released anonymously, was a rabid attack on the army and on conscription: see *Catéchisme du soldat belge*, Ghent, Imprimerie De Backer, undated [1903 or 1907].

<sup>199</sup> See H. de Man, *Après Coup*, 7-60.

<sup>200</sup> See chapter I of this dissertation.

socialism, he engaged in several publications and educational activities aimed at moulding class-consciousness, one of the paramount tasks in preparation for the ultimate seizure of power. Theoretically, his views were informed by Kautsky's historical materialism: in his first important pamphlet, he laid out a comparative analysis of the attitudes displayed by various socialist parties towards parliamentary rule building on Kautsky's *Die soziale Revolution* (The Social Revolution), and indeed acknowledging him as a major source of inspiration.<sup>201</sup> Strategically, de Man found himself close to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, helping the latter in setting up the International Federation of Socialist Young People's Organizations (IFSYPPO) in 1907, soon endorsed and funded by the Socialist International.<sup>202</sup> Both Luxemburg and Liebknecht underscored the need for intensifying class struggle instead of cooperating with non-revolutionary forces, and de Man's journalistic writings reiterated that point.<sup>203</sup> Nor was his dislike of gradualism tamed by his long stay in England in 1910, as he maintained that universal suffrage under capitalism was deceptive: bourgeois democracy, he believed, was no panacea for workers' exploitation.<sup>204</sup>

De Man's radicalism must be seen in the context of his frustration with the establishment of his own party, the POB, whose willingness to mediate and

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<sup>201</sup> See H. de Man, *Het Tijdvak der Democratie*, Ghent, Germinal 1907. See also de Man's retrospective acknowledgment of Kautsky's influence on him: H. de Man, 'Karl Kautsky, *Vossische Zeitung*', 16.10.1929.

<sup>202</sup> De Man briefly served as general secretary. See G. Haupt, *La Deuxième Internationale, 1889-1914: étude critique des sources, essai bibliographique*, Paris, Mouton & Co. 1964, 348-350; H. de Man, 'Avant-propos', *Compte rendu de la première conférence internationale de la jeunesse socialiste, tenue à Stuttgart, les 24, 25 et 26 août 1907*, Gent, Société coopérative Volksdrukkerij 1907, 3-7.

<sup>203</sup> De Man traced the basic tenets of his position to *Kein Kompromiss, kein Wahlbündnis*, a pamphlet written by Karl's father, William Liebknecht, in 1899 [see H. de Man, *Après coup*, 59].

<sup>204</sup> 'Spurred by my Marxist frenzy, I saw England much in the same way Lenin and Trotsky saw it in the same period, as they indicated the Westminster Parliament by saying with disdain: Over there is the place where "they" assemble.' [H. de Man, *Après coup*, 91] See also H. de Man, 'Sozialistische Reisebriefe: II', *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 1.2.1910 and 2.2.1910; H. de Man, 'Sozialistische Reisebriefe: V', *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 12.8.1910.

compromise, he thought, badly served the labour movement.<sup>205</sup> His doubts about the POB's real commitment to revolutionary socialism were legitimate. Under the influence of the syndicalist César de Paepe, it had originally leaned towards collectivism, a doctrine that prescribed the socialisation of the means of production without resorting to violence.<sup>206</sup> Only in 1894, nine years after its foundation, did the POB issue an official declaration of principles, the *Charte de Quaregnon*, which incorporated key Marxist ideas, such as the necessity to suppress capitalism to maximise the freedom of the workers and participate in the international struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. At the same time, the document greatly emphasised social reforms and parliamentary action to achieve those goals.<sup>207</sup> Its author, Emile Vandervelde, was to become not only the party leader and the most distinguished advocate of Marxism in Belgium but also one of the staunchest supporters of parliamentary rule. Vandervelde's thinking was subsequently celebrated within the POB as an example of 'astonishing dynamism', a 'miraculous synthesis [...] of all forms of proletarian, political, trade unionist, and cooperative action.'<sup>208</sup> In fact, Vandervelde excelled in squaring a genuine admiration for Marx's conceptual apparatus with the necessity to accommodate the progressive integration of the socialist movement within the Belgian legal and political structures after the introduction of universal male suffrage, in 1893. There is no reason to think that Vandervelde, who opposed Bernstein during the revisionist debate, did not truly believe in the inevitable demise of capitalism – except that, by setting the event in

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<sup>205</sup> See H. de Man, *Le mouvement ouvrier en Belgique*, manuscript dated December 1909, AHDM/AMSAB/1304.

<sup>206</sup> On de Paepe, see L. Bertrand, *César de Paepe: sa vie, son œuvre*, Brussels, Librairie de l'Agence Dechenne 1909.

<sup>207</sup> For an extensive commentary of the programme, see *La Charte de Quaregnon, déclaration de principes du socialisme belge: histoire et développements*, Brussels, Éditions de la Fondation Louis de Brouckère 1980, esp. 67-87.

<sup>208</sup> A. Wauters, 'La doctrine de Vandervelde', VV.AA., *Emile Vandervelde: l'homme et son œuvre*, Brussels, L'Eglantine 1928, 90-91. This laudatory book – co-authored by eight prominent socialists – is revealing about the status reached by Vandervelde within the POB in the second half of the 1920s.

a distant future, he provided a rationale for focusing on short-term, practical tasks. It is also because of Vandervelde's lightly worn theoretical baggage that reformist practices gained wide currency within the POB and meant that in Belgium debates about the possibility of pursuing an organic alliance with the Liberals, which social democratic parties with deeper Marxist roots had already excluded in the 1880s and 1890s, dragged on until 1914.<sup>209</sup>

Before the Great War, however, de Man's criticism was levelled at the symptoms, rather than at the cause, of the POB's lacklustre political culture. Appointed director of the *Centrale d'Éducation Ouvrière* (Workers' Education Committee) – an institution aimed at training party members and trade union cadres – in 1910, de Man did not refrain from crossing swords with moderate elements, often former Liberals of middle-class background who, in his view, 'failed to defy the intellectual and moral limitations – such as political careerism – of their class' mentality', accusing them of switching parties 'the same way a mercenary would change sides.'<sup>210</sup> His assaults reached their peak in March 1911 when, in a leaflet published by the *Die Neue Zeit*, he lambasted the 'cooperative cretinism' developed by structures like *Vooruit* (Forward), the main socialist consumer organisation based in Ghent: by claiming that British-style mutualism was nurturing 'the dominant parochialism of the labour movement', de Man was consciously targeting the 'intellectual misery' of his party, stifled by a 'practical revisionism [...] resting upon the illusions of a decreasing class antagonism and the

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<sup>209</sup> As Marcel Liebman argued, 'pragmatism' became the hallmark of Belgian socialism, whose main features were 'a trade unionism lagging behind politics, and politics being dominated by the material and immediate interests of the cooperative movement' [M. Liebman, *Les socialistes belges, 1885-1914*, 198]. For a severe analysis of the POB's integration in the Belgian system, see C. Renard, *La conquête du suffrage universel en Belgique*, Brussels, Éditions de la fondation J. Jacquemotte 1966. According to Janet Polansky, Vandervelde must be credited for developing, together with other social democrats, an original brand of 'revolutionary reformism' [see J. Polaksy, *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde*, 3]. More prosaically, one could argue that he watered down important aspects of vulgar Marxism for practical reasons without bearing the burden of properly revising it.

<sup>210</sup> H. de Man, *Le Citoyen Vertongen*, manuscript dated December 1911, AHDM/AMSAB/1316.



utopia of a peaceful transition to socialism.’<sup>211</sup> By doing so, however, he alienated *Vooruit*’s powerful president, Edward Anseele, and forced Vandervelde to publicly brush off the ‘trivial things’ denounced in the piece.<sup>212</sup> The bitter dispute between Anseele and de Man ended a year later with a formal censure of the latter’s opinions and an appraisal of the cooperatives’ ‘admirable work’ issued by a panel of distinguished party members.<sup>213</sup> Using the most authoritative Marxist journal to criticise the Belgian socialists’ deviance from the orthodoxy was surely a defiant act – but also a misstep for an inexperienced and still relatively unknown party member with no major political accomplishment to claim credit for.<sup>214</sup> In retrospect, the controversy about *Vooruit* is significant for two reasons. First, it revealed de Man’s tendency to overplay his hand in dealing with the POB, which would remain a constant in his career. Second, it showed Vandervelde’s inclination to protect the ideological and institutional heritage of the party, a major cause of friction with de Man in the subsequent decades. It took nothing less than the Great War to shake de Man’s defiant, quasi-religious devotion to historical materialism. His hostility to any revolutionary verbalism that was aimed at concealing unprincipled pragmatism, however, would not change, and would rather be magnified by his war experience.

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<sup>211</sup> H. de Man, ‘La particularité du mouvement ouvrier en Belgique’, in H. de Man and L. de Brouckère, *Un épisode de la lutte des tendances socialistes: le mouvement ouvrier en Belgique* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1911), Brussels, Éditions de la Fondation Joseph Jacquemotte 1965, 65, 68, 49, 38, 80.

<sup>212</sup> Brief van (E. Anseele), AHDM/AMSAB/842; E. Vandervelde, ‘Die Arbeiterbewegung in Belgien: Erwiderung an de Man und de Brouckère’, *Die Neue Zeit*, 2, 28, 43.

<sup>213</sup> Resolutie van Louis Bertrand, Louis De Brouckère en Joseph Wauters betreffende de zaak Anseele-Hendrik de Man, goedgekeurd in de zitting van 28 februari 1912, AHDM/AMSAB/868.

<sup>214</sup> In April 1902, Rosa Luxemburg had vehemently attacked the leadership of the POB on *Die Neue Zeit* for having dashed the revolutionary hopes of the workers after an unsuccessful general strike, a charge that Vandervelde dismissed as unfair and insulting. Yet, unlike de Man, Luxemburg was not a card-carrying member of the POB [M. Liebman, *Les socialistes belges, 1885-1914*, 141-144; J.P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg. Vol. I*, London, Oxford University Press 1966, 242-245].

The most enduring consequence of the 1914-1918 period on de Man's mind-set was his abandonment of vulgar Marxism, driven by his determination to critically engage with assumptions and arguments that pre-war socialists had neither spelled out clearly nor seriously questioned.<sup>215</sup> Though still praising some aspects of the SPD's inner organisation during the 1920s<sup>216</sup>, de Man's uncompromising allegiance to the German strand of socialism died away in the summer of 1914, confronted by the contrast between the theory and the real behaviour of the working class.

The starting point of *The Remaking of a Mind* was the acknowledgement that socialists had tragically underestimated the strength of nationalism. Being proudly attached to his Flemish roots, de Man had been grappling with the problem of national identity at least since 1905, getting acquainted with the works of Otto Bauer and the Austro-Marxists during a semester he spent in Vienna.<sup>217</sup> Despite his ongoing opposition to militarism<sup>218</sup>, only his momentous decision to enlist forced him to recognise that the lack of international solidarity displayed by the proletariat originated from the inherent limitations of international socialist bodies, which merely linked up 'autonomous national organizations for purposes of mutual help and information', and therefore fell short of establishing a genuinely transnational sense of belonging.<sup>219</sup> Socialists were, somewhat paradoxically, victims of their own success for the struggle

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<sup>215</sup> See e.g. letter from H. de Man to L. de Brouckère, 3.8.1916. AHDM/AMSAB/89; H. de Man, 'La révision du marxisme', *Le Peuple*, 13.5.1919, later in H. de Man, *La leçon de la guerre*, 10-17. Both sources dwell on issues that were subsequently addressed in *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, published in 1926. See also H. de Man, *Après coup*, 118-119. On *Zur Psychologie*, see chapter III of this dissertation.

<sup>216</sup> Especially in the field of workers' education, where de Man continued to endorse a German-like centralised system: see e.g. H. de Man, *Le mouvement d'éducation ouvrière en Belgique*, Brussels, Lucifer, 1922, 3-5, 19; H. de Man, 'La politique de la Centrale d'Education Ouvrière', *Education-Récreation*, 10, 1926, 147-148.

<sup>217</sup> See C. Sente, *L'évolution intellectuelle de Henri de Man du début du siècle à la crise des années 20*, Dissertation, Université Libre de Bruxelles 1988-89, 79. See also H. de Man, *Après coup*, 82-86, 132-133. On Bauer, see chapter I of this dissertation.

<sup>218</sup> See e.g. H. de Man, 'Die Militarismus in Belgien', *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 15.11.1909.

<sup>219</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 27-28.

to improve workers' conditions at national level had led the latter to identify their state as the guarantor of their welfare: 'the more national movements increased their strength and influence in their own sphere, the less were they prepared to receive directions from abroad.'<sup>220</sup>

However, this failure went beyond politics and, according to de Man, was a consequence of the socialists' reluctance to seize on psychology. Incidentally, this argument highlighted another source of disagreement between him and many of the radical comrades he had been close to until 1914. In de Man's view, well-intentioned Marxists gathering at Zimmerwald, in September 1915, and Kienthal, in April 1916, rightly argued that the war had been caused by competing imperial interests.<sup>221</sup> On the other hand, by calling for a policy of non-collaboration with bourgeois governments, they were equating all the powers involved, blind to the fact that a victory of the Central Powers would have been 'incompatible with the progress of any movement which requires political freedom, democracy and peace for its normal development', socialism included.<sup>222</sup> Even worse, they were unable to explain why the overwhelming majority of workers accepted taking up arms, being neither 'traitors' nor 'victims of nationalist intoxication' as they erroneously claimed.<sup>223</sup> Refuting the strand of absolute pacifism within the socialist movement, therefore, demanded a closer examination of the soldiers' mentality.

De Man conceded that coercion and propaganda played a part in the early phases of mobilisation. At best, however, this was a half-truth. Building on his first-hand

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<sup>220</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 29.

<sup>221</sup> On these two conferences held in Switzerland, see O. Hess Gankin and H.H. Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War: The Origin of the Third International*, Stanford, Stanford University Press 1940, 309-478; R.C. Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*, Durham, Duke University Press 1989, esp. 63-96, 131-168.

<sup>222</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 96.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

experience, he argued that, after an initial outburst of enthusiasm, a new feeling emerged among the troops: a 'sense of duty', stirred by 'the tremendous elementary power of the desire not to disappoint others who expect something of you. It is this instinct that makes it normal for the least educated of common labourers to do his job well.'<sup>224</sup> The enormous grip that this readiness to obey held up on thousands of people, fully ignorant of the political implications of the war, came as shock to de Man, alongside other spontaneous reactions, such as the burgeoning 'instinct of solidarity' within the trenches and the less admirable but deeply human 'desire to retaliate' against the enemy.<sup>225</sup>

De Man was far from glorifying the soldier's life. To him, war remained nothing but a carnage that spread hatred and acquainted human beings with violence: as he later wrote commemorating his friend Karl Liebknecht after his murder in 1919, the conflict 'had bred more beasts than heroes.'<sup>226</sup> Still, he could not find any better word than heroism to label 'a capacity of the will to subjugate impulses or circumstances adverse to the fulfilment of a duty dictated by conscience' that he witnessed in most soldiers.<sup>227</sup> Under different circumstances, that self-discipline which helped curb the chronic fear of death, he speculated, could be exploited for progressive aims, as de Man held that 'the fundamental instincts of our race' could serve 'the purposes of our present social ethics to the same extent as [...] they were the moral cement of the earlier forms of human society.'<sup>228</sup> Those non-materialistic aspects of the human mind, he argued, could no

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 164, 166.

<sup>226</sup> H. de Man, 'Karl Liebknecht', *Ontwikkeling en Uitspanning*, 6.1.1921.

<sup>227</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 185.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 193. Compare de Man's statement with William James' plea for discipline under peace and wish that 'the military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the growing fibre of the people; no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes now are blind, to man's relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life.' James was an American progressive and a pacifist who had authored *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890. [W. James, 'The

longer be overlooked by any ‘rationalistic philosophy or Utopian desires’ that sought to impose upon the masses ‘a conception of the brain or an ethical imperative contrary to the native instincts and material interests that are the driving power of their common actions.’<sup>229</sup> By 1919, de Man was willing to acknowledge that ‘ideal forces, like the attachment to liberty, the spirit of justice and of chivalry’ were powerful drivers of human action, and to criticise ‘the Marxian philosophy that had thus far confined my outlook too exclusively to the economic aspects of things.’<sup>230</sup>

Dissatisfaction with Marxism was not limited to the theoretical realm. After three years at the front, during which he became commander of a trench mortar battery receiving an Iron Cross for his bravery<sup>231</sup>, in May-June 1917 de Man was sent to Russia at the request of the Belgian government along with Vandervelde and Louis de Brouckère, at the moment when the Entente powers feared the Russian provisional government led by Georgy Lvov might seek a separate peace.<sup>232</sup> By then de Man was well qualified to speak up in the name of socialism and patriotism, and insist on the necessity of marrying them. In a speech given before the First Revolutionary Regiment in Petrograd, he introduced himself both as a ‘soldier of the homeland’ and a ‘soldier of the revolution’, interested neither in ‘annexations’ nor in ‘conquests and exactions’ but

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moral equivalent of war’ (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1910), *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 1, 1995, 24-25]. De Man would occasionally cite this essay in the 1940s: see e.g. H. de Man, *Cahiers de ma montagne*, Brussels, Éditions de la Toison d’Or 1944, 195.

<sup>229</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 195.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> See ‘Comment Hendrik de Man, un de leaders de la Jeunesse socialiste belge et volontaire belge, gagna la Croix militaire’, typescript dated 21.3.1917, AHDM/AMSAB/93; K. Haenisch, ‘Een interview met Rik de Man: Zijne Ervaringen op het front en in Rusland’, *De Volksgazet*, 4.12.1918.

<sup>232</sup> A copy of the original report is in FRP/AN/313/AP130. The most detailed account of the mission ever published is in E. Vandervelde, *Souvenirs d’un militant socialiste*, Paris, Denoël 1939, 225-259. See also H. de Man, *Après coup*, 119-135. De Man contributed to Vandervelde’s book on revolutionary Russia with a chapter on the new Russian army: see E. Vandervelde, *Trois aspects de la révolution russe: 7 mai-25 juin 1917*, Paris-Nancy, Berger-Levrault, 1918, 83-161. An interesting comparison may be drawn between Vandervelde’s account and the diary of another prominent socialist, the French Albert Thomas, who recorded a few meetings with Vandervelde during his stay in Russia: see ‘Journal de Russie d’Albert Thomas: 22 avril-19 juin 1917’, I. Sinanoglou (ed.), *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 1-2, 1973, 86-204.

in preventing ‘a German militaristic hegemony’ over Europe and, perhaps, the entire world. Whereas pacifists in Germany were justified in their refusal to fight, the circumstances compelled those living in attacked countries to wage ‘a desperate struggle for that liberty which is necessary to live.’ Belgian and Russian socialists alike shared the same destiny: ‘As we cannot fight for socialism, we must fight at least for democracy, in order to maintain that minimum of freedom without which socialism will never prosper. That minimum of freedom existed among us, it existed within Western democracy. But it did not exist in Germany.’ In addition, Russians deserved a universal praise for having got rid of the Czar’s hideous regime, hence making clear that ‘only emancipated nations are part of the Entente, struggling against a few, still enslaved peoples.’ The ‘moral unity’ born out of such an outright rebuttal of autocracy was arguably Russia’s greatest contribution to the war effort, de Man contended.<sup>233</sup>

In praising Kerensky and his endeavours to reform the ramshackle imperial system de Man was not simply delivering Belgian propaganda: private correspondence suggests that he truly believed the Socialist Revolutionary Party was right in supporting a wartime coalition government.<sup>234</sup> By contrast, his relationship with the Bolsheviks – ‘men of another mood, if not another stripe’ – was strained from the outset.<sup>235</sup> The Russian far left, he complained, was composed of ‘intellectuals and semi-intellectuals,

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<sup>233</sup> H. de Man, ‘Texte du discours prononcé le 12/23 mai 1917 à Petrograd’, AHDM/AMSAB/96. On de Man’s critique of Germany as a militaristic country, from whose spirit the SPD was not immune, see H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 117-152.

<sup>234</sup> De Man’s contempt for non-interventionists was so strong that in the summer of 1917 he begrudgingly refused to meet his friend Kautsky in Sweden in order not to be associated with the participants to the Stockholm conference [letter from H. de Man to K. Kautsky, 4.7.1917, AHDM/AMSAB/97]. The conference gathered leaders of the Left from countries on both sides during the war to discuss peace terms. On the Stockholm conference, see H. Meynell, ‘The Stockholm Conference of 1917’, *International Review of Social History*, 1, 1960, 1-25 and 5, 2, 1960, 202-225.

<sup>235</sup> H. de Man, *Après coup*, 123. De Man recalled that he was particularly disturbed by Trotsky, whose Anglophobia had been exacerbated by his imprisonment in Nova Scotia [see H. de Man, *Après coup*, 126-129]. In turn, Trotsky would later be a harsh critic of de Man in the Thirties, naming him among the ‘moralists and sycophants against Marxism’ [see L. Trotsky, *Leur morale et la notre* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1939), Paris, Pauvert 1966, 109-123].

most of them Jews, Letts, Georgians, and other members of oppressed nationalities, who had been imprisoned or exiled from their native country in their youth.’<sup>236</sup> Cut off from the public sphere, with no opportunity to engage in daily politics, ‘they had to confine themselves to theorizing. Their main activity consisted in meeting from night till morning in small groups around a friendly samovar, in smoking an endless number of cigarettes and in vehement discussion of abstract theories.’<sup>237</sup> That estrangement made their temper ‘bitter and intolerant’, a condition Lenin was eager to exploit when he established ‘despotism from below’, which turned out to be an ‘unorganised mob-rule by disbanded soldiers with their machine-guns.’<sup>238</sup> Bolshevism, de Man contended, had little to teach socialists living in Western Europe: ‘Practically it was nothing but the response of the hungry war-weary masses to the call for support of the only people who could at least promise them a way out of their misery. Theoretically, it was an attempt to adapt artificially to Russian conditions, aggravated by military and economic disorganization, an abstract doctrine conceived in exile and distilled from social conceptions corresponding to a stage of economic and political development existing abroad but as different from that of Russia as is a hydraulic-press from a sledge hammer in a village smithy.’<sup>239</sup> Their strategy was equally short-sighted. By killing capitalism in its cradle, Bolsheviks were bound to dash all hopes for a real democratisation of the country: like a ‘man up a tree’, de Man quipped, they seemed ‘busily engaged in sawing off the branch’ upholding them.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 241.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 242, 243.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 245. De Man went on reiterating his anti-Bolshevik allegations in 1920, further sharpened by Bertrand Russell’s early writings on the Russian revolution: see e.g. ‘No Bolshevism in Twenty Years: Henri de Man Says State Socialism Dying Out Rapidly’, *The Toronto World*, 8.3.1920; H. de Man, ‘The Menace to Europe’s Urban Civilization’, *Queen’s Quarterly*, 2, 1920, 107-117. See also B. Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1920.

A second official mission – this time to the United States, between April and November 1918 – strengthened his conviction that a workable, decent socialist system needed solidly liberal and democratic foundations. The trip also marked the beginning of an enduring fascination with America and its culture. At first, his admiration for the United States was instinctive, aroused by the dynamic, creative, pioneering spirit of the New World. ‘I have clearly seen its shortcomings and, particularly after a couple of months, I have a sharp understanding of what is still missing and raw in a young civilization like this’ de Man confessed to Louis de Brouckère in August 1918 ‘but its greatness, democratic idealism, spirit of enterprise and bravery are so fascinating that, for my temper and my age, I cannot resist their impact.’<sup>241</sup> He found the same passions buoying the U.S. labour movement, fully committed to victory and just peace – an attitude he linked to the unions’ non-Marxist character –.<sup>242</sup> Moreover, the streak of individualism still permeating the American mind, especially in the West, went against the overarching trend towards big business and centralisation. De Man was well aware that America was neither on the verge of dismantling the free-market system nor likely to swing to the Left in any foreseeable future.<sup>243</sup> However, he wished farmers and industrial workers could come together and, in the long run, form the bedrock of a home-grown social democratic movement.<sup>244</sup> The contrast with Bolshevism could hardly be more striking: ‘In Russia, I have seen socialism without democracy. In America, I have seen democracy without socialism. My conclusion is that, for my part,

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<sup>241</sup> Letter from H. de Man to L. de Brouckère, 12.8.1918, AHDM/AMSAB/102.

<sup>242</sup> De Man’s speeches were well received by the press. *The New York Times* pointed at the differences between him and American socialists supporting the anti-war St. Louis platform. *The Los Angeles Citizen* even portrayed de Man as a titanic figure: when the war broke out ‘he immediately abandoned his dovelike attitude and sprang into the arena, every inch A MAN.’ [‘Against Socialists Here’, *New York Times*, 14.9.1918; ‘Lieutenant Henri du (sic) Man of Belgium Strongly Impresses Unionists of Southern California’, *Los Angeles Citizen*, 12.7.1918]

<sup>243</sup> See e.g. H. de Man, ‘Les élections de novembre’, *Le Peuple*, 7.9.1920.

<sup>244</sup> See H. de Man, ‘L’alliance des fermiers et des ouvriers’, *Le Peuple*, 7.5.1920; H. de Man, ‘L’handicap Europe-Amérique’, *Le Peuple*, 2.10.1920.



if I had to choose, I would prefer living in a democracy without socialism than under a socialist regime without democracy.’<sup>245</sup>

De Man’s belief that the U.S. was set on a fundamentally progressive course was buttressed by his study of its industrial system – that was the purpose of the trip, and de Man found the subject deeply intriguing. By getting familiar with scientific management as theorised by Frederick W. Taylor and tentatively introduced in some factories from the Atlantic to the Pacific he realised that the ‘principles of the good economy [...] to achieve the maximum degree of production with the minimum effort and the minimum waste’ could have massive implications for the socialist movement.<sup>246</sup> ‘Until now, Taylorism, as a method of organising manpower, has served capitalist interests only, against those of the mass of producers and of the nation as a whole’ he claimed in the report summarising the findings of his mission, released in 1919.<sup>247</sup> However, ‘Europe would only benefit from quickly and fully adopting the American principle: high salaries, low costs of production. That means: an improved mechanical equipment, thanks to the concentration of production, the standardization of products and machinery, production in series, and specialization, so to minimize the intervention and the use of labour; in turn, higher productivity, greater wealth and possibility of reducing almost indefinitely the workday while raising wages.’<sup>248</sup> It was true that workers, once involved in a such a uniform, rationalised process, could be easily deprived of the pleasure of craftsmanship, and degraded to the rank of cogs in a machine out of their control – that was, in his view, the most disturbing aspect of scientific management, and one of the reasons why American workers resisted the

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<sup>245</sup> H. de Man, *La Leçon*, 25.

<sup>246</sup> ‘Conférence donnée par Monsieur de Man, Secrétaire de la centrale d’éducation ouvrière, le 22 Janvier 1919, sur le Taylorisme aux Etats-Unis’, AHDM/AMSAB/165.

<sup>247</sup> H. de Man, *Au pays du taylorisme*, Brussels, Le Peuple 1919, 15.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 98.

imposition of Taylor's most reactionary principles.<sup>249</sup> Yet, while ensuring better, more agreeable working conditions was a cause worth fighting for, socialists had to bear in mind that only ever-higher outputs would allow living standards to rise steadily and peacefully. In short, de Man came to see American capitalism as a cooperative and emancipatory enterprise rather than as a zero-sum game based on pure, naked exploitation, allowing him to square the circle and discard Marxism even on economic grounds. His penchant for economic social engineering would also give a distinctly technocratic flavour to some of his subsequent writings on economics.<sup>250</sup>

In the final chapter of his *The Remaking of a Mind*, de Man ventured to predict that no overthrow of bourgeois institutions would occur in the United States: 'I believe that in such an atmosphere socialism can evolve gradually and experimentally from capitalism by the mere play of the tendency to indefinite improvement in efficiency which is inherent to the cooperative system, and by the movement towards more and more political self-determination of the masses, which gives them the power to counteract the detrimental effects of monopolisation.'<sup>251</sup> By no means, however, did de Man believe America was unique in that regard: even Europe, despite a very different historical background, could follow a similar path, provided an ideological reorientation took place. That was the aim of 'New Socialism', a doctrine he outlined with the

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<sup>249</sup> See Ibid., 21-30, 81-89. Throughout the 1920s, de Man was to write extensively about the psychological implications of losing the 'joy in work'. See in particular H. de Man, *Der Kampf um die Arbeitsfreude*, Jena, Diederichs 1927, based on field research undertaken in Frankfurt between 1924 and 1926, sections of which appeared also elsewhere: see e.g. H. de Man, 'Socialisme et bonheur', *L'avenir social*, 1, 1927, 14-17; H. de Man, 'Die Repetitivarbeit als Kulturproblem', *Europäische Revue*, 3, 1927, 88-97.

<sup>250</sup> See de Man's remarks on tentative experiments at industrial democracy mediated by managers, in H. de Man, *Au Pays*, 67-79. In 1948 de Man observed that, following his 1918 trip to the U.S., he started looking at 'the construction of a socialist order as less dependent on the electoral success of parties and more on the development of common welfare (*salut commun*) across all classes, including those running the economy and the administration': see H. de Man, *Au-delà du nationalisme*, Geneva, Les Éditions du Cheval Ailé 1948, 281.

<sup>251</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 260.

purpose of suiting all industrialised nations, in a chapter at first entitled, tellingly enough, 'The Remaking of the World.'<sup>252</sup>

New Socialism, de Man held, differed sharply from Bolshevism, the latter being 'destructive of that very freedom which is the motive power' of positive change where democracy was already in place.<sup>253</sup> The 'germs' of Russian-style socialism were becoming 'as widespread as those of Spanish influenza', and forced democratic socialists to recognise that the socialist movement was irremediably split into two opposing factions: on the one side, de Man placed those aiming at 'the gradual seizure of political power through propaganda aimed at forming a majority', retaining 'all the correctives to unbound majority-rule implied by the constitutionally safeguarded liberties of opinion, press, speech, and opposition by representative bodies'; on the other, the advocates of 'State socialism', a system which would 'entrust a tyrannic and incapable officialdom with a power more absolute than that of any Czar, since it would fetter not only the political, but also the economic sphere.'<sup>254</sup>

New Socialism would pursue bold economic reforms without suppressing the private sector. Despite claiming that 'private property in land and in the principal means of production and transport is no longer justified', de Man refrained from recommending extensive public ownership: 'joint bodies representing both employer and the employed' were 'the only means by which satisfactory conditions of labour can be provisionally secured and increased productivity attained, without augmenting the individual strain', prompting 'collaboration between the management and the managed.'<sup>255</sup> Under the new system, the state would act as a regulator as well as a

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<sup>252</sup> See the original manuscript in AHDM/AMSAB/891.

<sup>253</sup> H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 273.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-276.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 279-281.

competitor of private enterprise. This mixed regime, categorised as ‘competitive and experimental socialism’, would be less a monistic, command-driven structure than a pluralistic framework, putting the ‘incentive of competition and the constant increase of human productivity, which we owe to capitalism’ at the service of ‘the ideals of freedom, equality of rights and chances, and universal solidarity, which we owe to democracy. Only thus can the reconciliation of the two equally vital, but still antagonistic, principles of individual liberty and social unity be effected.’<sup>256</sup> By calling for a ‘revision’ of the doctrine of class struggle, which overlooked the ‘much larger field [...] where the interests of all classes coincide’, de Man came to share some key tenets of Fabianism – a strand of thought he had previously scorned.<sup>257</sup>

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What to make of de Man’s elaborations on his war experience? For sure, their impact on the public was limited: we know, for instance, that *The Remaking of a Mind* failed to reach a big audience.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, not every argument laid down there and in *La leçon de la guerre* stands out as very deep or particularly original. Presenting the conflict as an all-out struggle between the forces of democracy and German imperialism was quite a platitude, especially among English-speaking and French-speaking socialists.<sup>259</sup> Nor did de Man escape some obvious pitfalls in describing America as a

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 283-284.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 284-285. A contemporary reviewer described the book as an account of ‘a conversion to what we should call a Liberal creed’ [‘Some books of the week’, *The Spectator*, 4781, 14.2.1920, 216]. In fact, de Man continued to regard himself as a full member of the socialist movement: see e.g. the preparatory materials for his last conference in Seattle, ‘Labor Crisis is near in Belgium’, AHDM/AMSAB/159.

<sup>258</sup> In the United States the book hit the shelves in a critical moment, around six months before the Senate rejected the Versailles Treaty. In February 1920, the publishing house admitted that, while rating the book ‘very high’ and having ‘strong hopes for its success’, it had not ‘struck the popular note’, mostly due to the ‘strong reaction against books connected with the war.’ [letter from Charles Scribner’s Sons to H. de Man, 3.2.1920, AHDM/IISG/187] See also letter from Charles Scribner’s Sons to H. de Man, 2.7.1923, AHDM/AMSAB/893]

<sup>259</sup> See e.g. A. Henderson, *A World Safe for Democracy*, London, The Athenaeum 1917; E. Vandervelde, *La Belgique envahie et le socialisme international*, Paris, Berger-Levrault 1917.

force for good.<sup>260</sup> In particular, his admiration for Wilson led him to underestimate the mounting tide of conservatism that was soon to sweep American society – as he discovered to his own cost in 1920 when, having returned to the U.S. with the intention of applying for citizenship, he was forbidden to teach and subjected to police surveillance because of the left-wing sympathies. The Red Scare and the subsequent pro-business policies pursued by the Republicans would put an end to the most groundbreaking experiments in workers' control that de Man had witnessed, and praised, during the war.<sup>261</sup>

Nonetheless, from a wider perspective, de Man's accounts are highly original, perhaps even unique. Psychologically, the trauma of World War I stirred up in some veterans the feeling of belonging to a lost generation, crushed by an unparalleled degree of violence, whose faith in progress had been dashed and for whom a return to normality was impossible.<sup>262</sup> For de Man quite the opposite is true: the conflict energised him, drove him into two countries he had not previously visited, and got him acquainted with new patterns of thought that prompted a thorough revision of his thinking. Ideologically, trench experiences often paved the way to a brutalised form of politics, underpinned by a bellicose civic religion.<sup>263</sup> Once again, de Man moved in

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<sup>260</sup> In his enthusiasm for American culture, de Man outstripped most U.S. progressives. As psychologist James Jastrow commented on *The Nation*, 'M. de Man's idealization of the American mind results from a too complimentary acceptance of profession for reality' [J. Jastrow, 'Remaking a Mind', *The Nation*, 2857, 3.4.1920, 433].

<sup>261</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup*, 160-169. See also letter from the American Federation of Labor to H. Suzzallo, 19.3.1920, AHD/AMSAB/156. Frustrated by the loss of his job, de Man decided to return to Belgium in late 1920 as director of the *Ecole ouvrière supérieure*, a newly created institution funded by the POB.

<sup>262</sup> See the classic treatment of R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1979, 1-2, 112-121.

<sup>263</sup> See G. L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, 3-11; F. Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion*, 34-40. Many scholars have linked the rise of totalitarian movements and regimes to brutalization during World War I, including S. Audoin-Rouzeau and A. Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2002, 235-237; R. Gerwarth, 'Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Central Europe', *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, R. Gerwarth and J.

another direction: the more he put his own beliefs under examination the more he shrank away from zealotry and extremism. A comparison between his trajectory and that of former pacifists of the far left such as the Frenchman Gustave Hervé, the Italian Benito Mussolini, the German Karl Liebknecht, and the Belgian Victor Serge, is revealing. Like de Man, Hervé had been an unwavering opponent of militarism: he used to sign his editorials as *Sans-Patrie* and lost his job as a teacher for his convictions. In 1914 he abandoned insurrectionism, took the side of France, and celebrated the proletarian character of its army. He too rejected materialistic and rationalistic philosophies, but eventually converted to a belligerent and socially conservative form of nationalism whereas de Man claimed to fight for progressive principles that were nobler than the defence, or the glory, of a single country.<sup>264</sup> First-hand experience of trench warfare ties de Man to Mussolini, who had become a towering figure of Italian revolutionary socialism due to his opposition to the Italo-Ottoman War of 1911. Yet Mussolini's diaries, written between 1915 and 1917, are imbued with much more rhetoric than anything de Man wrote during the conflict. Besides, Mussolini ended up theorising *trincerocrazia*, namely the rule of former war combatants in opposition to parliamentary institutions whilst de Man came to recognise the significance of the latter for the development of a pluralistic socialist society.<sup>265</sup> Neither Karl Liebknecht nor Victor Serge abandoned their non-interventionist stance during the conflict. However, they became convinced, in 1917, that Communism was a cause worth fighting for.

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Horne (eds.), New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 52-71; E. Gentile, 'Paramilitary Violence in Italy: The Rationale of Fascism and the Origins of Totalitarianism', *War in Peace*, 85-103.

<sup>264</sup> Compare de Man's statement 'the only way in which I ever felt any Belgian patriotism in the real sense of the world is by loving Belgium as a microcosm of Europe' to Herve's increasingly chauvinistic and authoritarian writings [H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 7; G. Hervé, *La C.G.T. contre la nation*, Paris, Éditions de la Victoire 1920; G. Hervé, *Lettres aux socialistes*, Paris, Éditions de la Victoire 1920]. On Hervé, see G. Heuré, *Gustave Hervé: itinéraire d'un provocateur: de l'antipatriotisme au pétainisme*, Paris, Découverte 1997, esp. 247-286.

<sup>265</sup> See B. Mussolini, 'Trincerocrazia', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 15.12.1917; B. Mussolini, *Il mio diario di guerra*, Milan, Imperia 1923. On Mussolini, see P. Milza, *Mussolini*, Paris, Fayard 1999, 163-217.

Liebkecht, who had co-founded the IFSYPO with de Man, staunchly opposed German's war effort through his movement *Spartakusbund*, a position that earned him a heartfelt tribute from his former comrade. In 1919, following the Soviet example, Liebkecht proclaimed the establishment of a German Free Socialist Republic in Berlin, under which workers' councils were meant to replace the bourgeois State. After that insurrection failed, he was executed by the Freikorps troops who carried out the repression of the uprising on behalf of the German government. As for de Man, internationalism remained Liebkecht's pole star – except that his hero was Lenin, not Wilson.<sup>266</sup> Serge shared with de Man an early militancy in the JGS before turning to anarchism and moving to Paris. In 1914 he was in prison, due to his connections with the Bonnot gang. Released, expelled from France then arrested again for having come back, he was sent to Moscow thanks to a prisoner swap deal in January 1919. There he joined the Communist Party, becoming a close associate of Trotsky. While the First World War pushed de Man to defend his country, an attraction to the Bolsheviks induced Serge to break with it, and rediscover his Russian roots in the name of a universalist revolutionary ideology.<sup>267</sup> Obviously, all these socialists, or former socialists, parted ways: Hervé and Mussolini moved to the right, Liebkecht and Serge to the left. The important point is that all of them were, to an extent, radicalised and drifted away from liberal democracy; on the contrary, de Man veered towards it.

*The Remaking of a Mind* and *La leçon de la guerre* also deserve scrutiny in the context of de Man's intellectual journey. The most immediate change from his pre-war

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<sup>266</sup> On Liebkecht, see H. Wohlgemuth, *Karl Liebkecht: Eine Biographie*, Berlin, Dietz 1973. On de Man's appraisal of Liebkecht's intellectual integrity and courage in challenging German propaganda, see H. de Man, *The Remaking*, 66-67. The stark choice between Wilson and Lenin – epitomising the contrast between the 'democracy born out of the French Revolution' and 'the primitive, incoherent, and brutal forms of Russian fanaticism' – was outlined by Albert Thomas in a famous editorial [see A. Thomas, 'Démocratie ou bolchevisme', *L'Humanité*, 9.11.1918].

<sup>267</sup> See V. Serge, *Mémoires d'un révolutionnaire, 1901-1941*, Paris, Seuil 1951, 53-79. On Serge, see S. Weissman, *Victor Serge: The Course is set on Hope*, London, Verso 2001, 11-51.

thinking was, of course, the acceptance of the most fundamental tenet of democratic socialism: the idea that collectivism, if imposed through a dictatorship, would bring about slavery instead of equality. On that level, de Man's aversion to Bolshevism echoed that of his old mentor, Kautsky.<sup>268</sup>

Still, de Man had no interest in denouncing Lenin for acting 'in contrast with the essential and immutable principles of Marxist socialism.'<sup>269</sup> His appetite for American ideas led him to envisage a mixed economy that would spring out of a steady increase in productivity: in this he anticipated some reformists, such as Hyacinthe Dubreuil, who would discover the advantages of rationalisation for the working class in the late 1920s.<sup>270</sup> His loss of faith in historical materialism and economic determinism spurred his interest in social psychology, in line with the teachings of Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler.<sup>271</sup> Altogether, these elements made him a thinker difficult to pigeonhole, a far out figure who had broken with vulgar Marxism to shift towards Fabianism and ethical socialism in general rather than acquiescing to mainstream Continental social democracy.<sup>272</sup>

The inward-looking character of *The Remaking of a Mind* and *La leçon de la guerre* is a source of strength of those books but also their main weakness. Both weave an intriguing narrative of an ideological evolution yet the theoretical justification for it

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<sup>268</sup> See K. Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats*, Wien, Ignaz Brand & Co. 1918.

<sup>269</sup> L. Blum, *Pour la vieille maison: intervention au Congrès de Tours (1920)*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1934, 10. The powerful indictment of Bolshevism made by the French socialist deputy and future party leader Léon Blum rested on the assumption that Lenin was not a true Marxist.

<sup>270</sup> See H. Dubreuil, *Standards: le travail américain vu par un ouvrier français*, Paris, Bernard Grasset 1929. On the American view of productivity and its spread across Europe after the First World War, see C. Maier, 'Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5, 2, 1970, 27-61; B. Settis, *Fordismi: storia politica della produzione di massa*, Bologna, Il Mulino 2016, esp. 107-204.

<sup>271</sup> See e.g. A. Adler, 'Bolschewismus und Seelenkunde', *Internationale Rundschau*, 4, 1918, 597-600. It is unclear whether de Man was already familiar with Adler at this point. In *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, Adler is extensively praised.

<sup>272</sup> One could argue that, of the three Labour's utopias sketched out by Peter Beilharz, de Man was close to Fabianism whilst Kautsky embodied Social Democracy: both rejected Bolshevism. [see P. Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias: Bolshevism, Fabianism, Social Democracy*, London-New York, Routledge 1992]



remains flimsy: de Man told the reader how and why he distanced himself from Marxism; he did not offer a compelling argument to explain why Marxism was doomed. That would be his main concern during the following decade.

### III.

#### Turning the Old House Upside Down:

#### Hendrik De Man and *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*

Everywhere, in the world, a revision of socialism had been undertaken in the light of changes that had occurred in the dual domain of ideas and facts.

Gaétan Pirou, 1939<sup>273</sup>

During the Thirties, Henri de Man enjoyed an exceptional reputation. Forgotten today, he seems to me the only theorist of democratic socialism between the wars.

Raymond Aron, 1975<sup>274</sup>

Seven years passed before de Man managed to turn the core underlying theme of *The Remaking of a Mind* – his rejection of Marxism – into a new book, sparking a debate which, for breath and depth, if not for animosity, might be compared to the revisionist controversy.<sup>275</sup> De Man's main purpose, however, was less the calling out of the obsolete parts of Marx's thought and more the renewal of the foundations of Western European socialism by endowing intellectuals with a brand new conceptual apparatus. Bernstein wanted Marxism to evolve; de Man aimed at transcending it. His intention was to renew socialism in light of recent developments in social sciences such as the emergence of sociology and, even more importantly, social psychology as new ways of understanding human behaviour and collective action. 'Socialism must free

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<sup>273</sup> G. Pirou, *Néo-libéralisme, néo-corporatisme, néo-socialisme*, Paris, Gallimard 1939, 139. Pirou referred to de Man, the German Werner Sombart, and the British G.D.H. Cole.

<sup>274</sup> R. Aron, 'Post-scriptum to «Au delà du marxisme»', *Contrepoint*, 16, 1975, 166. Aron's review of *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* originally appeared in the journal *Libre Propos* in January 1931. It was republished in 1975, following the 1974 re-edition of de Man's book by Seuil.

<sup>275</sup> See chapter I of this dissertation.

itself from Marxism' he wrote in his memoirs, summarising his feelings in the mid-1920s. 'Not like someone who trashes an enemy whom he had considered a friend for a long time, having suddenly realised he was wrong, but like someone who get rids of formulas which, once alive and vivifying, have been surpassed by the evolution of facts since long time and fallen back into the state of harmful prejudices.'<sup>276</sup>

This chapter focuses on de Man's critique of Marxism as expressed in his most relevant theoretical work, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*. It also discusses how the book was received by Kautsky and Vandervelde, who aimed at preserving Marxism as the ideological cornerstone of the international socialist movement. The dispute between them and de Man, far from being a mere clash of ideas, revealed a generational divide between two leading figures of the Second International, sceptical about conceptual renovation and fearful of the consequences of breaking with the existing framework of analysis, and a breed of intellectuals in their mid-20s-early 30s, based all across Europe, persuaded that de Man had simply spotted the obvious, namely the inadequacy of Marxist categories in accounting for the post-1914 realities. By scrutinising the reaction to *Zur Psychologie* by three Belgians (Max Buset, Yves Lecoq, and Ivo Rens), a Dutchman (Hendrik Brugmans), an Italian (Carlo Rosselli) and a Frenchman (André Philip) the chapter stresses not only the similarity between de Man's concerns and theirs but also, in some cases, the existence of a common background between them and de Man, an element that contributed making *Zur Psychologie* the

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<sup>276</sup> H. de Man, *Après coup*, 191. It is noteworthy that de Man continued to praise Marx's contribution to the history of socialism, reacting very positively to the publication in 1932 of his *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, in which he found the freshness and vitality that Marxism had irremediably lost in the subsequent decades. [see H. de Man, 'Der neu entdeckte Marx', *Der Kampf*, 5-6, 1932, 224-229, 267-277] One could even argue that de Man was less critical of Marx than of Engel's and Kautsky's systematisation of his thought. On the distinction between Marx's thinking and vulgar Marxism, see chapter I of this dissertation.

rallying cry for significant sections of the socialist youth. Finally, the chapter will evaluate strength and weaknesses in de Man's analysis.

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The origins of de Man's decision to return to full-time academic research must be traced to the frustrations of the early post-war period. Contrary to his expectations, the Versailles Treaty bore little resemblance to Wilson's war aims and was perceived at the time as imposing a Carthaginian peace upon the vanquished.<sup>277</sup> Unable to acquire American citizenship, his sympathies went now to the Weimar Republic, 'the democratic and unarmed Germany' whose prospects of stability and economic recovery were threatened by the unmitigated hostility of the neighbouring countries.<sup>278</sup> Belgium's acceptance of Poincaré's foreign policy was another major source of disappointment. When, in January 1923, the Theunis cabinet agreed to occupy the Ruhr, an outraged de Man resigned from the military reserve force, denouncing the 'violence' of the government's conduct, perpetrated through an army which had become 'instrumental to a policy which is in flagrant contradiction with the principles for which I have fought.'<sup>279</sup> His disenchantment could hardly have been spelled out more clearly. The choice of moving back to Germany reflected, therefore, not only a genuine commitment to social theory but also an increasing estrangement from the post-war settlement.<sup>280</sup>

It was in Darmstadt, where he taught social psychology, that de Man laid the groundwork of his magnum opus published in 1926, *Zur Psychologie des*

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<sup>277</sup> See H. de Man, 'La grande désillusion', *Le Peuple*, 26.1.1919.

<sup>278</sup> H. de Man, 'L'Allemagne nouvelle: l'esprit de mon enquête', *Le Peuple*, 12.6.1921. On several occasions de Man publicly demanded the revision of the Versailles Treaty, including a substantial reduction in war reparations and the end of the Rhineland occupation: see e.g. the speech he gave in Cologne on March 22, 1922. For further details, see AHDM/AMSAB/209, AHDM/AMSAB/210.

<sup>279</sup> Letter from H. de Man to the Ministry of National Defense, 12.1.1923, AHDM/AMSAB/135.

<sup>280</sup> See H. de Man, 'Sabotons la Guerre!', *Education-Récréation*, 25, 1921, 418-419. De Man was also upset by the trade unions' unwillingness to fully engage in international and transatlantic cooperation: see his remarks about Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labour in H. de Man, 'A Blow to International Solidarity', *Seattle Union Record*, 6.10.1920.

*Sozialismus*.<sup>281</sup> This hefty, carefully written book, first published in German, soon revised with minor changes and slightly abridged, then translated into all major European languages<sup>282</sup>, covered a wide range of topics, distilling de Man's efforts to recast socialism as a cultural and ethical phenomenon, rooted in the workers' search for self-fulfilment in performing a job.<sup>283</sup> According to de Man, Marxism – as much as other social theories elaborated in the nineteenth century – suffered from 'determinism, causal mechanism, historicism, rationalism, and economic hedonism', having failed to acknowledge that 'the realisation of socialism does not depend upon the automatic fulfilment of an economic law' but rather 'upon the deliberate activity of the labour movement, upon an activity working in opposition to this alleged economic law, upon activity which aims at maintaining or restoring the workers' joy in labour.'<sup>284</sup> Contending that the 'essential driving force of the labour movement' was mainly a 'question of dignity' rather than a desire for material gains, de Man argued that working class solidarity developed out of the 'ancestral community instincts which had been modelled into ethical norms by Christianity and by the social experience of past centuries.'<sup>285</sup> The socialist creed, therefore, did not stem from class conflict in itself but from an ongoing 'moral revolt' (*Auflehnung*) prompted by 'a specific sense of justice'

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<sup>281</sup> A rich but confused collection of notes about his research in Darmstadt, including a number of reviews of books related to social psychology, is available in AHDM/AMSAB/179-181. For a succinct analysis of de Man's intellectual endeavours in Darmstadt and Frankfurt, see A. Gatzemann, *Hendrik de Man (1885-1953): sein Leben und Werk aus Sicht heutige Wertediskussionen*, Wien, Novum Pro 2009, 29-108.

<sup>282</sup> Contracts were signed with publishing houses based in Netherlands (June 1926), Belgium (November 1926), United Kingdom (February 1927), Czechoslovakia (June 1927), Spain (September-October 1927), Sweden (October 1927) and Italy (November 1928). [see AHDM/AMSAB/905-912] The first edition published in France, which appeared in 1929, was based on the German second edition, slightly shorter than the original one. [see H. de Man, 'Avant-propos de la deuxième édition française', H. de Man, *Au-delà du marxisme*, Paris, Alcan 1929, 5] The second edition was also the one translated into Italian, by Alessandro Schiavi, upon request by Benedetto Croce, as well as into English, by Eden and Cedar Paul.

<sup>283</sup> The theme of joy in work lies at the core of the Darmstadt lectures delivered in January-March 1924: see e.g. the undated draft 'Arbeitsfreude', AHDM/AMSAB/259.

<sup>284</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1926), Diederichs, Jena 1927, 14, 67. For clarity purposes, quotations are drawn from the English translation: H. de Man, *The Psychology of Socialism*, London George Allen & Unwin 1928, 23, 95.

<sup>285</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 39, 91; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 57, 127.

(*Rechtsempfinden zu suchen*) which the rise of capitalism, by separating the producer from the whole process of production through the division of labour, deeply offended.<sup>286</sup> In many respects, capitalism engendered a ‘distaste for work’ (*Arbeitsunlust*) to which further increases in prosperity or a less unequal distribution of wealth would offer no solution. A ‘mere change in property relationship’, de Man insisted, would not suffice to make the industrial worker feel ‘the master of his own work.’<sup>287</sup>

Socialists operating under the influence of Marx, de Man contended, failed to realise that a key source of strength for socialism lay in the instinctive, spontaneous rejection of capitalism on psychological and moral grounds, and that workers who had permanently lost, or never experienced, joy in work could hardly establish or live in a cooperative society. Soviet Russia too, de Man held, hinting at Lenin’s New Economic Policy, ended up resorting to capitalist management techniques as communists had ‘not succeeded in providing the masses with new working motives in place of the old.’<sup>288</sup> On the contrary, socialism would thrive only if ‘the endeavour to upbuild a better social system becomes in the long run an endeavour to make men better and happier, an attempt to develop the psychological forces which will make such a system possible.’<sup>289</sup>

In the second and third part of the book, de Man engaged with the practical implications of neglecting non-rational factors for socialist parties across the Western world. The tendency to present the socialist society as the inevitable outcome of conflicting material forces, he argued, led socialists to disregard intellectual renovation, turning Marxism into dogma and obliterating the ‘enduring spiritual creative force’

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<sup>286</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 40-41; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 58-59.

<sup>287</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 46; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 66.

<sup>288</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 49; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 70.

<sup>289</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 52; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 75.

which informed the various strands of socialist thought that developed throughout history.<sup>290</sup> In turn, such a stiff adherence to historical materialism estranged the intellectuals – broadly defined as skilled labour, namely those employees whose work is based on knowledge rather than on physical force – for socialists got used to splitting up that class ‘into two or three fragments which they assign [...] to the capitalist class, to the proletariat, or to the middle class’ and treating its members as ‘camp followers’ (*Mitläufer*) unless ‘they wholly adopt the mentality of the working masses.’<sup>291</sup> The most remarkable consequences, however, were party bureaucratisation and a crisis in internationalism, to which de Man devoted some of the most biting pages of *Zur Psychologie*.

At first the battle for political and social democracy, he noted, was waged by socialists with passionate, semi-religious intensity: ‘This struggle for a remote end inspired them with a heroic emotional frame of mind. Their aims were a little vague, perhaps; but they were certainly such as tended to arouse enthusiasm.’<sup>292</sup> The successful consolidation of party structures, however, resulted in the dwindling of that crusading spirit: ‘The leader becomes a professional leader, and his activity takes the form of office work. By slow degrees the motive of the organisation changes. The distant goal of the primary desires is not repudiated’ but, in its daily activities, the organisation displays a tendency ‘towards self-preservation and towards becoming an end in

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<sup>290</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 141; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 192.

<sup>291</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 154, 169; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 209, 229. It is worth mentioning that de Man excludes declassed intellectuals from the group. As he put it, ‘a socialist society could easily dispense with the ragtag and bobtail of Bohemia (*Caféliteraten*); but it could not continue to exist without the good will of engineers, men of science, school teachers, able civil servants, and statesmen.’ [H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 168; de Man, *The Psychology*, 228] De Man expanded his views on the subject in a conference given in May 1926, before a group of social-democratic academics: H. de Man, *Die Intellektuellen und der Sozialismus*, Jena, Dietrichs 1926.

<sup>292</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 214; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 283.

itself.’<sup>293</sup> Such a ‘displacement of motives’ (*Motivverschiebung*) in socialist psychology caused the shift from a revolutionary to a predominantly reformist mindset among leaders and militants alike during the second half of the nineteenth century: socialist cadres started confusing ‘the cause of socialism with the cause of the party’ as if the two were the same thing.<sup>294</sup> Trade unionism and the cooperative movement went down the same path. A similar set of unintended consequences, de Man claimed, operated with regard to the prevailing attitudes towards the State. The more the working class gained influence, the more socialist forces were incorporated into the existing political system, holding power at local and, from time to time, national level. As a consequence, the buoyant internationalism of the early days was gradually replaced by an emotional attachment to the institutions already in place, nurturing a widespread social patriotism that socialist leaders proved unable to rein in. ‘Since the days of the First International’, de Man argued, ‘the working-class movement has undergone an increasing national differentiation of mentalities and methods; has displayed a growing tendency on the part of the national organisations towards intellectual autonomy; has manifested a progressive intensification of the motives leading the workers of the respective countries to be integrated as national communities.’<sup>295</sup> Defying the expectations of Marx and Engels, socialist parties had thus become ‘the true buttress of the State’ across Europe.<sup>296</sup> De Man was not appalled by the trend as he understood the international socialist movement as ‘a plurality rather than a unity’, and was keen to praise the national sentiment as ‘an integral part of the emotional content of socialism of each country’ insofar as it was tempered by a deeper commitment to humanitarianism and

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<sup>293</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 215; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 284.

<sup>294</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 221, 224; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 292, 295.

<sup>295</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 229; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 302.

<sup>296</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 236; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 311.



world peace.<sup>297</sup> On the other hand, both bureaucratisation and the waning of internationalism within the Left raised serious doubts about Marxism as a valuable conceptual framework for socialists living in the 1920s. ‘Every organised intellectual movement’, de Man warned, ‘reaches a stage of development when the power of the organisation becomes the main obstacle to the realisation of the ideal on behalf of which the organisation was founded.’<sup>298</sup> Once that point has been reached, a radical turn both in party management and in its ideology is required.<sup>299</sup>

De Man was therefore pointing to the need for a new doctrine so to ‘invigorate the pursuit of partial objectives by relating them to some great common end’, both domestically and internationally, and the book did end with a call for ‘a renovation of socialist conviction by means of the moral and religious consciousness.’<sup>300</sup> This was a long way from a detailed programme for action yet many passages of *Zur Psychologie* not only suggest de Man was consistent with the conclusions reached in *The Remaking of a Mind* but also reveal an even stronger ascendancy of British socialism over him. It is worth stressing that, among the remedies to the bureaucratization of the socialist movement that de Man proposed, strong emphasis was placed on the importance of involving workers in industrial management, as recommended by Guild Socialism, ‘the most modern and the most carefully thought-out form of the socialism of the

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<sup>297</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 246; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 325. To him, ‘every socialist must be eager to overlook nothing which can possibly reinforce internationalism; but for that very reason every socialist must begin by recognising the reality of the conditions and the limitations which derive from the power of national sentiment.’ [H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 357; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 456]. For further discussion on de Man’s views on nationalism, see chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>298</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 221, 224; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 296.

<sup>299</sup> On important issues, de Man’s analysis of party bureaucratisation echoes Robert Michels’ *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der Modernen Demokratie*, first published in 1911. Michels, though, wrote the book after having left the SPD as he had concluded the establishment of a socialist society was impossible due to the oligarchic dynamics inherent to party politics. De Man was much less pessimistic than Michels about the prospects of socialism – but the fact that the attack came from a distinguished socialist thinker made it harder to dismiss that criticism as reactionary or biased.

<sup>300</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 347, 397; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 445, 505.

intellectuals.’<sup>301</sup> Although it is unclear whether de Man had already met its leading theorist, G.D.H. Cole, there is no doubt that he was well familiar with Cole’s work, especially *Self-Government in Industry* (1917) and *Guild Socialism Restated* (1920).<sup>302</sup> Equally generous was his assessment of the British Labour Party, which he regarded as an example of dynamism, flexibility and immunity from dogmatism in comparison with the German SPD. Without denying the often ‘opportunist’ conduct of Labour, de Man cheered its ‘progressive’ outlook: ‘British socialists, engaged in a daily struggle on behalf of immediate demands, which are, however, justified by ethical motives, can watch the growth of their achievements while animating all their activities with a moral enthusiasm whose inspiration widens as their reformist activities prove increasingly successful.’<sup>303</sup> In his view, the ‘rapid advances of socialism in England’ originated from the virtuous interaction between trade unions and ‘the most advanced members of the intelligentsia’, such as the Fabians.<sup>304</sup> Finally, his support of democracy was unwavering. ‘To the Marxists, the labour movement is nothing more than a simple struggle between the interests of various classes; and they regard political democracy as only a means which will ensure the victory of the working class because the workers outnumbered the non-workers.’<sup>305</sup> Socialists, on the contrary, had to refute the

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<sup>301</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 165; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 222.

<sup>302</sup> See AHDM/AMSAB/158. In this undated note, arguably written in 1919 or 1920, in preparation for a series of lectures on scientific management to be delivered in the United States, he explicitly mentioned Cole. For further evidence of Cole’s influence on de Man, see de Man’s intervention during the 1921 seminar in Morlanwelz [see H. de Man, ‘L’allocution du President de Man: la définition du contrôle ouvrier’ and ‘L’aspect psychologique du contrôle ouvrier’. *Compte rendu sténographique de la semaine syndicale tenue à Morlanwelz du 4 au 10 septembre 1921*, Brussels, Lucifer 1921, 11-17 and 43-60 respectively] and, at a later stage, an essay devoted to industrial democracy [see H. de Man, ‘Socialism and Industrial Democracy’, *Socialism in Our Times: A Symposium*, H. W. Laidler and N. Thomas (eds.), New York, The Vanguard Press-League for Industrial Democracy 1929, 362-371]. Only a few scholars have so far noticed that de Man’s intellectual relationship with Cole predates the 1930s. Among them see C. Sente, *L’évolution intellectuelle de Henri de Man*, 114, and M. Harrington, *Socialism: Past and Future*, New York, Anchor 1989, 96. On Cole, see also chapter VII of this dissertation.

<sup>303</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 192; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 256.

<sup>304</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 155, H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 210-211.

<sup>305</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 78; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 110.

dictatorship of the proletariat as a beneficial or necessary step towards a socialist society, and anchor socialism to the idea of self-rule: ‘We must abandon the disastrous belief that there are “means” independent of the “end” [...]. We must contrapose to the communist fallacy of a socialism without democracy, the proud conception of a humanitarian ideal which will consciously derive its energies from centuries of equalitarian aspiration.’<sup>306</sup> This line of argument allowed de Man to link socialism to the core values of Christianity. Both socialism and Christianity, he wrote, stand for the principle that every human being has dignity and deserves respect. For this reason, ‘Christian sentiment remains one of the most bountiful sources of democratic and socialist convictions.’<sup>307</sup> In all likelihood, de Man was here alluding to Christian socialism, a strand of thought particularly strong in Britain, and quite possibly drawing from to the work of the Fabian Richard H. Tawney.<sup>308</sup>

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De Man’s endeavours to sever socialism from Marxism, i.e. the intellectual tradition underpinning German social democracy, while bestowing dignity on some of the most controversial aspects of the British socialist tradition, including its anti-materialistic outlook, could hardly have gone unnoticed, within and outside Germany.<sup>309</sup> In

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<sup>306</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 79; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 111.

<sup>307</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 82; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 116.

<sup>308</sup> In *Zur Psychologie* de Man makes a direct reference to Tawney’s *The Acquisitive Society* (1921) [see H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 165; H. de Man, *The Psychology*, 223] but he might also have been aware of Tawney’s most recent book, in which the British historian argued that ‘compromise is as impossible between the Church of Christ and the idolatry of wealth, which is the practical religion of capitalist societies, as it was between the Church and the State idolatry of Roman Empire.’ [R. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*, London, John Murray 1926, 286] From an overview on British Christian socialism, see N. Dennis and A.H. Halsey, *English Ethical Socialism: Thomas Moore to R. H. Tawney*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1988; M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 2011, 215-297.

<sup>309</sup> Between 1926 and 1928 *Zur Psychologie* received no less than seventy reviews in all major European languages. In Germany, early commentators included Arkadij Gurland, later associated with Theodore Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s *Institut für Sozialforschung*; Carlo Mierendorff, a leading figure of the anti-Nazi resistance; legal theorist and former minister Gustav Radbruch; theologians Emil Fuchs and Paul Tillich. In France, Bracke and Jean Longuet – Karl Marx’s grandson – were among those who

particular, the book stunned two distinguished figures who had played a major role in de Man's intellectual and political upbringing: Karl Kautsky and Emile Vandervelde.

De Man encouraged Kautsky not to take his criticism of Marxism personally, as he considered their friendship strong enough to survive disagreements, but both men realised that a book calling the ideology of the SPD into question compelled the party's main ideologue to hit back, and the controversy that would follow would inevitably unveil some 'formal breaks' (*formalen Brüchen*) in their assessment of the past, the present, and the future of socialism.<sup>310</sup> Kautsky, then seriously ill and busy completing *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung* (1927), a two-volume work aimed at revising historical materialism by filling some gaps in Marx's and Engel's thought, managed to come out publicly against *Zur Psychologie* only in January 1927.<sup>311</sup> Unsurprisingly, the importance of safeguarding Marx's reputation and legacy was the key underlying theme of his remarks. Instead of fully engaging with de Man's own arguments, Kautsky quickly dismissed his fundamental premises – the possibility of developing a non-materialistic understanding of workers' exploitation – and flagged up, in a rather patronising way, a number of passages allegedly proving a misreading of Marx's writings: 'Presenting and criticising certain ideas that are impossible to find in Marx and that, at times, Marx himself outrightly rejected as 'Marxist' is a common technique among Marx's critics. In this case, each Marxist has not only the right but, on occasions, the duty to refute that criticism as false by referring to what Marx actually

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claimed de Man misinterpreted Marx's thought and provided an unfair assessment of the socialist accomplishments before 1914.

<sup>310</sup> Letter from H. de Man to K. Kautsky, 3.12.1925, AKK/IISG/DXVI/320. See also the letters from L. Kautsky to H. de Man, 12.12.1925 and 17.2.1925, AHDM/IISG/190.

<sup>311</sup> In 1927 Kautsky acknowledged that, in some cases, 'revisions' of Marxism were 'unavoidable' [K. Kautsky, *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung. Vol. II*, Berlin Dietz 1927, 630] but he also clarified that his own conception of history, as outlined in the book, was 'built on that of Marx and Engels' and thus consistent with historical materialism as a method of inquiry. [K. Kautsky, 'Eine Selbstanzeige', *Rote Revue*, 7, 6, 1928, 161] It is clear that de Man's and Kautsky's attitudes towards Marxism diverged quite sharply at this stage.

said.<sup>312</sup> Kautsky was not blind to the fact that *Zur Psychologie* had sparked a significant debate and caught the interest of many left-wing intellectuals. Yet he claimed that de Man, being a ‘talented writer’, had only been able to capitalise on a latent ‘disposition of spirit’ already present in the youth: ‘war infused the generation grown up under its reign with great revulsion and disdain for systematic hard work’ in social theory, and their lack of first-hand knowledge of Marx’s thought drove them into the arms of de Man.<sup>313</sup> In the second part of his review, Kautsky denied that *Zur Psychologie* had something valuable to offer. Claiming that Marxism never neglected the role of intellectuals in society, he criticised de Man for sketching out a theory which, if put into practice, would have reactionary implications: ‘the establishment of the intellectuals as *ruling class within the State*’, oppressing the working class instead of lifting it up.<sup>314</sup> Empowering intellectuals without addressing economic exploitation, i.e. the extraction of surplus value under capitalism, could hardly be a satisfactory solution, for it would simply pit intellectuals and unskilled workers against each other in the long run. In sum, Kautsky bemoaned, *Zur Psychologie* was based on ‘empty assertions’ and ‘inaccurate accounts of both the history of our party and our theories.’<sup>315</sup> Kautsky’s unabashed defence of German Marxism prompted an extensive reply by de Man, who went through a meticulous discussion of specific sections of *Das Kapital* in order to demonstrate his acquaintance with the text.<sup>316</sup> No common ground, however, could be found between the 73-year old co-editor of the Erfurt programme (1891) and a 42-year

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<sup>312</sup> K. Kautsky, ‘Les «leçons» de Henri de Man’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 22, 1928, 110-111. The text originally appeared as K. Kautsky, ‘De Man als Lehrer’, *Die Gesellschaft*, 4, 1, 1927, 62-77.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>314</sup> K. Kautsky, ‘Les «leçons» de Henri de Man (fin)’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 23, 1928, 213.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>316</sup> See H. de Man, *Antwort an Kautsky*, Jena, Diederichs 1927. This 24-page pamphlet was originally conceived as an article for *Die Gesellschaft*. The journal, however, refused to publish it, apparently not to give further visibility to de Man’s book. [see H. de Man, ‘Vorbemerkung’, *Antwort an Kautsky*, Jena, Diederichs 1927, 1] See also the letter from H. de Man to R. Hilferding, editor of *Die Gesellschaft*, 17.1.1927 and his reply on 29.1.1927, AHDM/IISG/200.

former protégé who had rejected the analytical framework of his mentor.<sup>317</sup> Seven years later, in October 1934, the two would cross swords once again after de Man referred to ‘the degenerate and ossified Marxism of social democracy during the last quarter of the previous century’ epitomised by Kautsky and August Babel, whose conception of the State had ‘an undeniable lingering odour of barracks.’<sup>318</sup> The vitriolic language used by both suggests that no reconciliation had occurred in the meantime, nor that had de Man softened his views about the theoretical limitations of German social democracy.<sup>319</sup>

Vandervelde, who had fewer reasons to take on a friend and POB member, found himself embroiled in an intellectual contest with de Man following a speech he gave Paris in May 1927, centred on the incompatibility between Bolshevism and democratic socialism. *Le Patron* briefly referred to *Zur Psychologie*, praising the book at first, calling it ‘the most important work on socialism, perhaps, that has been published since the war’ and celebrating de Man’s experience as ‘a propagandist, academic, manual worker, as well as an intellectual, an educational director, and even a war volunteer.’<sup>320</sup> Yet, having surely read Kautsky’s review and taking up its main points, the leader of the POB voiced his dissatisfaction with a purely psychological understanding of the social inferiority complex, and confessed his ‘astonishment’ regarding some of de Man’s conclusions. ‘By departing from historical materialism’, Vandervelde warned, de Man was moving back to ‘the idealism of Jaurès but, whereas the latter, coming from an opposite pole, never ceased to get closer to Marx, de Man

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<sup>317</sup> De Man published a succinct account of Kautsky’s thought in occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. In an otherwise generous assessment, based on the recognition of his political courage, intellectual standing and unparalleled influence over German socialists in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, de Man nonetheless stressed that Kautsky’s works ended up reflecting ‘the stable, comfortable course of social-democratic opportunism. (*trägen, behaglichen Strom des sozialdemokratischen Opportunismus*)’ [H. de Man, ‘Karl Kautsky’, *Vossische Zeitung*, 16.10.1929]

<sup>318</sup> H. de Man, ‘Le corporatisme socialiste contre l’étatisme’, *Le Peuple*, 19.9.1934.

<sup>319</sup> See also K. Kautsky, ‘Mon étatisme. Une mise au point de Karl Kautsky’, *Le Peuple*, 29.9.1934.

<sup>320</sup> E. Vandervelde, ‘Le marxisme a-t-il fait faillite?’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 18, 1927, 514.

seems to have the preoccupation of moving away from it, and to replace the *immanence* of a class movement with the *transcendence* of a group of intellectuals.<sup>321</sup> According to him, such an ‘aristocratic conception’ was bound to collide with the ‘profound feeling’ of ordinary social democrats, who expected to be rescued by their own conscious action rather than by a ‘revelation from without.’<sup>322</sup>

Vandervelde’s comments triggered de Man’s response less than a month later, when he addressed a cohort of socialist students in Brussels. Not only had *Le Patron* misquoted him about the role of intellectuals, de Man held, but he had also missed the deeper implications of his conception of human agency: ‘There are no final causes that social science can know, neither ideological nor economic. It is the very principle of causality that I attack. And the method of this attack is psycho-analytic: I have tried to show that [...] every sociological theory elevates to historical causes the current motives on which it wishes to act.’<sup>323</sup> Even if Marxism was helpful in highlighting ‘le milieu’, e.g. the material conditions under which socialists operated, its determinism could not explain the appeal of socialism itself.<sup>324</sup> To strengthen his case, de Man took his critic as an example: ‘in order to explain Vandervelde’s convictions, we must acknowledge an ethical purpose, the reaction of the thinking individual against the environment, which means that socialism is not only wanted but wanted as something just; it is necessary to presuppose an absolute scale of ethical values.’<sup>325</sup>

In January 1928, seeking to outline the historical relationship between Marxism and socialism, de Man made a more sophisticated case against Vandervelde in which

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>322</sup> Ibidem. The second part of the speech was published as E. Vandervelde, ‘Le marxisme a-t-il fait faillite? (fin)’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 19, 1927, 5-12. The full speech is in E. Vandervelde, *Études marxistes*, Brussels, L’Eglantine 1930, 11-46. The original typescript can be found in AEV/IEV /IIA/50.

<sup>323</sup> H. de Man, *La crise du socialisme*, Brussels, L’Eglantine 1927, 11.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 14.

the generational element loomed large. Hinting at the times in which he used to criticise Belgian socialists for not being Marxist enough, de Man noticed there was an element of irony in their squabbling, as Vandervelde was currently busy defining ‘Marxism against my heresies, whereas fifteen or twenty years ago, he defended his heretical politics against my Marxist orthodoxy.’<sup>326</sup> He also argued that Vandervelde’s concerns were driven by a mixture of emotional attachment to the past and strategic calculations in dealing with other socialist parties. According to de Man, Vandervelde, who ‘owes to Marx the foundations of his socialist thinking’, naturally resisted the idea of pursuing a new course; moreover, being ‘first of all the man of the International’, he was hostile to any endeavour that could jeopardise ‘the traditional cement’ uniting Western European socialists, namely their common, carefully crafted set of ideological tenets developed by Marx and Engels.<sup>327</sup> However polite in his wording, de Man came close to levelling a charge of opportunism against his party leader by suggesting that he refused to ‘sever the intellectual link which unites his party to the brotherly parties across the Rhine’ due to his ‘temperament’ and his ‘deep love for working class unity’.<sup>328</sup> Vandervelde ignored this ad hominem attack and challenged the key arguments of *Zur Psychologie* in a review that was first published in *L’Avenir social*, the Belgian Labour Party’s official journal, and soon after reprinted in *Die Gesellschaft* – unsurprisingly, in the light of Vandervelde’s reputation, closeness to Kautsky and high esteem of the latter’s work.<sup>329</sup> After having summarised de Man’s thesis, Vandervelde conceded that the book

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<sup>326</sup> H. de Man, *Socialisme et marxisme*, Brussels, L’Eglantine 1928, 31.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>328</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>329</sup> In 1928, Vandervelde hailed at Kautsky’s *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung* as ‘the culmination of the great effort which the most illustrious of Marx’s disciples, now very old, has never stopped pursuing with an admirable persistence. None knows the letter and has penetrated the spirit of Marxism better than him.’ [E. Vandervelde, *La psychologie du socialisme: à propos de trois livres récents: Karl Kautsky-N. Boukharine-Henri de Man*, Brussels, Lamertin 1928, 3] Vandervelde’s review of *Zur Psychologie* was published as E. Vandervelde, ‘Jenseits des Marxismus’, *Die Gesellschaft*, 5, 3, 1928, 222-230.



contained insightful observations on certain degenerations of the socialist movement, such as the ‘excessive bureaucratisation of workers’ organisations.’<sup>330</sup> However, echoing Kautsky’s comments, he distanced himself from de Man’s ‘supersocialism’ which, in his view, aimed at empowering intellectuals as a class not only distinct but also superior to the rest of the workers, as well as from his ‘complete bergsonisme’, i.e. irrationalism, shown by his disregard of economic interests in explaining human action.<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, Vandervelde argued that de Man’s zeal against Marx was essentially misguided, resting on a straw man argument. A ‘brutally materialist Marxism, aggressively atheist’ as the one depicted by de Man had been advocated only by a tiny number of radicals – including, Vandervelde jibed, the young de Man himself – and never crept into the socialist mainstream.<sup>332</sup> In a rejoinder, de Man insisted that he never intended to suggest intellectuals were naturally entitled to lead the socialist movement. Rather, by envisaging a ‘new Fabianism’, he had hinted at ‘a movement of ideas – which at first entails little or no organisation – aimed at preparing individually its adherents to certain socialist tasks which do not fit in the immediate framework of collective class conflicts’, along the lines of the burgeoning cooperation between the Belgian *Groupement universitaire d’études socialistes*, the British Fabians, and the French CGT or the Heppenheim colloquium, that de Man was then helping to set up.<sup>333</sup> Vandervelde, de Man went on, also missed the whole point about the social inferiority

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<sup>330</sup> E. Vandervelde, ‘Au-delà du marxisme’, *L’avenir social*, 3, 1928, 134.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 135, 137.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 137. The review was reprinted with minor changes in E. Vandervelde, *La Psychologie du socialisme: à propos de trois livres récents*, 21-48, and subsequently in E. Vandervelde, *Études marxistes*, 87-127.

<sup>333</sup> H. de Man, ‘Réponse à Emile Vandervelde’, *L’avenir social*, 5, 1928, 260-261. The Heppenheim three-days conference, held in May-June 1928, gathered young socialists from the German-speaking world and featured de Man as keynote speaker on the topic ‘The foundations of socialism’. Although the group failed to get traction, largely due to its heterogeneity, the conference is worth mentioning as an early example of transnational intellectual cooperation in which de Man engaged before his planist turn. The proceedings were published as *Sozialismus aus dem Glauben: Verhandlungen der sozialistischen Tagung in Heppenheim a. B., Pfingstwoche 1928*, Zürich-Leipzig, Rotapfel-Verlag 1929.

complex. Without denying the existence of exploitation as an objective fact, de Man had rejected the assumption according to which material exploitation *alone* would suffice to trigger the rise of a countermovement: ‘the formation of the working class’ socialist mentality is not a direct consequence of its milieu of life but rather the product of a psychic reaction which presupposes a preliminary fixing of the mentality by certain moral beliefs and certain notions of social equality.’<sup>334</sup> The corollary of de Man’s reasoning was that without establishing those cultural and ideological preconditions socialists could hardly succeed, even under favourable economic conditions. De Man cited the United States, where capitalist expansion had not been matched by the rise of an equally powerful working class, as a concrete example of the threats socialism would face in the future, if clinging to an outmoded, materialistic and deterministic outlook. His purpose, thus, was to point out the need for a reaction, by lying down ‘by acts of conscious, reasoned and doctrinally motivated will’ the real prerequisites of a successful socialist strategy.<sup>335</sup> That clash notwithstanding, evidence suggests that the relationship between de Man and Vandervelde remained warm, leaving room for cooperation between the two in the future.<sup>336</sup>

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Apart from their intellectual content, Kautsky’s and Vandervelde’s uneasy, and at times resentful, reception of de Man’s book demonstrated that, for better or worse, the author of *Zur Psychologie* was right in stressing a generational divide within the socialist camp. It is highly significant that the only prominent socialist praised by de Man, who praised de Man in turn, albeit privately, was the director of the International

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<sup>334</sup> H. de Man, ‘Réponse à Emile Vandervelde’, *L’avenir social*, 264.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>336</sup> In the midst of their dispute, de Man approached Vandervelde in a very friendly way: see letter from H. de Man to E. Vandervelde, 20.2.1928, AEV/IEV/IV/157.

Labour Office Albert Thomas – an outcast in the golden age of the Second International for his rebuttal of Marxism and eccentric defense of reformism –.<sup>337</sup> No less important is the evidence of the appeal exerted on young socialists in search of inspiration. A former teaching assistant of de Man then in his early thirties, Max Buset translated *Zur Psychologie* into French and got it released by the Belgian left-wing publishing house *L'Eglantine* in 1927.<sup>338</sup> After having fought during the Great War, Buset, who had grown up in a poor family, managed to be admitted to the *Central d'éducation ouvrière* established by de Man in 1920, then specialised in economics at the *Université Libre de Brussels*. He had a first-hand knowledge of British socialism, having been a visiting student to Ruskin College, one of the most distinguished institutions devoted to workers' education, in 1921, at the very moment when Guild socialism was gaining wide currency among Labour intellectuals.<sup>339</sup> Given this background, it is hardly surprising that Buset was heavily impressed by *Zur Psychologie*, arguing that such 'a masterful book', far from epitomising 'a simple passing vogue', was causing 'a singularly active ferment' within the socialist movement, and was bound to 'leave traces' there.<sup>340</sup> Other students in Brussels had the same feeling. Yves Lecocq, born in 1908, who came across the Belgian version of *Zur Psychologie* while taking courses at the ULB, found there a groundbreaking application of insights from disciplines they

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<sup>337</sup> In a letter dated April 30, 1927, sent together with a copy of the French translation of *Zur Psychologie*, de Man portrayed the book as 'an attempt to lay down certain elements of a doctrine of that realistic and constructive socialism that you embody. And it is, besides that, a testimony of admiration for the admirable and tenacious activity which as director of the International Labour Office, you carry out at service of your faith.' [letter from H. de Man to A. Thomas, 30.4.1927, FAT/ILO/CAT-7-489] Thomas' agreement with the substance of de Man's thinking was made explicit a few months later, when he commented on the tract *La crise du socialisme*: 'I have already told you about my sympathy for your ideas, and I am especially grateful to you in this pamphlet for having incorporated in your system, so to speak, the most living tendencies of our modern socialism.' [letter from H. de Man to A. Thomas, 4.11.1927, FAT/ILO/CAT-7-489]

<sup>338</sup> See letter from M. Buset to H. de Man, 10.5.1927, AHDM/IISG/146.

<sup>339</sup> G.D.H. Cole is credited as one the most popular lecturers at Ruskin during the 1920s. [see H. Pollins, *The History of Ruskin College*, Oxford, Ruskin College Library 1984, 38-39] On Ruskin, see also the introductory leaflet *Ruskin College: What Is and What It Stands For*, London, Ruskin College 1918.

<sup>340</sup> M. Buset, 'Au delà du marxisme', *L'avenir social*, 7, 1927, 198.

were taught about but which orthodox Marxists tended to dismiss as irrelevant, such as pedagogy and psychology. De Man's work, Lecoq later claimed, was 'precious' in bolstering 'emerging convictions, rather sentimental at first', but was also an endless source of intellectual and emotional stimulus, whose 'breath' repeatedly fed his enthusiasm.<sup>341</sup> Having met de Man in Frankfurt in December 1930, Lecoq admittedly developed 'a kind of fascination with his personality', similarly to many of the young people working for him, whose 'constancy, fidelity to every challenge, devotion' in championing de Man's ideas was remarkable.<sup>342</sup> One of them, Jef Rens, had also met de Man for the first time while he was in Germany. Having won a one-year fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in 1931, Rens moved to Berlin but soon relocated to Frankfurt in order to take classes from the author of *Zur Psychologie*: 'This work marked me, like many young people of my generation [...]. The book of Henri de Man arrived at the right time to arouse the interest of the socialist youth. *Au-delà du marxisme* certainly did not satisfy us entirely but we found a language in it that was ours, as well as a lucid analysis of the problems of our time.'<sup>343</sup> Rens' curiosity was also piqued by the eclectic figure of de Man, a widely respected theorist who, despite having his roots in Antwerp, was barely known by local party members, strongly committed to the party's official ideology: 'From time to time a leader came to give us a lecture on a so-called doctrinal problem. But these expositions were rather rare and most of the time heavily imbued with a Marxism more or less well understood.'<sup>344</sup> Rens was spellbound by de Man's public persona for he 'did not fit the stereotype of the professor', being

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<sup>341</sup> Y. Lecoq, 'Quelques souvenirs sur Henri de Man', *Bulletin de l'association pour l'étude de l'œuvre d'Henri de Man*, 3, 1975, 6-7.

<sup>342</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>343</sup> J. Rens, *Rencontres*, 45-46.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 46.

athletic and a lover of open-air life.<sup>345</sup> Furthermore, Rens recalled, he was an extremely talented orator, especially in the academic context, and an acute observer, thanks to his ability to stay focused: ‘undoubtedly, that force enabled him to consider social phenomena in a more thorough manner than we did, and to grasp certain aspects that we did not see.’<sup>346</sup> The two became friends, keeping strong ties across politics and academia which proved mutually beneficial when de Man moved back to Belgium: Rens, then a trade unionist, was a key supporter of the Labour Plan whilst de Man helped him achieve a doctorate with a thesis on German National Socialism, based on early findings dating back to his stay in Frankfurt.<sup>347</sup>

The admiration for de Man was not limited to a cohort of young Belgians. Even when reading *Zur Psychologie* did not result in an early acquaintance with the author, the provocative character of de Man’s thinking struck a chord with highly educated militants based in other countries already baffled by their own experiences in dealing with the working class. A fascinating testimony in that regard has been given by the Dutch politician Hendrik Burgmans, later on a prominent advocate of European federalism and founder of the College of Europe. As a 26-year-old teacher, Brugmans moved from Amsterdam – where he was born and got the essentials of his socialist education – to the small town of Terneuzen, in the Zeelandic Flanders, in 1932, taking up a job at the local high school. There he found out that the Dockers who formed the backbone of the local branch of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers’ Party (SDAP) had developed a genuine sense of solidarity towards each other, despite not having read

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 51-55. For further details on Rens’ background and relationship with de Man, see ‘Interview with Jef Rens’, *Socialism in Western Europe*, 91-130. On the campaign for the Belgian Labour Plan see chapter V of this dissertation.

‘a line of Marx.’<sup>348</sup> Moreover, they seemed uninterested in the grandiose debates urban intellectuals regularly engaged in. Brugmans was soon to conclude that his ‘Marxist education did not correspond with the proletarian reality.’<sup>349</sup> To him, the allure of *Zur Psychologie* lay mainly in two aspects: first, de Man’s inductive method to analyse the workers’ movement for, unlike leaders and trade unionists who kept an elitist approach to the issue, he had ‘drawn his conclusions from his work as educator’; second, his insistence on ‘the national question’, addressed through the lens of his decision to join the Belgian army in 1914, as an important component of the workers’ self-identity which Marxism had failed to address.<sup>350</sup> In his view, de Man was the natural heir of Bernstein, an intellectual who provided a theoretical rationale for the daily ‘cultural reformism’ Brugmans was keen to undertake, both as a teacher and as a militant.<sup>351</sup> A fervent supporter of the Labour Plan during the 1930s, Brugmans continued to defend de Man’s reputation as a philosopher even after the Second World War.<sup>352</sup>

Even richer is the evidence about the impact of *Zur Psychologie* on the Italian anti-fascist activist Carlo Rosselli and the French economist André Philip. Undertaking a closer examination of their reading of the book is a valuable exercise, not only because of the remarkable influence that both Rosselli and Philip exerted on the socialist movement in their respective national contexts but also for the different ways in which *Zur Psychologie* crossed their human and theoretical paths.

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<sup>348</sup> H. Brugmans, *A travers le siècle*, Brussels, Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes 1993, 104.

<sup>349</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>352</sup> See H. Brugmans, ‘Hendrik de Man’, *Paraat*, 23.1.1948. In the second half of this article, Brugmans – by then a distinguished member of the Resistance – also dismissed the charges of collaboration against de Man. De Man read and briefly annotated the article. [see AHDM/AMSAB/593] In 1952 Brugmans criticised de Man’s political record but also stated that ‘this does not prevent me from esteeming him.’ [letter from H. Brugmans to Y. Lecoq, 10.1952, AHDM/IISG/570]

Born in Rome in 1899 from an upper class family of Jewish origins, Rosselli was no Marxist in his youth. Still, being steeped in the radical and republication tradition of Garibaldi and Mazzini, he was a harsh critic of the monarchy and despised the conservative role played by the Catholic Church within Italian society. Seeing the Great War as the opportunity to complete the unfinished business of *Risorgimento*, namely national unification, Rosselli supported Italy's intervention in 1915. Drafted in June 1917, he spent the winter of 1918-19 as a member of an *Alpini* division on the northeastern front, finally being discharged with the rank of lieutenant in February 1920. Unlike de Man, Rosselli had a relatively limited experience of trench life. The conflict, however, crushed his family – his older and beloved brother, Aldo, had volunteered and was killed in action in 1916 – and shook the foundations of his patriotism.<sup>353</sup> There was little doubt, Rosselli argued in 1924 while reflecting on the reasons why Italian fascism tended to appeal to the youth, that the Great War brought about a 'gigantic upheaval', for those who had gone through it could hardly harbour illusions about the virtues of violence and, by the same token, had gained a much better grasp of politics: young soldiers who, Rosselli pointed out, 'had left with an abstract ideal [...] were put in the position of understanding many things that they would have missed, in their class or professional isolation.'<sup>354</sup> On the other hand, most fascists, being too young to be drafted and therefore to face the realities of trench warfare, remained attached to an idealised conception of warfare: to them, 'brotherhood, love, internationalism, peace' were meaningless words, 'laughable ideals' to be replaced by

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<sup>353</sup> For a detailed account of Rosselli's early years, see N. Tranfaglia, *Carlo Rosselli: dall'interventismo a Giustizia e Libertà*, Bari, Laterza 1968, 11-31; A. Garosci, *Vita di Carlo Rosselli*, Florence, Vallecchi 1973, 3-22. The only book covering Rosselli's life available in English is S. G. Pugliese, *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Anti-Fascist Exile*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1999, but it touches upon his war experience very briefly: see *ibid.*, 20-24.

<sup>354</sup> C. Rosselli, 'Inchiesta sui giovani (guerra e fascismo)', *Libertà*, 1, 10, 15.5.1924, reprinted in S. Mastellone, *Carlo Rosselli e "la rivoluzione liberale del socialismo": con scritti e documenti inediti*, Florence, Olschki 1999, 153, 153-154.

‘violence, strength, might.’<sup>355</sup> In their naïve enthusiasm for direct action and revolutionary rhetoric, Rosselli observed, the ‘younger brothers’ (*fratelli minori*) of those who fought could have become ‘communists’, had the latter expressed a ‘resolute will to act.’<sup>356</sup> By the time he was writing, Rosselli had embraced humanitarian socialism – becoming, according to the Italian standards of the age, a reformist, yet one of another stripe from older party leaders such as Filippo Turati, born in 1857, and Claudio Treves, born in 1869. Like de Man, Rosselli increasingly looked at the British Labour Party as a model, and at Guild socialism as a promising theoretical approach. ‘Trade Unionism’ (*Il sindacalismo*) became the title as well as the topic of his final dissertation in social sciences, submitted in 1921 at the University of Florence. In his thesis, aimed at comparing the strategies followed by the Labour movement in different European countries, he paid careful attention to the cooperative system envisaged by the Webbs and to G.D.H. Cole’s blueprint industrial democracy, being more sympathetic with the anti-statist framework of latter. In his assessment, Cole deserved credit for having succeeded in ‘imposing on the trade union movement, giving a concrete shape to vague, increasingly urgent demands and aspirations of the masses, the two fundamental motives of struggle: workers’ control and self-government in industry.’<sup>357</sup> In 1922 he visited Britain for the first time; he came once again one year later, together with his mentor Gaetano Salvemini, attending the Fabian Summer School, doing some research at the London School of Economics and developing contacts with the British Trade

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<sup>355</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>356</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>357</sup> C. Rosselli, ‘Il sindacalismo’, unpublished manuscript, AGL/ISRT/3-4/3.1. His findings were summarised in C. Rosselli, ‘Il movimento operaio’, *La Rivoluzione liberale*, 13, 25.3.1924, 53-54. Rosselli categorised Cole as ‘by far the most original of the guildists.’ [ibidem, 54]



Union Congress: in July-August, he met Cole and Tawney.<sup>358</sup> Rosselli's anglophile sentiments – further bolstered by a third stay in London, in 1924, during which he extensively commented on the downfall of Ramsay MacDonald's minority government for the socialist newspaper *La Giustizia*<sup>359</sup> – put him at odds with the establishment of the *Partito Socialista Unitario* (PSU), the only official social-democratic party existing in Italy.<sup>360</sup> As he fiercely claimed in November 1923, for fifteen years the Italian socialist movement had been 'suffering from intellectual paralysis [...]. As the body of the party expanded, membership multiplied, the seats in city councils and in Parliament increased, the cultural level and the fervour of intellectual life declined at an impressive pace.'<sup>361</sup> Three years before de Man, Rosselli argued that 'the most serious mistake' made by reformist leaders during the previous decades was to 'elevate the Marxist doctrine to official thought', a tendency that inhibited new theoretical developments. 'An honest theoretical evaluation of Marxist doctrine' on 'essentially scientific and realistic grounds', Rosselli insisted, was badly needed in order to distinguish 'what is alive and what is dead in Marxism.'<sup>362</sup> In a curious anticipation of the clash between de Man and Kautsky, Rodolfo Mondolfo – a well-known Marxist philosopher – expressed strong reservations about dismissing Marx's thought for this would result in depriving

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<sup>358</sup> Letters from C. Rosselli to A. Rosselli, 28.7.1923, 31.7.1923, 6.8.1923, 14.8.1923, 26.8.1923, 30.8.1923, 2.9.1923, reprinted in *I Rosselli. Epistolario familiare di Carlo, Nello, Amelia Rosselli, 1914-1937*, Z. Ciuffoletti (ed.), Milan, Mondadori 1997, 158-170.

<sup>359</sup> See e.g. C. Rosselli, 'Il Partito del Lavoro in Inghilterra', *Libertà*, I, 15.2.1924, reprinted in S. Mastellone, *Carlo Rosselli*, 142-151; C. Rosselli, 'Laburisti e liberali faccia a faccia', *La Giustizia*, 252, 21.10.1924; C. Rosselli, 'I laburisti torneranno alla Camera più forti di prima', *La Giustizia*, 24.10.1924; C. Rosselli, 'I fattori della vittoria conservatrice', *La Giustizia*, 1.11.1924.

<sup>360</sup> The PSU gathered socialist reformists expelled from the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI) in 1922, after its seizure by the maximalist wing. Rosselli eventually joined the PSU in fall 1924, following the assassination of one his most prominent deputies, Giacomo Matteotti. On the PSU, see G. Arfé, *Storia del socialismo italiano*, Turin, Einaudi, 1965, 338-369; *Il socialismo riformista tra Giolitti e il fascismo: Turati, Matteotti, Rosselli*, Nicola Colonna (ed.), Bari, Palomar 2005, esp. 51-91.

<sup>361</sup> C. Rosselli, 'La crisi intellettuale del Partito Socialista', *Critica sociale*, 21, 1923, 326.

<sup>362</sup> Ibidem.

the socialist movement of intellectual rigour and a proper historical consciousness.<sup>363</sup> In his rejoinder, Rosselli emphasized a generational gap between his views and those of his critic: ‘The “elderly” often believe that socialism and socialist culture are to be passed from generation to generation, almost by endosmosis. Not at all: you must be ready to start all over again!’<sup>364</sup> Given these premises, it is no wonder that Rosselli found in de Man a soulmate within the socialist camp.<sup>365</sup>

Arguably, Rosselli’s interest in *Zur Psychologie* can be traced to late 1927-early 1928, soon after the French edition became available.<sup>366</sup> By then, Rosselli was bearing the consequences of his anti-fascist activism. Having helped to arrange Turati’s escape to France, he was sentenced to ten months of imprisonment on the island of Lipari. There he plunged into study, and evidence suggests that de Man’s book had a huge impact on him. In a set of personal notes written in December 1928, Rosselli expressed unreserved admiration for *Zur Psychologie* and his author: ‘Here is a book, indeed here is the book, my book, the book that I had dreamed of writing so many times, so often begun, always abandoned. It is the courageous, honest, fierce confession of a disenchanted Marxist, or rather of a committed and practising socialist who sees the

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<sup>363</sup> See R. Mondolfo, ‘Le attività del bilancio’, *Critica sociale*, 21, 1923, 328-330.

<sup>364</sup> C. Rosselli, ‘Aggiunte e chiose al bilancio marxista’, *Critica sociale*, 23, 1923, 359. For further criticism by Mondolfo, see R. Mondolfo, ‘Contributo a un chiarimento di idee’, *Critica sociale* 1, 1924, 14-16. On this debate, see R. Treves, ‘Rodolfo Mondolfo e i fratelli Rosselli’, attachment to *Critica sociale*, 20, 1967, 12-14.

<sup>365</sup> In July 1926, Rosselli sketched out the essentials of his socialist tenets as follows: ‘I do not believe in the scientific demonstrations of socialism; I do not believe to possess the absolute truth; I do not intend to yield to the dogma, I do not think I hold the key to the future in my own pocket [...]. I am socialist by culture, by reaction, but also – and I say this loudly in order to be heard by some absolute determinists or shrivelled Marxists – by faith and sentiment. I do not think that socialism will occur and that the working class will assert itself in history due to an inevitable evolution of things, apart from human will.’ [C. Rosselli, ‘Liberalismo socialista’, *La Rivoluzione liberale*, 29, 1924, 116] This paragraph could have been written by de Man himself.

<sup>366</sup> In October 1928, Benedetto Croce – the dean of Italian anti-fascists – highly praised the book for his ‘great efficacy’ and ‘high interest.’ [B. Croce, Review of ‘Au delà du marxisme’, *La Critica*, 6, 1928, 460] It is possible that Croce’s positive remarks had an impact on Rosselli’s reception, considering that *La Critica* was held in high esteem by anti-fascist elites. In February 1929, Rosselli recommended the translation of the book into Italian: see letter from C. Rosselli to A. Rosselli, 24.2.1929, reprinted in *I Rosselli*, 447-449.

Marxist verb under the light of the facts and of his own experiences.’ After summarising de Man’s tortuous life, including the ‘fundamental, revolutionary, shocking’ experience as soldier during the First World War, Rosselli carefully scrutinised all the major claims of *Zur Psychologie*, which he repeatedly endorsed: the blistering attack on the ‘Vestals of the sacred Marxist heritage’, namely the leaders of the Second International; the failure of Marxism in providing ‘a faith’ to be proven in practice, the lack of joy in work as the main source of ‘discontent of the working class.’ Particularly significant for him – and unsurprisingly so, in the light of the Italian situation – was de Man’s vibrant defence of democracy, coupled with his neo-Fabian emphasis on intellectuals as the pivotal actors in the fight for socialism. Fully agreeing with de Man’s attempt to put ‘social science at the service of will’, Rosselli believed *Zur Psychologie* would be regarded as a watershed in the history of socialist thought.<sup>367</sup> *Socialismo liberale*, Rosselli’s most ambitious theoretical work, written in 1928-29 and first published in French in 1930, also built on de Man’s critique of Marxism, presented by Rosselli as ‘a picture which cannot be more suggestive or more powerful.’<sup>368</sup> Although Rosselli’s main concern was to develop an inclusive and progressive ideology appealing to a wide range of anti-fascists, important analogies between *Zur Psychologie* and *Socialismo liberale* could be easily spotted.<sup>369</sup> Through Rosselli’s book and the official journal of

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<sup>367</sup> Unpublished manuscript, ACR/BNC/VIII/1.

<sup>368</sup> C. Rosselli, *Socialisme libéral*, Paris, Valois 1930, 108. Chapter V in the French edition was entitled ‘«Au delà du marxisme»’, making Rosselli’s debt to de Man plain (see *ibid.*, 101-118). Rosselli managed to get *Socialismo liberale* published once in Paris after having fled from Lipari in July 1929. A vivid account of his evasion is offered by his friend Franco Fausto Nitti, who was also involved in the escape: see F.F. Nitti, *Escape: The Personal Narrative of a Political Prisoner Who Was Rescued from Lipari, the Fascist “Devil’s Island”*, New York, G. P. Putnam’s Sons 1930.

<sup>369</sup> A French reviewer already familiar with de Man’s thought even contended that the book ‘offers nothing new’ from a theoretical perspective. [G.J., Review of «Socialisme libéral», *Critique sociale*, 1, 1931, 18]

*Giustizia e Libertà*, house organ of a clandestine movement that Rosselli had cofounded, some of de Man's key ideas crept in the Italian anti-fascist tradition.<sup>370</sup>

If the war experience and the dissatisfaction with orthodox Marxism were key factors in leading Rosselli to revere de Man, Andre Philip was probably attracted by the idealistic and quasi-religious conception of socialism outlined in *Zur Psychologie*. Being born in June 1902, Philip was too young to be drafted during the First World War. Nevertheless, he was deeply affected by the violence brought about by the conflict and grew up determined to reconcile his Protestantism with the pursuit of social justice. In a letter to a friend, written in July 1920, Philip already expressed reservations about Marxism because of its materialistic bias: 'You call me a Marxist; let's distinguish, please [...]. Except for a few points that I think are inaccurate, I admire Marx as an economist but I cannot accept his supposedly philosophical ideas on historical materialism [...]. Believing that a revolution will be brought about by economic forces and by personal or class interests, that's stupid. Interest is undoubtedly an excellent instrument of conservation, it is not creative.'<sup>371</sup> The early 1920s became a turning point in his political education as, while studying law in Paris, he met Élie Halévy, then teaching a popular course on British socialism.<sup>372</sup> Halévy, an eclectic Anglophile, had

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<sup>370</sup> See e.g. Magrini [Aldo Garosci], 'Il nostro socialismo. II – Giustizia e libertà', *Giustizia e libertà*, 2, 1934, 1-2. Rosselli's ideas, however, never became dominant within the anti-fascist camp. An Italian edition of *Socialisme libéral*, based on the French one, appeared in 1945 but had an extremely limited circulation. The original Italian manuscript was released as a monograph only in 1973. Whereas Rosselli's reputation dramatically rose after his killing by Fascist thugs in 1937, from this it does not follow that his thinking was widely known. Even authors who came to similar conclusions in the late 1930s apparently did it without being familiar with *Socialisme libéral*: see A. Capitini, 'Sull'antifascismo dal 1932 al 1943', *Il Ponte*, 6, 1955, 848-854. On the weakness of Italian planism, see L. Rapone, 'Il planismo nei dibattiti dell'antifascismo italiano', *Crisi e piano: le alternative degli anni Trenta*, M. Telò (ed.), Bari, Di Donato 1979, 269-288.

<sup>371</sup> Letter from A. Philip to G. Laplane, 13.7.1920, in L. Philip, *André Philip*, Paris, Beauchesne 1988, 142-143. I have been unable to trace the original in the André Philip Papers.

<sup>372</sup> On Philip's relationship with Halévy see Philip's interview with Francis Jeanson in A. Philip, *André Philip par lui-même ou les voies de la liberté*, Paris, Aubier Montaigne 1971, 245. Halévy's lectures on European socialism were later reconstructed throughout the notes of five among his most successful students: Célestine Bouglé, Raymond Aron, Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, Pierre Laroque, Etienne Mantoux

good connections with some Fabians, including Graham Wallas, and this may have helped Philip spend two summers in Britain, in 1921 and 1922, during which he also gained access to G.D.H. Cole's personal library in Oxford for his doctoral work.<sup>373</sup> The published version of his thesis, on Guild Socialism, reveals the extent to which Philip was passionate about the subject.<sup>374</sup> To him, Cole and his followers were 'revolutionaries', animated by 'a profound idealism' and even 'a true mysticism' who nonetheless recoiled from dogmatism and the stiffness of systemic thought: 'The Guild Socialists have not sought to establish a dogma, to deduce from their principles the consequences of an absolute logical rigor, to constitute, by pure reasoning, an ideal-type of society [...]. They wanted first and foremost to educate, fuelling a revolutionary realism among workers that would enable them to solve all the problems of the day, according to the revolution to come.'<sup>375</sup> By fleshing out a moral, rather than economic, argument against capitalism, they were able to acknowledge the value of craftsmanship: 'Their aim [...] is to provide the worker with the most complete independence so his work can become a joy for him.'<sup>376</sup> Despite refusing to adhere to their overoptimistic conception of human nature, Philip praised Guild socialists for their anti-statism and faith in the workers' capacity of self-government. Furthermore, the theory offered 'an endeavour to reconcile' revolutionary socialism and reformism as it combined elements

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and Robert Marjolin. See E. Halévy, *Histoire du socialisme européen rédigée d'après des notes de cours par un groupe d'amis et d'élèves*, R. Aron (ed.), Paris, Gallimard 1948. Halévy – as Aron pointed out – was 'an historian of England [...]. He was, very precisely, very vigorously, an historian of English ideas and, starting from this, of the English people.' [R. Aron, 'Elie Halévy', *Government and Opposition*, 4, 1984, 408].

<sup>373</sup> Philip expressed gratitude to Cole in his preface to *Guild-socialisme et trade unionisme* to whom the book is dedicated. [see A. Philip, *Guild-socialisme et trade unionisme: quelques aspects nouveaux du mouvement ouvrier anglais*, Paris, Les Presses Universitaires de France 1923, 8]

<sup>374</sup> Philip would later comment, perhaps exaggerating, that his doctoral thesis encapsulated the essence of his entire political thought. [see A. Philip's interview with Francis Jeanson, in A. Philip, *André Philip par lui-même ou les voies de la liberté*, 252] A chapter of the thesis appeared as A. Philip, 'Le Guild socialisme dans l'industrie anglaise du bâtiment', *Revue d'économie politique*, 6, 1922, 751-773.

<sup>375</sup> A. Philip, *Guild-socialisme*, 20-21.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

of the two strands together.<sup>377</sup> In the ethics of trade-unionism, Philip found an antidote not only to selfishness but also to a wider spectrum of utilitarian and materialistic principles of conduct, the replacement of ‘selfish individualism’ with ‘a spirit of fraternal help and reciprocal devotion.’<sup>378</sup> The contrast between the vitality of trade-unionism and the constraints imposed by parliamentary tactics lay at the core of Philip’s second work centered on Britain, *L’Angleterre moderne: le problème social, l’expérience travailliste*, published in 1925, which anticipated de Man’s criticism of social democratic practice. Reflecting on Ramsay MacDonald’s short-lived minority cabinet (January-November 1924), Philip highlighted the paradox of a party which ‘remained in office only by giving up its programme.’<sup>379</sup> In his view, that impasse originated from Labour’s difficulties in coping with the new dynamics sparked by the Great War: on the one hand, a higher degree of government intervention and control over the economy; on the other, higher level of concentration and collusion in business. According to Philip, Macdonald’s inability to capitalise on the increasingly left-leaning tendencies of trade unions spoke volumes about the need for a fresh, ground-breaking economic programme for socialist parties. Warning against the dangers of making ‘new concessions’ in order to return to power, Philip wished a stronger role for ‘left-wing labour’ (*le travaillisme de gauche*) within the Labour movement, being the only force seemingly inclined to carry out a genuine revolution by legal means, i.e., establishing workers’ control over industry.<sup>380</sup> Besides their commitment to an ethical variant of socialism and their engagement with Cole’s ideas, a third factor pulled Philip closer to

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 395

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>379</sup> A. Philip, *L’Angleterre moderne: le problème social, l’expérience travailliste*, Paris, Crès 1925, 241. Philip’s observation would have been ever truer for MacDonald’s second government (June 1929-August 1931), which ended up with him and other three Labour ministers joining a National Government with the Conservatives and the Liberals. On this episode, see chapter VII of this dissertation.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 242.

the de Man: a trip to the US. Thanks to the support of Charles Rist, a French economist and technocrat who held him in high esteem, Philip secured a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation and travelled across the North and the West, visiting New York – where he attended the seminar in theology at Columbia University –, South Dakota, Oregon, and Wisconsin, still a stronghold of American Progressivism. As de Man did during his stay, Philip repeatedly took low-paid jobs to get acquainted with the members of the working class.<sup>381</sup> His analysis of scientific management, laid down in *Le problème ouvrier aux Etats Unis*, released in 1927, is remarkably similar to de Man's *Au Pays du Taylorisme*, although Philip's misgivings about the expansions of the American model of industrial relations to Europe reflected the much more conservative atmosphere in which the book was written. 'American capitalism holds that an omnipotent employer, by following exclusively his interest (in seeking the optimal exploitation of the worker), can at the same time achieve the happiness of the workers and the social progress', Philip observed, and he acknowledged that 'undoubtedly scientific management had accomplished an excellent organisation of the workshops; thanks to it, the United States had reached their extraordinary prosperity.'<sup>382</sup> Yet he also pointed out that, under Taylor's principles, 'the worker is absorbed in a mechanical gear which he has to endure without seeking to understand it; this leads to a degradation of the worker's function within the industrial life of the country, to a diminution of the personality which can become of extreme gravity.'<sup>383</sup> American trade unions, therefore, were supposed to fulfil three tasks: '1° Work with the bosses to attain the maximum production; 2° Fight against the bosses to obtain a fair share of the wealth created; 3° Preserve the intellectual and moral autonomy of their members and oppose to the

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<sup>381</sup> See letter from A. Philip to his mother, 13.3.1926, FAP/AN/625/AP/4.

<sup>382</sup> A. Philip, *Le problème ouvrier aux Etats-Unis*, Paris, Alcan 1927, 216.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 224.

bourgeois conception of the world an original philosophy.’<sup>384</sup> In the long run, Philip predicted, American capitalism could either override trade unionism due to the poor organisation of the latter, bringing about ‘the most perfect example of a stabilisation of capitalism through the dictatorship of the employers’; establish an enduring cooperation with the union by ‘integrating the labour movement within the capitalist economic system’; or collapse due to an unpredicted crisis caused by external factors.<sup>385</sup> It is noteworthy that Philip, no less than de Man, continued to show interest in the United States throughout the Thirties, as his unsuccessful attempt to return to the US as an envoy for the International Labour Office in 1931 and his 1935 analysis of the New Deal demonstrate.<sup>386</sup>

Back in France, having been appointed professor of political economy in Lyon, Philip decided, together with his colleague Bernard Lavergne, to popularise de Man’s ideas in 1928 by publishing a selection of the most significant passages of *Zur Psychologie*.<sup>387</sup> By then, Philip had already labelled de Man ‘the Luther’ of the socialist tradition, had met him and the two were in friendly terms.<sup>388</sup> In his introductory essay, Philip claimed that a ‘crisis of growth’ was plaguing socialism, and only a radical

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>385</sup> A. Philip, *Le problème ouvrier*, 558. Philip’s ambivalence towards scientific management can be compared to that of other young socialists more positive about the accomplishments of American capitalism, such as Jules Moch. [see J. Moch, *Socialisme et rationalisation*, Brussels, L’Eglantine 1927]

<sup>386</sup> See letter from A. Thomas to A. Philip, 25.6.1931, FAP/AN/625/AP/4; A. Philip, *La crise et l’économie dirigée*, Paris, Cluny 1935. esp. 151-178.

<sup>387</sup> As Lavergne noted in his foreword, the book was seen as too heavy and dense to be read by the general public. [See B. Lavergne, ‘Avertissement’, A. Philip, *Henri de Man et la crise doctrinale du socialisme*, Paris, Gamber 1928, 15-16] See also letter from B. Lavergne to H. de Man, 28.1.1928, AHDM/IISG/253. The first part of Philip’s introduction, not mentioning de Man at all, was first published as A. Philip, ‘La rationalisation et le problème doctrinal du socialisme’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 24, 1928, 299-310. The second part, dwelling on de Man, appeared as A. Philip, ‘Hendrik de Man et la crise doctrinale du socialisme’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 26, 1928, 163-167. De Man himself summarised the findings of the book for the French public in an article for *Monde*, whose title drew from Philip’s: see H. de Man, ‘La crise doctrinale du socialisme’, *Monde*, 2, 76, 1929, 10-11.

<sup>388</sup> A. Philip, ‘Hendrik de Man et la crise’, 167. See also the letter from A. Philip to E. Gounelle, FEG/BPF/Mss.1670, 35, 10. According to Jacques Poojas, this undated letter – in which Philip mentions de Man’s stay in Lyon as his guest – was written in early 1928. [J. Poujol, ‘L’entrée en politique du chrétien André Philip’ in VV.AA., *André Philip, socialiste, patriote, chrétien*, Paris, Comité pour l’histoire économique et financière de la France 2005, 38]



revision of its theoretical foundations would prevent it from becoming ‘*a doctrine without practice coupled with a practice without doctrine*.’<sup>389</sup> Changes in the capitalist mode of production, by offering employees the prospects of higher living standards in exchange for more efficiency, posed at least a threefold threat to the working class: corporatism – the increased tendency of skilled labour to take the side of the employers –, nationalism – the temptation of raising barriers to protect domestic markets –, and conservatism – the danger that increased prosperity would induce workers to abandon the pursuit of higher moral ideals. In order to meet those challenges, Philip held that socialists, ‘instead of fighting rationalisation’, had to ‘direct and control it, making in all concrete cases the necessary distinction between the ‘science of production’ and its use by capitalism.’<sup>390</sup> But, even more important, they had to debunk the myth of a permanent correlation of aims between the socialist idea and the immediate interest of the working class: ‘the socialist task’ was ‘an endeavour of emancipation’ on political and moral grounds, rather than a simple redistribution of resources.<sup>391</sup> To Philip, de Man’s approach was key to ‘bring the class struggle from an economic to an ethical plan’, and foster a ‘spiritual realism’ (*réalisme spiritualiste*) through which socialism could recover ‘its revolutionary strength and old energy’ by replacing the ‘acquisitive motive’ with the ‘absolute moral ideal of Christianity.’<sup>392</sup> A few years later, Philip would be at the forefront of the campaign for a French Labour Plan.<sup>393</sup>

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*Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* is not an easy book to assess. Kautsky, as well as other reviewers, pointed to alleged misunderstandings and misconceptions in de

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<sup>389</sup> A. Philip, ‘Socialisme et Rationalisation’, *Henri de Man*, 19-20.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 50, 53.

<sup>393</sup> See chapter VI of this dissertation.

Man's analysis of Marx's thought – as if the Belgian had failed to grasp all the nuances of the Marxian system.<sup>394</sup> This line of argument, however, missed a key element in de Man's critique: the fact that it was consciously aimed not at Marx but at Marxism, the set of core beliefs underpinning European social democracy in its age of expansion. As de Man adamantly put it in its German preface: 'By Marxism I mean the elements of Marxist teaching which live on in the labour movement, in the form of emotional valuations, social volitions, methods of action, principles, and programmes. Our concern is, not with the dead Marx, but with living socialism.'<sup>395</sup>

From that angle, de Man's case was much more compelling. And even if one, with the benefit of hindsight, could argue that his perception of British socialism, and the role that intellectuals played in it, was highly idealised, serving almost as a counterpoint to the ossified SPD, his examination of the flaws of social democratic Continental organisations was certainly powerful, and touched a sour spot.<sup>396</sup> Still, there were at least two evident blind spots in his work. One was economics. In rejecting materialism, de Man had remained silent on crucial issues, such as what was the most adequate economic framework for a socialist society, including the balance between the public and the private sector. Because of that, his argument appeared more abstract than it was – and failed to persuade other socialist thinkers who had rejected a deterministic reading of Marx.<sup>397</sup> The second was the lack of a *pars construens* in the book – no clear, detailed programme for action to energise the decaying social democratic movement was offered. Yet, while this was certainly a limitation from a theoretical viewpoint, it

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<sup>394</sup> See e.g. T. Haubach, 'Widerlegung des Marxismus', *Hamburger Echo*, 28.1.1926; J. Longuet, 'Le marxisme plus vivant que jamais', *Le Populaire*, 3.2.1928.

<sup>395</sup> H. de Man, *Zur Psychologie*, 5; H. De Man, *The Psychology*, 16.

<sup>396</sup> This was acknowledged even by some critics of the book: see e.g. F. Lepinski, 'De Man überwindet den Marxismus', *Jungsozialistische Blätter*, 5, 10, 1926, 310-313.

<sup>397</sup> Tellingly, Gramsci criticised de Man for having produced 'a new abstract sociology.' [A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere. Vol. III: Quaderni 12-29*, V. Gerratana (ed.), Turin, Giulio Einaudi Editore 1975, 857]

probably had positive practical implications. In the words of Dan S. White, de Man ‘broke the ice’ by bringing ‘issues which had been submerged to the surface. His audacity encouraged others who shared his experience and outlook to join in widening the peripheries of the critical space he had opened.’<sup>398</sup> *Zur Psychologie* provided above all a thrilling stimulus.

Retrospectively, de Man seemed to appreciate this. ‘Apparently a certain number of people within and outside the socialist movement have found in my book an echo of their preoccupations strong enough to get comfort and answers to their own perplexities’, he observed in his memoirs.<sup>399</sup> The fact that a ‘demanism’ in the narrow sense of the word did not emerge at this stage – being, if anything, a vague orientation, a sensibility fuelled by a common frustration with mainstream social democratic politics – allowed de Man to become a reference point for a wide and heterogeneous group of figures in the late 1920s, such as Brugmans, Rosselli, and Philip. Even though these heretics failed to take the lead in their respective countries, they could nonetheless cooperate across borders, enhancing the circulation of de Man’s writings and feed debates that otherwise would have remained clustered within national boundaries. When de Man returned to public life, his credibility as a leader was strongly enhanced by his intellectual reputation. And many of those who bought his argument about the importance of going beyond Marxism were finally ready, in the turbulent climate of the early 1930s, to embrace his planism.

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<sup>398</sup> D. S. White, *Lost Comrades*, 58.

<sup>399</sup> H. de Man, *Après coup*, 193.

#### IV.

#### **Breakthrough:**

#### **Hendrik de Man and the Genesis of the Plan**

If [...] it is not possible to bring about a restoration of Capitalism, or not worth while to attempt it, then it is the duty of the world to get down at once to the fundamental task of changing the basis of its economic system.

G.D.H. Cole, 1932<sup>400</sup>

Plan and order are latent in all modern industrial processes [...]. What is still lacking is the transference of these techniques from industry to the social order at large.

Lewis Mumford, 1934<sup>401</sup>

By 1928, Hendrik de Man was known as ‘the man who killed Karl Marx’, as one of his detractors put it: an ambitious, perhaps too ambitious, social theorist who had stunned both the German-speaking and the French-speaking world by declaring the necessity of replacing Marxism as the underlying framework of socialism and yet had no positive ideology to offer as a substitute.<sup>402</sup> In the early 1930s, however, he seemed increasingly prone to move beyond the realm of ideas and draw a more practical set of policy proposals from his writings. This reflected an evolving attitude towards public life. Jef Rens, then one of his students, reported that de Man informed him in 1932 that his forthcoming book, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, would be ‘the culmination’ of his studies, and pledged that, after its release, he would restart ‘the practical militant action within

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<sup>400</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide through World Chaos*, Gollancz, London 1932, 650.

<sup>401</sup> L. Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, New York, Harcourt Brace 1934, 417.

<sup>402</sup> C. Rappoport, ‘La doctrine et l'histoire: De Man, l'homme qui assassina... Karl Marx’, *L'Humanité*, 5.2.1928. Rappoport, then a communist, charged de Man of ‘treason’ and claimed his views could thrive only within a party ‘without doctrine, or programme.’ [ibidem]

the labour movement in order to try to turn my ideas into reality.’<sup>403</sup> In May of that year, de Man expressed the same intention to Vandervelde, resuming the project of establishing a ‘laboratory of ideas’ devoted to economic planning within the Belgian Labour Party.<sup>404</sup> Just a few months later, Vandervelde contributed to award de Man a prize for his accomplishments in social science; in turn, de Man proposed to use the money he had received to fund a POB-related research centre.<sup>405</sup> In December, during an informal meeting in Brussels, the *Bureau d’études sociales* (BES) was finally set up, with de Man as director and Emile Vandervelde, Louis de Brouckère, and Arthur Wauters as members of the scientific committee. The executive committee was meant to be open to delegates from trade unions, cooperatives, and other socialist associations, in addition to POB members.<sup>406</sup> In April 1933, de Man finally moved back to Belgium, soon resuming his full-time party membership as well as taking up a teaching position at the University of Brussels.<sup>407</sup>

There is little doubt that Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, and the subsequent suppression of academic freedom, had made de Man’s departure from Frankfurt

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<sup>403</sup> J. Rens, *Rencontres*, 48. De Man would later describe *Die Sozialistische Idee* as ‘le complément positif d’*Au delà du marxisme*’ [F. Lefèvre, ‘Une heure avec Henri de Man: le «Plan du Travail» belge’, *Les nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques*, 656, 11.5.1935, 3].

<sup>404</sup> ‘L’exécution du Plan du Travail: une lettre d’Henri de Man à Emile Vandervelde du 14 mai 1932’, *Le Peuple*, 24.3.1935. I have been unable to find the original letter in the Emile Vandervelde Papers. Early talks between the two dated back to November 1931 [see E. Vandervelde, ‘Un appel: pour le Plan du Travail’, *Le Peuple*, 14.1.1934] and de Man prepared a memorandum about the future *Bureau* in January 1932 [see H. de Man, ‘Mémoire: Bureau (ou Institut) d’études et de documentation pour l’économie planée’, dated 12.1.1932, AHDM/IISG/421] but financial constraints and the evolving situation in Germany probably contributed to delay the project.

<sup>405</sup> ‘Henri de Man reçoit le prix quinquennal des sciences sociales’, *Le Peuple*, 29.10.1932; ‘La vie internationale: chez les gens d’esprit’, *Le Peuple*, 31.10.1932; Official communication from the jury of the Social Science Prize to H. de Man, 2.3.1933, AHDM/AMSAB/929; letter from H. de Man to E. Vandervelde, 29.10.1932, AEV/IEV/IV/158.

<sup>406</sup> See ‘A propos du Bureau d’Études sociales et du Bureau d’Action pour le Plan’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 12, 20.12.1934, 275.

<sup>407</sup> See H. de Man, *Cavalier seul*, 156. In September-October, he began teaching a seminar in social psychology [see de Man’s notes on collective psychology dated 8.9.1933, AHDM/AMSAB/264 and the university circular dated 30.10.1933, AHDM/AMSAB/265]. In October-November he was asked to reorganise the POB internal structure in view of the forthcoming Congress [see H. de Man, ‘Au Bureau du C.G. du P.O.B.’, 8.11.1933, AHDM/ IISG/405].

inevitable.<sup>408</sup> What is perhaps more surprising is de Man's ability to assume the part of the POB ideologue shortly after his return to his home country: the once-estranged, insubordinate radical was to play a pivotal role in the renovation of his party's platform with the blessing of Vandervelde, the leader he had criticised for his unsteady leadership and had clashed with over the enduring relevance of Marxism.<sup>409</sup>

At structural level, the realignment between de Man and the POB was made possible by the increasingly unstable political environment of the first half of the decade, during which the European order, domestically and internationally, began to unravel.<sup>410</sup> In that context, de Man had something appealing to offer to his Belgian comrades: an original analysis of the rise of right-wing nationalism based on his experience as a first-hand witness of the demise of the Weimar Republic. That analysis combined elements drawn from his criticism of Marxism with fresh insights about the economic crisis and its implications for social democracy. It also contained, at an embryonic stage, a strategy to counter the advance of fascism – an issue that the Nazis' seizure of power pushed to the forefront of left-wing debates even in countries with a long-standing commitment to democratic rule, such as France or Belgium –.<sup>411</sup> By

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<sup>408</sup> See de Man's refusal to fill a questionnaire related to his teaching duties while in Frankfurt [see letter from H. de Man to the Chancellor of Frankfurt University, 23.5.1933, AHDM/AMSAB/199]. All de Man's books available in German, apart from *Der Kampf um die Arbeitsfreude*, were burned by the Nazis in May 1933 [see I. Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs und seine Welt (1896-1930)*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz 1998, 437].

<sup>409</sup> See chapter II and III of this dissertation.

<sup>410</sup> As Zara Steiner put it, 'the years between 1929 and 1933 represent the hinge connecting the two decades of the inter-war period, the decade of reconstruction and the decade of disintegration [...]. It was a transitional period during which the problems of peacemaking shifted to more immediate and pressing concerns, which contained within them the origins of many of the dislocations of the international order that followed. A triple predicament confronted European policy-makers: a financial crisis to accompany the ongoing economic depression; security anxieties, as disarmament unavoidably came to the fore in circumstances favouring German revisionism; and a challenge to internationalism and extra-European co-operation arising from Japan's expansionist policies in the Far East.' [Z. Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919-1933*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2005, 635-636]

<sup>411</sup> For an overview of the reactions by social democrats and communists to Hitler becoming Chancellor, see G. R. Horn, *European Socialists*; G. Vergnon, *Les gauches européennes*. Further details on France and Britain can be found in chapter VI and VII of this dissertation.

coming up with the proposal for a Plan to curb unemployment, reform democratic institutions, and take a substantial step forward in overhauling laissez-faire capitalism, de Man was well equipped to return to politics from a position of strength, no longer as someone on the fringes but as a credible and well-regarded advocate of policies that could address the anxieties of the party's mainstream.

Unlike the next chapter – which will deal with de Man's endeavours to produce a Plan for Belgium and sell it to public, and will thus be more empirical – this chapter traces the emergence of the idea of the Plan in de Man's writings between 1930 and 1934, and has a theoretical focus. First, it investigates de Man's understanding of the German crisis. Second, it delves into de Man's use of three key concepts – patriotism, *économie dirigée*, and corporatism – to sketch out a vision by which socialists could overcome the impasse in which they had trapped themselves. Finally, it evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of de Man's analysis and prescriptions.

It is worth stressing that de Man's outlook developed under the pressure of events, and it was not, therefore, free from minor contradictions or changes over time. This lack of systematisation was also due to the fact that de Man never produced a full monograph on fascism or on the Great Depression – with the partial exception of *Die Sozialistische Idee*, which nevertheless had higher philosophical ambitions and in which references to recent events were confined to the final chapter.<sup>412</sup> For this reason, his grand design can be reconstructed only *a posteriori*, by examining a variety of apparently minor sources, such as speeches, newspaper articles, and other occasional contributions aimed at reaching French-speaking, German-speaking, and sometimes even Dutch-speaking audiences. This does not mean, however, that de Man failed to

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<sup>412</sup> The book aimed at investigating the development of the socialist idea through history, following the anti-materialistic methodology that de Man had outlined in *Au-delà du marxisme*. For a thorough discussion of this book, see H. Brélaz, *Henri de Man*, 455-506.

arrange his ideas in a coherent whole. In many ways, the Belgian Labour Plan, officially launched in December 1933, encapsulated the essence of his conceptual effort. By the same token, studying the emergence of the idea of the Plan sheds light on how theoretical issues and practical concerns were already entangled in de Man's mind at least three years before his decision to take up prominent positions within the POB.

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At the moment when Hitler was invited to form a government by the President of the Republic Paul von Hindenburg, Germany was in deep turmoil. At the low point of the Depression, in 1932, industrial production had fallen to 61% of its 1929 level and more than 30% of the workforce was unemployed, a far worse situation than the one faced by Britain or France. Due to a interplay of factors, including an ossified banking system, a massive foreign debt, a demographically-inspired expansion of the labour pool, higher productivity in industry, and a political system that had failed to successfully accommodate different interest groups, mass unemployment became a highly critical issue, and resulted in a radicalisation of the electorate between 1930 and 1932, of which the Nazis and the Communists were the main beneficiaries.<sup>413</sup>

In many ways, de Man argued, the combination of forces undermining democracy in Germany was unique. Economically, cooperation between employers and trade unions was hampered by the drastic budget cuts imposed by the Young Plan,

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<sup>413</sup> See H. James, *The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924-1936*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1986, 6, 419-424; A. Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, London, Allen Lane 2006, 23-30; D. Petzina, 'The Extent and Causes of Unemployment in the Weimar Republic', *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany*, P.D. Stachura (ed.), Basingstoke, Macmillan Press 1986, 29-48. As Jürgen W. Falter pointed out, the unemployed were much more likely to vote for the Communists than for the Nazis, but a growing perception of job insecurity may very well have led many white-collar workers to support Hitler's party. [see J.W. Falter, 'Unemployment and the Radicalisation of the German Electorate, 1928-1933: An Aggregate Data Analysis with Special Emphasis on the Rise of National Socialism', *Unemployment and the Great Depression*, 187-208]



which resulted in high inflation and fewer jobs.<sup>414</sup> Attempts to restore a balance of payment surplus paved the way to protectionism in agriculture, benefiting big landowners but hurting the rest of the population, and to wage cuts in industry, triggering strikes and fuelling widespread unrest.<sup>415</sup> Long-term causes, however, were at least equally important. Socially, the top-down industrialisation pursued under Bismarck had boosted living standards but, in contrast to what happened in other countries, including France, a bourgeois class in favour of individual freedom and representative government failed to emerge.<sup>416</sup> The concentration of capital in few hands, under the protection of state bureaucracy, was the hallmark of a system de Man referred to as ‘authoritarian capitalism’, under which, at least until World I ‘the relations between directors, foremen, and workers’ were the civilian equivalent to those ‘between officers, sub-officers, and soldiers’.<sup>417</sup> Even though substantial progress was made after 1918, Germany was affected by wider global trends pushing capitalism towards higher levels of rationalisation and monopoly that ended up crushing small owners to a degree unknown in Britain, France, or America.<sup>418</sup> The ‘new anti-capitalism’ embraced by rentiers, pensioners, artisans, and farmers developed in reaction to the dominance of big business, whose economic status seemed less and less justifiable, and to the international isolation of the country, feeding ‘a remarkable

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<sup>414</sup> See H. de Man, ‘L’assainissement des prix et des salaires en Allemagne’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 5, 5, 10.9.1930, 160-164.

<sup>415</sup> See H. de Man, ‘Le protectionnisme agraire et la crise économique en Allemagne’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 4, 25.2.1932, 97-105; H. de Man, ‘La nouvelle politique des salaires en Allemagne’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 7, 8, 25.10.1932, 265-271.

<sup>416</sup> See H. de Man, ‘Entre la France et l’Allemagne’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 2, 6, 10.9.1931, 159-164.

<sup>417</sup> H. de Man, ‘Le capitalisme autoritaire’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale de Belgique*, 1, 6, 25.1.1931, 35.

<sup>418</sup> See H. de Man, ‘Die neue Phase des Kapitalismus’, *Hamburger Echo*, 20.1.1933; H. de Man, ‘Die Folgen der kapitalistischen Monopolwirtschaft’, *Hamburger Echo*, 24.1.1933.

combination of national and social resentment.’<sup>419</sup> National socialism successfully emerged as the most extreme, ‘plebeian’ variant of right-wing nationalism, spurred by ‘the impotence of bourgeois pacifism’ preached by Walter Rathenau and Gustav Stresemann in their vain attempt to rebuild Germany as a great power within the boundaries of ‘European solidarity.’<sup>420</sup>

Some of the features of National Socialism, however, had a more general character, and were not limited to the German setting, de Man contended.<sup>421</sup> Middle classes leaning towards the Nazis suffered from a sense of economic and psychological dependence upon ‘anonymous capitalist forces’ (*anonymen kapitalistischen Macht*) that made their existence uncertain and precarious.<sup>422</sup> Despite their falling living standards, they strongly resisted the prospect of joining, or making common cause with, the industrial workforce: fascism profited from this instinctive revulsion by allowing a ‘diversion’ (*Ablenkung*) of socio-economic resentment from economic to non-economic phenomena, channeling people’s anger towards other races or nations.<sup>423</sup> The fact that fascism grew out of a ‘false consciousness’, in Marxian terms, and exploited a ‘lack of intellectual qualities’, de Man insisted, did not make it less dangerous: rather, it increased its appeal among the disenfranchised.<sup>424</sup> Modern capitalism had ‘inhibited’ workers’ ‘collective self-esteem’ by exacerbating class divisions; socialism, however, seemed no longer able to provide a strong sense of psychological fulfillment to its supporters, leaving the field open to fascists, who excelled in exploiting ‘the compensatory effect of national pride’ (*die kompensatorische Wirkung des*

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<sup>419</sup> H. de Man, *Le nouveau nationalisme allemand*, Brussels, Imprimerie médicale et scientifique 1932, 9, 19. The original speech was given in Brussels on November 21, 1931.

<sup>420</sup> H. de Man, *Le nouveau*, 2-3.

<sup>421</sup> For an overview, see H. de Man, ‘Les causes universelles du fascisme’, *Le Peuple*, 4.10.1933.

<sup>422</sup> H. de Man, *Sozialismus und Nationalfascismus*, Potsdam, Protte 1931, 7. The original speech was given in Berlin on December 12, 1930.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 21.

*Nationalstolzes*).<sup>425</sup> Building on his previous critique of Marxism, de Man pointed to the necessity of a ‘true radicalisation’ (*Wahre Radikalisierung*) in socialist thought and action, by which ‘the reformist function’ and the ‘radical motivation’ could be finally reconciled, so as not to stifle the ‘driving force’ (*Stoßkraft*) towards social justice and democracy which, throughout history, had been the fundamental source of strength of the socialist movement.<sup>426</sup>

De Man’s insistence on radicalisation reflected a bitter disappointment with the decisions taken by the SPD in the final years of the Weimar Republic, when the party lent support to the Brüning cabinet, under the assumption that deflation was a reasonable price to pay to restore political and monetary stability.<sup>427</sup> In 1935, de Man would openly decry German social democrats for their ‘fatalism’ in coping with the economic crisis; a refusal to act justified through a ‘theory of passivity and forced inactivity’ according to which it was in the best interest of the working class to let the economic cycle play out and wait for the subsequent recovery.<sup>428</sup> The thrust of the argument, however, was already present in some of his articles written in early 1933, which bore striking resemblance to some charges levelled in the same period by the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer. Both de Man and Bauer held that an overconfidence in

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 23. Interestingly, de Man understood fascism as a process of radicalisation of the middle classes rather than one driven by big business. This is a major difference between his interpretation and the one provided by Marxists such as John Strachey or Leon Trotsky: see J. Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, London, Gollancz 1932; L. Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1975.

<sup>426</sup> H. de Man, *Sozialismus*, 47, 49-50.

<sup>427</sup> It is no coincidence that the main architect of that strategy, named ‘policy of toleration’, was Rudolf Hilferding, a die-hard party loyalist who had previously attacked de Man for his efforts to refute vulgar Marxism and call into question Kautsky’s authority. In 1931, Hilferding had even claimed that socialists who proposed to mitigate the Depression through public works were ‘not Marxist.’ [W.S. Woytinsky, *Stormy Passage: A Personal History Through Two Russian Revolutions to Democracy and Freedom: 1905-1960*, New York, The Vanguard Press 1961, 471]. On Hilferding, see W. Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding: The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat*, De Kalb, Northern Illinois University Press 1988, 120-172; F.P. Wagner, *Rudolf Hilferding: Theory and Politics of Democratic Socialism*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press 1996, 152-183.

<sup>428</sup> H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, Brussels, Bureau d’Action pour le Plan 1935, 8. The original speech was given in Paris on December 10, 1934.

parliamentary action and in discredited economic theories prevented social democrats from matching the dynamism of fascist movement.<sup>429</sup> Nevertheless, Bauer proposed a united front based on close coordination between the Socialist and the Communist International whereas de Man – who was initially open to the idea of strengthening the ties with the Communists – was soon to express greater ambitions.<sup>430</sup> In his view, rather than aggregating existing anti-fascist parties, social democrats had better chances of success by rallying different classes around a grandiose, path-breaking project.

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Defeating right-wing nationalism in an age of economic distress, de Man suggested, required a multifaceted strategy. In a nutshell, de Man's approach consisted of turning some notions that fascists were keen to exploit against them. This is different from arguing that de Man was then succumbing to the appeal of fascism, or contaminating socialism with fascist tenets.<sup>431</sup> Rather, de Man attempted to recover concepts that had already been part of the socialist intellectual arsenal well before fascism seized on them and employ them to reinvigorate democratic socialism.

The first concept was patriotism – although de Man made a limited use of that term –, namely the idea that socialists were not to feel ashamed for being emotionally attached to their own country and that internationalism was not supposed to be in

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<sup>429</sup> See e.g. H. de Man, 'Wende des Sozialismus', *Hamburger Echo*, 17.1.1933; 'Schicksalswende in Deutschland', *Arbeiterville*, 13.9.1932, reprinted in O. Bauer, *Werkausgabe. Vol. VI*, Europaverlag 1979, 830-837. For a systematic illustration of Bauer's argument, see O. Bauer, *Zwischen zwei Weltkriegen? Die Krise der Weltwirtschaft, der Demokratie und des Sozialismus*, Bratislava, Prager 1936.

<sup>430</sup> It is noteworthy that Bauer's ideas were immediately ridiculed by Soviet Communists: see e.g. D.Z. Manuilsky, *Social Democracy: Stepping-Stone to Fascism, or, Otto's Bauer Latest Discovery*, New York, Workers Library Publishers 1934. The original speech was delivered before the executive committee of the Communist Youth International in December 1933.

<sup>431</sup> That synthesis was sought by other authors, such as the French writer Pierre Drieu La Rochelle [see P. Drieu La Rochelle, *Socialisme fasciste*, Paris, Gallimard 1934]. The fact remains that Drieu was unquestionably committed to spread fascism, not to fight it, as his admiration for Mussolini and later on for Hitler demonstrates. On Drieu la Rochelle, see R. Soucy, *Fascist Intellectual: Drieu La Rochelle*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1979, 152-174; P. Andreu and F. Grover, *Drieu La Rochelle*, Paris, La Table Ronde 1989, 255-310.

contrast with the recognition of different national identities. This argument could be traced back at least to Jean Jaurès, as de Man himself acknowledged.<sup>432</sup> Rather ingeniously, de Man distinguished between two kinds of nationalism, the first based on an ‘aggressive mindset’ (*aggressiven Staatsgesinnung*) leading to militarism and expansionism, and the second imbued with ‘love for the Fatherland’ (*Vaterlandsliebe*), a manifestation of ‘cultural affinity’ (*kulturellen Verbundenheit*) with a people or a language.<sup>433</sup> According to him, nationalism and socialism were both legitimate heirs of the industrial revolution, and both stemmed from an understandable desire for collective recognition and self-determination. Furthermore, nationalism had a libertarian bent every time minorities rose up to fight against other nations oppressing them, and could therefore be, within certain limits, commendable.<sup>434</sup> Socialism, however, was ‘more *total* and more *radical*’ for it strove for the freedom of all peoples, and acknowledged that the ‘states’ lust for power, through armaments, economic protectionism, claims of unfettered sovereignty, and even through the very existence of borders, is the scourge of Europe and the cause of degradation of our present society.’<sup>435</sup> De Man expressed admiration for the intellectual-turned-politician Thomas Masaryk, whose defence of Czech identity and willingness to fight for national independence was balanced by an

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<sup>432</sup> De Man openly referred to Jaurès’ classic work *L’Armée nouvelle*, in which internationalism is presented as the natural completion, rather than the antithesis, of patriotism: see e.g. H. de Man, *Le nationalisme économique*, Brussels, Imprimerie médicale et scientifique, Brussels 1934, 21-22. The original speech was given in Brussels on December 15, 1933. On Jaurès’ influence on de Man, see also H. de Man, ‘De 1910 à 1934’, *Le Peuple*, 24.1.1934; H. de Man, ‘Jean Jaurès, 1859-1914’, *Great Democrats*, A. Barratt Brown (ed.), London, Ivor Nicholson and Johnson 1934, 369-382.

<sup>433</sup> H. de Man, *Sozialismus*, 31-32.

<sup>434</sup> See H. de Man, *Nationalisme et socialisme*, Brussels, L’Eglantine 1932, 7-15. The original speech was given in Ghent and Antwerp in December 1931. It is worth noticing that de Man delivered the speech in Dutch, dwelling upon the situation of the Flanders and lending support to language equality in Belgium [see *ibid.*, 16-32, 71-76]. The first language law in Belgium, introducing regional monolingualism, was passed in June 1932. On the language question in Flanders, see H. Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, Antwerp, University Press Antwerp 2011, 153-164.

<sup>435</sup> H. de Man, *Nationalisme et socialisme*, 36, 38.

equally firm commitment to social reform, humanitarianism, and peace.<sup>436</sup> In the long run, he added, only an international federation aimed at ensuring ‘the autonomy of the *peoples*’ would settle the issue of minorities once and for all, abandoning the principle of absolute sovereignty and establishing an international framework through which disarmament could be finally achieved.<sup>437</sup> In envisaging European unity as a long-term solution to international instability, de Man was probably influenced by the Briand Plan, well received by Belgian socialists and sponsored by other Belgian-led groups, such as the movement *Union Jeune Europe*, to which de Man was loosely connected during the Thirties.<sup>438</sup>

The second concept was *économie dirigée* – an expression we may roughly translate into ‘planning’ or *Planwirtschaft*, encapsulating the belief that the economic system could be successfully managed in the interest of the working class as well as of the entire nation.<sup>439</sup> Without buying into a deterministic interpretation of the rise of

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 48-60. De Man and Masaryk had known each other since World War I and discussed the problem of German minorities in Czechoslovakia at least once in the late 1920s [see H. de Man, *Après coup*, 130-131]. In 1934 de Man was appointed honorary fellow to the Czech Sociological Society named after Masaryk [see H. de Man’s diploma as corresponding member, 10.5.1934, AHDM/AMSAB/284]. See also de Man’s letter of condolences for Masaryk’s death [see H. de Man to the Masaryk Academy, 15.9.1937, ASMAB/286].

<sup>437</sup> H. de Man, *Nationalisme et socialisme*, 79.

<sup>438</sup> For some socialist reactions to the Briand Plan, see E. Vandervelde, ‘M. Briand et l’Union fédérale européenne’, *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 31, 1930, 296-300; E. Vandervelde, ‘L’Union fédérale européenne’, *L’avenir social*, 8, 1930, 487-494. Originally established in Switzerland in 1930, *Union Jeune Europe* gained roughly 5,000 members in Belgium, thanks to the efforts of the publisher Édouard Didier. De Man’s involvement in the movement seems to have been fairly limited: he published a few articles on the bulletin *Jeune Europe* – some having already appeared elsewhere – and attended the 1936 Zoute summer camp. On *Jeune Europe* and de Man’s participation, see X. Dehan, ‘Jeune Europe, le salon Didier et les Éditions de la Toison d’Or (1933-1945)’, *Cahiers du Centre des Recherches et d’études historiques de la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 17, 1996, 203-236; G. Duchenne, *Esquisses d’une Europe nouvelle: l’eupéisme dans la Belgique de l’entre-deux-guerres (1919-1939)*, Brussels, Peter Lang 2008, 383-529.

<sup>439</sup> The expression was already quite popular within the French-speaking world: see e.g. B. de Jouvenel, *L’économie dirigée: le programme de la nouvelle génération*, Paris, Valois 1928; VV.AA. *L’économie dirigée*, Paris, Alcan 1934. But the vision of a managed capitalist economy directed towards a greater good than individual profit had also been articulated by another heterodox socialist, Albert Thomas, who had served as Minister of Armaments during the Great War. On Thomas, see M. Rebérioux and P. Fridenson, ‘Albert Thomas, pivot du réformisme français’, *Le mouvement social*, 87, 1974, 85-97; A. Blaszkiewicz-Maison, *Albert Thomas: le socialisme en guerre, 1914-1918*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2015, 101-116.

nationalism, de Man was conscious that the economic downturn exacerbated pre-existing tensions within capitalist countries, making the success of nationalism only more likely.<sup>440</sup> De Man understood the 1929 crisis as a structural rather than cyclical event, caused by at least five distinct but interconnected factors: high levels of unemployment due to the ongoing rationalisation – i.e., increased efficiency – of industry; a lack of new international markets to export those goods that producers were unable to sell domestically; low levels of productivity in agriculture; the rise of monopolies and trusts, which made prices less flexible and slower to adjust; and the politicisation of foreign trade. The crucial phenomenon underlying all these trends, de Man maintained, was underconsumption: advanced capitalism was marked by a ‘growing disparity’ between supply and demand, the latter being unable to meet the former.<sup>441</sup> De Man’s reference to Marx is less surprising than one might think at a glance: despite his methodological objections to historical materialism, de Man had never questioned the soundness of some of Marx’s insights about the long-term unsustainability of capitalism. Moreover, in his account of the Great Depression, de Man – an avid reader without a proper training in economics – in all probability drew heavily from the works of other scholars, including heterodox liberals and Marxists.<sup>442</sup> An author who may have left an enduring mark on him was Otto Maschl, better known as Lucien Laurat. The two men met for the first time in April 1933.<sup>443</sup> An Austrian-born

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<sup>440</sup> See H. de Man, ‘Crise économique et critique de l’économie’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 2, 10, 25.11.1930, 357-362.

<sup>441</sup> See H. de Man, ‘La crise du capitalisme’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 6, 11, 25.7.1931, 40.

<sup>442</sup> See e.g. John A. Hobson, the British liberal critic of imperialism, whose theory of underconsumption might have inspired de Man. For de Man’s remarks on Hobson’s book *Rationalisation and Unemployment: An Economic Dilemma* (1930). [see H. de Man, ‘Le capitalisme libéral’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 1, 8, 25.4.1931, 265-270]

<sup>443</sup> See L. Laurat, ‘Mémoires d’un planiste 1932-1939’, *Les études sociales et syndicales*, 120, 1965, 19-24. See also ‘Une conférence de Lucien Laurat’, *Le Peuple*, 17.12.1932. A clipping of that article can be found in AHDM/IISG/341, suggesting that de Man was already familiar with Laurat’s ideas by late 1932.

economist based in Paris and former card-carrying communist, Laurat had a first-hand knowledge of the Soviet New Economic Policy, having lived in Russia between 1923 and 1927. Moreover, despite his steadfast anti-Stalinist feelings shared by his friend and colleague Boris Souvarine, he still considered himself a Marxist, and used a Marxist framework of analysis to account for the functioning of the Soviet system.<sup>444</sup> In addition to a glowing reputation as commentator on economic affairs, Laurat had good ties with the POB. Independently from de Man, he had come to the conclusion that Belgian socialists would benefit from deepening the study of nationalisations and encouraged his friend Jef Rens to set up a research bureau for that purpose.<sup>445</sup> His works *L'accumulation du capital d'après Rosa Luxembourg* (1930) – an abridged edition of Luxembourg's main work for the French public, followed by Laurat's case for the relevance of her thought in the light of subsequent developments in Marxist theory –, *Bilans: cent années d'économie mondiale* (1931), and even more importantly, *Un système qui sombre* (1932), may well have been the most important sources in shaping de Man's understanding of the Great Depression.<sup>446</sup> Some even argued that Laurat

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<sup>444</sup> In 1931, Laurat published an extensive analysis of the NEP as an example of 'économie dirigée': see L. Laurat, *L'économie soviétique: sa dynamique, son mécanisme*, Paris, Valois 1931, esp. 119-140. Biographical details on Laurat can be found on the special issue of *Est & Ouest* published at the moment of his death: see in particular B. Souvarine, 'Un demi-siècle d'amitié' and G. Lefranc, 'Lucien Laurat, 1932-1939', *Est & Ouest*, 515, 16.9.1973, 1-4 and 5-7.

<sup>445</sup> See letter from L. Laurat to J. Rens, 25.3.1933, and letter from L. Laurat to J. Rens, 5.4.1933, FLB/IEV/1.320 and 1.321.

<sup>446</sup> It is worth stressing that *Un système qui sombre* first appeared in Belgium, from the official publishing house of Belgian socialists [see L. Laurat, *Un système qui sombre*, Brussels, L'Eglantine 1932] and that in the spring of 1933 Jef Rens introduced both de Man and Laurat to his readers as leading theorists in the field of economic planning [see J. Rens, 'Problèmes de socialisation', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 4, 20.4.1933, 90-93, and *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 5, 20.5.1933, 127-131]. Laurat also published a few short tracts on economics for l'Eglantine under the name of A. Minard. [see A. Minard, *Quelques données du problème européen*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1931; A. Minard, *Le développement du capitalisme et la lutte pour la démocratie*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1933]



mooted the idea of a Labour Plan in the first place, as demonstrated by his *Economie planée contre économie enchainée*, released in May 1932 by Georges Valois in Paris.<sup>447</sup>

De Man and Laurat agreed on a crucial issue: both men did not think that a generic increase of state intervention and regulation of the economy would suffice to address the crisis. For this reason, while playing with the notion of *économie dirigée*, de Man also expressed misgivings about it. His attitude can be better explained against the backdrop of the 1931 World Social Economic Planning Congress held in Amsterdam, where distinguished experts, businessmen, and academics from all around the globe discussed different schemes aimed at introducing planned production and consumption.<sup>448</sup> During his 1918 trip to the United States, de Man had already developed mixed feelings towards scientific management: he appreciated the emphasis on efficiency, productivity, and higher wages but despised Taylor's tendency to treat labour as a mere commodity.<sup>449</sup> Times, however, were changing. A new breed of advocates of planning, such as the managing director of the Taylor Society, Harlow S. Person and Lewis L. Lorwin, then a fellow of the Brookings Institution, were advocating a much more enlightened vision of planning, called 'social', by which

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<sup>447</sup> So argued Claude Harmel: see C. Harmel, 'Le marxisme de Lucien Laurat', *Est & Ouest*, 515, 1973, 365-379. It is uncertain, though, whether de Man had read that book. Besides, as discussed later on in this chapter, de Man's subtle distinction between 'économie dirigée' and 'Plan' is absent from Laurat's work, and by April 1933 de Man was already familiar with the WTB Plan: it is therefore difficult to claim that Laurat was the hidden hand behind the Belgian Labour Plan. It remains true, on the other hand, that Laurat delved into many of the issues that de Man brought to the foreground in his own Plan, such as the nationalisation of credit: see e.g. L. Laurat, *Economie planée contre économie enchainée*, Paris, Valois 1932, 105-112.

<sup>448</sup> The most significant contribution on the largely neglected 1931 World Social Economic Planning Congress is A. Salsano, 'Gli ingegneri e il socialismo. Taylorismo e planismo di fronte alla grande crisi', *L'Internazionale operaia e socialista fra le due guerre*, E. Collotti (ed.), Milan, Feltrinelli 1985, 1181-1216, where de Man's remarks are also discussed. Important references to the Congress can also be found in T. Cayet, 'Travailler à la marge: le Bureau International du Travail et l'organisation scientifique du travail (1923-1933)', *Le mouvement social*, 3, 2009, 39-56 and T. Cayet, 'The ILO and the IMI: A Strategy of Influence on the Edges of the League of Nations, 1925-1934', *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World during the Twentieth Century*, J. Van Daele et al (eds.), Bern, Peter Lang 2010, 251-270.

<sup>449</sup> See chapter II of this dissertation.

managers would promote the general welfare instead of serving business interests. In the words of Person, 'individualistic industry' was no longer able to meet the dynamism of the overall economic system: 'we have come to the conclusion that a regulating mechanism must be added to it – social economic planning – and that economic integration represented in social economic planning must precede any effective political cooperation.'<sup>450</sup> A progressive undertone was especially evident in Lorwin's speech, in which he suggested social planning would 'provide a basis for cooperative action which would make possible a peaceful exploitation of the world's resources in the common interests of all groups and nations' as well as 'work out a national policy which promised a higher development for all', bringing people together 'on the basis of what is technically and objectively best for the community as a whole.'<sup>451</sup> Arguments like these did not leave de Man indifferent: he too believed that experts were to play a major role in addressing economic imbalances, building an 'alliance between labour and science' to redress the imbalances generated by unfettered capitalism.<sup>452</sup> Nor did he miss the significance of American intellectuals denouncing *laissez-faire*: the United States was undergoing a 'truly spiritual revolution', as the thriving of the technocratic movement demonstrated, showing the extent to which ordinary people could become passionate about social engineering even in countries where capitalism had deep

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<sup>450</sup> H.S. Person, 'Scientific management as a philosophy and technique of progressive industrial stabilization', *World Social Economic Planning: The Necessity for Planned Adjustment of Productive Capacity and Standards of Living*, M.L. Fledderus (ed.), The Hague, International Industrial Relations Institute 1932, 153. On Person's new approach, see H.S. Person, 'The New Challenge to Scientific Management: Can the Principles of Planning and Control Be Applied Over a Wider Area than the Individual Enterprise?', *Bulletin of the Taylor Society*, 16, 2, 1931, 62-63.

<sup>451</sup> L.L. Lorwin, 'The Problem of Economic Planning', *World Social Economic Planning*, 262, 265. Lorwin's paper was praised by the Albert Thomas, who also spoke at the conference [see A. Thomas, 'Détermination internationale des normes du travail', in *World Social Economic Planning*, 529-541]. Lorwin would later serve as an advisor to the ILO and a consultant to the National Resources Planning Board established by the Roosevelt Administration in 1933. His views on social planning are laid out in L.L. Lorwin, *A Time for Planning: A Social-Economic Theory and Program for the Twentieth Century*, New York-London, Harper & Brothers 1945.

<sup>452</sup> H. de Man, *Les techniciens et la crise*, Brussels, Imprimerie coopérative, n.d., 30. The original speech was given in Liège on November 10, 1934.

roots.<sup>453</sup> However, de Man found the dominant view of planning expressed by most speakers at the Congress unrealistic. ‘There is something utopian in all the plans for a managed economy (*économie dirigée*) discussed in Amsterdam’ he wrote in 1932, for they lacked ‘the sovereign power that could enforce them upon reluctant powers going in the opposite direction.’<sup>454</sup> Although de Man was referring here to a plan for international cooperation, the caveat applied to national plans too. As he pointed out in evaluating the contribution of the Russian delegation to the conference, ‘in one thing, the managed economy of the Soviets is enormously superior to all the other “plans”: it exists and it works.’<sup>455</sup> By no means had he become an admirer of Stalin’s policies – as his critical remarks in the text prove – ; still, he intended to underscore the key political preconditions of successful planning: namely, that socialists had to gain a position of strength to use planning to make bold changes, instead of marginal improvements, to the social order. In the end, planning could serve too many purposes – including a short-term, capitalist self-reform to provide temporary relief – to be uncritically accepted. As de Man summed up his perplexities: ‘*Economie dirigée*, that sounds very well. The expression suits men’s desire, inseparable from human intelligence, to steer their own fate away from the action of blind, uncontrollable, and irresponsible forces. But it remains dangerously vague and chaotic unless one says towards what it is directed (*dirigée*).’<sup>456</sup> However essential as a tool, planning alone gave no sense of direction. According to de Man, two elements were missing: a leader and a Plan.

The need for strong leadership informed de Man’s understanding of the New Deal, born out of ‘the conjunction between a governing will matched with executive

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<sup>453</sup> H. de Man, ‘La technocratie’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 1, 4, 25.2.1933, 103.

<sup>454</sup> H. de Man, *Réflexions sur l’économie dirigée*, Brussels, l’Eglantine 1932, 12.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 37.

power and a public opinion dominated by a general threat.<sup>457</sup> It was Franklin D. Roosevelt, de Man argued, who kicked off the transition of the United States towards state capitalism but the rationale of that transformation had already been laid out by the National Bureau of Economic Research and other advisory boards set up by his predecessor, Herbert Hoover.<sup>458</sup> According to de Man, leadership, in order to be effective, had to be transformative. In *Massen und Führer*, published in 1932, he lamented that socialist leaders too easily turned themselves into bureaucrats, especially when the masses, as in the case of social democratic militants, were already inclined towards self-discipline and lukewarm about abrupt changes – somewhat restating the charges he had made in *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* –.<sup>459</sup> Yet this time he also set out a different theory of leadership. In a paragraph entitled *Die Kommende Aristokratie*, de Man predicted that future leaders would give up the will to compromise at any cost and focus on the task of building deep, emotional connections with their followers. ‘The psychological secret behind the authority of a leader’, he held ‘is also the secret of the tamer. That sympathy that makes us penetrate into a foreign soul and gives us the opportunity to exercise dominion over all the living creatures is possible only for who is not afraid and, by bestowing confidence, receives confidence in return.’<sup>460</sup> De Man carefully stressed that, by drawing attention to the importance of irrational feelings, he was not lurching towards fascism. His conception of leadership implied mutual trust and reciprocity: leader and masses would strengthen, support, and energise each other, in a circular way, whereas authoritarian leaders believed that ‘masses must be subjugated to

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<sup>457</sup> H. de Man, ‘Du plan technique au plan économique’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 1, 10, 25.5.1933, 473.

<sup>458</sup> See H. de Man, ‘La volte-face des Etats-Unis’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 1, 12, 25.6.1933, 523-528.

<sup>459</sup> See chapter III of this dissertation.

<sup>460</sup> H. de Man, *Massen und Führer*, Potsdam, Protte 1932, 45.

the will of the ruling elites' – a vision at odds with his emancipatory conception of politics.<sup>461</sup> Fascists and communists alike saw masses as 'an object', consistent with their loathing for the 'democratic freedom of expression.'<sup>462</sup> Authoritarian rule maintained the divide between those exerting political power and those exposed to it, hence failing to deliver the socialist promise: 'an ascension, an ennoblement, an improvement, an act of creation, a process of liberation' to be experienced by every single individual.<sup>463</sup>

The Plan, however, was the real cornerstone of de Man's strategy. The term was, of course, widely employed at the time – the first Soviet five-year plan was issued in 1928 – and de Man is likely to have been inspired by a wide range of sources in choosing it. Arguably, an important document was the WTB Plan, named after its three proponents: the economists Wladimir Woytinsky, Fritz Tarnow, and Fritz Baade. The WTB Plan, launched in Germany in December 1931, outlined a programme of public works and credit expansion to create one million new jobs, and gained considerable support among trade unionists. As a set of interventionist measures, it sparked a fiery debate: the SPD firmly opposed it, fearing that, if implemented, the Plan would unleash inflation, and the unions begrudgingly discarded it.<sup>464</sup> But the WTB Plan, however unsuccessful, was also a beacon of hope: it demonstrated that heterodox ideas, such as Woytinsky's energetic defense of an 'active economic policy' (*aktive Wirtschaftspolitik*) to overcome the recession, could get an enthusiastic response from

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>462</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>464</sup> On the WTB Plan, see D. Harsch, *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1993, 155-168; S. Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment*, 190-196.

the workers and their representatives, putting the party establishment under severe strain.<sup>465</sup>

In one respect, however, de Man's notion of 'Plan' was deeply original: rather than encompassing a wide-ranging set of measures that could be implemented or not, depending on varying circumstances, with no detailed schedule and no clear priority, the Plan was meant to be binding and immediately applicable: in de Man's terminology, it was a 'Plan for action (*Aktionsplan*).'<sup>466</sup> Conceptually, the Plan would involve the 'overcoming' (*Aufhebung*) of the distinction between the 'minimalist practical programme' (*praktischen Minimalprogramm*) and the 'maximalist theoretical programme' (*grundsätzlichen Maximalprogramm*), hence transcending both the reformist and the revolutionary interpretation of socialism.<sup>467</sup> In practice, this was tantamount to saying that planism would seek to bridge the divide between social democracy and communism in the name of 'constructive socialism' (*konstruktiver Sozialismus*).<sup>468</sup>

In ordinary times, de Man explained, socialists in power used their position to reallocate wealth and improve the material condition of the working class by passing 'redistributive reforms' (*réformes de répartition*); the crisis, however, was so deep that 'structural reforms' (*réformes de structure*) had to be prioritised, in order to change the underlying capitalist framework under which wealth was created; structural reforms

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<sup>465</sup> See W.S. Woytinsky, 'Aktive Wirtschaftspolitik', *Der Arbeit*, 6, 1931, 413-440. In 1932 de Man tried to hire Woytinsky as an analyst for the B.E.S. [see letter from H. de Man to R. De-Becker, 12.1.1932, AHDM/IISG/421]; two years later, Woytinsky attended the Pontigny Conference. In his memoirs, he claimed that the Belgian Labour Plan was 'partly copied from the WTB Plan.' [W.S. Woytinsky, *Stormy Passage*, 478]

<sup>466</sup> See H. de Man, *Wende des Sozialismus (Ende des Reformismus)*, Zürich, VPOD 1934, 22-24. With regard to the Belgian Labour Plan, de Man would speak of 'a set of immediate measures for an institutional transformation clearly delimited in advance, but radical within those predetermined limits.' [H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail*, Paris-Brussels, Labor, 1934, 15]

<sup>467</sup> H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, Jena, Diederichs 1933, 327.

<sup>468</sup> H. de Man, *Wende des Sozialismus*, 3; see H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, 307.

were the only ones through which production and consumption could be expanded.<sup>469</sup> The Plan would therefore include measures aimed at nationalising key industries and, even more importantly, the banking sector. Again, de Man was keen to distance himself from those reformists loosely committed to a soft version of *économie dirigée*: he deemed ‘chimeric’ any effort to manage the whole economy unless credit, energy production, and raw materials were seized immediately and turned into ‘a socialist state’s monopoly.’<sup>470</sup> On the other hand, he denied that the Plan was bound to suppress the private sector. Hinting at the bureaucratisation and despotism of the Soviet system, de Man pointed out that ‘European socialism, in its first phase of the socialising process, must preserve the free competitive sector as much as possible, and even expand it.’<sup>471</sup> Such a stance would make it easier for socialists to win support among small businessmen and farmers fearful of expropriation but, de Man insisted, his point was not just tactical; rather, a dynamic private sector was consistent with his ‘personalist and pluralist view of socialisation’, according to which economic power had to be dispersed and made accountable, rather than simply transferred to the state.<sup>472</sup>

In essence, de Man was calling for the establishment of a mixed economy, based on the coexistence of a public and a private sector: the socialisation of the latter would ensue only in the far-off future. The argument resembles the economic case for a New Socialism made in his 1919 book, *The Remaking of a Mind*.<sup>473</sup> At least one big

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<sup>469</sup> As de Man would put it when launching the Belgian Labour Plan, structural reforms under a Plan ‘aim at introducing a better redistribution also by transforming the regime, and steer it towards a higher national income, that is a production better fulfilling the needs of consumption and developed in parallel to the latter.’ [H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail*, 6] See also H. de Man, ‘Pour une nouvelle stratégie socialiste’, *Le Peuple*, 27.10.1933; H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, 6.

<sup>470</sup> H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, 331.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>473</sup> See chapter II of this dissertation. De Man resumed the expression ‘socialisme nouveau’ in late 1933: see H. de Man, ‘A capitalisme nouveau, socialisme nouveau’, *Le Peuple*, 29.11.1933; A. Dewinne, ‘Nouveau socialisme’, *Le Peuple*, 7.12.1933.

difference, however, must be flagged up: in 1932-33, de Man no longer believed – unlike Bernstein, Thomas, and other reformists– that a smooth and ordered transition from laissez-faire to collectivism, driven by the inherent trend towards an ever more rationalised and increasingly concentrated private sector, was on the cards. On the contrary, a radical break was needed and the Plan would mark that turning point. ‘From now on, the state must be able to command the banks, instead of being commanded by them. For sure, that implies a transformation of the existing regime as profound as a revolution’ he told a cheering Belgian audience in June 1934. ‘I do not use that word vulgarly, in the sense of an insurrectional action, but in its true meaning: the overturning of an existent balance of power and the radical transformation of a regime. This is not about triggering riots (*créer des désordres*); rather, and very simply, it is about ending an existing disorder by establishing a true order (*ordre véritable*).’<sup>474</sup> De Man was adamant in stating that the planist revolution was to be carried out within, not against, the democratic system, accepting majority rule and parliamentary constraints, even though the inherent logic of the Plan pointed to the establishment of a strong state and a more powerful executive authority.<sup>475</sup> The democratic character of planism, however, presupposed a firm political will: by creating a ‘dynamic unity’ between structural reforms and countercyclical measures, planism wished to combine ‘the objectives of Lenin with those of Roosevelt’ and was therefore expected to overhaul conventional social democratic practices based on negotiations, compromises, and concessions.<sup>476</sup>

The third concept that de Man used to buttress his proposals is corporatism, i.e. a way of reorganising the state to prevent the newly established mixed economy from

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<sup>474</sup> H. De Man, *Les Techniciens*, 27.

<sup>475</sup> See *ibidem*; H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, 18, 22-23; H. de Man, ‘Les limites de la nationalisation’, *Le Peuple*, 15.11.1933; H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, 342-343.

<sup>476</sup> H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, 22.



slipping into statism. It is noteworthy that the term was conspicuously absent from de Man's early writings on the economic crisis and made its appearance only in summer 1934, in a series of articles published by the Belgian socialist newspaper *Le Peuple*. His choice of words was hazardous and driven, to a certain extent, by contingency. De Man was by then involved in the campaign for the Labour Plan, and by using the term 'corporatism' he probably tried to reach out to Belgian Catholics, who – under the influence of the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued in 1931 – were exploring new ways to reconcile capital and labour.<sup>477</sup> Yet de Man must have known that the concept would upset many on the Left, as – unlike patriotism or *économie dirigée* – it brought to mind Italian fascism and its *Carta del Lavoro* as well as Spain and Portugal's authoritarian regimes.<sup>478</sup> Fascists themselves were keen to capitalise on that ambiguity. The fact that, in 1935, a relatively well-known Italian intellectual, Ugo Spirito, could claim that de Man's trajectory proved that socialism was bound to dissolve into corporatism may have led some socialists to think that de Man's language was grist for the fascists' mill.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> De Man was outspoken about the necessity of involving the Catholics in a planist campaign: see his speech at the 48<sup>th</sup> POB Congress, *Conseil General, XXVIIIème Congrès, Bruxelles, 24-25 Décembre 1933*, Brussels, L'Eglantine 1934, 25-26. For further discussion on corporatism in Belgium, see chapter VI of this dissertation.

<sup>478</sup> Following de Man's interventions, a number of socialists took a stand against the term. In Belgium, Vandervelde told de Man that that word was 'dangerous' ['Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 12 juillet 1934', APWB/AMSAB] after having denounced it as deceptive. [see E. Vandervelde, 'L'équivoque corporative: anachronisme et camouflage', *Le Peuple*, 4.2.1934] The journalist and deputy Léon Delsinne objected to de Man on the same newspaper. [see e.g. L. Delsinne, 'Peut-il y avoir un corporatisme socialiste?', *Le Peuple*, 5.10.1934; L. Delsinne, 'Le corporatisme ne peut plus avoir sens de sens au XXe siècle', *Le Peuple*, 12.10.1934; L. Delsinne, 'Corporatisme ou socialisme?', *Le Peuple*, 26.10.1934] Even committed planists expressed misgivings about contaminating socialism with corporatism. [see G. Lefranc, 'Le mouvement ouvrier devant le corporatisme', VV.AA., *Crise et Plan (quinze conférences et études sur le Plan de la CGT)*, Paris, Centre Confédéral d'Education Ouvrière 1935, 88-94; J. Rens, *Fascisme et corporatisme: essai documentaire*, Viviers, Imprimeur coopérative le Travail 1937, esp. 99-103; J. Rens, *Corporatisme, non! Organisation des professions, peut-être!* Brussels, Publications de la Centrale d'Éducation Ouvrière 1937, esp. 99-104] On the hostility of mainstream socialists to de Man's corporatist turn, see also L. Franck, 'Ricordi', *Il corporativismo e l'economia dell'Italia fascista*, N. Tranfaglia (ed.), Turin, Bollati Boringhieri 1990, 3-30.

<sup>479</sup> See U. Spirito, *Il Piano de Man e l'economia mista*, Florence, Sansoni 1935; U. Spirito, 'Capitalismo, socialismo, corporativismo', VV.AA., *Nuove esperienze economiche*, Florence, Sansoni 1935, 219-241.

Truth be told, de Man dismissed fascist corporatism as a false and perverted version of a much nobler set of principles, a ‘camouflage of the capitalist world’s reaction against democracy.’<sup>480</sup> Even more importantly, he referred to Belgian and British authors – de Paepe, Vandervelde, Tawney, and Cole – to underscore that an ancient and venerable strand of socialist thought had favoured the creation of intermediate bodies with the purpose of allowing the self-organisation of the working class well before Mussolini built his own corporate state.<sup>481</sup> A mixed economy, de Man held, would work better if ‘placed under the sign of the autonomous organisation of professional interests’ so to reconcile class and professional solidarity.<sup>482</sup> Furthermore, under socialist corporatism, the state would impose a ‘legal statute’ upon certain institutions and enforce ‘a property regime’ upon capital in order to safeguard the public interest; it would not, however, be directly in charge of managing the public sector, a task to be left to technicians and workers’ associations.<sup>483</sup> In many ways, de Man – whose version of corporatism enshrined the right to strike and the full recognition of free trade unions – was still faithful to some teachings of Guild Socialism, which he had praised in *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, as his mention of Cole and Tawney demonstrates.<sup>484</sup> Some institutions already in place and experiences across Europe

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Spirito, a leading theorist of Italian corporatism, worked under the auspices of the Minister of the Culture Giuseppe Bottai. The *Scuola superiore di scienze corporative*, which Spirito directed, managed to publish a variety of articles from international scholars interested in economic planning, including Pirou, Sombart, Lorwin, Cole, and Durbin but, quite interestingly, not de Man.

<sup>480</sup> H. de Man, ‘Démocratie industrielle ou dictature capitaliste ?’, *Le Peuple*, 3.10.1934. See also H. de Man, ‘Le vrai et le faux corporatisme’, *Le Peuple*, 26.9.1934.

<sup>481</sup> See H. de Man, ‘Le corporatisme et nous’, *Le Peuple*, 25.7.1934; H. de Man, ‘Le corporatisme socialiste contre l’étatisme’, *Le Peuple*, 19.9.1934; H. de Man, ‘Unité syndicale et différenciation corporative’, *Le Peuple*, 5.9.1934. In 1933 Vandervelde acknowledged as ‘one of the merits of Henri de Man’ the fact that he had warned against the danger of ‘a generalised statism, which leaves little room, or no room at all, to the substantial rather than formal freedom of the workers, whether through an industrial or a political democracy.’ [E. Vandervelde, *L’alternative: capitalisme d’état ou socialisme démocratique*, Paris-Brussels, l’Eglantine 1933, 142]

<sup>482</sup> H. de Man, ‘Syndicalisme contre corporatisme?’, *Le Peuple*, 22.8.1934.

<sup>483</sup> H. de Man, ‘Le corporatisme socialiste contre l’étatisme’, *Le Peuple*, 19.9.1934.

<sup>484</sup> See chapter III of this dissertation.

might have inspired him too. He greatly admired, for instance, the Reich Economic Council (*Reichswirtschaftsrat*) of Germany, created in 1920, which was supposed to promote cooperation between employers and workers but could also advance labour legislation before Parliament.<sup>485</sup> And he was certainly aware of the early reforms undertaken by Swedish social democrats after the 1932 election, inspired by the concept of *Folkhemmet* (People's home) as developed by socialist leaders Ernst Johannes Wigforss and Albin Hansson: both were long-time admirers of Guild Socialism and leaned towards left-wing corporatist solutions.<sup>486</sup> In other words, de Man was trying to reclaim a term which he believed had been unjustly appropriated by the Right.<sup>487</sup>

It remained to be seen at what level the transformation of the economy would be undertaken. On that point, de Man was crystal clear: the Plan would be enforced through the institutional machinery of the nation state. That was less a choice than a necessity, he pointed out, due to the inability of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) to articulate a consistent and coordinated strategy among socialist parties to oppose the rise of fascism and to the lack of executive power of international

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<sup>485</sup> See H. de Man, 'Les institutions paritaires de l'industrie allemande', *Bulletin d'information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale de Belgique*, 2, 7, 10.10.1930, 253-258.

<sup>486</sup> See E. Wigforss, *Industrins Demokratisering*, Stockholm, Tidens Förlag 1922; A. Hansson, *Demokratiskt och uppsatser*, Stockholm, Tidens Förlag 1935. In December 1932 de Man visited Sweden and Denmark [see clippings in AHDM/IISG/178] and in 1933 commented on Swedish monetary policy [see H. de Man, 'L'expérience suédoise', *Bulletin d'information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale de Belgique*, 2, 1, 10.7.1933, 1-6]. Swedish social democrats circulated a brief summary of their reforms in August 1933, at the Labour and Socialist International conference held in Paris: de Man was among the attendees [see LSIA/IISG/928]. For an overview on Swedish socialism, see T.A. Tilton, *The Political Theory of Swedish Social Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2001; M. Telò, *Le New Deal européen*, 155-168.

<sup>487</sup> The existence of a left-wing strand of corporatism, often associated with French trade unionism, was then widely acknowledged in the literature: see e.g. M. Bouvier-Ajam, *La doctrine corporative*, Paris, Sirey 1937, 81-110; F. Perroux, *Capitalisme et communauté de travail*, Paris, Sirey 1938, 160-176, 297-309; G. Pirou, *Essais sur le corporatisme: corporatisme et libéralisme, corporatisme et étatisme, corporatisme et syndicalisme*, Paris, Sirey 1938, 13-21. On corporatism and the Belgian milieu, see also D. Luyten, *Ideologisch debat en politieke strijd over het corporatisme tijdens het interbellum in België*, Brussels, Koninklijke Academie 1996. Insightful remarks on left-wing corporatism can be found in M. Pasetti, *L'Europa corporativa: una storia transnazionale tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bologna, Bononia University Press 2016, 44-58.

organisations such as the International Labour Office (ILO) or the League of Nations.<sup>488</sup>

In all likelihood, de Man's scepticism towards the LSI, and international socialist organisations in general, stemmed from his own personal experience in the summer of 1914.<sup>489</sup> Furthermore, the LSI conference held in Paris in August 1933 had left little hope that socialist parties could be prevented from going down different national paths, due to the lack of consensus about the causes of fascism and the best strategy to fight back.<sup>490</sup> 'Every working class, every people' de Man wrote in December 1933 'instead of waiting for salvation from an international power which the capitalist world had proved unable to create, must seek their own salvation in the only arena in which they have means to achieve it.'<sup>491</sup> A national action, however, differed from a nationalist one. Throughout the Thirties, de Man – consistent with his conception of patriotism – staunchly opposed protectionism, which he felt was creating 'a truly latent state of economic war' among European countries.<sup>492</sup> To his mind, economic barriers, quotas, and other measures undercutting international trade were a symptom, rather than a cause, of the crumbling of *laissez-faire*, to which socialist economic planning offered the only long-term solution as well as the best hope for the establishment of peaceful relations between nations: 'a national economic plan is the precondition of international

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<sup>488</sup> See H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Idee*, 335; H. de Man, 'Le plan national d'abord', *Le Peuple*, 22.11.1933; H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail*, 12-13.

<sup>489</sup> See chapter II of this dissertation.

<sup>490</sup> See *Après la catastrophe allemande. Résolutions de la conférence de Paris de l'Internationale Ouvrière Socialiste*, Zürich, Éditions de l'IOS 1933. De Man acknowledged the deep divisions that emerged from the Conference: see H. de Man, 'Clarification', *Le Peuple*, 24.9.1933; H. de Man, 'Avant-propos', *Pour un plan d'action*, Brussels, L'Eglantine 1933, 1. For an overview of the conference, see G. Vergnon, 'La dernière conférence: la conférence de Paris de l'Internationale Ouvrière et Socialiste (21-25 août 1933)', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 3, 1994, 440-470; L. Rapone, *La socialdemocrazia europea tra le due guerre: dall'organizzazione della pace alla resistenza al fascismo*, Rome, Carocci 1999, 248-264.

<sup>491</sup> H. de Man, *Le nationalisme économique*, 20.

<sup>492</sup> H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail*, 1; H. de Man, *Le nationalisme économique*, 1. See also H. de Man, 'Du protectionnisme à l'autarchie', *Bulletin d'information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 2, 12, 25.12.1932, 413-419. Tellingly, de Man was invited to give a speech about the Plan at the *Institut d'économie européenne*, a bulwark of Belgian internationalism. [see letter from I. Van der Ghinst to H. de Man, 20.11.1933 and the conference's invitation letter, undated, AHDM/IISG/449]

conventions. If national economies are not managed through a plan and if private interests, within each country or through the action of international groupings, can do what they want, the chances for economic agreements abroad are minimal.’<sup>493</sup> National plans, therefore, could be instrumental to peace, and one day be harmonised into wider international economic plans – in accordance to his multifaceted internationalism, based on the recognition of different national cultures.<sup>494</sup>

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De Man’s ideas between 1930 and 1934 must be evaluated in comparison with contributions from other authors released in the same period. His economics was undoubtedly rudimentary but the same applies to many socialist writers who had little or no familiarity at all with non-Marxist political economy.<sup>495</sup> Only after the publication of Keynes’ *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in 1936 did the categories of modern macroeconomics begin to permeate left-wing discourses on the economic crisis as the theory of underconsumption, and institutional economics more generally,

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<sup>493</sup> H. de Man, ‘Libre-échange, autarchie ou économie dirigée’, *Bulletin d’information et de documentation de la Banque Nationale du Belgique*, 2, 8, 25.10.1933, 251. See also H. de Man, ‘Economie nationale dirigée, oui! Repli économique national, non!’, *Le Peuple*, 6.12.1933; H. de Man, ‘Reprise mondiale ou reprises nationales?’, *Le Peuple*, 30.5.1934.

<sup>494</sup> De Man’s case is similar to at least one resolution unanimously approved by the LSI in August 1931, during the Vienna Congress, under the heading ‘The World Economic Crisis and Unemployment’: see ‘The Decisions of the Congress of the L.S.I.’, *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International: Vienna, 25<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 1931 – Reports and Proceedings*, London, Labour Party Publications Department, 1932, 901-902. In introducing the resolution, the Swiss socialist Robert Grimm hinted at the necessity of ‘transitional reforms which will point the way to the path that leads to the future and that will broaden out into the wide highway to Socialism.’ [Ibid., 751] See also the resolution passed by the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) – the so called Amsterdam International – during their international congress held in Brussels in late July-early August 1933. [‘Les conclusions des commissions discutées en séance plénière au cours de la dernière journée du Congrès International’, *Le Peuple*, 4.8.1933; *The Activities of the International Federation of Trade Unions, 1933-1935*, London, International Federation of Trade Unions 1937, esp. 132-135]. The IFTU had developed a strong interest in l’économie dirigée already in the 1920s: see W. Schevenels, *Quarante cinq années: Fédération Syndicale Internationale, 1901-1945*, Brussels, Éditions de l’Institut Emile Vandervelde 1964, esp. 102-114, 140-148.

<sup>495</sup> For an overview on this literature, see e.g. G.D.H. Cole, *What to Read on Economic Problems of To-Day & Tomorrow*, Leeds, Leeds Public Libraries 1932.

lost ground.<sup>496</sup> His case for patriotism was elegantly made but added little to his previous works, and his densest speech on that matter had also a relatively narrow focus as it addressed the issue of language equality between the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium. Calling for a social democratic variant of corporatism was a risky move, and it is unfortunate that de Man's articles were overshadowed by the almost contemporary publication of Mihail Manoilescu's *Le siècle du corporatisme: doctrine du corporatisme intégral et pure*, imbued with sympathy for the new system, as well as by Louis Rosenstock-Franck's *L'économie corporative fasciste en doctrine et en fait*, which denounced Mussolini's experiment as a propaganda myth. Manoilescu and Franck's books contributed to turn left-wing anti-fascists based in the French-speaking world against corporatism in general, hence crippling de Man's efforts to strive a middle course between an outright rejection and a full acceptance of the corporatist tradition. De Man's fight for salvaging the term was lost a few months after he had launched the first assault.<sup>497</sup> On the contrary, however, his analysis of the downfall of the Weimar Republic – within the limits of the empirical evidence then available – was remarkably insightful and anticipated many of the subsequent findings of the historiography, especially with regard to the strategic blunders of the SPD in 1930-1932.<sup>498</sup> Finally, his view of the Plan is highly imaginative, because of its shrewd

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<sup>496</sup> On Keynes' effort to overcome the limitations of Hobson's theory of underconsumption, see R. Skidelsky, 'Keynes, Hobson, Marx', *PSL Quarterly Review*, 264, 2013, 7-19. See also E.E. Nemmers, *Hobson and Underconsumption*, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing Company 1956, 26-32. For a more sympathetic assessment of de Man's economics, see L. Cuyvers, 'Was Henri de Man an Early Post-Keynesian Neo-Marxist?', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 1, 2015, 90-105.

<sup>497</sup> Manoilescu was a Rumanian economist who staunchly defended protectionism and, later on, became a supporter of the fascist movement Iron Guard. Franck, on the other hand, was a graduate from the *Ecole Polytechnique* who wrote his doctoral thesis on corporatism while being in touch with several Italian exiles, including Rosselli, Angelo Tasca, and Gaetano Salvemini. See M. Manoilescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme: doctrine du corporatisme intégral et pur*, Paris, Alcan 1934; L. Rosenstock-Franck, *L'économie corporative fasciste en doctrine et en fait: ses origines historiques et son évolution*, Paris, Gamber 1934.

<sup>498</sup> See e.g. K.D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1955), Stuttgart-Düsseldorf, Ring-Verlag 1957, 287-330; R.A.

combination of an economic and a political message. Instead of fleshing out a purely technocratic tool to reverse the material consequences of the Depression – as did most plans sketched out during the Thirties –, de Man understood the potential of planning as a method to address the weakness of parliamentary rule and allow democratic socialists to take the offensive. Without denying experts a key role under the mixed economy, de Man wished to make the Plan a rallying point for ordinary people – a multi-class political platform to broaden the appeal of social democratic parties and gain a majority by which existing institutions, both political and economic, could be thoroughly reformed. Having returned to Belgium, de Man did not wait long before putting his own ideas to the test.

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Gates, 'German Socialism and the Crisis of 1920-1933', *Central European History*, 4, 1974, 332-359. Similarly, Harold James contended that 'the history of the Weimar SPD is, despite the party's large share of the popular vote, a sad litany of mistakes, lost opportunities, misguided tactics and a confused strategy.' [H. James, 'The SPD and the Economic Depression, 1930-1933', *Bernstein to Brandt: A Short History of German Social Democracy*, R. Fletcher (ed.), London, Edward Arnold 1987, 143] This is not to deny that both German social democrats and the Brüning cabinet operated under huge fiscal constraints: see e.g. K. Borchardt, 'Constraints and Room for Manoeuvre in the Great Depression of the Early Thirties', and 'Economic Causes of the Collapse of the Weimar Republic', *Perspectives on Modern German Economic History and Policy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1991, 143-160 and 161-183 respectively. De Man was also prescient in a forebear in analysing National Socialism as a fundamentally middle class phenomenon: see e.g. D.J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, London, Allen Lane 1991, 156-158; E. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1988), London-New York, Routledge 1988, 101-115.

V.

**Fire and Ashes:**

**The Fight for the Labour Plan in Belgium**

It does not seem a very big thing to ask that the energies of a nation might be concentrated on the achievement of some such limited plan for the well-being of that nation [...]. Admittedly, however, even this modest aim has never been attained except perhaps when, in war, practically a whole people becomes united on the destruction of another people. For any peaceful end such union has never been experienced.

Barbara Wootton, 1934<sup>499</sup>

All that is fine but they are *images d'Épinal*.

Raymond Aron, 1934 ca<sup>500</sup>

Around 1935, Bertrand de Jouvenel, then a French journalist in his thirties, sketched out the ideal types of the figures dominating the politics of his age. At the top of the list, there was the 'Great Parliamentarian', whose talent lay in hammering out backdoor agreements and broad alliances to outflank his opponents.<sup>501</sup> A master of seduction no less than a skilful tactician, he was often able to disarm his critics through charm and good humour. Old-fashioned dealmakers, however, were losing ground to other types of leaders. The first were the fascists, allegedly superhuman beings who stood out due to their red-blooded, manly attitude towards their supporters: the 'hard love' that bound the leader and his followers was far different from the 'familiarity' and

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<sup>499</sup> B. Wootton, *Plan or No Plan*, London, Gollancz 1934, 284.

<sup>500</sup> Cited in R. Marjolin, 'Les années 30', *Commentaire*, 1, 1985, 19. Aron's comment refers to the Belgian Labour Plan.

<sup>501</sup> B. de Jouvenel, *Un voyageur dans le siècle, 1903-1945*, avec le concours de J. Malige, Paris, Laffont 1979, 195. The book blends souvenirs with published and unpublished materials from de Jouvenel's early career as a journalist and commentator.



‘affection’ linking the Great Parliamentarian to his supporters.<sup>502</sup> Personal charisma, not ideological consistency, explained the appeal of fascism. The fascist leader, de Jouvenel observed, always tended to turn his own life into a ‘legend’, concealing or manipulating facts about his past to stir up emotions, and eventually beguile the masses. In that sense, fascism too relied on seduction.<sup>503</sup> Of another temper were the men epitomising the third tendency, a group categorised as ‘the planists’ (*les planistes*): Hendrik de Man in Belgium, Rexford Tugwell in the United States, and G.D.H. Cole in Britain.<sup>504</sup> ‘It is a lesser known species, but very important’, de Jouvenel argued. Unlike the parliamentarian – a ‘handler of men (*manieur d’hommes*)’ – or the fascist – ‘a handler of crowds (*manieur de foules*)’ –, the planist excelled as a ‘handler of things (*manieur de choses*).’<sup>505</sup> He cared about production, labour, and the good functioning of the whole society. Instead of pursuing dominance, or indulging in pipe dreams, he stayed focused on the essentials: ‘secure everyone’s livelihood and organise abundance.’<sup>506</sup> Being convinced that, with the rise of planists, ‘a new phase’ of history had begun, de Jouvenel speculated whether some synthesis between these figures would soon emerge, combining the shrewdness of the great parliamentarian, the ability to thrill ordinary people displayed by the fascist, and the cult of competence shown by the planist.<sup>507</sup> His hypotheses about the future, however, are less interesting in this context than his assessment of the contemporary situation. Quite remarkably, de Jouvenel understood planism as a broad transnational phenomenon, encompassing the American New Deal, a movement that could effectively compete with, and possibly defeat, fascism. Of this

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>503</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>505</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>506</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>507</sup> Ibidem.

orientation, de Man was seen as the natural standard bearer, the most articulate spokesperson. In October 1936, de Jouvenel interviewed de Man, then a Belgian Minister, and introduced him as ‘the prototype of the «leader of the future»’ («*chef de l’avenir*»), a ‘kind of social engineer’ who was relentlessly fighting to disentangle democracy from vested interests and protect it from nefarious pressure groups.<sup>508</sup> His admiration was genuine, almost palpable: de Jouvenel gave the impression of having met someone with the potential to change the course of history.<sup>509</sup>

De Jouvenel’s remarks, however overblown, are revealing about de Man’s new status, and the public perception of him outside Belgium, in 1935-36. By then he was associated with a doctrine, planism, which he had not only laid down but was also embodying while in office. As a matter of fact, planism cannot be assessed in a vacuum: at least from mid-1933, it underpinned a specific political project, the Labour Plan, also known as *Plan du Travail* or *Plan van de Arbeid*, which de Man launched in and for Belgium. This chapter sets out to explain how de Man managed to turn his insights about the economic crisis into a platform to which his party agreed to commit but also why the Labour Plan was not implemented when he had the opportunity to serve in government. First, it underscores how the Belgian socio-economic and political context provided de Man with a window of opportunity to convert the POB to his ideas. Second, it investigates how unforeseen difficulties and existing constraints led de Man to break the key pledge behind the Plan – its complete enactment as soon as the POB went into power – and to serve as Minister of Public Works in Paul Van Zeeland’s first National Government (1935-1936). Finally, it evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the

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<sup>508</sup> B. de Jouvenel, ‘Le pensée et l’action’, *Les nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques*, 732, 24.10.1936, 1.

<sup>509</sup> By 1936, de Jouvenel had become a friend of de Man and had frequently praised him on the French press. See e.g. B. de Jouvenel, ‘Belgique: Patrie du Plan’, *La République*, 15.9.1934; B. de Jouvenel, ‘Henri de Man l’homme du Plan’, *L’Europe nouvelle*, 878, 8.12.1934, 1216.

planist offensive, casting some light on de Man's failure, which contributed to push him towards the infamous call for collaboration with Nazi Germany after the military defeat of 1940. Tragically, instead of blocking fascism, as de Jouvenel predicted, the most distinguished planist ended up yielding to it, tarnishing not only his name but also the principles he had stood for.

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Summer 1933 marked a turning point in de Man's life. Having spelled out large parts of his creed, and being no longer based in Germany, he became increasingly involved in Belgian politics. After the dissolution of the SPD, the POB could claim the title of second biggest socialist party in Europe, with 600,000 card-carrying members out of an overall population of 8 million.<sup>510</sup> Yet the moment was critical, as the party seemed unable to topple the conservative coalition that had been running Belgium since 1927, despite widespread popular discontent. The Prime Minister, 74-year old Charles de Broqueville, was determined not to abandon the gold standard and repeatedly cut public spending in an effort to balance the budget. In May, the House and the Senate granted the government full powers (*pleins pouvoirs*) to pass the most severe and unpopular measures on the agenda, including entitlement reforms. Meanwhile, the collapse of international trade was having a profound impact on Belgian society: between 1929 and 1932, exports fell by 26%, industrial output declined by nearly one-third; wages were cut, unemployment soared up to 20%. Spontaneous strikes, often

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<sup>510</sup> According to the statistics released by the Labour and Socialist International in 1931, the British Labour Party had more members (2.5 million) but one must bear in mind that the population of the United Kingdom was much bigger (42.92 million). The Austrian SDAPDÖ, with more than 700.000 members, had also a bigger membership in 1931 but, by mid-1933, the repressive measures passed by the Chancellor Dollfuss had probably undercut it: we know, for instance, that socialist trade union membership in Austria fell from 766.000 in 1928 to 520.000 in 1932. It is also worth stressing that the French SFIO was still small, with as little as 125.500 members. [see *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International*, 380-381; R. Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy and Its Background: Economic and Political Group Organization*, London, Routledge and Keagan Paul 1953, 316-317]

involving clashes with the police, erupted in various regions, including the Borinage, where miners had been long-time supporters of the socialist movement.<sup>511</sup> Political stability and democratic rule, the founder of the POB Louis Bertrand warned, could no longer be taken for granted.<sup>512</sup>

In July, the BES that de Man directed, still at an embryonic stage, received full support from the socialist trade unions *Commission Syndicale* (CS), was expanded, and put in charge of assessing pieces of legislation to protect small savers, then was invited to prepare a broader study on the overall economic situation of the country.<sup>513</sup> De Man seized that opportunity to recruit young experts: faculty members and students from Belgian academia were invited to the sessions of a seminar in economic and financial studies, held at the BES headquarters from September 1933 until March 1934. Participants discussed and critically evaluated different technical solutions to address the economic crisis. Some of the attendees would become de Man's closest aides in the following years: the economists Max Buset, Robert J. Lemoine, and Albert Halasi; Jef Rens, representing the CS; the activists Alice Pels and Herman Vos; Georges Truffaut, a contributor to the magazine *Plan*; and the sociologist Léo Moulin.<sup>514</sup> It was de Man, however, who made the decisive move towards the Belgian Plan by addressing the CS Economic Council on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1933: in his speech he called for 'a programme for immediate execution' (*un programme d'exécution immédiate*), which involves a detailed and precise plan, and a complete identification between the propaganda

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<sup>511</sup> G. Vanthemsche, *De werkloosheid in België: 1929-1940*, Berchem, EPO 1989, 113-124, 277; I. Cassiers, *Croissance, crise et régulation en économie ouverte: la Belgique entre les deux guerres*, Brussels, De Boeck Université 1989, 155-164; M. Goossens, 'The Belgium Labour Market during the Interwar Period', *The Economic Development of Belgium since 1870*, H. Van der Wee and J. Blomme (eds.), Cheltenham, Elgar 1997, 417-429. On the Borinage, see J. Puissant, *L'évolution du mouvement ouvrier socialiste dans le Borinage*, Brussels, Académie Royale du Belgique 1993. The famous pro-Communist documentary *Misère au Borinage* was filmed by Joris Ivens and Henri Storck in 1933.

<sup>512</sup> See L. Bertrand, 'Démocratie et régime parlementaire', *Le Peuple*, 20.3.1933.

<sup>513</sup> See 'A propos du Bureau d'Études sociales', 275.

<sup>514</sup> See the minutes of these meetings – fourteen in total –, AHDM/IISG/349A; ABSO/AMSAB/98.

platform and the governmental programme.’<sup>515</sup> On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the Council agreed with de Man’s guidelines and set up a commission to develop them in full. Three days later, the POB General Council – which had asked de Man for clarifications about his ‘action plan’ (*plan d’action*) on October 19<sup>th</sup>, receiving a detailed memorandum in response – endorsed his work, and appointed six new members to the commission: François Van Belle, Désiré Bouchery, Louis de Brouckère, Arthur Jauniaux, Arthur Wauters, Max Buset, and Paul-Henri Spaak. Victor Servy was selected as fifteenth and final member, on behalf of the cooperative movement. Following a series of unrecorded meetings, a first version of the Plan, by then known as the Labour Plan (*Plan du Travail* or *Plan van de Arbeid*), was presented, discussed, and approved by a joint session of the CS National Committee and the POB General Council on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933.<sup>516</sup>

In all probability, the contribution by POB politicians to the final draft of the Belgian Labour Plan was very limited – de Man, Buset, and perhaps Jauniaux are those who did the hard work.<sup>517</sup> The significance of the creation of a joint commission, however, lies in the fact that a number of socialist heavyweights agreed to step in. Especially relevant was the appointment of Spaak, a 35-year old lawyer and member of Parliament from Brussels, then the rising star of *Action socialiste*, the most radical

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<sup>515</sup> H. de Man, ‘Un Plan économique pour la Belgique’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 11, 20.11.1933, 297. See also ‘Des voies nouvelles’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 11, 20.10.1933, 261, highlighting the impact of de Man’s speech. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, de Man wrote that getting involved in politics to implement the BES plans was ‘absolutely essential’ to ensure the effectiveness of the B.E.S. [letter from H. de Man to A. Jauniaux, 17.10.1933, AHDM/IISG/585].

<sup>516</sup> See ‘En avant pour le Plan du Travail’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 11, 20.11.1933, 291; ‘Note soumise par H. de Man au Bureau du C.G. du P.O.B. en vue de sa séance du 27 octobre 1933’, 23.10.1933, AHDM/IISG/422; ‘Le Conseil Général du P.O.B. et le Comité National de la Commission Syndicale ont examiné hier le plan d’action de Henri de Man’, *Le Peuple*, 16.11.1933. On the origins of the name, see J. Rens, ‘Rectifications!’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 11, 26.11.1936, 228-229.

<sup>517</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup*, 207; H. de Man, ‘Préface’, M. Buset, *L’action pour le Plan*, Brussels, l’Eglantine 1934, 3. De Man had already set out the essentials of the Plan in his Note of October 27<sup>th</sup>, and Buset had carried out most of the research on the banking sector by mid-November. [see ‘Compte-rendu abrégé de la séance du séminaire d’études économiques et financières du 17 Novembre 1933’, AHDM/IISG/349A] Jauniaux’s contribution, albeit acknowledged by de Man in his memoirs, remains undocumented.

faction of the POB. At that time, Spaak did little to conceal his Soviet sympathies and had a reputation as a troublemaker because of his contempt for party discipline. Even some members of *Action socialiste* regarded him as unreliable because of his extremism and bad temper.<sup>518</sup> In many respects, Spaak epitomised that left-wing mixture of defiance and discontent which – de Man claimed – only a Plan could successfully address.<sup>519</sup> De Man won his bet: by October 1933 Spaak was yearning for a ‘realist revolution’ to save Belgium from a constitutional crisis similar to the one that had wrecked the Weimar Republic.<sup>520</sup> Having concluded that the country was at the crossroads between fascism and socialism, he finally argued that the Plan would at least mark ‘a sharp break’ with reformism and lay ground for a ‘Labour Front’ (*Front du Travail*) behind which all workers could rally.<sup>521</sup> It is unclear whether Spaak’s new attitude stemmed from a genuine ideological evolution or from some unwritten agreement between him and de Man about the necessity of softening internal dissent.<sup>522</sup> Whatever the reasons, the fact that de Man was able to restrain the *enfant terrible* of Belgian socialism may have persuaded even those who vehemently disliked the Plan,

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<sup>518</sup> See e.g. P.-H. Spaak, ‘Paroles sur l’URSS’, *R.E.S.E.F.*, 8.11.1931, 119-121; J. Rens, *Rencontres*, 30, 64-65.

<sup>519</sup> ‘By treating discussions in which the discontent of our troops emerges as a matter of internal discipline, and therefore of individuals, one would put the cart before the horse [...]. The true solution lies in steering this ardour in a less sterile and less dangerous direction than the one of romantic insurrectionism and of extremist critique, where it now gloats.’ [‘Note soumise par H. de Man au Bureau du C.G. du P.O.B. en vue de sa séance du 27 octobre 1933’, 23.10.1933, AHDM/IISG/422]

<sup>520</sup> P.-H. Spaak, ‘Que faire? III. Une révolution réaliste’, *L’Action socialiste*, 42, 28.10.1933, unpagé.

<sup>521</sup> P.-H. Spaak, ‘Le Plan du Travail: II. Ses mérites’, *L’Action socialiste*, 48, 9.12.1933, unpagé; P.-H. Spaak, ‘Le Plan du Travail: III. Ses mérites’, *L’Action socialiste*, 49, 16.12.1933, unpagé.

<sup>522</sup> When, in February 1934, *l’Action socialiste* published an article that angered Vandervelde and the party leadership, de Man publicly reminded Spaak and other members of the General Council that ‘there was, between the two of us, an agreement, a kind of pact, not to rip anything out, but by which Spaak was committed to ensure that there would be no further conflicts.’ [Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 27 février 1934 à 2h, ABWP/AMSAB]

such as the mentor of the POB establishment Louis de Brouckère, to go along with it. At least, the Plan would put an end to intra-party conflict.<sup>523</sup>

The perception that the Plan could restore unity could also explain Vandervelde's pivotal role in the POB's alignment with the Plan. De Man claimed in his memoirs that *Le Patron*, soon before the so-called Christmas Congress, offered him the vice-presidency as well as the effective direction of the party, while maintaining the control of the parliamentary group for himself: this is inaccurate.<sup>524</sup> And yet it remains true that Vandervelde gave his consent to that solution.<sup>525</sup> Moreover, Vandervelde and de Man coordinated their efforts in preparation for the Congress, with the elderly leader giving de Man a free hand to develop his Plan.<sup>526</sup> Was Vandervelde – then 67-year old, deaf, and often attacked by younger militants for being out-of-touch – looking for an heir who could reinvigorate the party? Did he think that the ambitious and energetic de Man could fit that role? That cannot be excluded.<sup>527</sup> To be sure, the well-known critic of

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<sup>523</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup*, 206, 236. Throughout the summer, an anguished de Brouckère had commented extensively on the conflict between Léon Blum and the neosocialists within the SFIO, which resulted in a split in November, less than two weeks before the first draft of the Labour Plan was discussed at the POB Council. [see e.g. L. de Brouckère, 'Scission en France!', *Le Peuple*, 7.11.1934] De Brouckère's objections to the Plan are indirectly referred to in 'Séance du Bureau du 27 Octobre 1933 à 2h', ABWP/AMSAB. Spaak's definition as *enfant terrible* is drawn from G. Eyskens, *De Memoires*, Lanoo, Tielt 1993, 47. The fact that events within the French Left had repercussions on the POB was also acknowledged by the French socialist – and later neosocialist – Pierre Renaudel. [see letter from P. Renaudel to L. Bertrand, 11.4.1933, FLB/IEV/I.395]. See also Jexas, 'Réflexions sur le Congrès socialiste français: mise au point et examen de conscience', *Le Peuple*, 26.7.1933; L. Piérard, *Le socialisme à un tournant*, Mons, Librairie Fédérale 1933; L. Piérard, 'La médiation de l'Internationale', *Le Peuple*, 25.10.1933.

<sup>524</sup> H. de Man, *Après coup*, 229-230. It was de Man in the first place who declared himself available for the position of general secretary upon suggestion by Jauniaux. [see letter from H. de Man to A. Jauniaux, 17.10.1933, AHDM/IISG/585] Vandervelde opposed the idea of appointing de Man to an administrative role due to his obligations towards the B.E.S. [see 'Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 3 novembre 1933 – 2h', ABWP/AMSAB]

<sup>525</sup> See also J. Van Roosbroeck, 'Note sur la réorganisation du secrétariat', s.d., AHDM/IISG/405.

<sup>526</sup> See Vandervelde's suggestion that de Man would be fully in charge of developing the Plan [see 'Réunion du Bureau du Conseil Général du 19 Octobre 1933', ABWP/AMSAB], de Man's intention of finding an agreement with Vandervelde about the internal reorganisation of the party [see letter from H. de Man to E. Vandervelde, 9.11.1933, AHDM/IISG/620], Vandervelde's strong endorsement of the first draft of the Plan on November 15<sup>th</sup>. [see 'Séance du Conseil Général et du Comité National de la Commission Syndicale du 15 novembre 1933', ABWP/AMSAB]

<sup>527</sup> In February 1935, Vandervelde – having paid tribute to de Man's *Die sozialistische Ideen* – acknowledged that the youth had the right to claim the leadership of the socialist movement but also

Marxism and the white-bearded leader who boasted about running the most thoroughly Marxist party of Western Europe were strange bedfellows. But in late 1933, the sense of urgency fuelled by the German crisis, Belgium's shrinking economy, and the fear that the party base would be tempted by insurrectionism provided them with strong incentives to set differences aside – at least for a while.<sup>528</sup> At the 48<sup>th</sup> POB Congress, held on December 24-25<sup>th</sup>, 1933, de Man and Vandervelde worked in concert. While the first heralded the Plan as 'this thing without precedents in the history of our movement, but made necessary by the nature of [the party's] new task', Vandervelde reassured the old guard that the POB's official programme or fundamental principles would not be dismantled: the Plan was 'a fragment of the programme' that the party pledged to enforce as soon as it could count on a majority in Parliament.<sup>529</sup> Following a largely formal and self-congratulatory discussion, the Plan was approved with 567,451 votes in favour and 8,500 abstentions. Vandervelde and de Man were sworn in as President and Vice-President unanimously.<sup>530</sup>

Even at a cursory glance, it is clear the Belgian Labour Plan incorporated all the fundamental ideas that de Man expressed between 1930 and 1933: in that sense, it was unquestionably his brainchild. The Plan called for 'a profound transformation of the

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expressed the wish that they would not be driven by 'an individual or collective cut-throat ambition' (*un arrivisme individuel ou collectif*) but rather by 'a common preoccupation of welding the pre-war and the post-war generations together in the best way possible.' [E. Vandervelde, 'La cure de rajeunissement du socialisme', *La dépêche de Toulouse*, 17.2.1935] This statement casts some light on his attempts to facilitate, but also to control, de Man's rise within the POB.

<sup>528</sup> Vandervelde's comment on the Marxist character of the POB. can be found in E. Vandervelde, with the collaboration of J. Rens and J. Delvigne, *Le cinquantenaire*, 109. On his views about the relationship between Marxism and socialism, see also E. Vandervelde, *L'alternative*, 15-37. Vandervelde's apprehensions were clearly expressed in his speech at the 47<sup>th</sup> POB Congress, held in May 1933, and echoed by the Congress' final resolutions. [see *Conseil General, XXVIIème Congrès, Bruxelles. 27-28 mai 1933*, Brussels, L'Eglantine 1933, 27-37, 76-78]

<sup>529</sup> *Conseil General, XXVIIIème Congrès*, 12, 42. Vandervelde could link the Labour Plan to the 1931 *Plan de Salut Public*, a pack of economic reforms that the POB deemed urgent for the country. The *Plan de Salut Public* was far less clear, coherent and ambitious than the Labour Plan but set a useful precedent. On this first Plan, see M.-A. Pierson, *Histoire du socialisme*, 195; B.-S. Chlepner, *Cent ans d'histoire sociale en Belgique*, Brussels, Institut de Sociologie Solvay 1956, 383.

<sup>530</sup> *Conseil General, XXVIIIème Congrès*, 80, 143.



country's economic structure' aimed at the 'diminution (*résorption*) of unemployment' by increasing the purchasing power of the population up to the level of the productive capacity of the economic system.<sup>531</sup> The Plan identified 'the private monopoly of credit, which subordinates economic activity to the pursuit of individual profit' as the main obstacle to prosperity, and argued for its nationalisation, 'in order to give everyone a useful and remunerative job and increase the general welfare.'<sup>532</sup> The measures envisaged by the Plan involved the creation of a state-owned 'Credit Institute' subjecting banks' operations, financial institutions already under state control, the National Bank, and insurance companies to the Plan's directives, as well as the establishment of a 'Financial Commissariat directly under the legislative authority and responsible for the general direction of credit, the monetary regime, and the current account balance.'<sup>533</sup> Legislation would be passed to transform 'the main raw materials and motive power monopolies' into public services and run them as consortia placed under a Commissariat, and a similar body would manage public transport.<sup>534</sup> Within the private sector, 'no change will be made to the property regime': savings would be protected and free competition promoted; an inheritance tax would prevent 'the reconstitution of a hereditary financial oligarchy' while some restrictions would be enforced upon foreign capital, but only to safeguard 'national prosperity and the defence of national heritage against any sabotage' from the capitalist class.<sup>535</sup> A consultative 'Economic council' would be set up, supervising the operations of the Commissariats of Industry and Transport, and allowed to submit legislation to Parliament.<sup>536</sup> Following

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<sup>531</sup> 'La Résolution du Congrès de Noël', H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail*, 17.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

these structural reforms, the Plan would introduce a second set of measures in the field of investment, credit, price, labour, monetary, commercial, fiscal, and social policy: prices would be stabilised and speculation discouraged; credit favoured and made more easily accessible; working hours reduced and collective bargaining recognised; foreign trade boosted and protection reduced to a minimum; taxes and levies cut due to the increased revenues generated by the economic recovery, and so on.<sup>537</sup> Overall, these measures were expected to improve mass nutrition, social hygiene, housing, infrastructures, education and, more generally, the quality of leisure. The Plan hinted at the possibility of ordering these steps in a five-year plan (a plan within the Plan, so to speak) with the purpose of doubling the purchasing power of the internal market.<sup>538</sup> Last but not least, the Plan outlined a ‘political reform’ to strengthen the democratic features of the Belgian political system: all institutions would gain legitimacy from universal suffrage; constitutional liberties would be fully granted to every citizen; the independence and the authority of the state as well as of the other public institutions would be protected from the interference of organised money; the legislative power would be exercised by a single chamber, to be assisted by consultative councils providing technical expertise and by agencies in charge of the implementation of economic policy so to ensure rapidity, accountability, and efficiency, ‘so to avoid the pitfalls of statism.’<sup>539</sup>

If the Plan mirrored de Man’s key tenets, its execution would demand further study and deeper analyses – a task that de Man himself described as a collective enterprise in which party members could have a say.<sup>540</sup> Throughout 1934, under the

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>540</sup> *Conseil General, XXVIIIème Congrès*, 12-13.

supervision of the BES, twenty-two commissions featuring almost one hundred people – about one third from the POB parliamentary group – hammered out the proposals of legislation aimed at giving substance to the various headings of the Plan. The proposed bills were approved by a *Commission Générale du Plan*, appointed by the POB. General Council, in January 1935 and published in a 444-page volume shortly after.<sup>541</sup>

In the meantime, an extraordinary campaign was launched to circulate the Plan and gather the working class around it. Planist propaganda was issued by the *Bureau d'action pour le Plan* (BAP), headed by Buset, who happened to be a de Man loyalist as well as a socialist member of parliament. Both the BAP and its journal, *Plan*, were funded through a combination of voluntary subscriptions and compulsory contributions from the party, the unions, and the cooperatives.<sup>542</sup> Planist propaganda – Buset explained in a handbook written for the activists involved in the campaign – had to satisfy four main conditions: first, it had to reach out to non-socialist sections of the electorate, impressing public opinion ‘by the abundance, the variety, and the novelty of its means of penetration’, including the ability to use a language intelligible to people unfamiliar with socialist ideas; second, it had to adjust itself to the needs and sensibilities of a wide range of professional and social groups; third, it had to appeal less to reason and more ‘to instincts, to sentiments, to emotions’; fourth it had to be ‘infiltrating and obsessive at the same time.’<sup>543</sup> To a large extent the planist campaign met these standards. More than 2 million copies of the Plan had been printed and

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<sup>541</sup> See *L'exécution du Plan du Travail par Henri de Man et l'Equipe du Bureau d'Études Sociales*, Paris, Alcan 1935, esp. 5-16, 431-437. See also ‘Note sur le Bureau d'études sociales’, AHDM/AMSAB/343; ‘Rapport sur l'exécution du Plan du Travail présenté au Conseil Général du POB par le Bureau d'Études Sociales (novembre 1934)’, AHDM/IISG/428.

<sup>542</sup> See ‘Séance des Quatre Bureaux du 4 janvier 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB; E. Vandervelde, ‘Un appel: Pour le Plan du Travail’, *Le Peuple*, 14.1.1934.

<sup>543</sup> M. Buset, *L'action*, 68.

circulated by March 1934.<sup>544</sup> In addition to traditional demonstrations, rallies, and conferences, new kinds of gatherings were tested, such as bike parades.<sup>545</sup> Gender issues were addressed in ad-hoc meetings.<sup>546</sup> Manifestos targeting constituencies traditionally hostile to the POB were released, including a wide range of booklets courting Christian workers.<sup>547</sup> Comic stripes and cartoons were used to convey a straightforward message.<sup>548</sup> Speeches were delivered through radio broadcast, a March for the Plan was composed, and even a '*catéchisme*' was distributed.<sup>549</sup>

Events in Belgium put de Man at the forefront of international socialist politics. The Christmas Congress had given him the visibility he needed to speak out and be heard: by early 1934, a significant number of left-wing, non-communist intellectuals had turned their minds to Belgium. Lucien Laurat came out as a staunch supporter of the POB's new course, and so did an economist close to Albert Thomas and the CGT, Francis Delaisi.<sup>550</sup> A group of young socialists in Paris estranged from the mainstream

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<sup>544</sup> See 'Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 16 mars 1934', ABWP/AMSAB.

<sup>545</sup> See 'La première démonstration en faveur du Plan du Travail a pleinement réussie: le rallye cycliste s'est terminée par un beau meeting sur la place de Cuesmes', *Le Peuple*, 10.9.1934.

<sup>546</sup> See e.g. C. Rome, 'La femme et le Plan du Travail', *Le Peuple*, 9.5.1934. Isabelle Blume played a key role in uniting socialist women behind the Plan: see I. Blum, *Entretiens*, 54-57.

<sup>547</sup> See e.g. M. Hambursin, 'Le P.O.B. lance un appel aux cultivateurs pour qu'ils se rallient au Plan du Travail', *Le Peuple*, 19.5.1934; A. Wauters, *Paysan! Réveille-toi*, Bureau National d'Action pour le Plan 1935; H. Vos, *Le Plan du Travail et l'Encyclique papale Quadragesimo Anno*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1934; H. Vos, *Les démocrates-chrétiens et le Plan du Travail*, Brussels, Bureau National d'Action pour le Plan du Travail, n.d.; O. de Swaef, *Plan van den Arbeid*, Brussels, Actiebureau voor het Plan, n.d.; F. Denis, *Travailleur chrétien, tu liras ceci...: tu comprendras...*, Brussels, Bureau National d'Action pour le Plan du Travail n.d.

<sup>548</sup> See e.g. I. Delvigne, *Tuons la crise par le Plan du Travail*, Brussels, Éditions de la presse socialiste 1935. Comics stripes appeared regularly on *Plan*, which Buset wanted to be moulded on the French popular magazine *Marianne*: '12 pages, beaucoup d'images ou photos.' ['Séance des secretaries d'arrondissement wallons du 21 février à 2 1/2h.'], ABWP/AMSAB]

<sup>549</sup> See e.g. radio speeches, AHDM/IISG/365; *Chœurs parlés*, Brussels, Bureau National d'Action pour le Plan 1935; M. Poot, 'Marche du Plan' in AHDM/AMSAB/336; G. Bohy and H. Bohy-Denis, *Catéchisme du Plan du Travail*, La Louvière, Imprimerie Coopérative, s.d. Other musical scores can be found in AHDM/AMSAB/338, AHDM/AMSAB/339, AHDM/AMSAB/340, AHDM/AMSAB/341. See also the guidelines for the demonstrations of January-February 1935 in AHDM/IISG/432.

<sup>550</sup> See letter from L. Laurat to H. de Man, 8.11.1933, ABSO/AMSAB/82; L. Laurat, 'Réflexions sur un programme: la fin d'une vieille dispute', *La Wallonie*, 21.11.1933; L. Laurat, 'L'évolution doctrinale du socialisme' *L'Eglantine*, 1, 1934, esp. 31-32. Laurat's *Economie dirigée et socialisation* ended with a praise for the 'constructive socialism' animating the Belgian Labour Plan, pointing out that, 'for the first time', a major party affiliated with the Second International committed to 'the socialisation of a first,

socialist ideology who had established the circle *Révolution Constructive* in 1932, publishing a book under the same title, finally found a cause worth fighting for: planism became their credo.<sup>551</sup> Reverberations of the Labour Plan were especially strong in, but not limited to, France.<sup>552</sup> Austrian journalist Oscar Pollak summarised the Plan and heralded it as a breakthrough for socialists across Europe, as did the leading journal of German social-democrats in exile.<sup>553</sup> Dutch socialists were also enthusiastic and praised it as a leap forward.<sup>554</sup> Swedish philosopher Alf Ahlberg was pleased to find similarities between de Man's Plan and the economic programme of Swedish social democrats.<sup>555</sup> Italian antifascists associated with *Giustizia e Libertà*, founded by Carlo Rosselli,

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massive section of the capitalist economy' as soon as in power. [L. Laurat, *Economie dirigée et socialisation*, Paris-Brussels, L'Eglantine 1934, 250, 252] The book was enthusiastically reviewed by Arthur Wauters, the political editor of *Le Peuple* [see A. Wauters, 'Economie dirigée et socialisation', *Le Peuple*, 28.8.1934] and by *Le mouvement syndical belge*. [see 'Deux nouveaux livres de Lucien Laurat: «Economie dirigée et socialisation» et «Cinq années de crise mondiale», *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 10, 20.10.1934, 232] On Delaisi, see 'L'expérience américaine: une conférence de Francis Delaisi', *Le Peuple*, 20.1.1934. In April 1934, *Plan* gave ample coverage to the Delaisi Plan, soon to be released in France, not to be confused with the 1931 Delaisi Plan. In fact, this second Plan – a national Plan moulded on the Belgian Labour Plan – was never published; it was probably incorporated in the CGT Plan. [see H. Lefort, 'Le Plan Delaisi', *Plan*, 1, 6, 29.4.1934, 1-2] For further discussion of the CGT Plan, see chapter VI of this dissertation.

<sup>551</sup> See G. Lefranc, P. Boivin and M. Deixonne, *Révolution constructive*, Paris, Valois 1932; 'Préface par le groupe de Révolution Constructive', H. de Man, *Le socialisme devant la crise*, Asnières, Cahiers de Révolution Constructive 1935, 1-4. Two of the founders of *Révolution constructive*, Georges Lefranc and Claude Levi-Strauss, had already been in touch with de Man after having read *Au-delà du marxisme*. [see letter from G. Lefranc to H. de Man, 23.7.1927 and letter from C. Levi-Strauss to H. de Man, 17.10.1927, AHDM/IISG/253; G. Lefranc, 'Rétrospectives: à travers un demi-siècle de mouvement ouvrier, 1920-1970. Vol. I: Comment, dans les années 1920, on devient socialiste', *Cahier & Revue de l'Ours*, 116, 1981, 55] On *Révolution constructive*, see S. Clouet, *De la rénovation à l'utopie socialistes: Révolution constructive, un groupe d'intellectuels socialistes des années 1930*, Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy 1991, esp. 107-127.

<sup>552</sup> For further discussion of the French reception of the Labour Plan, see chapter VI.

<sup>553</sup> See "Ein Plan der Arbeit", *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 29.12.1933; O. P. [Oskar Pollak], 'Die Gewinnung der Mittelschichten', *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 31.12.1933; M. Klinger, 'Sozialistische Erneuerung: Das Beispiel der Belgischen Arbeiterpartei', *Neuer Vorwärts*, 30, 7.1.1934, 1.

<sup>554</sup> See 'De Man oogstte veel succes: Zijn "Plan van den Arbeid" door Congres aanvaard', *Het Volk*, 27.12.1933; M. Sluyser, 'Het Plan van de Arbeid van dr. Hendrik de Man', *Het Volk*, 28.12.1933; L.J. Klejin, 'Wat het Belgische vijfjarenplan van prof. Hendrik de Man wil', *Het Volk*, 4.1.1934; J.W. Albarda, "'Fiasco" van Het plan-De Man', *Het Volk*, 16.1.1934. See also various contributions to 'Het Plan van de Arbeid: Nieuwe Wegen', *De sociaal-democraat: weekblad van de Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*, 7, 6.1.1934.

<sup>555</sup> See A. Ahlberg, 'Socialismen På Offensiv. Hendrik de Man Framlågert ett Socialiseringsprogram', *Fackföreningsrörelsen: organ för Landsorganisationen i Sverige*, 2, 1933, 588-593, 620-626.

published and applauded the Plan in their journal.<sup>556</sup> Even more important, some trade unions and parties proved willing to embrace planism officially. In June 1934, the Swiss Federation of Public Employees (SFPE), led by an admirer of de Man, Hans Oprecht, launched a Swiss Plan which, despite the reservations of other union branches, was incorporated in the programme of the Swiss Socialist Party in January 1935.<sup>557</sup> In the Netherlands, Meyer Sluyser – a contributor to the social-democratic newspaper *Het Plan* – began championing a Dutch Labour Plan in January 1934, with de Man's blessing.<sup>558</sup> The Dutch Labour Party would finally release its own Plan the following year, in November.<sup>559</sup>

Perhaps the best indicator of de Man's popularity is not the enthusiasm of his followers but the fury of his detractors, including the most prominent of them, the distinguished Soviet economist Eugen Varga. By June 1934 Varga – a key advisor to Stalin and director of the Moscow Institute of World Economy and World Politics – was well aware of the diffusion of planism throughout social-democratic parties.<sup>560</sup> He thus proceeded to denounce the Belgian Labour Plan as deceptive, a machination to delay the insurrection of the working class; de Man – Varga claimed – was a “Marxist”

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<sup>556</sup> See L'Osservatore [G. Favarelli], “‘Il Piano del Lavoro’ del Partito operaio belga”, *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà*, 10, 1934, 94-103.

<sup>557</sup> See *Le Plan du Travail pour une économie suisse dirigée*, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Imprimerie des coopératives réunies 1934; *Der Plan der Arbeit: Ein Ausweg aus Krise und Not*, Zürich, Verlag PDA 1935. See also the correspondence in ABSO/AMSAB/94. For an overview on Swiss planism, see M. Brélaz, ‘Le Plan du Travail suisse’, *Bulletin sur l'étude de l'œuvre d'Henri de Man*, 12, 1984, 45-66.

<sup>558</sup> See M. Sluyser, *Planmatige socialistische politiek: het Plan van den Arbeid*, Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers 1934. See also H. de Man, ‘Voorrede’, *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>559</sup> See *Het Plan van de Arbeid. Rapport van de commissie uit N.V.V. en S.D.A.P.*, Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers 1935. Evidence of the B.E.S' influence in drafting the SDAP Plan can be found in ABSO/AMSAB/87. For an overview of Dutch planism, see G. M. Nederhorst, ‘Het Plan van de Arbeid’, *Het eerste Jaarboek voor het Democratisch Socialisme*, J. Blank, M. Ros and B. Tromp (eds.), Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers 1979, 109-135; R. Abma, ‘The Labour Plan and the Social Democratic Workers' Party’, *The Low Countries History Yearbook*, 14, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff 1981, 154-181; F. Verbruggen, ‘Terug naar het plan van den arbeid’ and H. Brugmans, ‘Le Plan de Man et le Pays Bays’, *Bulletin sur l'étude de l'œuvre d'Henri de Man*, 12, 1984, 3-29 and 30-36 respectively.

<sup>560</sup> ‘Everything points to the fact that the de Man Plan will very soon be imitated in all the other parties of the Second International.’ [E. Varga, ‘The De Man Plan is a Fraud on the Workers’ (Part I), *Communist International*, 11, 12, 15.6.1934, 485]

Gandhi', welcomed 'as one of their own' by the German bourgeoisie, tolerated by the Nazi regime, on the payroll of the Belgian National Bank for his contributions to its 'aristocratic organ', the *Bulletin*.<sup>561</sup> Personal attacks aside, Varga emphatically argued that the Plan would change neither the basic structures of the capitalist system nor the main features of the bourgeois state; the means of production would remain in the possession of the capitalist class; property rights would be respected; inequalities of income would not be addressed: 'To place the "mixed economy" planned by de Man alongside the economy of the Soviet Union is the most brazen fraud imaginable!'<sup>562</sup> If anything, the Labour Plan would clear the way to the enemies of the working class by establishing a strong state: the campaign of the POB was 'waged in the fascist spirit, and serves the cause of preparing the advent of fascism to power in Belgium.'<sup>563</sup> Varga's assault was so vicious and partisan that planists could dismiss it as a symptom of Moscow's growing irritation with their path-breaking strategy: as de Man boasted, 'the communists, who can no longer claim a role at the upfront of the labour movement, are now the rear-guard, in a position the movement itself is going to evacuate.'<sup>564</sup>

The interest raised by the Plan led de Man to take further steps in the development of a transnational planist network of his own making, through which socialists abroad could deepen their knowledge of his ideas and possibly embrace them.

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 482, 486, 487.

<sup>562</sup> E Varga, 'The De Man Plan is a Fraud on the Workers' (Part II)', *Communist International*, 11, 13, 5.7.1934, 523.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., 524. Varga further expanded his views in a tract written upon request of the Belgian Communist Party: see E. Varga, *Le "Plan"*, Brussels, C.D.L. 1934. The tract appeared in France as E. Varga, *Henri de Man et son Plan*, Paris, Bureau d'Éditions 1934.

<sup>564</sup> H. de Man, 'Un défenseur communiste du réformisme', *Le Peuple*, 31.1.0.1934. On a similar note, see L. Laurat, 'Le Plan du Travail vu de Moscou', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 10, 20.10.1934, 214-219. Laurat's rejoinder, and probably even De Man's six articles against Varga, were published as leaflets to address communist counterpropaganda. [see L. Laurat, *Le Plan de Travail vu de Moscou*, Brussels, Bureau d'Action pour le Plan 1935; H. de Man, *Le Plan du Travail et les communistes*, Paris-Brussels, Labor 1935] De Man compared Varga's piece to the low-quality anti-planist propaganda of the communist journal *Drapeau Rouge* but admitted that, due to a widespread distribution, it resonated through certain sections of the POB: see H. de Man, 'Le Plan du Travail et les communistes', *Le Peuple*, 10.10.1934.

The first International Plan Conference, supported by the BES and the SFPE, was held on September 14-16<sup>th</sup>, 1934 at the Abbey of Pontigny, where a French professor, Paul Desjardins, used to organise cultural seminars – the so-called *Décades*.<sup>565</sup> De Man was accompanied by almost his entire staff: Vos and Halasi for the BES, Buset as editor of *Plan*, Rens on behalf of the CS; Isabelle Blume, Arthur Gailly, Paul Finet, Leo Collard, Paul Lambert, and Marc Somerhausen as propagandists associated with the BAP. Jauniaux, Spaak, Truffaut, Isi Delvigne, Eduard Anseele, and Maurice de Moor were also part of the Belgian delegation. The French contingent was almost as big as the Belgian, featuring trade unionists (René Belin, Robert Bothereau, Robert Lacoste, Achille Dauphin-Meunier), academics (Georges Gurvitch, Edouard Dolléans), and public intellectuals (Bertrand de Jouvenel, Lucien Laurat). Swiss trade unionists and politicians (Oprecht, Otto Graf, Willy Spühler, Ernst Reinhard) were pivotal in conducting the discussion; the leader of *Giustizia e Libertà* Rosselli, former communist Angelo Tasca, and the author of the WTB Plan Woytinsky stood out among the exiles who attended.<sup>566</sup> No common decision was supposed to be taken at the end of the

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<sup>565</sup> Desjardins, a friend of André Philip who had been very impressed by *Au-delà du marxisme*, managed to host de Man in 1929 and invited him again in 1932. [see Desjardins' diary entries quoted in R. Nordling and G. Lefranc, 'L'activité sociale de Paul Desjardins', *Paul Desjardins et les décades de Pontigny: études, témoignages et documents inédits*, A. Heurgon-Desjardins (ed.), Paris, Presses universitaires de France 1964, 215-222, 301-302, 303-304; letter from P. Desjardins to H. de Man, 12.5.1929, AHDM/IISG/279; letter from A. Philip to H. de Man, 8.1.1932, AHDM/IISG/338; letter from P. Desjardins to H. de Man, 17.4.1932, AHDM/IISG/338] Early discussions between Desjardins and de Man about a conference on the Plan dated back to November 1933 [see letter from H. de Man to P. Desjardins, 6.12.1933, ABSO/AMSAB/82]. The French neosocialist Marcel Déat also proposed a one-week seminar devoted to the Plan but he was not involved in the Pontigny conference, largely due to his expulsion from the SFIO. [see M. Déat to H. de Man, 6.1.1934 and H. de Man to P. Desjardins, 27.2.1934, both in ABSO/AMSAB/82] On Déat and the French neosocialists, see chapter VI. Two other International Plan conferences were held, the first in Geneva in April 1936 and the second again in Pontigny in October 1937, but de Man played a very marginal role in them. For further discussion, see G. Lefranc, 'Les conférences internationales des plans et la commission internationale des plans', *Revue européenne des sciences sociales: Cahiers Vilfredo Pareto*, 31, 1974, 189-196; G.R. Horn, 'From Radical to Realistic: Hendrik de Man and the International Plan Conferences at Pontigny and Geneva, 1934-1937', *Contemporary European History*, 10, 2, 2001, 239-265.

<sup>566</sup> For a full list of participants, see *Konferenz zur Besprechung der Probleme der Panwirtschaft, 14. Bis 16 September 1934: Abbaye de Pontigny (Frankreich)*, Zürich, Verlag VPOD, 1934, 76-77. Further details on the Belgian delegation can be found in 'Séance du Bureau du 4 septembre 1934',



conference; sessions were informative and rather dry in their content. In addition to the Belgian Plan – duly presented by Buset – Dutch, Swiss, Czech, and French plans were laid out; German social democrat Walter Pahl, then based in London, introduced the works of Stafford Cripps and G.D.H. Cole as the main theoretical contributions to the Plan of the left-wing pressure group Socialist League – which, technically, did not exist as a single document.<sup>567</sup>

But the most remarkable moment of the conference was de Man's keynote speech in which, for the first time, he enunciated planism as a coherent ideology by laying out thirteen points, soon known as *les thèses de Pontigny*. Unlike the Labour Plan, which was moulded on the specific necessities of Belgium, the thirteen statements were meant to be universally true and applicable to every industrialised country. Empirically, the theses emphasised the structural nature of the crisis (n. 1) and the exhaustion of reformism (n. 2); from a normative viewpoint, they argued for the necessity of abandoning a passive attitude towards the business cycle (n. 3); acting at national level through a reorganisation of the internal market (n. 4); building a majority around the economic measures that were deemed essential to address the crisis (n. 5); establishing a transitional mixed economy in which consumption could rise and meet the productive capacity of the system (n. 6-7); pursuing nationalisations so to ensure public management – not necessarily public ownership – of key industries (n. 8); setting up a corporatist framework for the new polity (n. 9); forming anti-capitalist alliances with the middle classes against monopoly and finance capitalism (n.10-11); resorting to

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ABWP/AMSAB. The only French plan discussed at Pontigny was the CGT Plan. Pahl, who spoke in German and was referred to as 'Mr. X' in the Swiss proceedings, told the audience he had been contacted last-minute and was not speaking on behalf of the Socialist League. [see *Konferenz zur Besprechung*, 29] Pahl was indicated with his real name on the French record: see the special issue of *L'Information sociale*, 17, 13.12.1934. De Man had previously wished to host G.D.H. Cole, Richard Tawney, or Stafford Cripps. [letter from H. de Man to M. Déat, 25.1.1934, ABSO/AMSAB/82] On the Socialist League and the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in Britain see chapter VII.

<sup>567</sup> See *Konferenz zur Besprechung*, 10-38.

legal and constitutional means, wherever democracy was in place, to gain political power (n. 12); replacing old programmes with a limited but binding Plan to be immediately introduced by planists once in power (n. 13).<sup>568</sup> Less than two months later, giving a speech at the Sorbonne, de Man added a fourteenth thesis: planist parties would not participate in any coalition government that refused to enforce the Plan; by the same token, they would be willing to cooperate with any group or party that accepted such enforcement.<sup>569</sup> In embracing the motto '*Rien que le Plan, tout le Plan*' de Man was ruling out the possibility of backroom deals that could give socialists access to power in absence of a planist government.<sup>570</sup> These were the tenets underpinning a new ideological paradigm which he brazenly presented as the third phase in the history of socialism: after insurrectionism and reformism, the age of planism had been ushered in.<sup>571</sup> Or so he thought.

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1934 marked the high tide of de Man's popularity but also brought about new challenges. A major difficulty lay in reconciling his national and international personas. Whereas his international reputation was clearly built on his domestic successes – the intellectual who successfully climbs to the top of a major political organisation –, it soon became clear that his domestic position could suffer from his entanglements abroad. Despite his role as vice-president of the party, de Man continued to speak his mind on national and international affairs – a conduct that annoyed even some of his

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 4-6. See also 'Les thèses de Pontigny', *Plan*, 27, 23.9.1934, unpagged.

<sup>569</sup> See H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, 13-14.

<sup>570</sup> A modified version of the fourteenth thesis, including the motto '*Rien que le Plan, tout le Plan*' was published in the annex of the French edition of *Die Sozialistische Ideen*: see H. de Man, *L'idée socialiste*, Paris, Bernard Grasset 1935, 534.

<sup>571</sup> See H. de Man, *Socialisme et planisme*, 3-9.

allies within the POB.<sup>572</sup> Furthermore, by developing planism as a fully-fledged ideology, he lost the favour of Vandervelde who was as preoccupied as ever with ideological conformity. In 1934, the POB Council agreed, upon a request from *le Patron*, to forbid Belgian socialists to publicly meet foreign socialists whose party was not affiliated to the LSI.<sup>573</sup> De Man's transnational network, however, did not meet such strict requirements. On December 12, 1934, Vandervelde berated de Man for allowing 'some former combatants, with the plan of February 9<sup>th</sup>, a number of people who are at the frontier between the radical socialists and the French socialists, and even individuals who say that old socialism is outmoded, paralysed, and the future belongs to planism' to attend his talk at the Sorbonne. According to Vandervelde, who had done his best to graft the Plan onto the POB programme and whose support for it remained within the boundaries set by the 'principles of Marxist socialism', de Man had crossed a line.<sup>574</sup> As he stated repeatedly, both privately and publicly, the Belgian Plan was one thing. Planism was another.<sup>575</sup>

Philosophical frictions, however, were not the only source of animosity between the two. One major issue began to surface during the campaign for the Plan: how independent from the party was the BES supposed to be? In July, during a session of the POB Council, de Man claimed that, in conformity with the motto *Le Plan du Travail au Pouvoir*, the parliamentary group was expected to strictly comply with the policy

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<sup>572</sup> In the words of Joseph Van Roosbroeck: 'even if he [de Man] signs his articles, public opinion and the rival press cite and interpret these ideas as if they were those of our party.' ['Séance du Conseil Général du 25 mai 1934', ABWP/AMSAB].

<sup>573</sup> That included the members of the neosocialist *Parti Socialiste de France*. See 'Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 16 avril 1934', ABWP/AMSAB. De Man was well aware of Vandervelde's preoccupations: see letter from H. de Man to M. Déat, 10.1.1934, ABSO/AMSAB/82. On French neosocialism, see chapter VI.

<sup>574</sup> 'Séance du Conseil général du 12 décembre 1934', ABWP/AMSAB. Vandervelde was hinting at the *Plan du 9 Juillet*. On this Plan, see chapter VI.

<sup>575</sup> See letter from E. Vandervelde to G. Lefranc, 14.1.1935, in G. Lefranc, 'Les conférences internationales des plans et la commission internationale des plans', *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 195-196; E. Vandervelde, 'Retour à Marx et analyses marxistes', *Le Peuple*, 17.1.1935.

proposals formulated by the twenty-two commissions supervised by the BES. Vandervelde strongly objected to that ‘schoolteacher’s attitude’ and maintained that the parliamentary group had to retain a significant degree of autonomy: ‘It feels that it is in the best position to judge what it has to do’. In contrast, the BES was ‘an administrative body.’<sup>576</sup> In December, with the work of the commissions coming to a close, Vandervelde clarified that the POB parliamentary group expected to receive the detailed proposals of legislation in due course while de Man insisted that socialist representatives were to be handed the final drafts only at the moment of implementing the Plan. The row revolved around a hypothetical scenario – the POB was still in opposition – but the episode is revealing about the mistrust between the party establishment and the extra-parliamentary (or partly extra-parliamentary, as in the case of the B.E.S. commissions) groups involved in the planist campaign.<sup>577</sup> To be sure, de Man was disappointed by the lacklustre support of the official socialist press for the Plan, lamented that the propaganda effort had been thwarted by the crisis of the *Banque belge du Travail* (BBT), which diverted energy and resources from the planist cause, and became convinced that Vandervelde would keep paying lip service to the Plan but had no intention of putting it into practice.<sup>578</sup>

De Man’s tensions with the POB were heightened by the setbacks that the campaign for the Plan was suffering throughout the country. Unsurprisingly, the Plan

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<sup>576</sup> ‘Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 12 juillet 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB.

<sup>577</sup> See ‘Séance du Conseil général du 12 décembre 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB.

<sup>578</sup> See ‘Séance du Bureau du Conseil général du 16 mars 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB; ‘Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 8 juin 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB; ‘Séance du Bureau du Conseil Général du 8 juin 1934’; ‘Séance du C.G. du 8 novembre 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB. De Man was irritated by an article by Vandervelde in which *Le Patron* hinted at the possibility of a non-planist government tolerated by the POB. [see E. Vandervelde, ‘Prochainement sans doute la crise ministérielle: mais après?’, *Le Peuple*, 21.10.1934] The BBT was a Belgian cooperative bank badly hurt by the economic crisis. The fact that the BBT was involved in short-term, speculative investments damaged the reputation of the POB, as his president, Edouard Anseele, was also a well-known and powerful party member. For a contemporary account, see ‘La crise de la Banque Belge du Travail’, *Revue d’économie politique*, 4, 1934, 1212-1222.

was badly received by the liberal and conservative press, which deemed it ineffective, impractical, and highly dangerous: establishing control over the private sector would, in their view, lay foundation for a communist dictatorship.<sup>579</sup> Some observers who were not aprioristically hostile to the socialists tended to look at the Plan as an imaginative piece of propaganda but not as a feasible set of proposals.<sup>580</sup> Even those who took it more seriously, such as the writer Robert Poulet, warned that a State as strong as the one envisaged by de Man would be more likely to oppress the workers than defend their interests.<sup>581</sup> Poulet's remarks were echoed by Christian trade unions who opposed the Plan from the very outset: already in January 1934, the Catholic priest and trade unionist Louis Colens denounced it as a smokescreen created by socialists to pursue their 'anti-social and anti-religious programmes', and the *Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens* (CSC), *Fédération des Cercles Catholiques* (FCC) as well as the *Ligue Nationale des Travailleurs Chrétiens* (LNTC) rejected it on similar grounds a few months later.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> See e.g. 'Le Congrès socialiste et l'utopie du Plan de Man', *Vingtième siècle*, 28.12.1934; Tamias [M.-L. Gérard], 'Comment on trompe le peuple', *L'Indépendance belge*, 17.1.1934; Tamias [M.-L. Gérard], 'Comment le Plan du Travail est incompatible avec les libertés publiques', *L'Indépendance belge*, 12.4.1934; F. Deschamps, 'Le truc du Plan', *Vingtième siècle*, 19.1.1934; 'Une lettre de M. Henri Lambert sur l'économie libre: il faut découvrir la cause de la monopolisation graduelle ou de son danger', *L'Etoile belge*, 29.4.1934; J. Coelst, 'Réformes et plans de façade', *La libre Belgique*, 10.5.1934, P. des Sables, 'Les dangereuses suggestions du Parti socialiste', *L'Indépendance belge*, 9.6.1934; P. des Sables, 'La dictature et les socialistes', *L'Indépendance belge*, 6.8.1934; M. Delforge, 'La panacée de M. de Man: serait-ce un remède homéopathique', *Vers l'avenir*, 12.12.1934.

<sup>580</sup> See e.g. C. Van Overbergh, 'Socialisme', *Le Soir*, 12.1.1934; M. Masoin, 'Que veut le Plan de Man?', *Vers l'avenir*, 6.3.1935.

<sup>581</sup> See R. Poulet, 'Que penser du «Plan de Man»?', *La Nation belge*, 23.11.1933. Poulet would summarise his corporatist views in a famous pamphlet: see R. Poulet, *La révolution est à droite*, Paris, Denoël et Steele 1934.

<sup>582</sup> L. Colens, 'Le «Plan» et les démocrates chrétiens: réponse de ceux-ci aux socialistes', *La libre Belgique*, 4.1.1934; 'La Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens devant le Plan de Man', *Vingtième siècle*, 11.2.1934; 'A la fédération des cercles catholiques', *Le Soir*, 12.3.1934; 'La Ligue des Travailleurs et le Plan socialiste', *La vie nouvelle*, 22.4.1934. The CSC was especially severe: see C.S.C., 'Le Plan de Man', *Le progrès syndical*, 30, 25.1.1934, 1-2 and C.S.C., 'Voulez-vous suicider?', *Le progrès syndical*, 42, 25.2.1935, 1. For other rejections from prominent Catholics, see S.J.A. Muller, 'Le Plan du Travail et la morale catholique' and S.J.J. Arendt, 'Le valeur économique du Plan de Man', *La Terre Wallonne*, 174, 1934, 313-330 and 331-344 respectively. For the socialist reaction, see A. Dewinne, 'Les dirigeants de la démocratie chrétienne ne veulent pas du Plan: pourquoi?', *Le Peuple*, 11.1.1934; A. Dewinne, 'Ou

The hostility of the LNTC was not without consequences. The kernel of de Man's strategy was that Christian blue-collar workers could be won over, hence forcing the Catholic Union either to surrender to the Plan in order to bring those voters back into the fold or lose the next election. However inconclusive, the evidence suggests that this grassroots approach failed, largely due to the stalwart resistance of Catholic trade unionists, who distrusted the socialists and were much keener to praise corporatism than any socialist project.<sup>583</sup> It is true that a few Catholic intellectuals – such as Elie Boussart, editor of *Terre Wallonie*, and Raymond de Becker, who led a faction of dissident young Catholics based at the University of Leuven – did express support for the Plan but that was a far cry from the Labour Front that planists had dreamed of.<sup>584</sup> As a consequence, between 1933 and early 1935, the liberal-catholic coalition remained steadily in power, even surviving the downfall of the de Broqueville cabinet in November 1934. With no general election scheduled for the future, no leverage to pressure other parties to accept the Plan, no clear sign of an upcoming economic recovery, and no confidence in the party machine, de Man realised that planists had

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est la manœuvre ?', *Le Peuple*, 18.1.1934. The most comprehensive critique of the Labour Plan from a Catholic perspective can be found in a special issue of *La Cité Chrétienne* 5.2.1935, featuring articles by Jacques Leclercq, Marcel Grégoire, Léon Renard, Joseph Arendt and others.

<sup>583</sup> This is confirmed by contemporary accounts in the socialist press. See e.g. 'Les démocrates-chrétiens et le Plan du Travail', *Le Peuple*, 14.2.1934; J. Rens, 'Les chrétiens et le Plan', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 3, 20.3.1934, 54-58; 'Correspondance échangée entre la Commission Syndicale et la Confédération des Syndicats chrétiens', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 1, 20.1.1935, 16-19. Sympathies for corporatism were huge even among young Catholics, a major target for the planist campaign: see e.g. 'Les jeunesses catholiques en marche vers le corporatisme', *La Wallonie*, 29.1.1934; 'Le deuxième Congrès de la centrale politique de la Jeunesse Catholique', *La libre Belgique*, 29.1.1934. It is also possible that the aggressiveness of the planist campaign backfired. Interestingly, a catholic trade unionist wrote to de Man to complain about the 'slogans of infiltration loudly issued by certain socialist cadres aimed at turning the members of catholic trade unionists against their leaders.' [signed letter to H. de Man, 5.12.1934, IISG/429] Nor should one underestimate the strength of Catholic counterpropaganda. For instance, the Catholic Union set up its own *Alliance nationale des classes moyennes* to resist de Man's efforts to win over the middle class [see E. Gerard, *Die Katholieke Partij in crisis: partijpolitiek leven in België (1918-1940)*, Leuven, Kritak 1985, 357-360].

<sup>584</sup> See 'M. Elie Baussart en faveur de la constitution du Front du Travail', *Le Peuple*, 6.2.1934; A. Dewinne, 'Les catholiques et le Plan', *Le Peuple*, 27.12.1934; J. Parfait, 'Les jeunes catholiques belges et le plan de Man', *Esprit*, 30, 1.3.1935, 951-959. De Becker, who had published the first commentary on the Plan on the French journal *Esprit* in January 1934, had a public exchange of letters with de Man on *Le Peuple* between December 1934 and January 1935.

painted themselves into a corner. For him, the conclusion was straightforward: a majority for the Plan had to be found in the existing Parliament; a majority that could enforce, if not the entire Plan, at least significant parts of it.<sup>585</sup>

Two important factors must be taken into account to understand the reversal of the fourteenth thesis of planism. First, by the end of May 1934 de Man had publicly come out as a steadfast supporter of devaluation.<sup>586</sup> By taking this stance he once again found himself at odds with Vandervelde and the old guard of the POB, who still recalled the 1926 devaluation of the Belgian franc as harmful for the working class.<sup>587</sup> Devaluation was neither included nor excluded by the Plan but de Man realised that, economic reasons aside, the centre-right majority was divided between ‘deflationists’ and ‘devaluationists’, and socialists could oust the Theunis government by cutting a deal with the latter.<sup>588</sup> Furthermore, by putting parts of the Plan on hold, the POB could get credit for the new monetary policy, which was likely to boost exports and create new jobs.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> In his memoirs, de Man claimed that he reached that conclusion in Autumn 1934, when he became persuaded that even a stunning election victory by the POB would not allow the Labour Plan to be fully implemented: ‘I learned too much about the weaknesses of my own party to deceive myself about the role that it could play by governing alone.’ [H. de Man, *Après coup*, 241] If that is true, however, it is hard to explain why he outlined his fourteenth thesis in December. I think de Man’s change of mind did not occur until January 1935. According to Horn, fears of a spontaneous insurrections by workers and unemployed pushed him to accept governmental responsibility, after a visit to the mining community of Quaregnon. [see G. R. Horn, *European Socialists*, 88-91] This is entirely plausible, except that de Man’s decision to search for a planist majority in Parliament must be seen as a gradual evolution, not a sudden U-turn.

<sup>586</sup> See H. de Man, ‘La thésaurisation en Belgique’, *Le Peuple*, 23.5.1934. De Man gathered information about currency devaluations in autumn 1934 [see e.g. J. Rens, ‘Note sur la dévaluation’, 2.11.1934, IISG/427] but it remains unclear when he made up his mind.

<sup>587</sup> See ‘Séance du Conseil Général du 25 mai 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB.

<sup>588</sup> ‘Séance du Conseil Général du 16 juin 1934’, ABWP/AMSAB. The same point was made by journalists and academics who had reservations about the Plan but were not hostile to a coalition between the socialists and other parties on an anti-deflationary programme: see e.g. F. Baudhuin, ‘Le Plan du Travail: comment il apparait à la lecture des textes’, *La libre Belgique*, 18.3.1935; F. Masson, ‘Les questions lancinantes du moment’, *Le Soir*, 20.3.1935.

<sup>589</sup> During the second half of 1934, de Man’s message focused on importance of curbing unemployment: see e.g. H. de Man, ‘La résorption du chômage et le Plan du Travail’, *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 7, 20.7.1934, 152-158.

Second, in the spring of 1934 de Man became acquainted with Paul Van Zeeland, a widely respected civil servant and good friend of the planist Robert J. Lemoine.<sup>590</sup> In the following months, Van Zeeland, then Vice-Governor of the Belgian National Bank, would serve briefly as Minister without portfolio under de Broqueville but resign due to the government's commitment to a strong currency.<sup>591</sup> Without being a socialist, Van Zeeland had no qualms about saying that the crisis had buried dogmatic laissez-faire: '*à temps nouveaux, remèdes nouveaux*', he wrote in a book devoted to the Russian five-year Plan.<sup>592</sup> Moreover, he used to criticise big business for meddling with politics as well as Continental parliamentary systems for having a weak executive branch – two arguments that resonated with de Man.<sup>593</sup> Truth be told, Van Zeeland was less a supporter of planning than of 'limited and measured' government intervention<sup>594</sup> – but his reputation as an effective and open-minded technocrat, as well as the high esteem in which Catholics and Liberals held him, may have persuaded de Man that he was the best partner in power he could reasonably get.<sup>595</sup>

The promise of a planist revolution was finally broken in the name of *realpolitik* on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1935. After weeks of financial convulsions, the conservative Theunis government resigned; Van Zeeland became Prime Minister, de Man was appointed Minister of Public Works. Vandervelde, Soudan, Delattre, and Spaak were also sworn

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<sup>590</sup> De Man had already been a contributor to the bulletin of the Belgian National Bank, which Van Zeeland had directed: see letter from P. Van Zeeland to H. de Man, 30.6.1932, AHDM/IISG/423.

<sup>591</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup*, 242-244. It must be stressed, though, that no evidence of this meeting can be found in the de Man, Van Zeeland, or Lemoine papers. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1935, de Man alluded to the fact that he had been talking to Van Zeeland 'for a long time' about the regulation of the banking sector but it is unclear when these talks had begun [Séance du 25 mars 1935 – après midi', ABWP/AMSAB].

<sup>592</sup> P. Van Zeeland, *Réflexions sur le Plan quinquennal*, Brussels, Éditions de la Revue Générale 1931, 100.

<sup>593</sup> See P. Van Zeeland, *Regards sur l'Europe: 1932*, Brussels, Office de Publicité 1933, 172-185. Van Zeeland's clearest formulation of his own political philosophy can be found in P. Van Zeeland, *Révision de valeurs: essai de synthèse sur certains problèmes fondamentaux de l'économie contemporaine et leurs réactions politiques*, Paris, Albert 1937, esp. 253-314.

<sup>594</sup> P. Van Zeeland, *Regards*, 166.

<sup>595</sup> See H. de Man, *Après coup*, 241-242.



in as cabinet members.<sup>596</sup> It must be observed, however, that the POB's rise to power was taken less a symptom of strength than of weakness: the party moved from opposition to power without a sweeping electoral victory but by brokering a backroom deal that few celebrated as a virtuous compromise and many tolerated as the lesser evil.<sup>597</sup> Furthermore, although Van Zeeland's programme for national renovation incorporated some proposals taken from the Labour Plan, it was clear from the very beginning that the Prime Minister would have a firm grip on economic policy.<sup>598</sup> Much to the shock of his collaborators, de Man had jettisoned some of his principles and taken a shortcut to power. This time, his critics could easily call him a sheer opportunist.<sup>599</sup>

Truth be told, de Man and his followers contended that the deterioration of the economy had made the formation of a new government inevitable, and planists would use the opportunity to clear the ground for the Labour Plan: in their view, the establishment of a planned economic system would follow in due course.<sup>600</sup> A key

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<sup>596</sup> See 'Le nouveau gouvernement n'est pas aux mains des banquiers', *Le Peuple*, 27.3.1935. For an overview on intra-party negotiations, see B. Henkens, 'De vorming van de eerste regering-van Zeeland (maart 1935). Een studie van het proces van kabinetsformatie', *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 26, 1996, 209-261; C-H. Höjer, *Le régime parlementaire belge*, 236-245.

<sup>597</sup> The only major work favourable to the coalition written from a socialist perspective in 1935-36 is L. Pierard, *La Belgique, terre de compromis: les socialistes belges et le gouvernement Van Zeeland*, Brussels, Les Éditions de Belgique 1935. Even Vandervelde, while explaining the decision to support Van Zeeland before the POB extraordinary congress of March 1935, claimed that the economic crisis forced the socialists to accept governmental responsibility to prevent an authoritarian coup d'état and concluded: 'Nous avons dû.' [see *Compte rendu du Congrès extraordinaire du P.O.B. des 30 et 31 mars 1935*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1935, 42]. Spaak made the same point. Somewhat differently, de Man argued that the propaganda effort had been successful within the country but, exactly for that reason, waiting until 1936 was no longer an option: an 'impasse' had been reached and the conservatives in parliament could even try to make the next round of elections 'impossible' [Ibid., 161]. In general, the mood within the POB was not triumphalist. A number of speakers – including the general secretary of the JGS, Felix Godefroid – expressed regret to the new course.

<sup>598</sup> Van Zeeland's programme, as set out in his first speech before Parliament, included devaluation, special powers for one year, conversion of government bonds, credit control, reduction of unemployment, public works, and recognition of the USSR. 107 deputies voted in favour, 54 against and 12 abstained. For early reactions of the press, see AHDM/IISG/460.

<sup>599</sup> See e.g. E. Varga, *Le Plan trahi. Réponse à Henri de Man, Ministre de la bourgeoisie belge*, Brussels, C.D.L. 1934; *Dossier du Plan de Man: trahison et coup de massue, 1934-1935*, s.i., 1935. See also J. Rens, *Rencontres*, 53.

<sup>600</sup> See M. Buset, 'Notre ligne de conduite', *Plan*, 15, 5.5.1935, unpagé; A. Halasi, 'Le programme financier du Gouvernement', and 'Ce que le Gouvernement Van Zeeland a emprunté au Plan du Travail', both in *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 5, 20.5.1935, 87-90 and 91-94; M. Buset, 'Rapport sur la

driver of their strategy was the newly-created *Office de Redressement Économique* (OREC), directed by de Man, which was put in charge of a number of infrastructural projects. De Man and its general secretary, Lemoine, envisioned the OREC as a potential Brain Trust, which would gradually overtake functions from the Ministers and monitor the public as well as the private sector.<sup>601</sup> De Man was equally adamant about the need to complement extensive public works with other policies, including debt consolidation and cheap credit, aimed at ensuring full employment in the long run.<sup>602</sup> Yet, whilst public works were widely accepted as a temporary tool to kick-off a recovery, his coalition partners resisted any attempt to move the country into a socialist direction, let alone to allow the OREC to reshape the basic institutional framework of the Belgian state. The strongest opponent within the Van Zeeland cabinet turned out to be Max-Léo Gérard, a civil servant of liberal convictions appointed Minister of Finance who had denounced the Labour Plan as unfeasible and reckless. Between April 1935 and May 1936, Gérard was pivotal in preventing the OREC from having an autonomous budget, getting more appropriations to expand its scope, and being involved in the oversight of banks, a field in which not only de Man's but also Van Zeeland's initial proposals were substantially watered down by Gérard.<sup>603</sup> A skilful negotiator with excellent connections in the financial sector, Gérard could count not only on the

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propagande pour le Plan du Travail', *Compte-rendu du 52<sup>e</sup> Congrès – Bruxelles, les 16 et 17 novembre 1935*, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1935, 11-27.

<sup>601</sup> See 'Rapport au Roi. Projet d'arrêté royal délibéré en conseil des ministres créant un Office du Redressement Economique', ARJL/IEVI.D; M. Somerhausen, 'L'Office du redressement économique', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 3, 20.3.1935, 50-51.

<sup>602</sup> See e.g. 'Discours d'Henri de Man au Congrès du P.O.B. des 16 et 17 – XI – 35', AHDM/AMSAB/367; 'Exposé de M. Henri de Man, Ministre des travaux publics et de la résorption du chômage, sur le budget extraordinaire pour 1936', *Les travaux publics et la résorption du chômage*, Brussels, Ministre des travaux publics et de la résorption du chômage 1936, 5-38.

<sup>603</sup> See e.g. the memoranda in ARJL/IEV/I.B.3. For an overview, see G. Vanthemsche, 'De Mislukking van de vernieuwde economische politiek in België voor de Tweede Wereldoorlog: de OREC (Office de Redressement Economique) van 1935 tot 1938', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 2-3, 1982, 339-389; G. Kurgan-van Hentenryk, *Max-Léo Gérard: un ingénieur dans la cité (1879-1955)*, Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2010, 162-169.

sympathies of Van Zeeland but also on occasional support from Vandervelde, who feared the OREC would encroach upon governmental departments.<sup>604</sup> As a consequence of these divergences, the OREC was never given the amount of resources de Man asked for, and therefore its impact remained limited.<sup>605</sup> Much more successful was the devaluation of the Belgian franc, which – contrary to what critics had predicted – boosted exports without causing a general increase of prices.<sup>606</sup> Yet, by being the key factor in curbing unemployment – which dropped by roughly 6% in twelve months –, it reduced the urgency to pass bolder interventionist measures, hence weakening the argument in favour of nationalisations and other structural reforms.<sup>607</sup>

In theory, the legislative election of April 1936 could still provide the POB with a strong mandate to introduce the Labour Plan, which was placed at the centre of its propaganda, and pull the government to the left.<sup>608</sup> Yet the party had become too closely associated with Van Zeeland to be a credible anti-establishment alternative. Tens of thousands of workers cast their ballot for the Communists for the first time while an even higher number of middle-class voters opposing the national union backed the

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<sup>604</sup> See R. J. Lemoine, 'Note sur les débuts difficiles de l'OREC et les dangers qui en résultent pour le gouvernement', 10.5.1935, ARJLM/I.D.2; letter from H. de Man to P. Van Zeeland, 6.8.1935, AHDM/IISG/465. De Man would later argue that Vandervelde was 'the man who contributed more than anyone else to the failure of the planist movement.' [H. de Man, *Après Coup*, 222] The role of Vandervelde in restraining the role of OREC is controversial but is confirmed by the recently published memoirs of Gérard: see M.-L. Gérard, *Souvenirs*, 100.

<sup>605</sup> By October 1935, a frustrated de Man was privately denouncing how the Treasury and the federal bureaucracy were consciously curtailing the activity of OREC. [See 'Séance du Conseil General du 2 Octobre 1935', ABWP-AMSAB]

<sup>606</sup> For early favourable accounts, see F. Baudhuin, *La dévaluation belge: une opération délicate parfaitement réussie*, Brussels, l'Édition Universelle 1935; E. Poisson, *La dévaluation belge, mars 1935 mars 1936*, Paris, Librairie technique et économique 1937, and the special issue of *L'Europe nouvelle*, 950, 25.4.1936. A more critical account was offered by J. Sylvestre, *La dévaluation du franc belge: mars 1935-avril 1936*, Paris, Librairie sociale et économique 1939.

<sup>607</sup> As noted by a conservative economist, Henri Michel: see H. Michel, *La dévaluation belge: une opération aussi délicate que décevante*, Paris, Imprimerie du Palais 1936, 161-173. Van Zeeland too had described monetary reform as a means to 'preserve [...] what, in the general interest, has to be retained from liberalism properly understood.' [\*\*\*, *La crise de l'étalon d'or*, Paris, Albert 1935, 141]

<sup>608</sup> See H. de Man, 'La guérison du malade prouve l'excellence du remède', undated manuscript in AHDM/AMSAB/355; M. Buset, *La plateforme électorale du P.O.B.*, Brussels, Éditions du P.O.B. 1936; 'La propagande du Parti', undated memorandum, AEV/IEV/III/107; special issue of *Plan*, 3, 18, 1.5.1936.

fascist movement Rex. As a consequence, the POB lost three seats and 5% of the vote, and only bigger losses suffered by the Catholic Union allowed it to become the biggest party in Parliament.<sup>609</sup>

Although de Man's political career survived the election – he went on to serve in the subsequent two national governments, one led again by Van Zeeland (1936-1937) and one by Paul-Émile Janson (1937-1938) – the Labour Plan did not. Being no longer in opposition, the POB slipped into the kind of middle-of-the-road position that de Man had once disparaged, scoring some substantial victories – e.g. a tighter regulation of the banking sector, the reduction of the working week, the first minimum wage in Belgian history – but abandoning the prospect of a rapid transformation of the economy.<sup>610</sup> From 1936 onwards, de Man acquiesced to the new course as he did nothing to prevent the Labour Plan from lapsing into oblivion.<sup>611</sup> In fact, he even sought to bend planism and turn it into the ideology underpinning the convergence between Socialists, Catholics, and Liberals. In February 1937, when his ally Spaak urged the POB to fully embrace some kind of 'national socialism' (*socialisme national*) to justify their entanglement with Van Zeeland, de Man questioned Spaak's misleading terminology: 'Being «national» does not mean to be «nationalist». I want to be a good European, and a good citizen of the world, as much as a good Belgian. I hate economic nationalism, which leads people to isolate themselves and impoverish themselves in autarchy; I hate political nationalism, which provokes wars; I hate racial and cultural nationalism that

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<sup>609</sup> At the POB Congress held in October 1936, Vandervelde called the election a 'relative failure' for the party. [E. Vandervelde, 'Rapport sur la situation générale', *Congrès extraordinaire – Rapports*, 24-26 Octobre 1936, Brussels, l'Eglantine 1936, 3]

<sup>610</sup> See *L'œuvre des ministres socialistes de septembre 1936 à octobre 1937*, Brussels, Documentation pour militants édité par le P.O.B., 1937, esp. 5-23. For an overview, C. Strikwerda, 'The Belgian Working Class and the Crisis of the 1930's', *Chance und Illusion: Studien zur Krise der westeuropäischen Gesellschaft in den dreißiger Jahren*, Wien-Zürich, Europaverlag 1988, 279-304.

<sup>611</sup> While the BAP had ceased its activities soon after the formation of the Van Zeeland cabinet in 1935, the journal *Plan* suspended its publication in December 1936.

denies the superior values of a purely human civilisation.’<sup>612</sup> Furthermore, he held that his original planism outlined at Pontigny – claiming that socialism ought to stand for ‘the common good’ rather than for ‘the economic interest of a single class’, reject ‘an integral and simplistic collectivism’, protect the middle class from ‘proletarianisation’, build a Labour Front ‘against the big financial and industrial monopolies’, and resort to legal means to advance his agenda – was still the most suitable ideology for the POB.<sup>613</sup> He also added, quite controversially, that planism was ipso facto ‘a governmental socialism’ (*socialisme de gouvernement*).<sup>614</sup> Somewhat awkwardly, de Man was conforming to the new environment, in which cooperation had replaced cut-throat competition between the three major parties.<sup>615</sup>

Unfortunately for him, by choosing participation over a full implementation of the Plan, de Man lost many of his radical supporters, especially among the youth, without gaining much credit elsewhere.<sup>616</sup> In their final controversy with Vandervelde, Spaak and de Man saw *socialisme national* overwhelmingly rejected by the POB.<sup>617</sup> Nor

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<sup>612</sup> R. de Becker, ‘Pour bâtir une Belgique nouvelle: M. Henri de Man nous dit «Je suis d’accord avec Spaak»’, *L’Indépendance belge*, 9.2.1937. Spaak’s original interview appeared as R. de Becker, ‘Pour bâtir une Belgique nouvelle: M. Spaak définit le socialisme national’, *L’Indépendance belge*, 7.2.1937. Both texts were reprinted in P. H. Spaak, H. de Man, *Pour un socialisme nouveau*, Paris-Brussels, Labor 1937.

<sup>613</sup> R. de Becker, ‘Pour bâtir une Belgique nouvelle: M. Henri de Man nous dit «Je suis d’accord avec Spaak»’, *L’Indépendance belge*, 9.2.1937.

<sup>614</sup> Ibidem. On de Man’s governmental turn, see Austria, *Le socialisme gouvernemental d’Henri de Man*, Brussels, la Nouvelle Eglantine 1938.

<sup>615</sup> See e.g. ‘Henri de Man expose à Anvers notre situation politique: Il définit la position du P.O.B. attaché à de nouvelles réalités: parti de gouvernement, parti constitutionnel, parti national’, *Le Peuple*, 17.10.1937. Raymond de Becker, who interviewed Spaak and de Man, was an admirer of the Labour Plan as well as a staunch advocate of Van Zeeland: see e.g. R. de Becker, ‘Lettre aux Catholiques’, *Vers l’avenir*, 28.3.1937; R. de Becker, *Pour une Belgique nouvelle: l’Union Nationale*, Brussels, La Centrale d’éducation 1937. De Becker would later serve as editor of *Les cahiers politiques*, a short-lived journal sponsored by Spaak open to young Socialists, Catholics and Liberals.

<sup>616</sup> Compare the attitudes of the JGS towards the Plan – and his author – in November 1934 and November 1935: see *Congrès national FNJGS, 10 et 11 novembre 1934 à Namur*, Brussels, Fédération Nationale des J.G.S., 1934; *Congrès national FNJGS, 9 et 10 novembre 1935 à Bruxelles*, Brussels, Fédération Nationale des J.G.S., 1935.

<sup>617</sup> Vandervelde warned Spaak that his quest for a *socialisme national* would lead him into the arms of people advocating ‘a policy of «national withdrawal» under the pretext of «new socialism»’, ‘the shallowing of class struggles’, ‘governmental participation anyway’, and the liquidation of

did de Man's popularity grow much outside his party. When, in October 1937, Van Zeeland resigned, de Man's bid for premiership was stopped by the Liberals on the ground that his statist and corporatist views would be harmful to the economy.<sup>618</sup> Increasingly isolated, de Man chose to focus on two issues he deeply cared about: the reform of the state and the prevention of a new war. Persuaded that only a powerful executive authority would be capable of pursuing thoroughgoing economic reforms, he championed the abolition of the senate, a higher degree of ministerial control over the bureaucracy, popular referenda, and increased transparency in the relationship between deputies and pressure groups, hinting at the possibility of a directly-elected Prime Minister.<sup>619</sup> On foreign affairs, he advocated a policy of strict neutrality, hoping that abandoning collective security would suffice to keep Belgium out of another major conflict.<sup>620</sup> The intellectual origins of de Man's call for collaboration with Nazi Germany should be traced to his ardent pacifism and to his frustration with the Belgian parliamentary regime, not to an alleged conversion to fascism.<sup>621</sup> Moreover, his stance

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internationalism. [letter from H. de Man to P. H. Spaak, 6.1.1938, EV/IV/561] See 'A l'unanimité moins quatre voix et deux abstentions le Conseil Général du Parti a voté, hier, une résolution précise avec netteté la politique du P.O.B. en condamnant les manœuvres communistes contre les syndicats et le parti', *Le Peuple*, 4.3.1937, 'Le parti socialiste ne veut pas du "socialisme national"', *La Nation belge*, 4.3.1937. Vandervelde died in December 1938.

<sup>618</sup> See e.g. Le Huron, 'Que signifierait un gouvernement de Man?', *La Nation belge*, 30.10.1937; 'M. Henri de Man renonce à former le gouvernement', *L'Indépendance belge*, 31.10.1937, 'A la fédération nationale des jeunesses libérales: un Congrès de déléguées. La politique intérieure et extérieure de la Belgique', *La dernière heure*, 15.11.1937.

<sup>619</sup> See H. de Man, 'Is het Planisme dood?', *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 1, 1939, 3-13; H. de Man, 'Hervorming van den Staat vooraf!', *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 2, 1939, 68-73; H. de Man, 'Regeering en Parlement', *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 3, 1939, 147-154; H. de Man, 'Oude en Nieuwe Democratie', *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 5, 1939, 290-301. As de Man stressed in an article written for an international audience, his ministerial experience had left him 'the feeling of having had to work with bad tools – not so bad that the effort was in vain, but bad enough to make a far too high proportion of wasted effort inevitable.' [H. de Man, 'Van Zeeland's Achievements and Failures', *The Highway*, 31, 1939, 141] Van Zeeland made a similar point: see P. Van Zeeland, Letter to R. Marcq, 18.3.1937, VV.AA., *La réforme de l'Etat*, Paris, Sirey 1939, xiii-xiv.

<sup>620</sup> See e.g. H. de Man, *Une offensive pour la paix*, Paris-Brussels, Labor 1938; \*\*\* [H. de Man], 'Genoeg sabotage van de onzijdigheid!', *Leiding: Vlaamsch Socialistisch Maandschrift*, 10, 1939, 605-612.

<sup>621</sup> Jef Rens would later argue that, in doing so, de Man 'denied his own ideas spelled out in many of his books.' ['Interview with Jef Rens', S. P. Kramer, *Socialism in Western Europe*, 116] For further

probably also reflected a sincere, albeit misguided, desire to help the King protect Belgian sovereignty under the occupation, a task he saw as less and less compatible with factionalism and the morass of party politics into which he had been dragged.<sup>622</sup>

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The campaign for the Labour Plan and its disappointing outcome raise crucial questions not only about de Man's personality but also, and more importantly, about the chances of a successful ideological renewal in the turbulent context of the early Thirties. It is plausible that de Man's stubbornness, lack of empathy, and indifference to the technicalities of government weakened his position, and perhaps doomed the campaign from the very beginning.<sup>623</sup> Yet some of these traits were already apparent in 1933 and they did not prevent the author of *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* from climbing to the top of the biggest legal socialist party left on the European Continent. Although de Man failed to meet the highly ambitious targets he had set, the fight for the Labour Plan demonstrates that there was some space for a new paradigm, as planism did have a tangible impact on party structures, policy-making, and public opinion in general.

Still, how big really was that space? In retrospect, the rise and fall of the Labour Plan happened so quickly as to raise doubts about the possibility of reshaping the identity, as well as the public image, of a mass party in such a short period of time. For

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discussion, see M. Brélaz, *Léopold III et Henri de Man*, esp. 19-39; H. Balthazar, 'Henri de Man dans la «révolution avortée»', *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 197-215. As Mark Mazower pointed out, de Man was not alone in pinning hopes on a German-dominated Europe in 1940. [see M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe*, London, Penguin Books 2008, 473-474] In particular, an interesting comparison has been drawn between de Man and some French socialists: see B. Bruneteau, *«L'Europe nouvelle» de Hitler: une illusion des intellectuels de la France de Vichy*, Paris, Rocher 2003, esp. 293-307.

<sup>622</sup> Rather astonishingly, de Man still held in 1945 that his endeavours to 'alleviate the plight of the workers' under the Germans had failed due to the prolonged war and to the 'opposition of views' with the 'great majority' of his fellow socialists who were still reluctant to accept his insight and leadership. [H. de Man, 'De la capitulation à l'exil', manuscript dated 20.1.1945, AHDM/AMSAB/594]

<sup>623</sup> On de Man's shortcomings as a Minister, see F. Baudhuin, *Histoire économique de la Belgique, 1914-1939* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1944), Brussels, Bruylant 1946, 337-340; M.-L. Gérard, *Souvenirs*, 101-102; J. Rens, *Rencontres*, 63.

sure, de Man realised that only an establishment in disarray would hand him a blank cheque to rewrite the POB platform – and he eagerly seized this opportunity in 1933. Yet he underestimated the hidden costs of being coopted, including the difficulties in managing a heavily bureaucratised party machine that did not share his enthusiasm for the new agenda. In 1934-35, to de Man's bewilderment, the planist tail proved unable to wag the socialist dog.<sup>624</sup> Similarly, de Man is likely to have miscalculated about the readiness of the general public, as well as of the rank-and-file, to appreciate the thorough ideological reorientation he was proposing. Although the propaganda for the Labour Plan was far from sterile, it could hardly dispel the mistrust that non-socialist voters still felt for a self-declared revolutionary party.<sup>625</sup> Nor could socialist militants be expected to be immediately receptive to de Man's new gospel. The legacy of the traditional political culture of the POB, duly nurtured by Vandervelde, de Brouckère, and their acolytes for nearly four decades, could not be cancelled with the stroke of a pen.<sup>626</sup>

The latter element is particularly relevant. In March 1935, the sacrifice of the Labour Plan cleared the way for a centrist experiment that would soon be celebrated as a ground-breaking attempt to reconcile democracy, economic interventionism, and economic growth: within a year, foreign observers began comparing Van Zeeland with

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<sup>624</sup> The issue is discussed at length in de Man's memoirs: see H. de Man, *Après coup*, esp. 212-216.

<sup>625</sup> As one Catholic critic pointed out in 1935, 'the execution and success of the Plan' would 'depend on the men that will be in charge of implementing it', namely the cadres of the POB. [M. Laloire, 'Le Plan de Man', *Orientations religieuses et intellectuelles*, 4, 20.1.1935, 192]

<sup>626</sup> De Man had probably understood this by April 1936. During the second International Plan Conference, he admitted that 'a high number of traditional leaders, militants, and cadres of our movement', however involved in the propaganda effort, had 'never been sure, in their conscience, about the possibility of making substantial achievements through the means suggested by the Plan.' [H. de Man, 'L'action pour le Plan et l'action gouvernementale en Belgique', AHDM/AMSAB/350] This is a significant remark, much more sensible than his later charge of 'sabotage of the planist propaganda' against the POB establishment. [H. de Man, *Après coup*, 234]



Roosevelt, and spoke about a Belgian New Deal.<sup>627</sup> Progressive Catholics were keen to praise Van Zeeland and, to an extent, de Man for having forcefully tackled the economic crisis.<sup>628</sup> On the socialist side, the perception was different. De Man appeared less an enlightened reformer than a clever trimmer, and the myth of the Popular Front – which triumphed at the 1936 French elections, three weeks before the mediocre electoral performance of the POB – was powerful enough to undermine the prestige of the Plan, at home and abroad.<sup>629</sup>

To conclude, it seems fair to say that planism scored important points in the battle of ideas against orthodox Marxism but failed to take root and be properly assimilated within the socialist camp. The slow absorption of a new creed was incompatible with the chaotic conjuncture of 1933-36, during which most social democrats still felt torn between reformism and revolution, and the resilience of widespread practices and intellectual habits inherited from the previous generations proved too difficult to overcome. The problem of opposition, both top-down and

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<sup>627</sup> See e.g. C. Roger, 'A "New Deal" for Belgium', *Foreign Affairs*, 4, 1935, 625-637; L. Franck, *Démocraties en crise: Roosevelt, Van Zeeland, Léon Blum*, Paris, Rieder 1937. Already in July 1935 Keynes argued that 'the Belgian example' had made 'great impression' on the world. [see J.M. Keynes, 'The Lull Surrounding of the General Theory', *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes. Vol. XXI: Activities 1931-1939: World Crises and Policies in Britain and America*, D. Moggridge (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1982, 356. The liberal intellectuals who gathered in Paris, in August 1938, for the Walter Lippmann Colloquium thought about launching a Paul Van Zeeland Colloquium in 1939. Lippmann himself was an admirer of Van Zeeland: see W. Lippmann, 'The Van Zeeland Report', *New York Herald Tribune*, 29.1.1938. Marcel Van Zeeland, Paul's brother who attended the Walter Lippmann Colloquium, even theorised *Vanzeelandisme* as a coherent, centrist philosophy: see \*\*\* [M. Van Zeeland], *L'expérience Van Zeeland en Belgique*, Lausanne, Payot 1940, 283-307. In the American edition of 1943 Paul Van Zeeland wished that the study of his experience as Prime minister could 'offer a few lessons' for the post-war order. [P. Van Zeeland, 'Preface', \*\*\* [M. Van Zeeland], *The Van Zeeland Experiment*, New York, The Moretus Press 1943, 6]

<sup>628</sup> See e.g. X. Legrand, *Le socialisme belge*, 171-177; L. Hommel, *Paul van Zeeland. Premier ministre de Belgique*, Paris, Plon 1937.

<sup>629</sup> It is worth stressing that some planists, disenchanted with Van Zeeland, insisted on extra-parliamentary action to press the government to accept major economic concessions: see e.g. J. Bondas and J. Rens, *Nouveau départ: la grève de juin 1936*, Brussels, Commission Syndical Belgique 1936. The JGS, who had enthusiastically backed the Plan against governmental collaboration, never recovered from the shock of March 1935, as membership collapsed from 25.000 in 1934 to 7.800 in 1936. [A. Colignon, 'Les Jeunes Gardes Socialistes, ou la quête du Graal révolutionnaire, 1930-1935', *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 8, 2001, 222]

bottom-up, to the ideological innovation epitomised by planism will be further clarified in the next two chapters, in which the reception of the Labour Plan in France and Britain will be discussed.

## VI.

### Resistances:

#### The Belgian Labour Plan in France

Between the present capitalist chaos and the future socialist organisation of the world, there will be the work and the struggles of at least one generation of human beings, tirelessly busy transforming and reorganising the economy, while keeping it moving [...].

Lucien Laurat, 1934<sup>630</sup>

Planism is, within the crisis of Europe, within our internal crisis, the conception that perfectly suits France.

Marcel Déat, 1935<sup>631</sup>

Among the various countries through which the Labour Plan resonated France deserves special consideration. Thanks to the commonality of language and the strong historical connections between the French and the Belgian labour movement, the document was widely read and painstakingly debated by a wide range of individuals and organisations immediately after its release. Between December 1933 and early February 1934 the Belgian Labour Plan was the single, most controversial topic for the French Left – forcing leaders to declare if they were for or against it, prompting

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<sup>630</sup> L. Laurat, 'Réflexions sur l'économie «mixte»', *Révolte*, 4, 20, 1934, 39-40. Created in 1931, *Révolte* was a socialist monthly which, under the editorship of Jacques Grumbach, helped spread planism in France. Before its closure, in fall 1934, both planists and anti-planists within the French-speaking world – Lucien Laurat, Jean Itard, and Ludovic Zoretti among the first; Léon Blum, Bracke, Paul Faure, and Emile Vandervelde among the second – had joined its editorial board, showing the extent to which planist ideas had gained legitimacy within the socialist camp. On *Révolte*, see also L. Delsinne, 'Pour une revue socialiste internationale d'expression française', *Le Peuple*, 6.10.1933.

<sup>631</sup> M. Déat, 'Le planisme et la tradition française', *L'homme nouveau*, 12, 1.1.1935, unpag. *L'homme nouveau*, founded by Georges Roditi, regularly featured articles by de Man and Déat. After having attended an Italo-French conference on corporatism sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Culture in May 1935, Roditi displayed an increasingly sympathetic attitude towards Italian fascism and, like Déat, supported the Vichy regime. For an overview on his evolving views, see G. Roditi, *Ecrits d'avant-guerre: 'L'Homme Nouveau', 'Tribune de France', 'Idées et Peuples', 1931-1939*, Clermont-Ferrand, Sorlot 1941. Evidence suggests that Roditi knew de Man personally: see letter from G. Roditi to H. de Man, 10.11.1933, ABSO/AMSAB/82; letter from G. Roditi to H. de Man, 3.8.1937, AHDM/IISG/227.

discussions on whether and to what extent it could be applicable within the French context, and inspiring a wave of imitators. As one critic of planism beseeched in the midst of the storm, ‘Not thirty-six «plans», just one.’<sup>632</sup>

Instead of charting all the different associations, circles, and parties who launched a “Plan” of some sort, this chapter focuses on the three main groups who openly referred to de Man as a source of inspiration and called for a French Labour Plan similar to the one approved by the POB: the neo-socialists, the SFIO planists, and the CGT planists.<sup>633</sup> Their attitude was often less cooperative than competitive: each group claimed to be the most faithful to de Man’s teachings, and questioned the credentials of the others. Yet their history – as well as their fate – is so closely entangled that it would be impossible to study them separately. For this reason, the structure of the chapter is chronological. The first section explores the historical setting in which the discussions around the Belgian Labour Plan took place and follows the trajectory of the abovementioned groups until early February 1934. The second section deals with their reaction to the events of February 6<sup>th</sup>, when riots in Paris led many socialists to believe that a fascist coup was a real danger, and the difficulties that planists met until the formation of the Popular Front. The last section evaluates the sources of weaknesses in French planism.

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<sup>632</sup> P. Faure, ‘Qui n’a pas son plan ?’, *Le Populaire*, 17.1.1934. See also A. Rivière, ‘Il pleut des plans’, *Le Populaire*, 15.5.1934. According to Julian Jackson, 1934 was marked by ‘planomania’ as at least eleven different plans were launched in France alone. [J. Jackson, *The Politics*, 150] For a contemporary overview, see H. Noyelle, ‘Les Plans de reconstruction économique et sociale à l’étranger et en France’, *Revue d’économie politique*, 1934, 1595-1668; C. Pomaret, ‘Catalogue de Plans’, *L’état moderne*, 4, 1935, 364-367.

<sup>633</sup> There will be no discussion, therefore, of the plans set out by figures who showed no interest in de Man (i.e. the Radical journalist Emile Roche) or opposed the Belgian Labour Plan (i.e. the publisher Georges Valois).

The backdrop against which French planism emerged was a recession that unfolded much more slowly than in Belgium but, by mid-1932, had already caused a moderate growth of unemployment and falling wages and prices, particularly in the agricultural sector.<sup>634</sup> Although his last budget included important measures aimed at stimulating the economy, the incumbent Prime Minister André Tardieu was backed by a centre-right coalition which stuck to the principles of fiscal and monetary orthodoxy, e.g. a balanced budget and the defence of the gold standard. An admirer of the United States, Tardieu ran as a reformer but, all in all, his interventionism bore more resemblance to Hoover's technocratic brand of conservatism than to Roosevelt's New Deal.<sup>635</sup> In the 1932 legislative elections, the main French socialist party, the SFIO, gained 32 new seats, becoming the second largest group in Parliament. Thanks to Tardieu's poor performance, the Socialists were now in a position to form a majority with the Radicals. Yet the SFIO was deeply divided on the issue of governmental participation, with vociferous minorities making opposite arguments.

By all standards, this had been a torn in the flesh of French socialists since the Millerand case.<sup>636</sup> The party's ideology – an eclectic combination of Jauresian idealism, republicanism, and Marxist materialism – did not help solve the issue.<sup>637</sup> Back in 1926,

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<sup>634</sup> For an overview, see S. Bernstein, *La France des années 30*, Paris, Armand Colin 1988, 25-51

<sup>635</sup> See e.g. A. Tardieu, *Devant l'obstacle: l'Amérique et nous*, Paris, Frères 1927; A. Tardieu, *Paroles réalistes*, Paris, Figuière 1928, 'Des rapports de l'invention avec la production, la sécurité et la prospérité nationale' manuscript dated 5.7.1930, FAT/AN/324AP/50. Like Hoover, Tardieu had been an admirer of scientific management and championed its adoption in France together with the industrialist association *Redressement français*. On Tardieu's socio-economic vision in the late 1920s-early 1930s, see M. Claque, 'Vision and Myopia in the New Politics of André Tardieu', *French Historical Studies*, 1, 1973, 105-129; F. Monnet, *Refaire la République: André Tardieu, une dérive réactionnaire (1876-1945)*, Paris, Fayard 1993, 137-174.

<sup>636</sup> See chapter I of this dissertation. For an overview on governmental participation in France, see P. Ramadier, *Les socialistes et l'exercice du pouvoir*, Paris, Robert Laffont 1961, 21-27; A. Bergounioux and G. Grunberg, *Le long remords du pouvoir: le Parti Socialiste français 1905-1992*, Paris, Fayard 1992, 134-147.

<sup>637</sup> See G. Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, New York-London, Columbia University Press 1966, 30-33; T. Judt, *La reconstruction du Parti Socialiste, 1921-1926*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques 1976, 71-97.

the SFIO parliamentary leader, Léon Blum, had outlined the prerequisites for accepting governmental responsibility: this was a significant step away from the party's official stance, inspired to the 1904 resolution adopted by the LSI Amsterdam Congress, which banned all forms of participation. Blum's subtle distinction between the 'seizure of power' – i.e., a socialist revolution – and the 'exercise of power' – namely, a socialist government under capitalism –, however, could not obscure the fact that the preconditions he laid out were intentionally harsh and amounted to the establishment of a SFIO-dominated cabinet in which the party would keep firm control over the agenda. Considering the strength of the Radicals at that time, Blum was admitting the possibility of a centre-left coalition in theory while undermining it in practice.<sup>638</sup> In May 1932, negotiations between Radicals and Socialists collapsed because of the latter's intransigence over the new government's programme.<sup>639</sup>

Blum's line of conduct irritated some supporters of participation, such as Pierre Renaudel, Adéodat Compère-Morel, and Paul Ramadier, and a new breed of parliamentarians increasingly tired of self-inflicted isolation: the mayor of Bordeaux Adrien Marquet, the deputy from Seine Barthélemy Montagnon, and the former secretary of the Chamber's SFIO group Marcel Déat. Never a deep or profoundly original thinker, Déat was nonetheless a relatively charismatic figure with a penchant

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<sup>638</sup> In the words of Tony Judt, 'participation in government, and more generally a commitment to the daily tasks of a party in a parliamentary system, was not something that Blum found doctrinally repugnant, but nor did he see it as virtuous or an advantage per se. Sharing with the militants around Paul Faure a belief in the desirable and inevitable collapse of a system founded upon unjust exploitation, he could understand their desire to avoid contamination by excessive contact with the superstructure of such a system.' [T. Judt, 'The Socialist Party 1920-1936', *Marxism and the French Left: Studies in Labour and Politics in France, 1830-1981*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1986, 149] See L. Blum, 'Le parti socialiste et la participation ministérielle', L. Blum and P. Faure, *Le parti socialiste et la participation ministérielle*, Paris, Éditions de la nouvelle revue socialiste 1926, 3-23. See also 'Le Parti Socialiste et la participation ministérielle', *La Bataille socialiste*, 27, 10.11.1929, featuring articles by Faure, Bracke, Zyromski and other opponents of participation. A copy of this special issue can be found in Blum's private papers: see FLB/AN/570AP/7.

<sup>639</sup> See M. Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie: histoire d'une conversion, 1932-1952. Vol. I*, Paris, Comité pour l'histoire économique de la France 1991, 106-107; D. Frapet, *Le socialisme selon Léon Blum*, Nonette, Créer 2003, 69-70.

for political theorising.<sup>640</sup> A protégé of Albert Thomas<sup>641</sup>, in *Perspectives socialistes*, published in 1930, he urged socialists to forge an alliance between anti-capitalist forces with the aim of establishing a managed economy, in which the State would steer interclass cooperation by supervising a set of newly formed cartels. Déat occasionally quoted de Man in accounting for the inadequacy of orthodox Marxism; his book, though, was less a harbinger of planism than a search for common ground with the so-called Young Turks, a group of Radicals enthralled by the notion of *économie dirigée* who also supported the formation of a centre-left majority.<sup>642</sup> Déat's ambition and revisionist views, labeled 'neo-socialist' by one of his adversaries, soured his relationship with Blum.<sup>643</sup>

In 1933, the gulf between the socialist parliamentary group, who voted twice for the government's budget, and the rest of the party widened significantly. At the Paris Congress, held in July, Blum, Paul Faure and other opponents of participation lambasted the neo-socialists for their disregard of party discipline. But Déat and his followers used the podium to address a broader topic: the SFIO's long-term strategy in the light of Hitler's seizure of power. 'You will block the road to fascism only to the

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<sup>640</sup> In his memoirs, the French liberal philosopher Raymond Aron admitted that, in his youth, he had been 'carried away' by Déat's eloquence. [R. Aron, *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection*, New York, Holmes & Meyer 1990, 44] According to Marjolin, Déat was 'an excellent orator, endowed with a fertile mind always in motion' and 'his personality stood out from mediocrity of most of the socialist leaders. He could be compared with Léon Blum for the quality of the written and spoken word.' [R. Marjolin, *Le travail d'une vie: mémoires 1911-1986*, Paris, Laffont 1986, 65]

<sup>641</sup> In 1931, Déat publicly quoted a personal letter from Thomas in which the latter stated that Déat's ideas were to be 'at the roots of our modern socialist action.' [see *XXVIe Congrès national tenu à Tours le 24, 25, 26 et 27 mai 1931 – compte rendu sténographique*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1932, 22]

<sup>642</sup> See M. Déat, *Perspectives socialistes*, Paris, Valois 1930. On de Man, see *ibid.*, 41, 63, 137; on the young Radicals see 117-118, 169-170. The Young Turks included, among others, Bertrand de Jouvenel, Gaston Bergery, Jean Zay, Pierre Cot, Jacques Kayser, and Jean Luchaire. On the prospects of further cooperation between Socialists and Radicals see e.g. B. de Jouvenel, 'Pour la gauche unitaire. Socialistes et radicaux. Une conversation avec M. Marcel Déat', *La voix*, 9.6.1929.

<sup>643</sup> See J. Moch, *Rencontres avec... Léon Blum*, Paris, Plon 1970, 65-67; J. Moch, *Une si longue vie*, Paris, Robert Laffont 1976, 72-73; G. Lefranc, 'Rétrospectives. Vol. II: militant socialiste et syndicaliste', *Cahiers et Revue de l'Ours*, 118, 1981, 63-66. S. Bernstein, *Blum*, Paris, Fayard 2006, contains insightful remarks on the relationship between Blum and Déat. The term 'neosocialism' first appeared in J. Lebas, *Le socialisme, but et moyen: suivi de la réfutation d'un néo-socialisme*, Lille, Imprimeur ouvrière 1931.

extent that you will get rid of the causes [...] that allowed it to grow', Déat warned.<sup>644</sup> The therapy he envisaged included the establishment of a strong State, equipped with wide-ranging powers to regulate most sectors of the economy, including the banking system; attempts by the party to reach out to middle class elements hurt by the economic crisis, and a more dynamic parliamentary action. Perhaps echoing de Man, the neo-socialists stressed the necessity of 'a programme for immediate action' (*une programme d'action immédiate*) to mobilise voters but, in practice, struggled to produce an inspiring platform.<sup>645</sup> To Blum, however, neosocialism amounted to a deviation which, with the purpose of halting the rise of fascism, was in danger of contaminating socialism with authoritarian ideas.<sup>646</sup> In presenting Déat as the trailblazer of fascism, Blum was not alone: the term "fascist" was regularly employed by Communists and left-wing Socialists to assail reformists and other non-revolutionary elements of the Left.<sup>647</sup> In November 1933, after having been first censored then expelled from the

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<sup>644</sup> 'Discours de Marcel Déat, député de Paris', B. Montagnon, A. Marquet and M. Déat, *Néo-socialisme? Ordre, autorité, nation*, M. Bonnaïfous (ed.), Paris, Grasset 1933, 83.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 101. As a former associate of Déat who chose to remain in the SFIO wrote with reference to the neo-socialist doctrine: 'the socialism that has been presented to me has no soul. I cannot feel the thrill of joyful emotion, the warm flame of high experience.' [L.-O. Frossard, 'L'Ancien Testament et le Nouveau', *Marianne*, 46, 6.9.1933, 2]

<sup>646</sup> See e.g. L. Blum, 'Parti de classe et non pas parti de déclassés', *Le Peuple*, 19.7.1933; L. Blum, 'La leçon de l'histoire', *Le Populaire*, 25.7.1933.

<sup>647</sup> 'It has become common to treat neosocialism as a neo-fascist movement.' [M. Vivier, 'Néo-Socialisme (Bernard Grasset Éditeur)', *Masses*, 14, 1934, 7] The use built on the theory of 'social fascism' elaborated by Grigory Zinoviev within the Comintern. It is no accident that the main architect of Déat's expulsion from the SFIO was the pro-communist Marceau Pivert, who went on to break with the Popular Front in 1937 for being too moderate and launched his own socialist revolutionary party one year later: see memorandum GB/3 A6712, FP/AN/F/7/15991/2, 'De Versailles à Compiègne... où va la France?', unpublished manuscript, FAMP/AN/22AS/1. Ironically, though, the neo-socialists won the sympathies of some Italian anti-fascists. [see letter from G. Salvemini to C. Rosselli, 5.8.1933, *Fra le righe: carteggio fra Gaetano Salvemini e Carlo Rosselli*, E. Signori (ed.), Milan, Franco Angeli 2010, 167-168; C. Rosselli, 'Il neosocialismo francese', *La Libertà*, 17.8.1933; C. Rosselli, 'Lo spirito e i fini del neosocialismo francese', *La Libertà*, 24.8.1933; 'Il neosocialismo francese nel quadro internazionale', *La libertà*, 31.8.1933, all reprinted in C. Rosselli, *Scritti dall'esilio. Vol. I: Giustizia e Libertà e la concentrazione antifascista (1929-1934)*, Turin, Einaudi 1989, 226-243].



SFIO, the neo-socialists formed their own party, the *Parti Socialiste de France – Union Jean Jaurès* (PSdF) – but only 28 deputies and 7 senators joined the new group.<sup>648</sup>

It was de Man's Labour Plan that provided Déat, Renaudel, and their associates with a platform that they could sell to the public. Neo-socialists, however, were less thrilled about the Plan as a set of policy prescriptions than as a symbol.<sup>649</sup> First, by comparison, it allowed them to expose the SFIO's *attentisme* and lack of a comprehensive economic programme. Second, they realised that, despite being wrapped up in a revolutionary language, the Plan could offer a rationale for governmental participation and therefore create an aura of legitimacy around their new party. Renaudel's journal *La Vie Socialiste* proved instrumental to that effort. In November 1933, recent articles published by de Man in *Le Peuple* were reprinted under the heading *Pour un socialisme renouvelé*. In introducing them, Robert Bobin complained that French socialists who were making similar arguments 'let themselves to be treated as simple fascists.'<sup>650</sup> The practical impossibility of passing measures aimed at seizing all the means of production, Bobin insisted, was acknowledged by de Man and vindicated the neo-socialists' prescient insight.<sup>651</sup> As soon as the Belgian Labour Plan was launched, bolder attempts were made to establish a link between the newly formed PSdF and the Belgian experience. 'All the principles that have presided over the birth of our movement have been subsequently invoked by Henri de Man' Déat boasted.<sup>652</sup> 'We alone in the Socialist Party in France have favourably received the ideas of Henri de Man, which corresponded to our own reflections' Renaudel argued, presenting planism

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<sup>648</sup> See 'Le Conseil National de scission: Paris, 4 et 5 novembre 1933', *La vie socialiste*, 349-350, 18.11.1933 for a detailed account of the split. The estimated membership was 20,000.

<sup>649</sup> See letter from M. Déat to H. de Man, 28.12.1933, ABSO/AMSAB/82.

<sup>650</sup> R.B. [R. Bobin], 'Ce que dit Henri de Man: pour un socialisme renouvelé', *La vie socialiste*, 348, 4.11.1933, 6.

<sup>651</sup> R. Bobin, 'Une très important session du Conseil Général du Parti Ouvrier Belge', *La vie socialiste*, 351, 25.11.1933, 10.

<sup>652</sup> 'Le Plan belge et nous', *La vie socialiste*, 357, 6.1.1934, 3.

as a straightforward result of de Man's earlier repudiation of Marxism.<sup>653</sup> The party's Executive Bureau passed a resolution praising the 'realistic principles for action' (*formules d'action réalistes*) underpinning the Belgian Labour Plan and wishing that other parties affiliated with the LSI would do the same, so not to 'leave to the enemies of the working class the construction of «intermediate regimes»'.<sup>654</sup> According to the neo-socialists, planism – with its emphasis on the importance of acting at national level and win over the youth – was the most effective antidote to France slipping into right-wing authoritarian rule.<sup>655</sup>

Jumping on de Man's bandwagon was a shrewd gambit but hardly one that could win over sceptics who questioned Déat's good faith. Addressing both the Belgian and the French public, Vandervelde highlighted a major difference between de Man and Déat when he pointed out that, whereas the Belgian Labour Plan broadened the appeal of the existing socialist party, the neo-socialists exploited de Man's project to vindicate their split, hence exacerbating divisions within the working class.<sup>656</sup> It was, however,

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<sup>653</sup> P. Renaudel, 'Le «renouveau socialiste» est une réalité en Suisse comme en Belgique', *La vie socialiste*, 359, 20.1.1934, 12. In 1928, Renaudel had indeed invited de Man to speak in Paris about *Zur Psychologie*: see H. de Man, 'Socialisme et Marxisme', *La vie socialiste*, 92, 3.3.1928, 8-18.

<sup>654</sup> 'Chronique du Parti Socialiste de France – Union Jean Jaurès', *La vie socialiste*, 357, 6.1.1934, 15. The use of the term 'réaliste' is also noteworthy. Since the late 1920s, it had gained wide currency among the abovementioned Young Turks to qualify their own understanding of economics and society: see e.g. J. Luchaire, *Une génération réaliste*, Paris, Valois 1929. The neo-socialist Montagnon had also made a forceful case for 'réalisme': see B. Montagnon, *Grandeur et servitude socialistes*, Paris, Valois 1929, 179-180.

<sup>655</sup> See e.g. M. Déat, 'Réflexions sur le fascisme', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 9, 20.9.1933, 255-256. In 1934, de Man's views on foreign policy and the sensitive issue of national defence were also well received. See H. de Man, 'A propos de la défense nationale', *La vie socialiste*, 368, 24.3.1934, 4-9; H. de Man, 'A propos de la Défense Nationale', *La vie socialiste*, 369, 31.3.1934, 5-13. The centrality of the nation in the neo-socialist discourse was stressed by Paul Marion, another ideologue of the movement: P. Marion, *Socialisme et nation*, Paris, Imprimerie du Centaure 1933.

<sup>656</sup> E. Vandervelde, 'Henri de Man et Marcel Déat', *Le Peuple*, 7.1.1934, reprinted as E. Vandervelde, 'Le plan de Man et le néosocialisme: Henri de Man et Marcel Déat', *L'étudiant socialiste*, 5, 1934, 1-2. See also F. Lefèvre, 'Une heure avec Emile Vandervelde, écrivain politique', *Les nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques*, 581, 2.12.1933, 4, and the neo-socialist reply by J.T., 'A propos d'une interview d'Emile Vandervelde', *La vie socialiste*, 354, 16.12.1933, 3. Vandervelde reiterated the claim in E. Vandervelde, 'Planisme, néo-socialisme ou néo-réformisme', *Le Peuple*, 6.1.1935; E. Vandervelde, 'Le marxisme et le planisme', *Le Peuple*, 3.2.1935. Faure too tried to turn de Man's ideas against the neo-

Léon Blum who reacted most forcefully against what he regarded as an undue appropriation.<sup>657</sup> Devoting ten editorials to the Belgian Labour Plan in January 1934, he pinpointed the differences between it and the neo-socialist programme. The first, according to Blum, entailed the rejection of ministerial participation within a non-socialist majority<sup>658</sup>; the emphasis on class conflict<sup>659</sup>; the search for party unity<sup>660</sup>; the commitment to the nationalisation of property<sup>661</sup>; and, more generally, the creation of a *rassemblement* aimed at speeding up the transition to socialism. Contrary to the image that Déat and Renaudel were trying to convey, Blum insisted that de Man was no moderate and his name could not be invoked to justify a shameless pursuit of ministerial portfolios.<sup>662</sup>

Having set the record straight about the Belgian Labour Plan, Blum spelled out the strong reservations he had about it. To begin with, the Plan could generate unintended consequences, for – by bringing heavy industries and credit under public control while at the same time expanding domestic consumption – it could eventually delay, rather than accelerate, the downfall of the capitalist system. Even worse, the ‘coexistence’ between a public and a private sector was likely to trigger a stabilisation in which ‘the socialised sector, instead of growing little by little until absorbing

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socialists: see e.g. P. Faure, ‘Deuxième épître à des sénateurs’, *Le Populaire*, 12.11.1933; P. Faure, ‘Les tâches de demain’, *La Bataille socialiste*, 73, 15.11.1933, 1-2.

<sup>657</sup> Evidence suggests that Blum gave the Labour Plan careful consideration. In mid-January, Germaine Fouchère, a prominent militant from the Seine and secretary of the Chamber’s SFIO group, contacted de Man to organise a public rally entirely devoted to the Belgian Labour Plan ‘in accordance with the socialist party.’ [see letter from G. Fouchère to H. de Man, 17.1.1934, ABSO/AMSAB/82] Due to de Man’s commitments in Belgium the event never took place. Blum also attended at least one private meeting with a group of socialist parliamentarians – Vincent Auriol, Jules Moch, Charles Spinasse, Georges Monnet, and Robert Jardillier – to discuss the Plan in detail. [see letter from R. Jardillier to H. de Man, 3.2.1934, ABSO/AMSAB/82]

<sup>658</sup> L. Blum, ‘Au-delà du réformisme’, *Le Populaire*, 4.1.1934.

<sup>659</sup> L. Blum, ‘Appel à une bataille de classe’, *Le Populaire*, 5.1.1934.

<sup>660</sup> L. Blum, ‘Le Plan du Travail et le Parti Français’, *Le Populaire*, 6.1.1934.

<sup>661</sup> L. Blum, ‘Les grands lignes du Plan du Travail’, *Le Populaire*, 18.1.1934.

<sup>662</sup> L. Blum, ‘Le sens véritable du Plan du Travail’, *Le Populaire*, 21.1.1934.

everything, is circumscribed in advance, isolated.’<sup>663</sup> Yet those misgivings should not obscure the important concessions Blum was making to the sympathisers of the Labour Plan. For the first time, he was prone to recognise its usefulness, ‘as a plan of combat, as an offensive plan exercising the maximum action on the Belgian working class and the popular masses’, ‘as an instrument for the seizure of power.’<sup>664</sup> Besides, he implicitly admitted that a planist orientation was compatible with genuine socialist tenets, describing the work of the deputy Vincent Auriol as the closest to de Man’s original approach.<sup>665</sup>

Blum’s remarks, though, had less a theoretical than a tactical value. His aversion to planism notwithstanding, the leader was making clear he could get along with planist fringes as long as they operated *within* the SFIO rather than *outside* or *against* it. Short-term calculations might have played a role in this inclusive attitude. By mid-January, he was certainly aware that the Belgian Labour Plan was gaining admirers well beyond the PSdF and a tiny but vocal group of planists loyal to the SFIO – the SFIO planists – would make their voices heard during the forthcoming Lille congress, scheduled for February 10-11<sup>th</sup>. The pivotal figure of this group was Lucien Laurat, who, while being involved in the Belgian campaign for the Plan, was based in Paris and published regularly on the French press.<sup>666</sup> In 1933, having broken with *Monde* for the pro-Soviet line imposed by the editor Henri Barbusse, Laurat helped launch *Le Combat marxiste*, a monthly aimed at steering a new course between what he regarded as the three dominant strands of the French Left: ‘traditional reformism’ advocated by the neo-socialists,

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<sup>663</sup> L. Blum, ‘La socialisation par étapes’, *Le Populaire*, 22.1.1934.

<sup>664</sup> L. Blum, ‘Plan et Programme’, *Le Populaire*, 17.1.1934.

<sup>665</sup> L. Blum, ‘Appel à une bataille de classe’, *Le Populaire*, 5.1.1934; L. Blum, ‘Le Plan du Travail et le Parti Français’, *Le Populaire*, 6.1.1934. Blum referred to Auriol’s most recent policy proposal: see J. Brissaud, *La nationalisation des assurances*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1933. Auriol’s full proposals can be found in FVA/AN/552/AP/12.

<sup>666</sup> See chapter IV and V of this dissertation.

imbued with nationalism and pre-Marxian utopianism; ‘the traditional Left’ of Blum and Faure, whose ‘abstract propaganda’ had become a ‘source of inertia’, and the ‘bolshevism’ dominating the French Communist Party.<sup>667</sup> For Laurat, only planism could reinvigorate the SFIO. In December, *Le Combat marxiste* threw its support behind de la Belgian Labour Plan, praising both its ‘political dynamism’ and its ‘economic realism’, and emphasizing the similarities between de Man’s and Laurat’s ideas as expressed in two recent pamphlets.<sup>668</sup> By then, Laurat’s writings had caught the eye of Jean Zyromski, the leader of the left-wing faction *Bataille Socialiste* and Blum’s most powerful opponent within the party.<sup>669</sup> ‘Laurat convincingly demonstrates this: the breadth and depth of the crisis of the capitalist economy is as such that socialist parties can no longer be satisfied, within their propaganda effort, with *social policy*, narrowly defined’, Zyromski held.<sup>670</sup> ‘The socialist party, the party of the working class, must have a clear conception of its *economic policy*. That economic policy is the policy of *socialisation*.’<sup>671</sup> The latter meant, in Zyromski’s thoroughly Marxist understanding, the seizure of the economic surplus and its use in the interest of the collectivity. By bridging the gap between utopia and reality – moving from ‘the phase of *critical theory* to that of *constructive practice*’ – Zyromski presented the Plan as an essentially revolutionary tool which would ensure a relatively smooth transition from capitalism to

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<sup>667</sup> *Le Combat Marxiste*, ‘Notre But’, *Le Combat marxiste*, 1, 1933, 1. Many prominent planists – including Georges Albertini, René Belin, Pierre Brossolette, Jacques Itard, Jules and François Moch, and André Philip – were subscribers of *Le Combat marxiste*, according to Marcelle Pommera’s notebook: see FLL/IHS/4.

<sup>668</sup> ‘Belgique: un plan de socialisation du Parti Ouvrier Belge’, *Le Combat marxiste*, 3, 1933, 16-17. The pamphlets were L. Laurat, *Economie planée contre économie enchaînée*, and L. Laurat, *Le socialisme à l’ordre du jour: problèmes et tâches du marxisme contemporain*, Paris, Librairie Populaire, 1933.

<sup>669</sup> See letter from L. Laurat to J. Zyromski, 12.4.1934, FJZ/CHS/J1-Z-3EA4. On *Bataille Socialiste*, see E. Nadaud, ‘Les socialistes de la S.F.I.O. et l’idée de plan dans les années 1930: le cas de Jean Zyromski et de la tendance “Bataille socialiste”’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 1, 1996, 5-34.

<sup>670</sup> J. Zyromski, ‘De la brochure de Laurat au programme d’action’, *La Bataille socialiste*, 73, 15.11.1933, 2.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibidem*.

socialism.<sup>672</sup> By winning Zyromski's approval, Laurat – and planism indirectly – managed to gain credit from a well-established faction already active within the SFIO. Suddenly, a broad coalition for a French Plan took form.

It is perhaps no accident that, after that endorsement, SFIO planists seemed increasingly willing to set their differences aside. The evolving attitude towards the intellectual circle *Révolution Constructive*, one of the first to express admiration for de Man, are revealing in that regard. In 1932-33, the book after which the group was named, authored by the three of the founders – Pierre Boivin, Georges Lefranc, and Maurice Deixonne – had raised eyebrows within the SFIO Left for suggesting that a socialist system might be built without a genuine revolutionary break.<sup>673</sup> However, once the neo-socialists had been expelled and de Man himself authorised *Révolution Constructive* to publish his preliminary articles about the Labour Plan<sup>674</sup>, reservations dropped away and the group started receiving favourable coverage not only from *Bataille Socialiste* but also from *Le Combat Marxiste* and *L'Étudiant Socialiste*, a monthly aimed at socialist students from France, Belgium, and Switzerland.<sup>675</sup> Intellectual affinity soon turned into a more tangible convergence. In January 1934, Wolf Epstein and Marcelle Pommera for *Combat Marxiste*, Georges Lefranc and Jean Itard for *Révolution Constructive* joined

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<sup>672</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>673</sup> In late summer 1932, Raymonde Vaysset warned the authors of *Révolution Constructive* that 'a series of partial transformations' of the state 'would never be able to achieve the radical transformation which is necessary', not even under the pressure of the working class. [R. Vaysset, 'Révolution Constructive', *La Bataille socialiste*, 69, 8.9.1932, 11] Marcelle Pommera was even more trenchant: 'This "constructive revolution" does not revolutionise very much and does not construct anything.' [M. Pommera, 'Revue des Livres', *La Critique sociale*, 8, 1933, 85].

<sup>674</sup> See letter from H. de Man to G. Lefranc, 10.11.1933, ABSO/AMSAB/82. The correspondence between Lefranc and de Man in fall 1933 is extremely rich.

<sup>675</sup> See J. R. [J. Roberts], 'Dans le parti: Une déclaration de la «Révolution Constructive»', *Le Combat marxiste*, 3, 1933, 8-9; J. Rens 'Le Plan du Travail', *L'étudiant socialiste*, 5, 1934, 3-6; A. Delmarche and G. Hercot, 'Adhésion totale au Plan du Travail', *L'étudiant socialiste*, 9-10, 1934, 10-11. De Man's articles, originally published in *Le Peuple*, appeared as H. de Man, *Pour un plan d'action*, Asnières, Cahiers de Révolution Constructive 1934, with an introduction signed 'Le Groupe de Révolution Constructive', claiming that 'the French socialist thought, so proud of its vitality, seems to have been largely surpassed by our neighbours in the United Kingdom, Poland, and Belgium.' [Ibidem, 1]

forces with elements of *Bataille Socialiste* to present a single motion, “Pour l’offensive socialiste”, before the Seine Congress.<sup>676</sup> Under the same title, Itard and Lefranc made their case for a French Plan in *Le Populaire*, where Zyromski – who co-edited the newspaper – managed to secure them some editorial space.<sup>677</sup> Intellectual and political mobilisation often overlapped: André Philip, by then a socialist deputy as well as an ardent planist, contributed to an issue of *Esprit*, a non-conformist review, which appeared on February 1<sup>st</sup>, largely devoted to the Belgian Plan. SFIO planists were clearly trying to reach out to a more diversified audience, young Catholics included.<sup>678</sup>

SFIO planists secured other substantial victories outside Paris. Jules Moch, then a deputy from the Drôme, hammered out a declaration supporting a French Plan that won the unanimous approval of his federation.<sup>679</sup> On February 4<sup>th</sup>, in Aube, the ‘programme of action’ sketched out by Lefranc, Itard, and Laurat received an equally unanimous support while planist resolutions were passed with strong majorities in Hérault and Morbihan.<sup>680</sup> Somewhat awkwardly, whilst Déat was exploiting the Labour Plan to substantiate the neo-socialists’ defense of participation, Laurat and Zyromski

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<sup>676</sup> Reproduced in ‘Une politique nouvelle et réaliste’, *Le Combat marxiste*, 5, 1934, 4-6. Laurat too endorsed the motion: see ‘Le Congrès extraordinaire de la fédération socialiste de la Seine s’est tenu hier, salle des Fêtes de la mairie du Pré-Saint Gervais’, *Le Populaire*, 29.1.1934. On that month, Lefranc wrote an extensive appreciation of the Belgian Labour Plan, calling de Man’s ideas ‘the indispensable starting point for a new impetus’: see G. Lefranc, ‘Le plan d’action d’Henri de Man’, *L’homme réel*, 1, 1934, 20.

<sup>677</sup> See J. Itard and G. Lefranc, ‘Pour l’offensive socialiste’, *Le Populaire*, 31.1.1934. See also J. Itard and G. Lefranc, ‘Pour un plan de construction socialiste’, *Le Populaire*, 17.1.1934. In April, RC released a 40-page book, *Eléments d’un Plan français*, as a contribution for the upcoming SFIO congress which – Itard predicted – ‘will mark an important date for French socialism, as the Christmas congress marked one for the Belgian party.’ [J. Itard, ‘Il y a Plan et Plan’, *Le Populaire*, 18.4.1934]

<sup>678</sup> See A. Philip, ‘Autour du Plan Henri de Man: le socialisme et les classes sociales’, *Esprit*, 17, 1934, 788-804. In the same issue, the co-founder of *Esprit* Jean Lacroix and André Ulman commented extensively on the Plan.

<sup>679</sup> ‘Sur le Plan d’Action du Parti: une seule motion Moch-Cartier’, *La volonté socialiste*, 211, 9.2.1934, unpagéd. Moch’s candid admission that he was unaware of the motion presented before the Seine congress when drawing up his own is revealing about the lack of coordination among planists: see *XXXIème Congrès national tenu à Toulouse les 20, 21, 22 et 23 mai 1934 – compte rendu sténographique*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1934, 184.

<sup>680</sup> ‘Avant le Congrès de Lille: les Congrès fédéraux’, *Le Populaire*, 7.2.1934; ‘Avant le Congrès de Lille: les Congrès fédéraux’, *Le Populaire*, 8.2.1934.

were using it as a buzzword to galvanise young socialists hungry for bold economic ideas and disgruntled with the party leadership.<sup>681</sup>

In the meantime, a third group of planists came to the fore. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1933, the CGT secretary Léon Jouhaux launched an anti-crisis campaign from the Belgian city of Charleroi. The day after he headed a trade union delegation to the French *Présidence du Conseil* asking for a set of short-term measures, including the forty-hour week, new infrastructures, and the nationalisation of all monopolies, including the credit sector. Some of Jouhaux's requests were hardly a novelty, having been part of the CGT platform since 1931.<sup>682</sup> On that very day, however, his vice-secretary René Belin submitted a draft for a French Plan moulded on the Belgian one to CGT's federations and department branches, and visited the *Maison du Peuple* in Brussels. Jouhaux was soon to appoint a brain trust in order to further discuss and expand Belin's document.<sup>683</sup> Jouhaux was a lifelong reformist and his sudden conversion to planism may have been somewhat self-interested. On the other hand, some of his collaborators – such as Belin and Robert Lacoste, editor-in-chief of *La Tribune des Fonctionnaires* – were true believers, and their efforts to assimilate de Man's thinking stemmed from a genuine fascination for the Belgian experience.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> See J. Zyromski, 'Amical reproche à Vincent Auriol', *Le Populaire*, 27.12.1933; J. Zyromski, 'Pour une politique de socialisation', *Le Populaire*, 4.1.1934; J. Zyromski, 'Crise – Pouvoir – Socialisation', *Le Populaire*, 1.2.1934.

<sup>682</sup> See 'Le Congrès confédéral – Paris, 15 au 18 septembre', *La voix du peuple*, 133, 1931, esp. 609-611.

<sup>683</sup> See R. Belin, *Du secrétariat de la C.G.T. au Gouvernement de Vichy (Mémoires 1933-1942)*, Paris, Albatros 1978, 46-48. See also 'L'action de la C.G.T. pour conjurer la crise économique', *La voix du peuple*, 160, 1934, 10; 'La Confédération Générale du Travail demande l'application de mesures immédiates contre la crise économique', *Le Populaire*, 16.1.1934. The January issue of *La voix du peuple* featured both the *Plan du Travail* (pp. 10-13) and Belin's draft (pp. 38-40).

<sup>684</sup> See R. Lacoste, 'A Bruxelles, avec Henri de Man', *La tribune des fonctionnaires et des rétraiés*, 27, 583, 13.1.1934, 1, 4. Lacoste developed an early interest in the notion of *économie dirigée* and was probably the first periodical to introduce the Labour Plan to the French public, even before the final version was released. [see 'Le Plan Henri de Man pour lutter contre la crise', *La tribune des fonctionnaires et des retraits*, 577, 2.12.1933, 3] In February 1934, Lacoste's views on the nationalisation of the banking system were featured alongside those of de Man, G.D.H. Cole, and Christian Cornelissen as a French expression of a wider planist orientation. [see 'Nationalisations des



By late January, therefore, three different planist groups existed in France. All of them opposed the deflationary policies of the incumbent government, led by the Radical Camille Chautemps. All aimed at establishing an *économie dirigée* to curb unemployment and return to economic growth. All agreed about the necessity of nationalising monopolies – although the neo-socialists less enthusiastically than the others –. Their strategies, however, differed greatly. The neo-socialists envisaged a piecemeal transition towards economic planning in agreement with the Radicals (or at least with their progressive wing). The SFIO planists wished to take control of their party and run on a planist platform without seeking alliances, or participating in Radical-led cabinets. The CGT planists hoped to get a Labour Plan approved by mobilising workers and pressuring the government. This prevented the formation of a single planist front but, for the same reason, it allowed planism to resonate more widely. Blum's fear that planism could shake the ideological foundations of the SFIO was not irrational. The events of February 1934, however, reshaped the political scene to such an extent that planists' hopes, and Blum's apprehensions, were dashed in a few months.

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On February 6<sup>th</sup>, several far-right groups rallied against the new Daladier government for its decision to dismiss the police prefect Jean Chiappe. The Paris demonstrations degenerated into riots that caused seventeen casualties. Within the Left, the unrest was seen as a conscious attempt to overthrow the Constitution –possibly the first salvo of an upcoming coup d'état. As Blum put it in a dramatic address to the Chamber, 'the parties of reaction, defeated two years ago, and those who have sought

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banques et du crédit', *L'homme réel*, 2, 1934, 67-77] In autumn 1934, Lacoste attended the Pontigny conference, together with Belin. On the Pontigny conference, see chapter V of this dissertation.

their revenge alternatively through financial or moral panic, are trying today a coup de force.’<sup>685</sup>

The first immediate consequence of February 6<sup>th</sup> was the decision to postpone the SFIO congress which had been scheduled to be held less than a week later, freezing the debate at a time when planist ideas were gaining momentum.<sup>686</sup> The second was an almost instinctive search for unity among the forces that saw *la République* under threat, including the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF), which had previously ruled out any convergence with the SFIO. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, during a strike called by the CGT, thousands of Socialists and Communists marched together under the same banner. *L’Humanité* celebrated the ‘magnificent proletarian response to fascism’, and its editor, Marcel Cachin, caught the new mood by claiming that ‘the struggle between fascism and the working class and peasantry [...] *dominates everything!*’<sup>687</sup> The fact that, the same week, a civil war broke out in Vienna, allowing Chancellor Dollfuss to crush the Austrian social democrats, fuelled a sense of encirclement by all the self-proclaimed anti-fascist parties.<sup>688</sup>

Neither neo-socialists nor SFIO planists were taken aback by the prospect of a right-wing putsch. If anything, they agreed that the chronic inability of centre-right

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<sup>685</sup> ‘La réaction fasciste ne passera pas!’, *Le Populaire*, 7.2.1934. See also J. Moch, *Rencontres*, 91-92. For a chronicle of February 6<sup>th</sup>, see P. Pellissier, *6 février: la République en flamme*, Paris, Perrin 2000.

<sup>686</sup> The decision was taken on February 7<sup>th</sup>. At the Toulouse Congress, Blum contended that the postponement prevented an even deeper ‘trouble of ideas’ that might have endangered party unity: see ‘Les événements du 6 février’, *XXXI Congrès national*, 32-33, 350. In March, the SFIO National Council decided to set up a commission to prepare ‘a plan of propaganda and mass-gathering (*un plan de propaganda et de rassemblement des masses*)’ as well as ‘a programme for immediate action by the party in power’, but the task was not accomplished. [‘Le Congrès national fixé au 20-25 mai se tiendra à Toulouse’, *Le Populaire*, 12.3.1934]

<sup>687</sup> ‘Magnifique riposte prolétarienne au fascisme’ and ‘Une grève générale sans précédents’, *L’Humanité*, 13.2.1934.

<sup>688</sup> See e.g. J.-B. Séverac, ‘Après la dernière victoire du fascisme’, *La Bataille socialiste*, 76, 15.2.1934, 2; B. Souvarine, ‘Les journées de février’, *La Critique sociale*, 11, 1934, 201-205. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, a massive rally was organised to express solidarity to Austrian workers. [see ‘Paris ouvrière vengera la Commune de Vienne’, *Le Populaire*, 17.2.1934 as well as the special issue of ‘Révolution et contre-révolution en Autriche’, *La Vie du Parti*, 52, 16.3.1934]

cabinets to address the economic crisis was only making such prospect more likely. ‘We shall tirelessly repeat that the hour has come for a true revolution, in conformity with our principles as much as to the demands of the historical moment’, Déat boasted.<sup>689</sup> His message, however, was not one of uncritical support for the parliamentary system. No longer burdened by their association with the SFIO, neo-socialists – Déat speculated – could succeed in channelling ‘contradictory and tumultuous currents, which have not yet found their direction, to the benefit of the socialist and democratic revolution.’<sup>690</sup> Shortly after, this conviction drove him and other neo-socialists to cross paths with fringes which rejected liberal economics and leaned towards a variety of corporatist arrangements. In that spirit, Déat, Louis Vallon, Roditi and Marion all backed the *Plan du 9 Juillet*, released in 1934. This plan aimed at rallying young people all across the political spectrum around a set of constitutional reforms to strengthen the executive and introduce economic planning. Signatories included notable intellectuals – de Jouvenel, Jules Romains, Alfred-Fabre Luce –; technocrats – Jacques Branger, Jacques Coutrot, Pierre Laroque – as well as individual members of the *Croix du Feu* and the *Jeunesses Patriotes*.<sup>691</sup> In January 1935, Montagnon echoed them calling for ‘a strong state’ (*un État fort*) and ‘a national mystique’ by which the neo-socialists could get a foothold

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<sup>689</sup> M. Déat, ‘Sanglante confirmation’, *La vie socialiste*, 362, 10.2.1934, 2. The piece was allegedly written on February 6<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>690</sup> M. Déat, ‘Fin des vieux partis’, *Notre temps*, 14.2.1934. See also ‘Un manifeste du Parti Socialiste de France’, *La vie socialiste*, 363, 17.2.1934, 3-4.

<sup>691</sup> See VV.AA., *Plan du 9 Juillet: Réforme de la France proposée par le groupe du 9 Juillet*, Paris, Gallimard 1934. A young Radical deputy from Eure, Pierre Mendès-France, endorsed the Plan in September [cited in L. Vallon, ‘I. Le Plan du 9 Juillet’, *L’homme nouveau*, 9, 1.10.1935, unpagued]. Déat hoped the *Plan du 9 Juillet* would also win the approval of those ‘socialists in the SFIO who have not been carried away by the Bolshevik vertigo and claim at the same time to be faithful to Jaurès and won over by the “planism” of their Belgian comrades.’ [M. Déat, ‘Tâtonnements’, *Paris-Demain*, 57, 11.8.1934, 2]. Coutrot, an engineer from the circle *X-Crise*, met de Man in Pontigny and regarded him as a key source of inspiration: see letter from Coutrot to unknown member of *X-Crise*, 25.2.1934, FJC/AN/468/AP/7; copies of internal documents of the BES, FJC/AN/AP468/AP/11; the original manuscript of Coutrot’s book *Quoi vivre*, in which de Man is cited, FJC/AN/AP468/12.

among young voters.<sup>692</sup> Resentment against the establishment was one feeling that neo-socialists were eager to capitalise on, even at the price of mingling with the far Right.<sup>693</sup>

Déat's project of a planist *rassemblement*, however, collided with the reality of his beleaguered party. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, the neo-socialist Adrien Marquet agreed to serve as Minister of Labour in a cabinet of national unity (in fact, a centre-right one) headed by Gaston Doumergue, alongside unabashed conservatives such as Tardieu, Pierre-Étienne Flandin, and Louis Marin. Evidence suggests that, in doing so, Marquet consciously ignored the most recent PSdF resolution, a carefully drafted statement contemplating parliamentary support, not participation, to 'a government of public safety and détente.'<sup>694</sup> His impulsiveness and opportunism put neo-socialists under severe strain for they could neither capitulate nor alienate the powerful Gironde federation, on which Marquet held a firm grip.<sup>695</sup> To be sure, his conduct infuriated Renaudel.<sup>696</sup> After three stormy meetings, facing the danger of losing the party's only stronghold, the PSdF executive bureau begrudgingly authorised Marquet to serve on a

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<sup>692</sup> B. Montagnon, *Essai de synthèse néo-socialiste*, Paris, Parti Socialiste de France 1935, 13-14. Until then, the reform of the State had been a favourite theme of the Right, including Tardieu: see A. Tardieu, *L'heure de la décision*, Paris, Flammarion 1934. For an overview, see N. Roussellier, 'La contestation du modèle républicain dans les années 30: la réforme de l'Etat', *Le modèle républicain*, S. Bernstein and O. Rudelle (eds.), Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1992, 319-335.

<sup>693</sup> See e.g. M. Déat, *Jeunesses d'Europe*, Paris, SEI, n.d., esp. 11-14. In this tract, probably published in 1935, Déat praised the anti-parliamentary, and even anti-democratic, feelings of the French youth, both from the Right and the Left. The text is much more extreme than anything else written by Déat in the same period and suggests an attempt to reach out to extra-parliamentary groups.

<sup>694</sup> 'Au groupe néo-socialiste', *Le Temps*, 9.2.1934. To make matters worse, in a declaration issued on February 10<sup>th</sup>, Marquet framed his appointment as a bilateral bargain between him and Doumergue. [see 'Une déclaration de M. Marquet', *Le Temps*, 11.2.1934] For a detailed account, see E. Lafont, 'Le rapport du groupe parlementaire', *La vie socialiste*, 376, 19.5.1934, 6-8.

<sup>695</sup> Six out of seven SFIO deputies from Gironde joined the PSdF in 1933, half of the militants followed them, and the first local congress in Bordeaux, on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1934, hosted 600 delegates and 8,000 attendees. [see P. Brana and J. Dusseau, *Adrien Marquet maire de Bordeaux: du socialisme à la collaboration*, Anglet, Atlantica 2001, 123; P. Rambault, 'Le Congrès fédéral constitutive de la Fédération de la Gironde du Parti Socialiste de France', *La vie socialiste*, 366, 27.1.1934, 13-14]

<sup>696</sup> See 'Pierre Renaudel condamne l'Union Nationale et l'entrée de Marquet dans le ministère Doumergue', *Le Populaire*, 11.2.1934; P. Renaudel, 'Pour la République, contre la dictature et le fascisme', *La vie socialiste*, 363, 17.2.1934, 1-2.

personal basis.<sup>697</sup> In the aftermath, two deputies resigned in protest and neo-socialists were accused by SFIO backbenchers of siding with the murderers of Jaurès.<sup>698</sup> Déat needed ‘much flexibility, mental agility, and almost the gift of ubiquity’ to sell his party’s official line to the public.<sup>699</sup>

For his part, soon after his appointment Marquet came up with a plan of public works, approved by the government in March, which seemed to vindicate the decision to give credit to Doumergue.<sup>700</sup> In fact, the Marquet Plan – which aimed at lending social security savings to promote local infrastructure projects – could hardly match the appeal of the Belgian Labour Plan or other schemes for planned economy due to its narrow objectives and unemotional language. Moreover, as Déat pointed out, it was underfunded and restrained by the deflationary budget crafted by the Ministry of the Economy.<sup>701</sup> Instead of ushering a French New Deal, it replicated the “grands travaux” that fiscally conservative Prime Ministers had sponsored in the past. Because of that, the Plan Marquet backfired: Blum dismissed it as a bluff, and even the Radicals condemned it during their October congress.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> ‘Les néo-socialistes divisés’, *L’homme libre*, 10.2.1934; ‘Chez les néo-socialistes’, *Le Temps*, 16.2.1934.

<sup>698</sup> ‘Auguste Reynaud, député du Var, démissionne du parti «néo». La fédération varoise s’était d’ailleurs opposée au maintien de Marquet dans le cabinet Doumergue’, *Le Populaire*, 14.2.1934; ‘Maxence Roldes abandonne les «néo-socialistes»’, *Le Populaire*, 15.2.1934; ‘La présentation du cabinet Doumergue’, *La vie socialiste*, 363, 17.2.1934, 9-10.

<sup>699</sup> M. Déat, *Mémoires politiques*, Denoël 1989, 301. Neo-socialist efforts to keep distance from the majority were often convoluted and inconsequential. For instance, in February 1934, the neo-socialist parliamentary group voted in the favour of the Doumergue budget but against the full powers to balance it. [see ‘Vote du budget 1934 – La Chambre autorise la procédure des décrets lois’, *Le Temps*, 24.2.1934]

<sup>700</sup> See e.g. R. Bonin, ‘Pour la liquidation du chômage et de la crise économique’, *La vie socialiste*, 369, 31.3.1934, 3.

<sup>701</sup> In May 1934, Déat could still claim ‘an exact parallelism’ existed between the neo-socialist programme and the Belgian Labour Plan as the Marquet Plan had already proved ‘contradictory’ with the government’s restrictive fiscal policy: see M. Déat, *Problèmes d’hier et de demain*, Paris, Parti Socialiste de France 1934, 15, 26.

<sup>702</sup> L. Blum, ‘Le Plan démarqué’, *Le Populaire*, 17.5.1934; L. Blum, ‘Naïveté o bluff?’, *Le Populaire*, 22.5.1934; M. Bidoux, ‘Le Congrès de Nantes a accordé aux ministres radicaux un mandat large’, *Le Populaire*, 28.10.1934; M. Bidoux, ‘Le Congrès radical a terminé ses travaux hier’, *Le Populaire*, 29.10.1934.

Nevertheless, despite new spending cuts, Marquet refused to resign.<sup>703</sup> In early June 1934 an increasingly frustrated Déat tried to cause the downfall of Doumergue so to put Marquet out of office but his machination failed miserably.<sup>704</sup> In July, a number of PSdF members – including heavyweights as Vallon and Paul Marion – denounced the party's association with an unpopular government as a serious liability.<sup>705</sup> A resentful Marquet got back by threatening to defect.<sup>706</sup> After months of skirmishes and tensions, on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Marquet cut the Gordian knot by resigning from the PSdF. He also set up his own *Parti néo-socialiste de France*, active only at local level, which allowed him to get re-elected mayor of Bordeaux in 1935, this time within a centre-right coalition.<sup>707</sup> By then, however, neo-socialists were too discredited and splintered to attract new followers. Even Déat seemed completely off-track: he backed the CGT Plan – to be discussed later in this chapter – but also developed a revised version of it, named *Plan Français*, which included some protectionist measures and control over foreign trade through a small think tank of his own making, the *Comité du Plan*. Unsurprisingly, the *Plan Français* gained no traction.<sup>708</sup> Plagued by financial troubles

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<sup>703</sup> See 'La rentrée politique de Renaudel: son discours de la Seine', *La vie socialiste*, 375, 12.5.1934, 17; 'Le Congrès de la fédération de la région parisienne', *La vie socialiste*, 376, 19.5.1934, 11-14 during which Marquet was accused of 'capitulation'; 'Le Congrès fédéral du Var', *La vie socialiste*, 376, 19.5.1934, 14-15. Déat, despite rejecting the idea of 'the departure for the departure' acknowledged that Marquet's position was delicate and hardly tenable in the long run. [M. Déat, 'Axis de marche', *La vie socialiste*, 375, 12.5.1934, 3] See also M. Déat, 'Rapport moral', *La vie socialiste*, 374, 5.5.1934, 1-10.

<sup>704</sup> Déat unsuccessfully tried to persuade the *Confédération nationale des anciens combattants et victimes de guerre* to force their president to resign as Minister of Pensions hence provoking a government crisis [see G. Suarez, 'Marcel Déat révolutionnaire de juillet ou vers un ministère Paul Boncour', *Le Gringoire*, 291, 1.6.1934, 7; R. Parant, 'Grandeur et décadence', *L'Express du Midi*, 11.7.1934]. See also M. Déat, *Mémoires*, 303-304.

<sup>705</sup> R. Bobin, 'Le Conseil central du Parti Socialiste de France – 8 Juillet 1934', *La vie socialiste*, 384, 14.7.1934, 7-12.

<sup>706</sup> See 'Le Congrès du Parti Socialiste de France: M. Marquet ne veut pas être un boulet pour le parti. Il le quitterait plutôt', *La Petite Gironde*, 9.7.1934. Tellingly, this was omitted from Bobin's official account of the meeting.

<sup>707</sup> See 'Aux urnes pour la démocratie et le travail! Votez pour la liste Adrien Marquet', *Le cri populaire*, 28.4.1935; J. Cavignac, 'Les néo-socialistes dans les élections locales (1934-1939)', VV.AA., *Les néo-socialistes girondins*, Bordeaux, Institut aquitaine de sciences sociales 1988, 191-230.

<sup>708</sup> See M. Déat, 'Notre adhésion au Plan de la C.G.T.', *Paris-Demain*, 81, 2.2.1935, 1-2; M. Déat, 'Préface', *Comité du Plan, Le Plan français: doctrine et plan d'action*, Paris, Fasquelle 1935, 9-23. The

and a falling membership, the PSdF finally dissolved into the *Union Socialiste Républicaine* (USR), which assembled minor forces gravitating towards the Radicals.<sup>709</sup> Neosocialism ended not with a bang but with a whimper: in the 1936 legislative elections, despite running under the Popular Front banner, Déat was defeated alongside many former PSdF affiliates, and the entire USR won merely 29 seats.<sup>710</sup> The gulf between rhetoric and reality, for a party attacking the status quo while staying in power, had proven too wide to bridge.<sup>711</sup>

February 6<sup>th</sup> was equally fatal to SFIO planists who suffered a crushing setback in Toulouse, where socialists gathered in May 1934. The party establishment strongly objected to the key arguments in favour of a French Labour Plan, questioning its feasibility and minimising its merits. Paul Faure, the general secretary, suggested that, ‘before any plan’, socialists had to focus on ‘the seizure of power’, without which planning would be pointless.<sup>712</sup> Similarly, Jean-Baptiste Severac, the party ideologue, warned against any detailed blueprint for action that might stifle the creativity of the

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*Comité* rallied minor socialist parties, a few independent radicals, and various associations of ex-combattants: see ‘Contre la misère, la faillite et le chômage – Comité du Plan’, *La vie socialiste*, 409, 15.1.1935, 3-4; ‘Présentation du Plan’, *Le Front: socialiste, républicain, français*, 1, 4, 30.11.1935, 4; M. Déat, ‘Vers l’expérience française’, *Le Front: socialiste, républicain, français*, 1, 8, 28.12.1935, 1-2.

<sup>709</sup> See ‘Au Congrès du Parti Socialiste de France’, *Le Front: socialiste, républicain, français*, 1, 2, 16.11.1935, 1, 4. The architect of the operation was Joseph Paul-Boncour, a moderate center-left deputy and former Prime minister who had been deeply suspicious of the neo-socialists’ lurching towards extra-parliamentary forces: see J. Paul-Boncour, *Entre deux guerres: souvenirs sur la IIIe République. Vol. II: Les lendemains de la victoire, 1919-1934*, Paris, Plon 1945, 322-323.

<sup>710</sup> Bertrand de Jouvenel, who campaigned as a self-appointed neo-socialist, was among those who unsuccessfully ran for parliament: see B. de Jouvenel, ‘Pourquoi j’ai été battu’, *Vu*, 16.5.1936, 44-46.

<sup>711</sup> The contradiction was evident from the very beginning of the neo-socialist insurgence. As a perceptive observer, Angelo Tasca, noted during the Paris Congress of 1933, ‘participation is a defensive and conservative reflex [...]. Participating to keep the majority of May 8 and 15, 1932, and waging popular masses to socialism, even a national one, here are two political operations that seem irreconcilable to me.’ [A. Rossi, ‘La scission socialiste au Congrès du Paris’, *Monde: hebdomadaire internationale*, 268, 22.7.1933, 4] Anti-parliamentary elements within the PSdF were the most disgruntled by the new alliance: ‘The Socialist Party of France’, Roditi lamented, has increasingly moved away from its original socialism and “fascism”, it has gradually become one of those independent socialist parties which it is now merging with.’ [G. Roditi, ‘Mort ou naissance du néo-socialisme?’, *L’homme nouveau*, special issue, 1.9.1935, unpagged] On similar grounds, Marion and de Jouvenel later switched to Jacques Doriot’s *Parti Populaire Français*.

<sup>712</sup> XXXIe Congrès, 22.

socialist movement: 'I believe that the more we leave the terms of the Plan indeterminate, in case the Congress decides to have one, the less likely we are to be deceived.'<sup>713</sup> Jean Lebas, the Mayor of Roubaix and leader of the North Federation, even challenged the assumption that planism had anything original to offer, asking 'Comrades, what are you proposing to do, in sum? To put it simply: to continue the work of the founders of French socialism.'<sup>714</sup> SFIO planists had a hard time in fending off these attacks, perhaps due to poor coordination. At times they pledged their allegiance to the socialist tradition, as Salomon Grumbach did; in other cases, they proudly postured as non-conformists, like Boivin, who simultaneously condemned the 'generalised negativism' of its party and the 'damaging mistake' of uncritically supporting the parliamentary system.<sup>715</sup> As a consequence, their message appeared even more contradictory than usual.

Moreover, planists suffered from Blum's unparalleled ability to damp down internal dissent. Unlike a year before, when he had fiercely confronted the neo-socialists, Blum chose to play the role of the unifier. He therefore credited the young generation for having 'questioned ideas that we had been taken for granted. We must consider that, in doing so, they have rendered a service to us, and we must accept it for what it is. It is our duty to welcome their criticism, and also to show there is a living link (*lien vivant*) between the generations.'<sup>716</sup> Then he quickly moved on to dismiss the clash between planists and anti-planists as a fight originated by 'practical difficulties'

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid., 176. Séverac's most comprehensive critique of planism was published in *Révolte*: see J.-B. Séverac, 'A propos de "Plans"', *Révolte*, 21, 1934, 5-12.

<sup>714</sup> XXXIe Congrès, 226.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid., 161-162, 253-254. The speech was later included in P. Boivin, *Choix d'écrits: I. Ecrits philosophiques; II. Ecrits politiques*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1938, 227-234, under the title 'Le dilemme: socialisme ou fascisme'.

<sup>716</sup> XXXIe Congrès, 350.



rather than ‘theoretical ones.’<sup>717</sup> Planists, Blum argued, had come to acknowledge that ‘plan must be amendable and revocable, and it is necessary to lay down its guidelines, not its details.’<sup>718</sup> This was an overstatement – only Moch had outlined an instrumental conception of the plan, presenting it as a mere device to ensure the consistency of economic policy.<sup>719</sup> For his part, Blum praised the plan as a propaganda tool but, in an effort to identify the ‘key ideas’ of the socialist movement, he also resisted the claim that the plan, and the plan alone, could lead to victory: ‘It is not a plan, in my view, that the public needs most [...]. What the public wants is the assertion that we will keep our commitments, that there will be no resolution from which we will retreat, no sacrifice on which we will back down, in order to keep the engagement we have taken.’<sup>720</sup> In practice, Blum ensured that some measures advocated by SFIO planists (i.e., extensive public works, nationalisation of credit, insurance companies, and monopolies) were incorporated in the party programme without laying down a proper Labour Plan. As stated in the final resolution, the Congress agreed that ‘the party, once in power, being dominated by the feeling of its revolutionary mission, could not be chained or limited by any plan or programme’ and that ‘public opinion begins to feel disoriented by the abundance of plans, too often drafted to facilitate vain adhesions, that are followed by no action.’<sup>721</sup>

The document – drafted by a special commission including also Moch, Boivin, Itard, and André Philip – won the nearly unanimous support of the delegates, showing that, in the aftermath of February 6<sup>th</sup>, the quest for party unity trumped ideological

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<sup>717</sup> Ibid., 351-352.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>719</sup> See *ibid.*, 177-192.

<sup>720</sup> See *ibid.*, 359, 360-361.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid., 397-398.

differentiations.<sup>722</sup> Tellingly, some of the staunchest opponents of planism were already intrigued by the prospect of a united front with the Communists, and even Zyromski, after February 6<sup>th</sup>, regarded working class unity as more desirable, at least in the short run, than a thorough ideological revision.<sup>723</sup> In practice, the capitulation of the SFIO planists meant that planist ideas would continue to be tolerated within the limits set by the party leaders, Blum and Faure.<sup>724</sup>

The CGT was the only major organisation in which planism gained full acceptance. If trade unionists discovered planism, it is equally true that neo-socialists and SFIO planists discovered the virtues of trade unionism.<sup>725</sup> Under many respect, the CGT was better positioned than the PSdF and the SFIO to outline a French Labour Plan. To begin with, the very nature of the CGT allowed planists of all stripes and orientations to work together, regardless of their age, role, or party affiliation. The

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid., 366-367, 402. The search for unity was noticed also by sympathetic foreign observers, such as Arthur Wouters. [see A. Wouters, 'Après le Congrès de Toulouse', *Le Peuple*, 26.5.1934] In the words of Jean Itard: 'At the last congress, as at the one in Avignon last year, a motion has been approved almost unanimously. We have supported it without thinking it is perfect, without even seeing many virtues in it. This is because we have felt at that Congress a desire for unanimity [...] so we were afraid, by countering it, to appear to our comrades as agents of a news split.' [J. Itard, 'L'unanimité de Toulouse', *Le Populaire*, 27.6.1934]. Not all planists were satisfied, as some had warned in advanced about the danger of accepting a vague unanimity motion: see e.g. letter from G. Lefranc to M. Deixonne, 18.5.1934, FMD/OURS/1APO5/1; M. Pommera, 'La plus belle motion du monde...', *Le Combat marxiste*, 9, 1934, 15-17. Zyromski gave a more positive assessment of the Congress, although he admitted that 'a resistance has been opposed to some of our requests.' [J. Zyromski, 'Notre effort au Congrès de Toulouse', *La Bataille socialiste*, 79, 1934, 1-2]

<sup>723</sup> As Séverac wrote in 1933, well before the events of February 6<sup>th</sup>, 'it seems to me that the division between the communists and the socialists will not last for long. The progress of the proletariat's class consciousness will inevitably lead those who follow the communists to abandon a conception of action which [...] goes against progress itself. No obstacle will therefore prevent the unity of the workers, and it will be done.' [J.-B. Séverac, *Le Parti Socialiste: ses principes et ses tâches. Lettres à Brigitte*, Paris, Éditions de la Bataille Socialiste 1933, 96-97] See also J.B. Séverac, *De l'unité d'action à l'unité organique*, Paris, Nouveau Prométhée 1934. On Zyromski's attitudes towards organic unity with the Communists, see: G. Lefranc, 'La tentative de réunification entre le parti socialiste et le parti communiste de 1935 à 1937', *L'information historique*, 1, 1967, 19-27.

<sup>724</sup> As Déat crudely, but not unfairly, summed up: 'The young launched the offensive, not without ardour, not without reputational success, not without jostling a few pots of flowers, not without irreverently pulling some old beards. Obviously, they have been barred and, once again, the "elderly" prevailed. It could not have been otherwise.' [M. Déat, 'La motion de Toulouse', *La vie socialiste*, 378, 2.6.1934, 3]

<sup>725</sup> Some of them, like Laurat, were well aware of the role played by the CS in persuading the POB to accept the Labour Plan. In May 1935, writing for the Belgian public, he claimed the CGT Plan 'is inspired to principles that are identical to those of the Labour Plan.' [L. Laurat, 'La situation en France et le Plan de la CGT', *Le mouvement syndical belge*, 3, 20.3.1935, 54]

*Bureau d'études économiques* that the CGT, following the Belgian example, set up in March 1934 stood out for its pluralism. In addition to the ubiquitous Lefranc and Laurat, the 'brain trust' included academics in their fifties or sixties who had been close to Albert Thomas – Francis Delaisi, François Simiand, Paul Mantoux –, young trade union cadres – Jean Duret, Achille Dauphin-Meunier –, economists – Etienne Antonelli, Robert Marjolin – and engineers from Déat's inner circle – Vallon, Claude Bonnier.<sup>726</sup> Secondly, thanks to its international standing and financial resources, the CGT could facilitate relations with planists based abroad. It is noteworthy that, following the events of February 6<sup>th</sup>, the CGT managed to swiftly change the location of a one-week conference from Geneva to Brussels in order to host de Man as a keynote speaker and allow Buset to lecture French trade unionists on how to prevent the rise of fascism.<sup>727</sup> Finally, the CGT offered educational structures through which planism could be taught and spread. By mid-1934 until the war, the *Institut supérieur ouvrier* (ISO) and the *Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière* (CCEO), both run by Georges Lefranc with the help of a young professor of mechanics, Ludovic Zoretti, became the seedbeds of French planism.<sup>728</sup> Amidst a wide range of courses, Lefranc frequently addressed topics related to planning, such as the Bolshevik revolution or Roosevelt's New Deal; Laurat

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<sup>726</sup>See G. Lefranc, 'Le courant planiste dans le mouvement ouvrier français de 1933 à 1936', *Le mouvement social*, 54, 1966, 80; G. Bernard, D. Tintant and M.-A. Ridauld, *Léon Jouhaux dans le mouvement syndical français*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1979, 97-98. Dauphin-Meunier also served as editor-in-chief of *L'Homme réel*, a planist monthly, under the *nom de plume* of Pierre Ganivet.

<sup>727</sup> See 'Une heure avec Henri de Man au Bureau d'Études Sociales (12 juillet 1934)', VV.AA., *Les problèmes d'ensemble du fascisme: Semaine d'études d'Uccle-Bruxelles (10-15 juillet 1934)*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1939, 22-25.

<sup>728</sup> See VV.AA., *Les principes et la vie du centre confédéral*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1935; E. and G. Lefranc, *La CGT et l'éducation ouvrière en France*, Geneva, Bureau International du Travail 1938. In April 1938, Lefranc invited de Man to speak before a major CGT initiative, a Pontigny one-week seminar on workers' education but de Man's political commitments prevented him from participating. [see letter from G. Lefranc to H. de Man, 1.4.1938, letter from de Man's personal secretary to G. Lefranc, 2.5.1938, AHDM/IISG/227] De Man kept a copy of the proceedings in his papers. [see AHDM/AMSAB/348].

taught classes on contemporary social and economic thought.<sup>729</sup> When the CGT Plan was finally published, in October 1934, the CGT organised a series of fifteen conferences to advertise it and even launched a monthly, *L'Atelier pour le Plan*, that emulated *Plan*, the flagship publication of the Belgian campaign.<sup>730</sup> This was much more than anything the SFIO could, or intended to, offer for a propaganda effort.

But the association with the CGT came at a high price, namely the loss of the properly political dimension of planism.<sup>731</sup> A key promise of the Belgian Labour Plan was indeed that, by winning support from the middle class, the Plan would enable socialists to achieve a parliamentary majority and pass far-reaching measures, including the nationalisation of credit.<sup>732</sup> As de Man reminded his audience at the Sorbonne in December 1934, 'Today it is necessary [...] either to give up making the revolution or to gain power first', meaning that a genuine revolution had to be carried out through the parliament and the state.<sup>733</sup> Yet the CGT was not supposed to control political power: at best, it exerted some degree of influence over those holding it. For this reason, the CGT Plan looked less a consistent, detailed, blueprint for action than a set of distinct and negotiable measures – the creation of an economic council to supersede economic

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<sup>729</sup> See G. Lefranc and R. Lenoir, *La révolution russe*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1935; G. Lefranc, *Roosevelt contre la crise*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1936; L. Laurat, *La crise mondiale*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1935; L. Laurat, *Histoire des doctrines économiques*, Paris, Collège du Travail 1937. In 1936-37, Laurat taught a module at the ISO on 'social and economic aspects of planism': see the notes in FLL/HIS/1.

<sup>730</sup> The CGT plan first appeared on *Le Populaire* and subsequently circulated as a leaflet: see 'La C.G.T. présente un plan de rénovation économique', *Le Populaire*, 29.10.1934; *Le Plan de Rénovation économique et sociale*, Paris, Éditions de la Confédération Générale du Travail 1935. The conferences were held at the IOS on a weekly basis and later published as VV.AA., *Crise et Plan (Quinze conférences et études sur le Plan de la C.G.T.)*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière 1935. The first issue of *L'Atelier pour le Plan* appeared in May 1935.

<sup>731</sup> Some SFIO planists realised this very quickly. 'The economic plan of the CGT lacks a political plan, the absence of which could be interpreted as the acceptance of the present regime.' [H. and R. Modiano, 'Le «plan de rénovation économique»', *La Bataille socialiste*, 82, 1934, 4]; 'The "plan" can be excellent but it lacks consideration for political and social realities. Who will implement it? Under which conditions? One can go through the texts from the first to the last line, and find no semblance of an answer.' [R. Marjolin, 'Pour une conception révolutionnaire du plan', *Révolution constructive*, 4, 1934, 2]

<sup>732</sup> See chapter V of this dissertation.

<sup>733</sup> H. de Man, *Le socialisme*, 15-16.

planning, the nationalisation of credit and heavy industries, the launch of public works, the introduction of collective bargaining and reforms in the agricultural sector, etc. —, which a centre-left government might or might not implement, at its discretion.<sup>734</sup> That was *not* what Belgian planists were advocating in late 1934. The crucial distinction between ‘programme’ and ‘plan’, on which de Man insisted, was lost due to the inherent nature of the CGT, the latter being not a political party but an interest group.

The combined failure of the neo-socialists as well as of the SFIO planists had thus major consequences for the French Left. While the CGT managed to get its plan approved first by the National Confederal Committee, in October 1934, then by the unitary Congress held in March 1936, planists had virtually no say in the most delicate decisions taken by the SFIO in the same period: the creation of the Popular Front, followed by the drafting of its programme.<sup>735</sup> Blum, never convinced of the virtues of planism, preferred securing a broad intra-party alliance based on a minimalist agenda, and even more so after March 1935, when de Man’s decision to join the first Van Zeeland government left him puzzled.<sup>736</sup> Belgian developments pleased what was left of the neo-socialists but stunned many other planists, including Zyromski, to whom

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<sup>734</sup> See *Congrès confédéral de Paris 1935 – Compte rendu sténographique de débats*, Paris, Éditions de la Confédération Générale du Travail 1935, 56-73. Speaking before the CGT congress on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1935, Jouhaux argued that the Plan consisted of a combination of temporary measures against the crisis and structural reforms, and the two were inextricably linked. However, he also claimed that the origins of the CGT’s policy proposals could be traced back to 1919: ‘Maybe the name ‘Plan’ is the last coming; but the ideas contained in the Plan had been issued by the confederal movement long before the Plan was worked out.’ [see *ibid.*, 236] The Plan itself was amended after a public meeting with 19 organisations belonging to the Left, loosely defined: see ‘Une réunion à la C.G.T.’, *Le Populaire*, 6.8.1935.

<sup>735</sup> According to Harmel, the Popular Front ‘interrupted, buried, broken or perverted’ many different groundbreaking initiatives, including the CGT Plan [C. Harmel, ‘Le Front Populaire contre le planisme’, *Les études sociales et syndicales*, 11, 120, 2]. Harmel’s comment is perhaps too harsh but there is no doubt that the Popular Front and the French Plan proved to be mutually exclusive strategies.

<sup>736</sup> Blum observed: ‘It is not the Plan that is in power. It is the Party that participates in it [...]. The experience in which the Belgian Workers’ Party is engaged is therefore much closer to the normal types of ministerial collaboration than to the grandiose operation envisaged by the Christmas Congress.’ [L. Blum, ‘En Belgique’, *Le Populaire*, 27.3.1935]. On the other hand, Blum was by then more open to the idea of a limited set of nationalisations to be included in the SFIO programme. [see L. Blum, ‘Les nationalisations et la crise’, *Le Populaire*, 6.8.1934]

participation was anathema.<sup>737</sup> By then, however, tactical calculations were prevailing over efforts to work out a homogeneous and consistent platform: a vocal anti-planist like Lebas urged the SFIO to back the CGT Plan but only in order to negotiate with the PCF from a position of strength.<sup>738</sup> Congressional pledges were equally ephemeral: a resolution drafted by Auriol, which committed the SFIO to develop its own action programme in accordance with the CGT Plan, presumably passed to placate the trade unions, remained a dead letter.<sup>739</sup> Popular Front politics required flexibility, not a doctrinaire approach.

If antagonism from within the SFIO seriously damaged the planist cause, Communist opposition was the final nail in the coffin for all planists. In line with Varga's condemnation of the Belgian Labour Plan and early attacks from other Communist parties<sup>740</sup>, French Communists denounced 'the disease of the «plan»' and the pernicious influence of its advocates: 'The objective role of the «planners» (*faiseurs du plan*), especially the socialist ones, is to divert workers from the only way of acting that corresponds to their interests – a revolutionary struggle for the overthrowing of the capitalist regime.'<sup>741</sup> In December 1934, the general secretary Maurice Thorez clarified that the PCF would never join an alliance based on a French Labour Plan of any kind: 'The proposals for nationalization and socialization of credit are not peculiar to the

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<sup>737</sup> See M. Déat, 'De Bruxelles à Paris', *La vie socialiste*, 409, 15.1.1935, 1-3; L. Vallon, 'Le Plan du 9 Juillet et l'expérience belge', *L'homme nouveau*, 16, 1.5.1935, unpaged; J. Zyromski, 'De Belgique... en France', *Le Populaire*, 17.4.1935.

<sup>738</sup> See J. Lebas, 'Ou va le Parti Socialiste?', *Le Populaire*, 24.6.1935.

<sup>739</sup> See *Congrès national tenu à Mulhouse le 9, 10, 11 et 12 juin 1935 – compte rendu sténographique*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1936, 569-577.

<sup>740</sup> *Bilan*, a review linked to Italian Communist exiles published in French, was among the first to condemn the Plan as a fascist device: see 'Le Plan de Man', *Bilan*, 4, 1934, 122-132 and 'Le Plan de Man: suite et fin', *Bilan*, 5, 1934, 166-179. On Varga's criticism see, chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>741</sup> L. Constant, 'La Crise du Parti Socialiste – I. A la veille du Congrès de Toulouse', *Cahiers du bolchévisme*, 10, 15.5.1934, 592-593. See also L. Constant, 'Les réformistes et la crise – III. L'économie dirigée et la C.G.T.', *Cahiers du bolchévisme*, 7, 1.4.1934, 412-422, for a critique of the early steps towards the CGT Plan. For *L'Humanité*, both de Man and his French followers could be qualified as social-fascists: see e.g. 'Le plan social-fasciste d'Henri de Man – Tous d'accord!', *L'Humanité*, 8.1.1934.

Socialist Party. They are in the plan of the CGT, as the motion adopted by the Socialist Congress of Toulouse points out. We cannot approve the CGT Plan, which we claim being in contrast with the interest of the workers. We cannot accept the articles of a programme that can be found in the de Man Plan, as well as in the programme of the neo-socialists.<sup>742</sup> The SFIO's reservations and the PCF's opposition, coupled with a climate of opinion dominated by the search for a united front against fascism, resulted in the rejection of planism as a cement for the French Left. Consequently, the programme of the Popular Front turned into 'a rallying point of different political parties whose intentions were sometimes really opposite'<sup>743</sup>. Planists lamented its lack of clear priorities – no structural reforms, in de Man's terminology, were outlined in the text<sup>744</sup> – and when the first Blum government fell in June 1937, some of them mourned that only a French Labour Plan would have been able to prevent disagreements and curb tensions related to economic policy.<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> M. Thorez, 'L'organisation du front populaire du travail, de la paix et de la liberté', *Cahiers du bolchévisme*, 12, 1.1.1935, 28. The speech was given in Paris on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1934.

<sup>743</sup> J.-F. Biard, *Le socialisme devant ses choix: la naissance de l'idée de plan*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne 1985, 265. For a detailed account of the drafting of the programme, see J. Jackson, *The Politics*, 112-133, J. Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-38*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1988, 159-167.

<sup>744</sup> See 'Les revendications du Rassemblement Populaire', *La voix du peuple*, 183, 1936, 6, quoting an editorial by Belin; G. Lefranc, 'Le Plan de la C.G.T. et le programme de revendications du Rassemblement Populaire', *L'Atelier pour le Plan*, 9, 15.1.1936, 141-144; G. Vaillant, 'Le programme du Front Populaire et le Plan de la CGT', *Le Front: socialiste, républicain, français*, 2, 11, 18.1.1936, 2; L. Vallon, 'Le programme du Front Populaire', *L'homme nouveau*, 25, 1.3.1936 (unpaged). See also the unpublished manuscript by René Belin, 'L'insuffisance du programme du Front Populaire', FRB/IHS/2. In June 1936 Vallon published a book which may be regarded a last-ditch effort to convert the Popular Front to economic planning: see L. Vallon, *Socialisme expérimental*, Paris, Centre d'Études Polytechniques 1936.

<sup>745</sup> See e.g. M. Déat, *Le Front Populaire au tournant*, Paris, Éditions du Journal «La Concorde» 1937, esp. 12-16, 36-37, 45-47. Already in March 1936, Lacoste had pointed to 'the fragility' of coalition programmes, urging socialists to pass the CGT Plan as soon as possible. [*Congrès confédéral d'unité à Toulouse du 2 au 5 mars 1936 – Compte rendu sténographique des débats*, Paris, Éditions de la Confédération Générale du Travail 1936, 133] Later on, Lefranc argued the Achilles' heel of the Popular Front's was 'an excess of confidence in capitalism.' [G. Lefranc, *Histoire du Front Populaire (1934-1938)*, Paris, Payot 1965, 427]

There is no doubt that the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan sparked, between 1933 and 1936, a spirited debate within the French Left. It is equally clear that the endeavours of neo-socialists, SFIO planists, and CGT planists ended all in failure. To an extent, each group did not succeed for quite specific reasons. Lack of party discipline, opportunism, and ideological fluctuations crippled the PSdF from the outset. Like de Man, Déat was an inspiring young leader with intellectual credentials, even if *Perspectives socialistes* was a pale shadow of *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, both in terms of quality and impact. In retrospect, his resolve to establish a centre-left majority after the 1932 election seems not unreasonable yet he was probably wrong in thinking that economic planning would be an easy pill to swallow by most Radicals.<sup>746</sup> On the other hand, his disastrous handling of the Marquet affair and his clumsy efforts to court the far Right speak volumes about his limitations as a leader. Furthermore, the fact that the PSdF never managed to evolve into a credible, mass-based party suggests that planism could have hardly thrived if propagated only by minor, centrist parliamentary formations.

Assessing the record of SFIO planists is a more difficult task. One of them, Georges Lefranc – who turned into a highly respected historian of the French labour movement – maintained that, without the Paris riots of February 6<sup>th</sup>, SFIO planists would have gained the upper hand in the 1934 Lille Congress.<sup>747</sup> He also held that,

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<sup>746</sup> As understood by G. Pirou, *La crise du capitalisme*, Paris, Sirey 1936, esp. 121-124. The Radical leader Édouard Herriot had conservative instincts on economic policy and successfully fended off the attacks of the Young Turks aimed at renewing the party: see S. Berstein, *Histoire du Parti Radical. Vol. II: Crise du radicalisme, 1926-1939*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques 1982, 122-124, 184-188. On the ideological incongruities of the Radicals, see J. Kayser, 'Le radicalisme et les radicaux', *Tendances politiques dans la vie française depuis 1789*, G. Michaud (ed.), Paris, Hachette 1960, 65-88.

<sup>747</sup> See G. Lefranc, 'Histoire d'un groupe du Parti Socialiste SFIO: Révolution Constructive (1930-1938)', *Essais sur les problèmes socialistes et syndicaux*, Paris, Payot 1970, 185-186. According to another planist, George Soulès, the mobilisation of late 1933-early 1934 accounted a real 'revolutionary



without the vigorous campaign waged by *Révolution Constructive*, many more militants attracted by planism would have defected to the PSdF.<sup>748</sup> Lefranc's views on the matter must be taken with a grain of salt. However real and mounting, the intellectual ferment of planist circles did not equate with political strength. SFIO planists were, in most cases, intellectuals with little or no experience of intra-party fights, no territorial constituency, and no recognisable spearhead capable of facing down Blum or Faure – all things that they conceded at the time.<sup>749</sup> Nor there is compelling evidence of the base's alleged willingness to follow the neo-socialists before the SFIO planists made their bid.<sup>750</sup> Surely Blum might have further softened his opposition to a French Labour Plan, had the planist mobilisation continued to grow steadily. But it is hard to imagine the entire socialist apparatus succumbing to a handful of enthusiasts.<sup>751</sup>

The third group, the CGT planists, were perhaps the least unsuccessful but only because they were also the most willing to accommodate their message to the evolving circumstances. It is true that, being used as a propaganda tool after June 1936, the CGT Plan strengthened the hand of Jouhaux when confronting the centre-left in power.<sup>752</sup> Yet some of its measures were used as bargaining chips rather than as precondition for

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opportunity' comparable to the strikes of May-June 1936. [R. Abellio, *Les militants: 1927-1939*, Paris, Gallimard 1975, 228]

<sup>748</sup> See G. Lefranc, 'Une scission malencontreuse: la scission «néo-socialiste» de 1933', *Visages du mouvement ouvrier français: jadis, naguère, aujourd'hui*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1982, 131.

<sup>749</sup> In January 1934, Lefranc and Itard described *Révolution Constructive* as a 'small group [...] that has never wanted to form a wing (*une tendance*).' [J. Itard and G. Lefranc, 'Pour un plan de construction socialiste', *Le Populaire*. 17.1.1934] Itard reiterated the claim at the Toulouse Congress [see XXXI<sup>ème</sup> Congrès National, 215]. Lucien Laurat did not mention at all the role played by *Révolution Constructive* in spreading planism in France: see L. Laurat, 'Mémoires d'un planiste', *Les études*.

<sup>750</sup> On the contrary, *La Bataille socialiste* pointed out – perhaps disingenuously – that younger militants in Paris were galvanized by the break with the reformist wing, having seen the latter as a dead weight. [see E. Farinet, 'Dans la Seine, après le départ des néos', *Bataille socialiste*, 73, 1933, 10]

<sup>751</sup> For a balanced examination of the SFIO offensive, see G. R. Horn, *European Socialists*, 87-88.

<sup>752</sup> See L. Jouhaux, 'Des réformes de structure sont indispensables: Le Front Populaire doit s'en convaincre', *L'Atelier pour le Plan*, 29-30, 1937, 115-117; L. Jouhaux, *Le Plan de rénovation économique et sociale*, Paris, Confédération Générale du Travail 1937; *Actualité du Plan*, Paris, Éditions du Centre Confédéral d'Éducation Ouvrière 1937; L. Jouhaux, *La C.G.T.: ce qu'elle est, ce qu'elle veut*, Paris, Gallimard 1937, esp. 11-19, 169-187.

cooperation: many of the most ambitious prescriptions, such as nationalisations, were to remain unfulfilled.

From a wider perspective, French planism as whole suffered from more general weaknesses, the first of which was its divisive character. In Belgium, de Man's Labour Plan was seen by many, including some of its socialist critics, as instrumental to party unity, and therefore welcomed or at least tolerated.<sup>753</sup> In France, on the other hand, the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan took place when the split between the neo-socialists and the SFIO was well under way. Déat, Renaudel, and others exploited de Man's ideas to attack their former colleagues whereas anti-planists within the SFIO retaliated by hardening their opposition to planism. Because of that, SFIO planists were daunted by the memory of a recent split and faced stronger objections from anti-planists. Secondly, French planism did not find its own de Man: a clearly identifiable leader, a unifying figure having the final say on theoretical as well as strategic disputes. Consequently, each planist group often claimed to be the only one faithful to the spirit underpinning the original Labour Plan, a habit that caused a permanent cacophony within the planist camp.<sup>754</sup> Thirdly, French planism could not benefit from a friendly relationship between the main socialist party and the trade union movement. Unlike the Belgian CS, which was organically linked to the POB, the CGT had often clashed with the SFIO during the previous decades, and had jealously defended its independence.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> See chapter V of this dissertation.

<sup>754</sup> This was especially true for the neo-socialists and the SFIO planists. CGT planists tended to be more ecumenical. See e.g. M. Déat, 'La nouvelle épouvante de Léon Blum', *La vie socialiste*, 12, 360, 27.1.1934, 4-6; M. Déat, 'Le planisme au Parlement', *Le petit provençal*, 31.1.1935; P. Boivin, 'Le malaise du Parti Socialiste' (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1933), *Choix d'écrits*, 221-226; 'Préface par le Groupe du Révolution Constructive', H. de Man, *Le socialisme*, 1-4.

<sup>755</sup> See e.g. S. Sirot, 'SFIO, syndicalisme et luttes ouvrières (1905-1914): des relations problématiques et volontiers distendues', *Cahiers Jaurès*, 1, 2008, 87-96. Jouhaux was keen to stress the CGT's refusal to meddle in party politics: see e.g. L. Jouhaux, *Le syndicalisme: ce qu'il est, ce qu'il doit être*, Paris, Flammarion 1937, 33-35.

This explains why the acceptance of planism by the former did not result in a more favourable attitude by the latter.

The final, but perhaps most important, drawback of French planism was the determination of the incumbent leaders, Léon Blum and Paul Faure, to crush it. Vandervelde too was dubious and, from late 1934, resisted de Man's attempt to steer the POB far away from the orthodoxy. Nevertheless, his initial stance was more cooperative than confrontational: without Vandervelde, de Man would have not obtained the vice-presidency of the party, and the campaign for the Plan would not have been launched.<sup>756</sup> Blum and Faure, on the contrary, refused to commit the SFIO to a Labour Plan; at best, they made minor and sporadic concessions to the SFIO planists and did not hesitate to scrap them after February 1934, giving priority to the building of a Popular Front whose economic programme stood out only for its timidity.

Due to the poor state of his private papers and his often contradictory statements, no conclusive answer can be given to the question as to why Blum – the most intellectually sophisticated of the two – remained convinced for so long that establishing a mixed economy would not be in the best interest of France, and would in fact laid the groundwork for fascism.<sup>757</sup> Of course, thinking about the trajectory of several planists who ended up supporting the Vichy regime, it may be tempting to conclude that he was at least half-right.<sup>758</sup> Yet, even in the case of Déat – perhaps the most willing to connect his break with 'the sclerotic orthodoxy of old socialism' to his

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<sup>756</sup> See chapter V of this dissertation.

<sup>757</sup> Even a sympathetic biographer as Gilbert Ziebura acknowledged that Blum's writings on the subject were a 'dogmatic schematisation, without connection to reality.' [G. Ziebura, *Léon Blum et le Parti Socialiste*, Paris, Colin 1967, 358] According to Biard, Blum made up his mind after his first governmental experience, between 1937 and 1938, but even then he struggled with the distinction between redistributive and structural reforms: see J-F. Biard, *Le socialisme*, 277-288.

<sup>758</sup> The list includes neo-socialists (Déat, Marquet, Montagnon, Marion, Roditi), SFIO planists (Lefranc, Zoretti, Soules, Albertini) and CGT planists (Belin, Delaisi) altogether. Still, it must be noted that several anti-planists – Faure included – did the same.

decision to collaborate with the Germans<sup>759</sup> – the equation between planism and fascism does not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>760</sup> To begin with, a significant cohort of admirers of the Belgian Labour Plan – Philip, Moch, Lacoste, Vallon, Ramadier, Marjolin, Laroque, Pierre Drefyus, Henry Hauck, and Pierre Brossolette, among many others – joined the Resistance. Secondly, it is plausible that other factors – such as neutralism<sup>761</sup> and political marginalisation during the second half of the 1930s<sup>762</sup> – were much more important in fuelling a widespread sense of estrangement towards the institutions of the Third Republic, hence pulling some planists towards Pétain.<sup>763</sup>

If this is true, Blum must not be credited for having presciently detected the seeds of fascism within his party; if anything, he should be blamed for having stubbornly delayed an ideological revision that would have provided socialists with better conceptual tools to address the economic crisis, and, by the same token, renewed their faith in democratic rule.<sup>764</sup> After all, planning was neither relegated to the dustbin of history nor permanently associated with the dark years 1940-1944: it resurfaced strongly after the Second World War as a crucial tool of the French recovery.<sup>765</sup> The

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<sup>759</sup> M. Déat, 'Il y a dix ans, Place de la Concorde...', undated manuscript, FP/AN/F/7/15945. See also M. Déat, *Mémoires*, 542.

<sup>760</sup> See the introduction of this dissertation.

<sup>761</sup> Déat authored the famous editorial *Mourir pour Danzig?* Similarly, in 1938 some future collaborators – Georges and Emile Lefranc, Albertini, Zoretti – established a new tendency within the SFIO, *Redressement pour la construction du socialisme et de la paix*. By then, their main concern was not planism but peace. On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1939, Zoretti wrote to another planist, the President of the Swiss socialist party Oprecht, asking him to pressure socialists in neutral countries, including de Man, to mobilise against a general war. Once the letter, which included offensive remarks on Blum, was leaked, Zoretti was expelled from the SFIO. See letter from L. Zoretti to H. Oprecht, 13.9.1939, FLZ/IHS/2.

<sup>762</sup> On the 'drift towards marginalisation' (*dérive de marginalisation*), see P. Burrin, *La dérive fasciste: Doriot, Déat, Bergery, 1933-1945* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1986), Paris, Seuil 2003, 301, 489-490, Insightful remarks on marginality can also be found in N. Amzalak, *Fascists and Honourable Men: Contingency and Choice in French Politics, 1918-1945*, London, Palgrave MacMillan 2011, 170-177.

<sup>763</sup> For an overview on the drivers of socialist collaboration, see M. Sadoun, 'Les facteurs de la conversion au socialisme collaborateur', *Revue française de science politique*, 3, 1978, 459-487.

<sup>764</sup> The indictment, against the SFIO in general rather than against Blum in particular, has been made by G. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, 41-43. Nor was Blum very energetic, or effective, in challenging the consensus that opposed devaluation: see J. Jackson, *The Politics*, 191-192.

<sup>765</sup> For an overview, see J. Hackett and A.-M. Hackett, *Economic Planning in France*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1963.

alleged affinities between original planism and this new variant of it will be discussed in the conclusion, after having examined the reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in Britain.

## VII.

### Echoes:

#### The Belgian Labour Plan in Britain

It is the paradox of our time that, while the Labour Party is every day making fresh converts, and making them on the basis of an avowed Socialist faith, the nature of that faith is in danger of growing less and less clearly defined.

G.D.H. Cole, 1929<sup>766</sup>

It is not the intention of the Labour Party to attempt merely to tinker with the Capitalist system, for we are convinced that within Capitalism there can be no solution of our problems.

Stafford Cripps, 1933<sup>767</sup>

The Belgian Labour Plan drew much less attention in Britain than in France, and its reception has not been thoroughly studied yet. This gap in the historiography is symptomatic of a more general tendency to marginalise Britain in surveys of the European Left during the interwar years, an attitude that may have drawn strength from scholarly interpretations emphasising the alleged exceptionalism of the British Labour movement.<sup>768</sup> It is indicative that neither Gerd Rainer Horn nor Gilles Vergnon gave much space to the United Kingdom in their analyses of the strategies articulated by

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<sup>766</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy*, London, Macmillan 1929, 418.

<sup>767</sup> S. Cripps, *The Ultimate Aims of the Labour Party*, London, Labour Party Publications n.d. [usually dated 1933], 6.

<sup>768</sup> See e.g. P. Anderson, 'The Origins of the Present Crisis' and T. Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party', both in *Towards Socialism*, P. Anderson and R. Blackburn (eds.), London, The Fontana Library 1965, 11-52 and 159-217 respectively. Anderson and Nairn painted a bleak picture of isolation but others have been more complacent, in line with the opening statement of Hugh Dalton's most popular book: "'England is different," a curiously remote island, cut off from Europe by a little ditch of sea water which, *except mentally*, has ceased to be a barrier, either in peace or war.' [H. Dalton, *Practical Socialism for Britain*, London, George Routledge & Sons, 1935, 3. Emphasis added.] See e.g., with regard to the debate on planning, K.O. Morgan, *Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1987, 114-118.

social democratic parties in reaction to the rise of fascism, despite the transnational and comparative focus of their research.<sup>769</sup> In a similar fashion, historians who authored extensive works on de Man's thinking barely mentioned its impact on British politics, or lack of thereof.<sup>770</sup> As a consequence, Belgian planism and British socialism have often been depicted as two separate worlds despite having similar concerns and sharing, to a certain extent, the same vocabulary.<sup>771</sup>

Truth be told, a few spare references to the Belgian Labour Plan can be found in the literature on the British Labour Party (LP), all pointing to the debt that the British social theorist and Labour activist G.D.H. Cole supposedly owed to de Man. Geoffrey Foote contended that Cole, 'more than most British thinkers, was extremely sensitive to developments in foreign socialist thought, and seized on the *Plan du Travail* [...] as a prototype of the Labour Plan' that British socialists were expected to launch before the next general election.<sup>772</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Durbin claimed that Cole 'was greatly influenced by Henri de Man, a Belgian socialist, who drew up a comprehensive "Plan du Travail" for the Belgian Labour party. Cole translated the plan, and persuaded the NFRB [New Fabian Research Bureau] to publish it with his introductory explanation in 1935.'<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>769</sup> Horn preferred to concentrate on Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain without providing an explanation for excluding Britain. [see G.R. Horn, *European Socialists*, 14] Vergnon merely noted, in the last section of his book, the 'absence of radicalisation' of British and Scandinavian Socialists. [G. Vergnon, *Les gauches européennes*, 382]

<sup>770</sup> The most authoritative biographer of de Man, Michel Brélaz held that 'the insularity of British socialism meant that, apart from the Russian Revolution and some other notable events, little was known in England about what was happening within the other European socialist parties.' [M. Brélaz, *Henri de Man*, 668]

<sup>771</sup> See e.g. A. Sturmhthal, *The Tragedy of European Labour, 1918-1939* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1943), New York Columbia University Press 1951; A.S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press 1983.

<sup>772</sup> G. Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History*, London, Croom Helm 1985, 176.

<sup>773</sup> E. Durbin, *New Jerusalems: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1985, 273. See also D. Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in the 1930s*, Oxford Clarendon Press 1997, 282-283, which nevertheless wrongly associated planism with Popular Front politics.

Although containing a factual truth – Cole did translate the Belgian Labour Plan into English<sup>774</sup> –, Foot's and Durbin's statements are not entirely accurate. Cole was undoubtedly sympathetic to de Man and paid tribute to his Plan even after de Man agreed to compromise with Van Zeeland in March 1935.<sup>775</sup> What is less known, on the other hand, is de Man's ongoing interest in Cole's work, which may have resulted in a significant influence by Cole upon him. This chapter will show that de Man was in close touch with Cole as early as July 1933, around six months *before* drafting the Belgian Labour Plan. However, considering that Cole's conception of socialist planning was much more sweeping than de Man's, it would be a mistake to conclude that de Man built his Plan around Cole's ideas: constructive exchanges may have led both men to clarify their views without reaching full agreement. A second element to flag up is that Cole was not the only British socialist familiar with de Man's thought: at least one other prominent Labour MP, the later Chancellor of the Exchequer Stafford Cripps, had closer ties with Belgian planism than scholars have noticed so far.<sup>776</sup> Finally, it is plausible that de Man's ideas gained some currency in Britain *before* Cole's translation of the Labour Plan became available. Indeed, contrary to what Foote and Durbin assumed, the first reception of de Man's thinking in Britain can be traced back to June 1934. Altogether, these elements suggest that the most radical fringe of British democratic socialists was more interested, and entangled in, Continental socialist developments than historians have hitherto supposed.

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<sup>774</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, *Planned Socialism: The Plan du Travail of the Belgian Labour Party*, London, New Fabian Research Bureau 1935.

<sup>775</sup> Cole also recognised the international significance of the Plan: see G.D.H. Cole, *Socialism in Evolution*, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1938, 195-196. For a generous post-war assessment of de Man, see G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought. Vol. V*, London, Macmillan 1960, 189-191.

<sup>776</sup> In fact, not a single biography of Cripps mentions his interest in, or knowledge of, the Belgian Labour Plan.



Having said that, the ultimate aim of this chapter is not to overstate the impact of the Belgian Labour Plan on British socialists but rather to explore the reasons why it failed to appeal to a wider range of individuals. Consequently, the layout of this chapter is as follows. First, it briefly illustrates how the traumatic demise of the second Labour Government provided breeding ground for radical ideas in Britain. Second, it evaluates Cole's and Cripps' relationship with de Man and the transnational connections between Belgian and British planism. Finally, it investigates the key reasons why the Belgian Labour Plan did not resonate well across the Channel.

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In summer 1931, for the second time in history, a Labour minority government was in power in Britain. The socialist Prime Minister, James Ramsay MacDonald, had won the 1929 general election on a platform promising greater redistribution of wealth but was now grappling with an unprecedented economic crisis during which Britain's financial position had seriously deteriorated. MacDonald was not insensitive to the social consequences of deflation, and certainly resisted pressure from the Treasury, the press, and the opposition to slash public spending at an earlier stage.<sup>777</sup> Yet he was also extremely reluctant to challenge the prevailing view according to which only a strict fiscal discipline could restore confidence by investors and consumers. A man in his sixties, MacDonald had spent his entire political career trying to turn the LP into a credible force so to displace the Liberals as the official opposition. This quest for respectability had led him to constantly walk the tightrope between a formal commitment to socialism and prudent tactics aimed at showing Labour's sense of

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<sup>777</sup> As noted by R. McKibbin, 'The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government, 1929-1931', *Past & Present*, 68, 1975, esp. 112-114. R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2011, 80.

responsibility and self-restraint, especially with regard to budget deficits.<sup>778</sup> Nor was he encouraged to enter uncharted territory by his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, whose hostility to increased government borrowing, based on the assumption that taxing unearned income would provide enough resources to improve the condition of the poor, was well known.<sup>779</sup> Rather ironically, in the fluid situation of 1931, MacDonald and Snowden positioned themselves to the right of the Liberals who, spurred by a resurgent David Lloyd George, had begun advocating bold economic interventionism.<sup>780</sup> In August, facing the danger of a liquidity crisis and a collapse of the pound, MacDonald proposed to cut unemployment benefits by 10%. The cabinet split on the issue and he resigned. The day after, upon an invitation from King George V, he agreed to lead a National Government supported by Conservatives, Liberals, and a group of Labour loyalists. Shocked by his turnabout, his party refused to follow him. In a snap election held in November, however, the LP suffered a historic humiliation, losing about four fifth of its seats.<sup>781</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> See D. Marquand, *Ramsey MacDonald*, London, Jonathan Cape 1977, esp. 792-794; J. Callaghan, “‘Bolshevism Run Mad’: Labour and Socialism”, *Britain’s Second Labour Government, 1929-1931: A Reappraisal*, J. Shepherd, J. Davis and C. Wrigley (eds.), Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press 2011, esp. 172-174. In his caustic history of British socialism, Ralph Milliband referred to MacDonald’s dismal record in government as ‘the price of respectability.’ [see R. Milliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, 152-192]

<sup>779</sup> See C. Cross, *Philip Snowden*, London, Barrie & Rockliff 1966, 82-84; N. Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party: The Economics of Democratic Socialism, 1884-2005* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), New York, Routledge 2006, 69-73.

<sup>780</sup> See P. Sloman, *The Liberal Party and the Economy, 1929-1964*, Oxford University Press 2015, 48-79; D. Ritschel, *The Politics*, 42-44. In 1930 MacDonald and Snowden had equally discarded Oswald Mosley’s call for a new economic agenda: see R. Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, London, Macmillan 1975, 179-220; R. Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy, 1931-1951*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press 2003, 35-39.

<sup>781</sup> For a chronicle of the 1931 events, see R.G. Bassett, *1931: Political Crisis* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1958), Aldershot, Macmillan 1986. A detailed account of party manoeuvring is D.J. Wrench, “‘Cashing In’: The Parties and the National Government, August 1931-September 1932”, *Journal of British Studies*, 2, 1984, 135-153.

From that moment on, MacDonald occupied an unparalleled position in Labour demonology for his “Great Betrayal”.<sup>782</sup> But the Prime Minister’s conduct could not be explained in terms of viciousness or unscrupulous personal ambition. As Robert Skidelsky convincingly argued, the downfall of the second Labour Government ‘was not just a failure of individuals but the failure of a Party and a doctrine’.<sup>783</sup> Regardless of the limitations of the ministers and their tendency to trust the judgment of departmental civil servants too much, the Labour movement struggled to ‘bring together socialism on the one hand with economic and parliamentary democracy on the other’: having no ‘adequate theory of the transition’ towards a collectivist society, its leaders begrudgingly surrendered to the dogmas of *laissez-faire*, as if there were ‘nothing to do but govern without conviction a system it did not believe in but saw no real prospect of changing.’<sup>784</sup>

It is against that passivity and resignation that Labour intellectuals forcefully reacted. Following early talks in summer 1930 between Cole, his wife Margaret, and other socialists already frustrated with MacDonald’s lacklustre tenure, two distinct bodies were founded between January and March 1931: the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB) and the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda (SSIP).<sup>785</sup> The first was meant to refresh Fabian thinking, which had made little headway in the 1920s, with the blessing of the LP: Clement Attlee, then MP from Limehouse, served as

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<sup>782</sup> See e.g. H. Morrison, *Herbert Morrison: An Autobiography of Lord Morrison of Lambeth*, London, Odhams Press 1960, 126-132. A classic example of demonisation is L. MacNeill Weir, *The Tragedy of Ramsay MacDonald: A Political Biography*, London, Sacker and Warburg 1938. See also S. Webb, *What Happened in 1931: A Record*, London, The Fabian Society 1932, and the party’s official view in *The Second Labour Government*, London, The Labour Party 1935.

<sup>783</sup> R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: the Labour Government of 1929-1931*, London, Macmillan 1967, 394.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>785</sup> For a detailed account from an insider perspective, see Margaret Cole’s recollections in M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, London, Heinemann 1961, 214-242; M. Cole, ‘The Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda’, *Essays in Labour History, 1918-1939*, A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), London, Croom Helm 1977, 190-203.

director of its Executive Committee until 1933, when another MP, Christopher Addison, took over. Under the firm supervision of Cole, who served as honorary secretary, the NFRB focused mainly on three areas of research: domestic politics, international affairs, and economics. The economic section, run by two young economists, Evan Durbin and Hugh Gaitskell, was perhaps the most successful in producing detailed memoranda on economic planning and socialisation which were well received in academia and thoroughly debated in conferences and workshops. By mid-1933, the LP was increasingly willing to rely on the NFRB's technical expertise in drafting policy proposals.<sup>786</sup> The second group had stronger ties with the trade union movement, having drafted Ernest Bevin and Arthur Pugh, leaders of the Transport and General Workers Union and the British Iron, Steel, and Kindred Trades Association respectively, both outspoken critics of MacDonald.<sup>787</sup> Unlike a relatively detached, research-oriented institution like the NFRB, the SSIP aimed at sketching out immediate measures that would allow the government, and the parliamentary LP in general, to tackle the most urgent issues of the time.<sup>788</sup> The tumultuous events of 1931, however, were soon to change the goals, as well as the name, of the SSIP. When the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a small radical political formation which had been affiliated with the LP since 1906, decided to go its own way, a composite but spirited group of intellectuals chose not to follow it, predicting, quite rightly, that the ILP would slip into irrelevance. Among them, there were Guild Socialists as William Mellor, former Liberals such as

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<sup>786</sup> See E. Durbin, *New Jerusalem*, 80-81, 97-98, 119-120; R. Toye, *The Labour Party*, 41-44. A NFRB professor of statistics, Colin Clarke, served also in the LP's Finance and Trade Policy Committee that was set up in September 1931, becoming the link between the Bureau and the party. The whole history of the NFRB can be reconstructed on the basis of the minutes of the Executive Committee available in FSA/NFRB/LSE/7 and FSA/NFRB/LSE/8.

<sup>787</sup> Bevin was appointed chairman whilst Pugh served as vice-chairman alongside Cole and Denis N. Pritt: see 'Agenda of the first Annual Meeting held on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1932', FSA/SSIP/J/3/1.

<sup>788</sup> See e.g. John Strachey's and Harold Clay's memorandum on unemployment commissioned in early 1931: see 'Minutes of a Meeting held on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1931 at Easton Lodge', NFSA/SSIP/J/21.

Charles Trevelyan, civil servants such as Frank Wise, journalists such as Henry Noel Brailsford, barristers such as Gilbert Mitchison.<sup>789</sup> After prolonged discussions and a split<sup>790</sup>, the SSIP dissolved and most of its members, including Cole, joined the former ILP members in a new society, the Socialist League (SL). In a few months, the SL established itself as the most vociferous organisation of the Labour Left as well as its most effective pressure group.<sup>791</sup> It is true that the SL never achieved a mass membership and had little strength outside Greater London.<sup>792</sup> But thanks to the activism and eloquence of its spokespersons – first and foremost Stafford Cripps, the former Solicitor General under MacDonald and one of the few Labour MPs who had survived the 1931 election – the SL scored some important victories: at the 1932 Leicester Party Conference, for instance, the LP National Council was forced to pledge that nationalisations would be carried out as soon as the party returned to office.<sup>793</sup> Furthermore, the SL set out to produce a massive amount of propaganda calling for the suppression of capitalism and the introduction of socialist economic planning, under the slogan ‘A Five-Year Plan’.<sup>794</sup> A British version of planism, therefore, took root, even though its proponents did not use the term.<sup>795</sup> In order to grasp the content of the SL’s agenda, however, it is necessary to delve into the ideas of its leading members, Cole and Cripps.

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<sup>789</sup> On the disaffiliation, see G. Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream: the Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II*, London, I.B. Tauris 2007, 15-28.

<sup>790</sup> Durbin, Gaitskell, and Clark were among those who opposed the merging and decided not to join the SL but remained active in the NFRB: see ‘An Appeal to Members of S.S.I.P.’, NFSA/SSIP/J/4/1.

<sup>791</sup> On the SL, see B. Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1977, 41-58; M. Bor, *The Socialist League in the 1930s*, London, Athena Press 2005.

<sup>792</sup> See P. Seyd, ‘Factionalism within the Labour Party: The Socialist League, 1932-1937’, *Essays in Labour History*, esp. 207-210.

<sup>793</sup> See B. Pimlott, *Labour*, 49; M. Bor, *The Socialist*, 209-217.

<sup>794</sup> See its tentative programme *Forward to Socialism*, London, The Socialist League 1934.

<sup>795</sup> They called themselves ‘socialist’, implying that most Labour members had not been so in the recent past. See e.g. C. Trevelyan, *The Challenge to Capitalism*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., esp. 1-3. See also M. Telò, *Le New Deal européen*, 76-84.

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Both the NFRB and the SL emerged out of a frustration with orthodox democratic socialism very similar to de Man's.<sup>796</sup> To Cole's mind, the MacDonald experience encapsulated the dead end of gradualism, namely the illusion that 'a slow infusion of Socialistic mechanisms and policies into the existing economic order' would ensure 'a gradual, un abrupt, painless transition' to socialism.<sup>797</sup> Although the introduction of 'wedges of Socialism' under capitalism was not necessarily futile, Cole maintained that these infusions had to be made in accordance with a broader programme: for this reason, 'believers in Socialism' were confronted with the task of preparing 'plans for the socialisation of some at least of the vital industries and services of the country.'<sup>798</sup>

The same convictions were expressed by numerous British socialist intellectuals in the same period.<sup>799</sup> It was Cole, however, who made the biggest effort to articulate a coherent vision of socialist planning in two series of articles for the weekly *The New Clarion*, between June 1932 and June 1933. These short essays were subsequently

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<sup>796</sup> As Cole observed, 'the paradox of the situation in post-war Europe is that the Continental Social Democratic parties, for all their Marxian phrases and insistence on the class war, have certainly been in action no further to the left than the Fabian Socialists of Great Britain.' [G.D.H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide through World Chaos*, 610]

<sup>797</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *Some Essentials of Socialist Propaganda: A Tract for the Times*, London, The Fabian Society 1932, 7.

<sup>798</sup> G.D.H. Cole, 'The Essentials of Socialisation', *The Political Quarterly*, 3, 1931, 395, reprinted as G.D.H. Cole, *The Essentials of Socialisation*, London, New Fabian Research Bureau Tract 1932. An extended version appeared in G.D.H. Cole, *Economic Tracts for the Times*, London, Macmillan 1932, 285-306.

<sup>799</sup> See e.g. R. Tawney, *The Choice before the Labour Party*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., esp. 3-6; J. Horabin, *The Class Struggle*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., 6-7; H. Morrison, 'Reform or Revolution? The Labour Party Must Put Socialism First', *The New Clarion*, 11, 20.8.1932, 241-242, 258; C. Trevelyan, 'The New Offensive: How We Can Turn the Great Electoral Catastrophe into a Great Opportunity', *The New Clarion*, 13, 3.9.1932, 301-302; S. Cripps, 'The Future of the Labour Party', *New Statesman & Nation*, 80, 3.9.1932, 255-256; J.T. Murphy, *Preparing for Power: A Critical Study of the History of the British Working-Class Movement*, London, Jonathan Cape 1934, 262-286.

issued as pamphlets<sup>800</sup>, and should be regarded as the first organic formulation of British planism.<sup>801</sup>

Warning against the prospect of exercising power ‘without a definite plan of action already thought out’, Cole set the priorities of a future Labour government holding a majority in the House of Commons by outlining ‘a policy dealing with the essential, immediate steps for the effective establishment of socialist control’ that could be understood by ordinary militants.<sup>802</sup> His recommendations differed from the policy of extension of social services that the LP had pursued in the past, as they envisaged a much more active role for the state, and for the public sector in general.<sup>803</sup> By urging the LP to launch a ‘frontal attack’ on capitalism, Cole pointed out that only by socialising the Bank of England, the Joint Stock Banks, and all the financial institutions concerned with the supply of capital and credit socialists had a chance to succeed: ‘the socialisation of the productive industries, vitally important as it is, comes after these, because it will be done much more better and more easily if the financial and transporting organisation is already held firmly in Socialist hands.’<sup>804</sup> According to Cole, no enduring compromise could be achieved between the City – which was

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<sup>800</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan for Britain*, London, The Clarion Press 1932; G.D.H. Cole, *What Is This Socialism? Talks to “The Man in the Street”*, London, Gollancz/The Clarion Press 1933. A third pamphlet was issued in the same period: see G.D.H. Cole, *Socialist Control of Industry*, London, The Socialist League, n.d.

<sup>801</sup> A number of technical memoranda by Cole had been previously issued as SSIP pamphlets: see e.g. G.D.H. Cole, *Banks and Credit*, London, The Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, n.d.; G.D.H. Cole, *The Socialisation of Banking*, London, The Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, n.d. Their political implications, however, had not been clearly spelt out.

<sup>802</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘What We Mean to Do’, *The New Clarion*, 2, 18.6.1933, 33; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 5. See also G.D.H. Cole, ‘What’s Wrong – and Right – with the Labour Party’, *The New Clarion*, 45, 15.4.1933, 364; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 13-15; G.D.H. Cole, ‘What a Socialist Government Must Do’, *The New Clarion*, 46, 22.4.1933, 384; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 15-17.

<sup>803</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, ‘The Social Services’, *The New Clarion*, 12, 27.8.1932, 281; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 41-44. See also G.D.H. Cole, ‘The Gospel of Scarcity’, *The New Clarion*, 44, 8.4.1933, 344; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 10-13. A summary of the orthodox Labour position can be found in the election manifesto *Labour and the Nation*, London, The Labour Party 1928.

<sup>804</sup> Ibidem; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 6. See also G.D.H. Cole, ‘Take Over the Banks – and Ignore the Cranks’, *The New Clarion*, 47, 29.4.1933, 408; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 18-20.

struggling to retain its status as a financial centre and was therefore unwilling to pay for further ameliorative measures for the working class – and the overwhelming majority of the British people: socialisation was therefore indispensable. Furthermore, only a ‘transference at a blow to complete Socialist control’ would prevent private banks from obstructing Labour in power.<sup>805</sup> A socialist government could then manage both the supply of credit and the deposits necessary to fund it, setting out to ‘raise prices to a level high enough to stimulate employment and reduce the burden of debts to tolerable proportions.’<sup>806</sup>

In order to ensure an efficient allocation of financial resources, however, a comprehensive Economic Plan was required. This would involve the creation of new institutions – the machinery of planning, as Cole would call it elsewhere<sup>807</sup> –. Socialist planning, unlike its capitalist variants, demanded the establishment of ‘a central authority with power to decide what is to be produced’ and ‘the control of distribution as well as of production.’<sup>808</sup> Whilst capitalist planning preached rationalisation in industry in order to maintain some margin of profit, even at the cost of throwing people out of work, socialist planning was based on the principle of full employment: Cole urged Labour to ‘employ every available worker, either upon capital resources which are already in existence, and capable of producing goods we want, or upon new factories and other instruments of production which we decide to create.’<sup>809</sup> Through a National Investing Board, the government would reorganise existing industries,

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<sup>805</sup> Ibidem; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 8.

<sup>806</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Socialising the Banks’, *The New Clarion*, 3, 25.6.1932, 52; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 11. On controlling credit and production as the only way to suppress unemployment, see also G.D.H. Cole, ‘Socialism and Unemployment’, 1, 13, 3.9.1932, 305; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 45-48.

<sup>807</sup> See e.g. G.D.H. Cole, *Socialist Control of Industry*, 7-10; G.D.H. Cole, *Principles of Economic Planning*, London, Macmillan 1935, 293-324.

<sup>808</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘A Socialist Economic Plan’, *The New Clarion*, 4, 2.7.1932, 77; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 13.

<sup>809</sup> Ibidem; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 15.



expanding some and scaling down others. Coal, steel, transport, and electricity would be nationalised.<sup>810</sup> Further steps towards socialism would be taken by introducing ‘a really drastic limitation of inheritance’ and a system of licences aimed at controlling capital still in private hands and using it ‘for the development of industry in the public interest’: Cole expected these measures to stabilise investment without hurting small savers.<sup>811</sup> In agriculture, after having socialised the land, food supply would be increased in order to raise the living standards of the entire population.<sup>812</sup> By boosting domestic consumption, however, Britain would not seek economic self-sufficiency: Cole praised the international division of labour and professed himself ‘utterly against Economic Nationalism and in favour of the fullest development of international trade.’<sup>813</sup> Nonetheless, in a major departure from untrammelled free trade, imports and exports would be planned by publicly-owned Trade Corporations in relation to the needs of home production. By socialising foreign trade, the Labour government would thus be able to ‘promote increased exchanges of goods between country and country on organised and mutually beneficial lines.’<sup>814</sup> Its foreign policy would simultaneously strive to ‘break down the absolute barriers between State and State’ with the purpose of reorganising the world ‘as a closely-knit federation of co-operating communities’, forge a close alliance with Soviet Russia, and promote world disarmament by mutual consent.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, ‘The Restoration of Industry’, *The New Clarion*, 5, 9.7.1932, 100; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 17-20.

<sup>811</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Socialist Control of Capital’, *The New Clarion*, 6, 16.7.1932, 135; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 22, 23.

<sup>812</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, ‘The Land and Agriculture’, *The New Clarion*, 7, 23.7.1932, 159; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 25-28.

<sup>813</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Foreign Trade and Protection’, *The New Clarion*, 8, 30.7.1932, 182; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 29.

<sup>814</sup> Ibidem; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 32.

<sup>815</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Socialism and Internationalism’, *The New Clarion*, 9, 6.8.1932; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 34.

Cole was conscious that his agenda would be strongly resisted by the Conservative Party and the House of Lords. In fact, he had little respect for the British parliamentary system, which he deemed ‘an admirable instrument for the preservation of Capitalism’ and ‘utterly unsuitable’ for the purpose of establishing economic planning.<sup>816</sup> Because of that, he recommended socialists to pass ‘a drastic measure of emergency powers’ as soon as they got into office, creating a legal situation comparable to the one Britain had experienced during the Great War.<sup>817</sup> Having speeded up parliamentary procedures, curtailed the powers of obstruction conferred to the opposition, and erased ‘a large part of the useless talk which at present goes upon the floor of the House of Commons’, the government would then be in the position to suppress the Upper Chamber for good.<sup>818</sup> Cole expected these reforms to be carried out peacefully, provided that the capitalist class decided not to resort to unconstitutional means to stop them: in that case, a ‘violent revolution’ could not be ruled out.<sup>819</sup>

Cole’s planism was fully espoused and condensed in a plainly-written book by Stafford Cripps.<sup>820</sup> A distinguished barrister, Cripps added further weight to Cole’s charges against Westminster in a tract entitled *Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Methods?*, based on a highly controversial speech he gave in January 1933.<sup>821</sup> Truth be told, Cripps was not the only socialist who, in the aftermath of the ‘Great Betrayal’, had raised the same question.<sup>822</sup> But he was the only one to explore the possibility of a

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<sup>816</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Socialism and Parliament’, *The New Clarion*, 11, 20.8.1932, 254; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 37.

<sup>817</sup> Ibidem; G.D.H. Cole, *A Plan*, 38.

<sup>818</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>819</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Peaceably If We May’, *The New Clarion*, 51, 27.5.1933, 488; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 26.

<sup>820</sup> See S. Cripps, *Why This Socialism?*, London, Gollancz 1934. The case for planning made in the book is almost indistinguishable from Cole’s.

<sup>821</sup> See ‘A Socialist Programme’, *The Spectator*, 5458, 3.2.1933, 2.

<sup>822</sup> Most notably, Laski had expressed mildly pessimistic views, citing the conservative inclinations of the monarchy: see H.J. Laski, *The Crisis and the Constitution: 1931 and After*, London, Hogarth Press 1932, esp. 31-36; H.J. Laski, ‘The Present Position of Representative Democracy’, *The American Political*

democratically elected Labour government deliberately throwing the country into a constitutional crisis to defend its right to pursue socialist policies, extending its life beyond the normal five years period, and even making itself ‘temporarily into a dictatorship’ to forestall a military coup orchestrated by the army.<sup>823</sup> Cripps’ conjectures about a potential showdown with the establishment as well as his inflammatory rhetoric against the ‘saboteurs’ and the ‘machinations of the Capitalists’ caused an uproar, were severely condemned by the non-socialist press, and led the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) to reaffirm its unambiguous commitment to democratic rule.<sup>824</sup> His tirades – including one denouncing Buckingham Palace on which he had to backtrack<sup>825</sup> – outraged several moderates<sup>826</sup> but did not prevent him from replacing Wise as chairman of the SL in May 1933.<sup>827</sup> In a few months, his aggressive style of leadership would also disappoint Cole, who, having become persuaded that under Cripps the SL

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*Science Review*, 4, 1932, 629-641; H.J. Laski, *The Labour Party and the Constitution*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., esp. 24-27. This latter tract grew out of Laski’s work for the political section of the NFRB: see the minutes in FSA/NFRB/LSE/J/38.

<sup>823</sup> S. Cripps, *Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Methods?*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., 5.

<sup>824</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. Elsewhere, Cripps contended that “‘Socialism without Tears’ is a dream and not a reality [...] Once the party is in power it will have to be ruthless as regards individuals’ [S. Cripps, ‘Parliamentary Institutions and the Transition to Socialism’, VV.AA., *Where Stands Socialism To-Day?*, London, Rich & Cowan 1933, 29, 52] and that, despite being hostile to dictatorships in principle, ‘it may well be that in some countries and under some circumstances a dictatorship of the Proletariat is the sole method of escape from tyrannous capitalism.’ [S. Cripps, ‘Democracy and Dictatorship: The Issue for the Labour Party’, *The Political Quarterly*, 4, 1933, 470] On the trade unions’ condemnation, see W.M. Citrine, ‘Labour Policy and Practical Politics’, *The New Clarion*, 55, 24.6.1933, 41-42, and the trade union manifesto issued in September 1933. [see ‘Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement’, *Report of Proceedings at the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Trades Union Congress held at Brighton, September 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 1933*, London, Cooperative Printing Society 1933, 425-435] Laski sought to act as a conciliator between Citrine and Cripps: see H.J. Laski, ‘The Labour Party and Democracy’, *The New Clarion*, 54, 17.6.1933, 21-22. On their clash, see letter from W. Citrine to S. Cripps, 19.2.1935 and letter from S. Cripps to W. Citrine, 20.2.1935, both in PSC/WL/32. For a contemporary overview on this debate, see R. Bassett, *The Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*, London, Macmillan 1935, 182-232.

<sup>825</sup> See ‘Sir S. Cripps and the Crown’, *The Times*, 8.1.1934. Cripps privately acknowledged that he could not ‘picture’ himself ‘the ultimate Socialist State under a constitutional Monarchy’ but seizing economic power would take priority over the institutional issue. [letter from S. Cripps to G. Catlin, 26.1.1934, PSC/WL/SC39/2]

<sup>826</sup> In January 1934 Dalton called Cripps ‘the greatest electoral asset’ of the Tories and lambasted his ‘stream of oratorical ineptitudes.’ [H. Dalton, Entry of Friday 19<sup>th</sup> January 1934, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-1940, 1945-1960*, B. Pimlott (ed.), London, Jonathan Cape 1986, 184]

<sup>827</sup> See ‘Report of the National Council for 1933-1934’, *Final Agenda: Socialist League Second Annual Conference, Leeds May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 1934*, London, The Socialist League n.d., 3.

and the LP were bound to collide, decided to devote his whole energies to the NFRB.<sup>828</sup> These disagreements notwithstanding, Cole and Cripps were by far the most authoritative champions of British planism – the first being the intellectual leader, the second the political one – and their views can be regarded as representative of a broad spectrum of opinion within the British radical Left at the time.<sup>829</sup>

To what extent was de Man influenced by them? In article published in *Le Peuple* in late November 1933, de Man held that the Belgian Labour Plan would ‘draw the practical conclusion from a doctrinal preparation’ whose origins could be traced back to the end of the Great War, and to a revision of the concept of socialisation undertaken, in the previous three or four years, ‘by our friends Ed. Heimann and Karl Landauer in Germany, Otto Bauer in Austria, Richard Sandler in Sweden, Cole and Stafford Cripps in England, etc.’<sup>830</sup> At a glance, this may seem a cosmetic reference, although de Man had certainly assimilated Cole’s Guild Socialism in the 1920s.<sup>831</sup> But a letter from de Man’s private papers demonstrates that his relationship with Cole was actually tighter and more personal. Writing to Norah James on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1933, de Man informed her that he had ‘visited’ his ‘friend G.D.H. Cole last month’ and had

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<sup>828</sup> See G.D.H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1948, 284. In fact, Cole published one more article for the SL house organ in 1934 [see G.D.H. Cole, ‘A Socialist Peace Policy’, *The Socialist Leaguer*, 4, 1934, 53-55] and was again in touch with many Leaguers during the Unity Campaign [see the correspondence in PGDHC/NC/D4/11]. His departure was therefore less clear-cut than he subsequently claimed. See also G.D.H. Cole, ‘Dedication to Stafford Cripps’, *The People’s Front*, London, Gollancz 1937, 5-8 and the letter from G.D.H. Cole to Stafford Cripps, 2.7.1937, PSC/WL/SC39/2.

<sup>829</sup> See N. Ridell, “‘The Age of Cole’? G.D.H. Cole and the British Labour Movement, 1929-1933”, *The Historical Journal*, 4, 1995, 933-957; B. Pimlott, *Labour*, 5-6. On January 1<sup>st</sup> 1934, Attlee offered Cripps the vicepresidency, and *pro tempore* presidency, of the parliamentary Labour Party [see letter from C. Attlee to St. Cripps, 1.1.1934, PSC/WL/SC39/3]

<sup>830</sup> H. de Man, ‘A capitalism nouveau, socialisme nouveau’, *Le Peuple*, 28.11.1933. Even Vandervelde noted the ‘extremely numerous similarities between de Man’s and Cole’s ideas’. [E. Vandervelde, ‘Ce qu’un socialiste anglais pense de l’avenir du socialisme’, *La dépêche de Toulouse*, 22.4.1934] A subsequent direct quote from Cole’s pamphlet *The Working-Class Movement and the Transition to Socialism*, issued by the SL, proves that de Man kept reading Cole throughout 1934: see H. de Man, ‘Syndikale Eenheid en Beroepsverscheidenheid’, *Vooruit*, 5.9.1934.

<sup>831</sup> See chapter III of this dissertation.

‘discussed’ with him ‘the possibility of an American edition’ of *Die Sozialistische Ideen*.<sup>832</sup> It is worth noticing that the last chapter of the book contained the essentials of de Man’s planism.<sup>833</sup> Furthermore, considering that Cole ‘declared himself prepared’ to give Miss James ‘additional information’ about de Man’s ‘books in general’, there is room to argue that by July 1933 Cole and de Man were not only on friendly terms but had also good knowledge of each other’s work.<sup>834</sup>

Regarding Cripps, the connection with de Man is less straightforward as no evidence of friendship can be found in their papers. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that Cripps spoke at the *Semaine d’Études de Liège* held between July 25<sup>th</sup> and August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1934, on the very day de Man lectured students on the Labour Plan.<sup>835</sup> Cripps’ intervention, devoted to the activities and programme of the SL, was expected to appear in a special issue of *L’Étudiant socialiste* entitled ‘Révolution Constructive’, alongside writings of distinguished planists such as Laurat, Vos, and de Man<sup>836</sup>; in the end, it was published as a self-standing contribution, like the other papers.<sup>837</sup> Considering that the *Semaine* was organised by Belgian socialists, and Belgian planism was its topic, it is

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<sup>832</sup> Letter from H. de Man to N. James, 8.8.1933, AHDM/IISG/224. De Man visited England in July 1933 to speak at the Industrial Welfare Society conference. [see ‘Welfare Work in Industry’, *Times*, 10.7.1933]

<sup>833</sup> See chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>834</sup> Letter from H. de Man to N. James, 8.8.1933, AHDM/IISG/224. Presumably, the friendship between de Man and Cole continued even after 1940: the latter agreed to sign a petition aimed at giving the former a second trial after his conviction *in absentia*. [see the text of the petition to the Belgian Senate in AHDM/AMSAB/605; letter by Henri de Man in ‘Correspondence’, *The New Statesman & Nation*, 996, 8.4.1950, 402-403]

<sup>835</sup> See ‘La semaine d’études des étudiants socialistes’, *La Wallonie*, 30.7.1934. The week was meant to be a gathering point for planists. Jules Moch, André Philip and Georges Monnet were mentioned as potential French speakers [see ‘Participez à la semaine d’études des étudiants socialistes’, *La Wallonie*, 18.7.1934]; Cole was at some point expected to take Cripps’ place. [see ‘Fête de l’Internationale des jeunesses socialistes’, *La Wallonie*, 11.7.1934]

<sup>836</sup> See ‘Revue et livres’, *La Wallonie*, 27.10.1934. The French circle *Révolution Constructive* had already published one tract, edited by Pierre Dreyfus and forwarded by André Philip, about the Socialist League, translating articles mostly by Cole. [see *Vers un Plan britannique: les études de la Ligue Socialiste*, Asnières, Cahier de Révolution Constructive n.d.]. On this group, see chapter VI of this dissertation.

<sup>837</sup> See S. Cripps, ‘Le Plan anglais de construction socialiste’, *L’étudiant socialiste*, 5, 1935, 1-4.

reasonable to conclude that Cripps became familiar with the Belgian Labour Plan and Belgian planism in general no later than in July 1934.

This is equally true for British socialists who read *The Plebs*, organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges, the leading British institution in the field of workers' education. In June 1934, excerpts from de Man's *Pour un Plan d'Action* were published under the title 'What Must We Do About Fascism?'<sup>838</sup>. The purpose was to provide trade unionists with food for thought. In July, as a follow-up, the Labour activist Fay Jackson and the German socialist Heinz Schlosser laid out the campaign for the Belgian Labour Plan as well as its repercussions abroad, and argued that, without denying 'differences in outlook and circumstances' between Britain and other countries, developing a sound knowledge of 'Continental attempts' to address issues such as 'the winning of the support of the middle classes, the arousing of enthusiasm by a programme for immediate realisation, the working out of our future policy in detail, and the prevention of the stampeding of the electorate by bringing home to it what we really intend to do' could be 'of much use' to the British Labour movement.<sup>839</sup> *The Plebs* was a well-established monthly tied with Ruskin College, where Cole taught, and de Man's key ideas may therefore have crept into the British socialist milieu in June 1934.<sup>840</sup>

From an institutional viewpoint, it is noteworthy that the campaign for the Belgian Labour Plan was keen to establish formal links with the SL. The socialist publishing house *l'Eglantine* released a condensed summary of Cole's thinking in

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<sup>838</sup> See H. de Man, 'What Must We Do about Fascism?', *The Plebs*, 6, 1934, 124-126.

<sup>839</sup> F. Jackson and H. Schlosser, 'What Must We Do about Fascism?', *Plebs*, 7, 1934, 156. On Fay Jackson, see A.H. Cook, *A Lifetime of Labor: The Autobiography of Alice H. Cook*, New York, The Feminist Press at the City University of New York 1990, 67-68.

<sup>840</sup> It is true that some publications of the SSIP and the SL had already touched upon issues underlying de Man's thinking, such as the role of technicians under socialism [see e.g. G.W. Thomson, *The Technician under Socialism*, London, The Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, n.d.; L. Anderson Fenn, *What of the Professional Classes?*, London, The Socialist League, n.d.]. Yet, considering the lasting legacy of Fabianism, it would be a mistake to take these as a sign of de Man's influence.

February 1934, and works by Cole and Cripps were included in a list of suggested readings for planist militants attached to the official handbook released by the campaign.<sup>841</sup> Research assistants at the BES ordered and reviewed a rich selection of Cole's writings between 1933 and 1935, including *The Intelligent Man's Guide through World Chaos*, *The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-Day*, *What Everybody Wants to Know about Money*, *Studies in World Economics*, *What Marx Really Meant*, *Some Relations between Political and Economic Theory*, and *Studies and Capital in Investment*, alongside a few other publications by members of the SL, such as Mitchison's *The First Workers' Government*.<sup>842</sup> Following the Pontigny conference, where the activities of the SL were summarised by the German exile Walter Pahl<sup>843</sup>, Cole was invited to give a lecture in Brussels.<sup>844</sup> By late 1933, Cole's works were regularly cited by Herman Vos, one of de Man's closest aides, and in August 1934 even Vandervelde lauded a collective book produced by the SL.<sup>845</sup>

British socialists reciprocated through a more active involvement in the international planist network. In April 1936, a delegation of New Fabians and Leaguers attended the second International Plan conference held in Geneva.<sup>846</sup> The delegation

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<sup>841</sup> See 'Le socialisme dans le temps présent', *L'Eglantine*, 12, 2, 1934; M. Buset, *L'action*, 16. Interestingly, out of the twelve publications recommended, three were Belgian, two were French, and seven were English, including some technical studies prepared by the LP in 1932.

<sup>842</sup> See correspondence in ABSO/AMSAB/65. According to the evidence available, Cole was by far the most widely read author within the BES.

<sup>843</sup> See chapter IV of this dissertation.

<sup>844</sup> Cole's name was featured in a programme of events devoted to planism alongside those of Gaston Bergery, Laurat, Rens, Voos, Ansele Jr., and Tasca. His topic was supposed to be 'The change in our socialist conception since 1908'. [see 'Sozialistische studiekkring', *Vooruit*, 5.10.1934] All these events were presumably cancelled at a later stage for no other mention of them can be found in the Belgian press.

<sup>845</sup> See H. Vos, 'Het Plan van de Arbeid – Zijn Vertrekpunt', *Vooruit*, 12.12.1933; H. Vos, 'Een Noorsch Drie-Jaren Plan: Plan-Ekonomie in Scandinavie', *Vooruit*, 5.6.1934; H. Vos, 'Socialisme en het Nationale Karakter: De Engelsche arbeidersbeweging', *Vooruit*, 11.9.1934; E. Vandervelde, 'Il y a des socialistes en Suède et en Danemark', *Le Peuple*, 5.8.1934. Vandervelde referred to VV.AA., *Problems of a Socialist Government*, London, Gollancz 1933, a collection of SL tracts.

<sup>846</sup> Cole was invited by de Man, who observed that 'it was a pity that England was not represented at Pontigny' and Cole's attendance 'would enhance the value of the undertaking.' [letter from H. de Man to

included Cole, John Cripps (Stafford's son), Mitchison, Gaitskell, Colin Clark, Richard W. B. Clark, George Wansbrough, and A. P. Leiner.<sup>847</sup> Mitchison, Cripps, Wansbrough, and Colin Clark actively participated in discussions about agriculture under planning and the socialisation of the banking sector.<sup>848</sup> A loose association remained in place even after the dismissal of the Belgian Labour Plan. For example, a memorandum on foreign trade and colonies prepared by the NFRB Secretary, Herbert D. Hughes, served as a basis for discussion during the third and final International Plan conference, in late October 1937.<sup>849</sup> Two years later, de Man was invited to London by the NFRB, now amalgamated with the old Fabian Society, to give a talk on 'The Decline of Capitalist Enterprise' but the event was cancelled due to the crisis caused by the invasion of Poland.<sup>850</sup> To sum up, it seems fair to conclude that a channel of communication existed between Belgian planists, the SL, and the NFRB, and a bilateral circulation of ideas occurred between July 1933, when de Man visited Cole, and October 1937, when the last international conference was arranged.

It remains to be explained why, therefore, British socialists hesitated to give the Belgian Labour Plan a full endorsement, making it available in English only in late 1935. Presumably, the main reason lies in theoretical disagreements. In terms of strategy, there were obvious similarities between de Man's idea of a Plan for action as

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G.D.H. Cole, 14.2.1936, PGDHC/NC/C4/1-48] On this conference and the NFRB's involvement in it, see the letter from G.D.H. Cole to H. de Man, 1.3.1936, AHDM/IISG/227.

<sup>847</sup> See *Conférence Internationale des Plans du Travail, Genève, 17, 18, 19 Avril 1936, I: La nationalisation du crédit*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière, n.d., 3-4.

<sup>848</sup> See *ibid.*, 24-29, 33-36, 43-45; *Conférence Internationale des Plans du Travail, Genève, 17, 18, 19 Avril 1936, II: Les problèmes de l'économie agricole*, Paris, Centre confédéral d'éducation ouvrière, n.d., 27, 30-31.

<sup>849</sup> See New Fabian Research Bureau, 'Le commerce extérieur et le problème colonial', *IIIe Conférence Internationale des Plans du Travail: Abbaye de Pontigny, 23-24 Octobre 1937*, N.I., n.d., 103-110. On this conference, see also H. Oprecht, 'Third International Conference on Planned Economics, on October 23 and 24, 1937, in Pontigny (France)', PGDHC/NC/D1/62/3.

<sup>850</sup> See letter from J. Parker to H. de Man, 28.6.1939, letter from J. Parker to H. de Man, 17.7.1939, letter from J. Parker to H. de Man, 20.9.1939, all in AHDM/IISG/389.



presented in early 1933 and Cole's 'definite programme [...] capable of being put forward as the basis of an election appeal and carried through by constitutional means with the aid of a Socialist majority in Parliament', a programme which would indicate 'the steps by which the Labour Government will proceed', even though Cole and Cripps, as seen above, were more willing to justify a suspension of the ordinary parliamentary procedure to get their programme approved.<sup>851</sup> Besides, de Man, Cole, and Cripps agreed on the necessity of seizing control of the financial sector and rejected economic nationalism as incompatible with democratic socialism.<sup>852</sup> Nevertheless, differences were more substantial. Above all, de Man was in favour of establishing a mixed economy that would last until the private sector was competitive and profitable – an argument that suggested a very slow transition to full socialism – whilst Cole opposed the creation of any 'inherently self-contradictory system based on an unworkable compromise.'<sup>853</sup> To him, it was 'impossible to envisage the economic structure of a socialist society without at the same time envisaging an attempt at the distribution of *all* the available economic resources, or at least *all* resources of *major economic importance*, in accordance with a general economic plan.'<sup>854</sup> Under socialism, in Cole's view, the state would be in charge of producing a detailed inventory of the national resources available and assess the actual needs of the population, given that 'a

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<sup>851</sup> G.D.H. Cole and G.R. Mitchison, *The Need for a Socialist Programme*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., 6. See also their 'S.S.I.P. Memoranda on Socialist Policy', 10.8.1932, PGDHC/NC/D4/5/4. On de Man's call for a Plan for Action, see chapter III of this dissertation.

<sup>852</sup> From 1934 onwards, Cripps wrote extensively on foreign affairs from a staunchly internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective: see e.g. S. Cripps, *Fight Now Against War: A Call to Action*, London, The Socialist League n.d.; S. Cripps, *The Struggle for Peace*, London, Gollancz 1936; S. Cripps, *Empire*, London, The India League 1938.

<sup>853</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide through World Chaos*, 571. Cole here referred to 'controlled capitalism based on national planning' but his criticism could be extended to any kind of mixed economy. See also G.D.H. Cole, *Principles*, 95-117.

<sup>854</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *The Machinery of Socialist Planning*, London, The Hogarth Press 1938, 11. Emphasis added. The book was originally a memorandum amended during discussions within the NFRB: see the files in FSA/NFRB/LSE/J/25/4.

Socialist Society [...] is a Society in which what is to be produced, at what prices the products are to be distributed, what incomes the individual citizens are to have, how much of its income the community is to save and how much to spend on current consumption, are all matters to be collectively determined in accordance with the ends which the collective wisdom of the community sets up as the guiding principles of its economic policy.’<sup>855</sup> This explains why he insisted on the benefits of a relatively swift nationalisation of most industries, not necessarily with compensation, whereas de Man stressed that small business and non-monopolistic enterprises would *not* be affected by the implementation of the Labour Plan, and their profits should be stabilised but not suppressed.<sup>856</sup>

Their antidotes to bureaucratisation also differed. In order to give production a democratic character and prevent an excessive degree of centralisation, Cole advocated the creation of various councils, including local and regional branches, aimed at ensuring workers’ control over the entire process.<sup>857</sup> In his view, ‘a widespread devolution of responsibility and power’ was essential, and ‘the safeguard of an ultimate political control over the technical autocrats of industry’ was unsatisfactory to an unrepentant Guild Socialist like him.<sup>858</sup> Similarly, Cripps optimistically contended that ‘technical efficiency’ would not be affected by giving directorates ‘permanent leave of

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<sup>855</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Towards a New Economic Theory’ in *Studies in World Economics*, London, Macmillan 1934, 252. The original paper was written in January 1934. See also G.D.H. Cole, *Principles*, 162-195; G.D.H. Cole, *Practical Economics, or Studies in Economic Planning*, London, Penguin Books 1937, 7-40.

<sup>856</sup> See in particular H. de Man, ‘Socialisme petit-bourgeois?’, *Le Peuple*, 8.11.1933. As de Man summed up in his memoirs, ‘the point is not levelling fortunes by expropriating the rich; the point is preventing banking monopolies, the masters of credit and of basic industries, from undercutting and controlling the whole economy.’ [H. de Man, *Après coup*, 210] On these differences, see the remarks by A. Philip, ‘Préface’, *Vers un Plan britannique*, esp. 2-3.

<sup>857</sup> See *Workers’ Control and Self-Government in Industry*, G.D.H. Cole and W. Mellor (eds.), London, The New Fabian Research Bureau 1933, esp. 14-17. This memorandum, co-written by nineteen socialists and trade-unionists in June 1933, was an effort to square the circle between the trade unions’ call for workers’ control and the imperatives of large scale-planning.

<sup>858</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *Principles*, 328, 329.

absence' and replacing them with 'workers of all grades.'<sup>859</sup> By contrast, de Man – who had been sympathetic with Guild Socialists in the 1920s<sup>860</sup> – seemed now to believe that 'the problem of control takes priority over that of ownership' to the extent that the rise of civil servants and managers was making the physical seizure of the means of production increasingly less relevant for the socialist cause.<sup>861</sup> Technocrats, on the other hand, were to be held accountable before democratically-elected bodies, i.e. the Parliament and the Government, and hopefully embrace the values of socialism.<sup>862</sup> On that issue, de Man's arguments were much closer to those set forth by Herbert Morrison – who advocated the creation of public corporations and set up the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933 – than to thoroughgoing industrial democracy envisaged by the Leaguers, and somewhat anticipated some of Gaitskell's revisionist views of the mid-1950s.<sup>863</sup>

Incidentally, one could note that Cole's faith in an all-encompassing model of planning in which workers supposedly controlled production mirrored his admiration for the Soviet Union. Unlike de Man, who had come to understand the violence and fanaticism of the Bolsheviks during his trip to Russia in 1917<sup>864</sup>, Cole rallied behind the motto 'Russia's Cause is Ours'.<sup>865</sup> Still faithful to a highly idealised view of Soviet

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<sup>859</sup> S. Cripps, 'Introduction', G.R. Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, Gollancz 1934, 9.

<sup>860</sup> See chapter III of this dissertation.

<sup>861</sup> See *Konferenz zur Besprechung*, 5.

<sup>862</sup> See H. de Man, *Les techniciens* as well as the case against workers' control made by de Man's closest collaborator, Buset: M. Buset, 'L'Idée et l'Action planistes en Belgique', *IIIe Conférence Internationale*, esp. 42-43. It is unfortunate that de Man did not fully address the issue of workers' control in the outline of his Plan. This could be taken, however, as sign of his reservations about the idea.

<sup>863</sup> See H. Morrison, *An Easy Outline of Modern Socialism*, London, The Labour Party 1932; H. Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, London, Constable 1933, esp. 149-176; H. Gaitskell, *Socialism and Nationalisation*, London, Fabian Tract 1956, esp. 34-36.

<sup>864</sup> See chapter II of this dissertation.

<sup>865</sup> G.D.H. Cole, 'Can Capitalism Recover?' *The New Clarion*, 43, 1.4.1933, 324; G.D.H. Cole, *What is*, 10. Cole had no first-hand experience of the Soviet Union. His wife, however, visited the USSR in July-August 1932 and was stunned, alongside other British planists, by Stalin's industrialisation. [see undated letters from M. Cole to G.D.H. Cole, July-August 1932, PMC/NC/B1/14/1-9] Cole co-authored the

planning, he would confidently claim, as late as 1947, that the USSR was ‘a legitimate form of democracy’ under which workers could enjoy a different, but in some respects higher, degree of freedom than their Western counterparts.<sup>866</sup> In contrast, de Man repeatedly denounced the ‘dangerous illusion’ of emulating the Soviets.<sup>867</sup>

These differences of opinion were not unknown to Cole, who noted in February 1934 that de Man’s politics were ‘essentially reformist, much more than practically socialist.’<sup>868</sup> A close reading of his foreword to the NFRB edition of the Belgian Labour Plan reveals that he had grasped the not-so-radical character of de Man’s proposals, and most of his comments were actually aimed at showing why ‘the Belgian *Plan du Travail* will not, as it stands, meet British needs.’<sup>869</sup> His key premise was indeed that British socialists had not to ‘imitate what the Belgian Socialists have done’ but rather ‘consider how far its underlying notions can be of use to them in working out a policy and a strategy appropriate to British conditions.’<sup>870</sup> Cole underscored that the Plan intended to ‘strengthen’ the ‘lesser forms of Capitalism, by extending credit to them more freely and taking measures for general economic recovery which will enlarge the market for their products.’<sup>871</sup> This caution, according to Cole, stemmed from the peculiar social structure of Belgium, ‘one in which small-scale production and trade occupy a more important place’ than in Britain<sup>872</sup> – a remark that de Man regarded as

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foreword of the book which summarised the NFRB reports about the trip: see C.R. Attlee and G.D.H. Cole, ‘Introduction’, *Twelve Studies in Soviet Russia*, M. Cole (ed.), London, Gollancz 1933, 7-11.

<sup>866</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man’s Guide to the Post-War World*, London, Gollancz 1947, 802. On the pro-Soviet bias of British socialist intellectuals in the 1930s, see B. Jones, *The Russia Complex: The British Labour Party and the Soviet Union*, Manchester, Manchester University Press 1977, 11-32; P. Flewers, *The New Civilisation? Understanding Stalin’s Soviet Union, 1929-1941*, London, Francis Boutle Publishers 2008, esp. 71-112.

<sup>867</sup> H. de Man, *Die Sozialistische Ideen*, 342.

<sup>868</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘L’avenir du socialisme’, *L’esprit international*, 30, 1934, 192. Cole drew an analogy between De Man and Déat. The article is dated 25.2.1934.

<sup>869</sup> G.D.H. Cole, ‘Introduction’, *Planned Socialism*, 13

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>872</sup> *Ibidem*.

empirically false.<sup>873</sup> In addition to the different socio-economic impact of the economic crisis in Belgium and Britain, Cole observed that British socialists, operating under a two-party system, were not obliged to secure ‘the adhesion’ of the ‘middle groups’ without which a parliamentary majority was out of reach: ‘in Belgium, or in France, the “Plan” may involve government by coalition: in Great Britain there is no reason at all why it should.’<sup>874</sup> What British socialists could learn from de Man, however, was the importance of delivering a clear, compelling message: ‘the British plan of action has been neither so logically and clearly set out as the Belgian, nor supported with so plainly formulated a *rationale* of action, nor so explicitly directed to securing the support of a majority of the electorate.’<sup>875</sup> Cole strongly emphasised the necessity of setting out ‘a series of order measures, to be accomplished over a set period of time, and not merely a long list of aspirations, without order or set date for their achievement.’<sup>876</sup> He surely realised that the terminology of planning could be employed to revive, rather than replace, reformism: by February 1936, he feared that, despite ‘much talk’ within the LP, ‘a reversion to a policy of new-Liberalism’ was more likely than the development of ‘a planist sort of Socialism’.<sup>877</sup> Cripps’ and Cole’s misgivings about the LP’s real intentions led them, from mid-1936, to recommend the creation of a broad working-class coalition – either a United Front with the Communists and the ILP, or a

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<sup>873</sup> See letter from H. de Man to G.D.H. Cole, 14.2.1936, PGDHC/NC/C/4/1-74. This was de Man’s only critical remark on Cole’s foreword, and it must be flagged up for it strengthens the argument that de Man defended small ownership as a countervailing power to the socialised sector, not as a mere tactical device to win a majority of the popular vote.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>876</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>877</sup> Letter from G.D.H. Cole to H. de Man, 22.2.1936, AHDM/IISG/227. Dalton’s big book in favour of planning, *Practical Socialism for Britain*, was indeed set against ‘our melodramatists of the Socialist League’ [H. Dalton, *The Fateful Years, Memoirs 1931-1945*, London, Frederick Muller 1957, 58]

People's Front open to all well-intentioned progressives – against fascism and war.<sup>878</sup> Assuming, perhaps with an eye to Belgian events<sup>879</sup>, that a Plan offered no effective guarantee of the LP's sincere commitment to socialisation, the Leaguers no longer persisted in fighting for a programme of action, and focused instead on the launch of the pro-Communist Unity Campaign, in January 1937, which ended up with the disbandment of the SL after their members faced expulsion from the LP.<sup>880</sup> By then, however, the Labour Plan had lost traction in Belgium and a planist strategy seemed outmoded.

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Cole's theoretical reservations about the Belgian Labour Plan are therefore crucial to understand why British socialists paid scant attention to it. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that this was the only reason. At least other four key factors must be cited: the socio-economic situation of the mid-1930s; the very limited impact of *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* in the 1920s; the lack of a deeply rooted, pre-existing Marxist tradition to battle against; the anti-intellectualism of British trade unionism. Each of them deserves a concise but separate discussion.

To begin with, although the Great Slump hit the country severely, the National Government – by abandoning the gold standard in September 1931 and embracing, albeit reluctantly, a policy of cheap money – was able to impose a mild version of austerity, without provoking the same degree of social unrest that affected Germany or

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<sup>878</sup> See e.g. S. Cripps, 'Weld the Workers Together', *The Socialist*, 5, 1936, 1; S. Cripps, 'Problems of Unity and the People's Front', *The Labour Monthly*, 19, 1937, 78-82; G.D.H. Cole, 'A British People's Front: Why, and How?', *The Political Quarterly*, 4, 1936, 490-498; G.D.H. Cole, 'The United Front – and the People's Front', *The Labour Monthly*, 1, 1937, 14-19. G.D.H. Cole, *The People's Front*, esp. 13-34.

<sup>879</sup> Cole noted that Van Zeeland's measures were 'very far short of the programme of "structural reformation" proclaimed in the *Plan du Travail*.' [G.D.H. Cole, 'Planned Socialism', *The New Statesman & Nation*, 272, 9.5.1936, 693]

<sup>880</sup> On the Unity campaign, see B. Pimlott, *Labour*, 98-108; M. Bohr, *The Socialist League*, 356-388.

Belgium. Protective tariffs and social security benefits, however inadequate to meet actual needs, also contributed to soften the social impact of the crisis.<sup>881</sup> By and large, the ‘undramatic’ way in which Britain went through the Depression pre-empted political radicalisation, both on the Left and on the Right.<sup>882</sup> By the same token, with only marginal segments of the middle class fearful of losing its status and no serious domestic fascist threat within sight, the appeal of planism was substantially reduced.<sup>883</sup>

Other circumstances within the socialist camp worked against de Man’s agenda. To begin with, it must be stressed that, in a number of countries, de Man’s early writings, and his extensive critique of Marxism in particular, had created a favourable disposition towards planism in young activists such as Max Buset, André Philip, and Carlo Rosselli.<sup>884</sup> But they had no equivalent of them in Britain: when the English translation of *Zur Psychologie* was published in 1928, it passed almost unnoticed.<sup>885</sup> The only left-wing intellectual of some reputation to review it was the then 30-year old Kingsley Martin, who appreciated de Man’s ‘common sense and practical knowledge’ but was not thrilled by the book.<sup>886</sup> An anonymous reviewer on the *New Statesman*

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<sup>881</sup> In the words of Margaret Cole, ‘it is slightly ironical that after the worst of the depression the economic condition of the working class, *taken as a whole*, was rising slightly, owing largely to the rise of new industries and the ruin of the primary producers in other countries.’ [M. Cole, ‘The Labour Movement between the Wars’, *Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville*, D.E. Martin and D. Rubinstein (eds.), London, Croom Helm 1979, 223] For an overview, see S. Glyn and J. Oxborrow, *Interwar Britain: A Social and Economic History*, London, George Allen & Unwin 1976, esp. 133-139, 265-268. On Britain’s rejection of the ‘gold standard mentality’, see also B. Eichengreen and P. Temin, ‘The Gold Standard and the Great Depression’, *Contemporary European History*, 9, 2, 2000, 183-207.

<sup>882</sup> A. Thorpe, ‘Introduction’, *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-War Britain*, A. Thorpe (ed.), Exeter, University of Exeter Press 1989, 7.

<sup>883</sup> As pointed out by Cole: see G.D.H. Cole, ‘Introduction’, *Planned Socialism*, 9-11. Cripps suggested the National Government was pushing the country towards a ‘Country Gentleman’s Fascism’ whose path, however, differed from Italy’s and Germany’s. [S. Cripps, *National Fascism in Britain*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., 8]

<sup>884</sup> See chapter II of this dissertation.

<sup>885</sup> In 1935, the publishing house George Allen & Unwin described the book as a ‘commercial failure’. [see letter from George Allen & Unwin to H. De Man, 29.3.1935, AHDM/IISG/224]

<sup>886</sup> K. Martin, ‘Socialism’, *The Nation & Athenaeum*, 14, 14.7.1928, 502.

positively noticed de Man's admiration for British socialism.<sup>887</sup> Favourable remarks were made, a few years later, by Alfred Zimmern and Godfrey Elton in a public exchange on the future of the LP, showing that, at least within a tiny elite, de Man had been read and assimilated.<sup>888</sup> In general, however, *Zur Psychologie* seems not to have impressed British intellectuals as much as their counterparts in Continental Europe, and did not spark any substantial debate within the Labour intelligentsia. As a consequence, de Man was still poorly known in the 1930s and British planism could not be bolstered by his climb to power in Belgium.

This is arguably linked to a third factor, the weakness of Marxism in Britain. In Germany, France, and Belgium, Marx's teachings had become the foundation of the dominant social democratic ideology. In Britain, on the contrary, Fabianism gained the upper hand.<sup>889</sup> As a consequence, unlike Kautsky, Blum, or Vandervelde, Labour leaders in the mid-1920s were reluctant to pay lip service to Marxism, and often tended to downplay its relevance: even MacDonald, who did praise the author of *Das Kapital* for his charisma, held that 'it is not Marxism that survives but Marx', as an inspirational figure.<sup>890</sup> Because of that, de Man's critique of Marxism fell flat, and failed to strike a chord with the new generation yearning for fresh ideas. Ironically, in their struggle against conventional wisdom, planists like Cole contended that British socialists would

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<sup>887</sup> See 'Socialism under Fire', *The New Statesman*, 796, 28.7.1928, 518. A few years earlier, Martin had written a long essay on the war generation in England that expressed a frustration with established truths and the crumbling social order comparable to de Man's. It was published in French in 1925: see K. Martin, 'The War Generation in England', undated manuscript, in KMA/US/SxMs11/4/4/2/24/1. There is no evidence, however, of an enduring interest in de Man by Martin.

<sup>888</sup> See A. Zimmern, 'A National Labour Party?', *The New Statesman & Nation*, 54, 5.3.1932, 291; G. Elton, 'The Aristocratic Embrace', *The New Statesman & Nation*, 64, 14.5.1932, 616.

<sup>889</sup> See chapter I of this dissertation.

<sup>890</sup> R. MacDonald, *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, London, Cassell and Company 1921, 56. See also R. MacDonald, *Socialism and Society*, London, Independent Labour Party 1905, 92-108.



benefit from rediscovering certain aspects of Marx's philosophy instead of dismissing them as decrepit.<sup>891</sup>

Last but not least, the British trade unions' unwillingness to endorse planism must be taken into account.<sup>892</sup> In Belgium, the CS had been pivotal in pushing the POB to accept the Labour Plan.<sup>893</sup> In France, the CGT had become the last gathering point for planists after they failed to seize control of the SFIO.<sup>894</sup> In Britain, the TUC resisted attempts to move the LP to the left by sticking to the assumption that workers would be better off by choosing to cooperate with, instead of challenging, big business.<sup>895</sup> This is not to say that British trade unions opposed economic planning as a technique: quite the contrary.<sup>896</sup> Yet their main objective was the achievement of institutional recognition on an equal footing to business within the machinery of planning, a position – much to the dismay of the SL – that did *not* require a transition to socialism.<sup>897</sup> Furthermore, consistently with a pattern that dated back to the late nineteenth-century, trade unionists

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<sup>891</sup> See e.g. G.D.H. Cole, *What Marx Really Meant*, London, Gollancz 1934. Nonetheless, Cole drew a distinction between Marxism as a methodology and Marxism as a crystallised set of beliefs similar to de Man's: 'An "orthodox" Marxist may be learned in the Marxian scriptures: the one thing he cannot be is a follower of Karl Marx.' [G.D.H. Cole, 'Marxism and the World Situation of To-Day', VV.AA., *Marxism*, London, Chapman & Hall 1935, 208]

<sup>892</sup> Their hostility was key also in undermining support for the SL. As one Leaguer bitterly put it, 'it is not often realised that the Labour Party is really the trade unions participating in politics.' [J.T. Murphy, *New Horizons*, London, John Lane The Bodley Head 1941, 310]

<sup>893</sup> See chapter V of this dissertation.

<sup>894</sup> See chapter VI of this dissertation.

<sup>895</sup> Communists described this attitude as 'Mondism': see e.g. W. Gallacher, *Mondism and MacDonaldism*, London, Communist Party of Great Britain 1928; A. Hutt, *British Trade Unionism: A Short History*, London, Lawrence & Wishart 1962, 119-143. On the moderating influence of British trade unionism in the Thirties, see R.M. Martin, *TUC: The Growth of a Pressure Group, 1868-1976*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1980, 205-243; H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1963), London, Penguin Books 1992, 176-199.

<sup>896</sup> In 1931, the TUC welcomed 'the present tendency towards a planned and regulated economy in our national life': see *Report of the Proceedings at 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Trades Union Congress held at Bristol, September 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 1931*, W. Citrine (ed.), London, Co-Operative Printing Society 1931, 406.

<sup>897</sup> Left-wing critics lamented that 'the more responsible men, in control of the Labour movement are very concerned to help those intelligent capitalists, who stand for planning, to crush the stupid and inert capitalists, the type who say, "this system will last my lifetime and it's very good for me while it lasts".' [E. C. Wilkinson and E. Conze, *Why Fascism?*, Selwin & Blount, n.d., 244-245] John Thomas Murphy even warned trade unionists against 'the propagation of "Roosevelt Recovery Plans" for Britain' which he thought represented 'unconscious support to Fascist plans for the "Totalitarian" or "Corporative State."' [J.T. Murphy, *Fascism! The Socialist Answer*, London, The Socialist League, n.d., 9]

remained deeply suspicious of intellectuals as a class: the TUC General Secretary Walter Citrine refused to ‘waste’ his time by discussing ‘ultimate Socialist objectives of a theoretical character.’<sup>898</sup> Highly indicative in this regard is the attitude of Bevin, in theory more open to Cole’s proposals.<sup>899</sup> In 1932, Cole invited Bevin to join the SL Executive Council but Bevin, despite his previous association with the SSIP, refused, on the ground that he would find himself ‘in a difficulty – torn by two loyalties’, and lamented that the SL was likely to have ‘a bias against Trade Unionists.’<sup>900</sup> Bevin also hinted at the fact that the SL might also turn into ‘a sort of ladder’ for ‘careerists’, i.e. members of radical fringes interested in taking over the LP.<sup>901</sup> Bevin’s concerns about radicalisation emerge even more clearly from an exchange of letters he had with Cole in December 1935. The latter warned him that intellectuals could ‘develop an anti-Trade Union complex largely because they feel the Trade Unions have no use for them’ and wished that the two groups would rather ‘pull together’ and ‘work out [...] a short and simple platform of immediate projects, including both ameliorative and socialistic measures.’<sup>902</sup> Although he admitted the SL had failed to achieve that purpose, he declared that intellectuals and trade-unionists had a common interest in turning the LP ‘into a really united and well-led party, capable both of getting a majority, and of using

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<sup>898</sup> So Citrine reacted to a SL meeting he attended in 1933. [W. Citrine, *Men and Work: An Autobiography*, London, Hutchinson 1964, 300] In his diary, Dalton recorded that there was ‘much suspicion’ towards the SL ‘in orthodox circles, at Transport House and on the National Executive, and some opposition within S.S.I.P. itself.’ [H. Dalton, Entry of Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October 1932, *The Political Diary*, 169]

<sup>899</sup> Bevin had published a short tract with Cole in 1931, funded *The New Clarion*, and produced his own plan to tackle the economic crisis. [see E. Bevin and G.D.H. Cole, *The Crisis: What It is, How It Arose, What to Do*, London, New Statesman & Nation 1931, E. Bevin, *My Plan for 2,000,000 workless*, London, Clarion Press 1933]

<sup>900</sup> Letter from E. Bevin to G.D.H. Cole, 24.9.1932, EBP/UW/MSS126-EB-X-12.

<sup>901</sup> Ibidem. Bevin turned down a similar offer for the vice-chairmanship of the NFRB: see letter from E. Bevin to G.D.H. Cole, 29.9.1932, EBP/UW/MSS126-EB-X-12. On Bevin’s misgivings, see A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Vol. I: Trade Union Leader, 1881-1940*, London, Heinemann 1960, 515-516; M. Worley, *Labour inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars*, London, I.B. Tauris 2005, 144.

<sup>902</sup> Letter from G.D.H. Cole to E. Bevin, 2.12.1935, EBP/UW/MSS126-EB-X-15.

it when it has been got', overcoming the 'present senseless, and largely meaningless, division between left and right.'<sup>903</sup> But Bevin was unimpressed by Cole's emotional appeal. Rather, he bluntly stated that 'the difference between the intellectuals and the Trade Unions is this: you have no responsibility, you can fly off at a tangent as the wind takes you. We, however, must be consistent, and we have a great amount of responsibility. We cannot wake up in the morning and get a brain wave, when father says 'turn' and half a million people turn automatically.'<sup>904</sup> Besides, he regretted that unions had tolerated, or even trusted, figures as Mosley and Cripps for too long. Finally, he expressed scepticism towards grand schemes: 'I do not believe in the "great" man idea. My experience of life has been that if you can form your judgments as a result of the common contribution arising from the ordinary commonsense (sic) of people, you have a better chance of making progress.'<sup>905</sup> In response, Cole sent him a copy of his translation of the Belgian Labour Plan as an example of virtuous cooperation between intellectuals and trade unions but nothing suggests that Bevin's convictions were shaken by it.<sup>906</sup>

There were therefore many obstacles to a successful reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in Britain, but one is left wondering whether Cole and Cripps could have been more successful, had they supported a type of type planism closer to de Man's. After all, with the defection of MacDonald, the electoral wipe-out suffered by his successor Arthur Henderson, and the benevolent encouragement that the new party

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<sup>903</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>904</sup> Letter from E. Bevin to G.D.H. Cole, 31.12.1935, EBP/UW/MSS126-EB-X-12.

<sup>905</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>906</sup> Letter from G.D.H. Cole to E. Bevin, 9.1.1936, EBP/UW/MSS126-EB-X-12. In 1944, G.D.H. Cole told his wife Bevin had 'a phobia of intellectuals [...]. It is a great pity, but I should call it a case of odium proximi.' ['Transcript of a Discussion between G.D.H. Cole and Margaret Cole, 1944', PGDHC/NC/D1/31/8]

leader, George Lansbury, gave to the SL<sup>907</sup>, the old guard was undoubtedly on the defensive between 1931 and 1935, and a detailed programme aimed at creating a mixed economy may have been won over moderates and trade unionists alike. It is indeed highly plausible that the SL's obsession with large-scale planning, let alone its anti-parliamentary and pro-Communist drift, eventually backfired.<sup>908</sup> In this light, it may be no accident that two of the most seminal English-language socialist books of the late 1930s – Douglas Jay's *The Socialist Case* and Evan Durbin's *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* – refrained from celebrating the alleged virtues of economic planning as if they were distancing themselves from the belligerent talk of the Labour Left. According to Jay, a journalist at the *Daily Herald*, "planning" amounted to any interference with the price-mechanism. In his view, it had to be 'intelligent, not comprehensive', and could not be pursued 'at the expense of the freedom of the consuming masses', but it was barely mentioned in his lengthy tract.<sup>909</sup> Durbin, a lecturer at the LSE and influential contributor to the NFRB, used the term to categorise 'the substitution of monopoly control for competition in all the markets and industries that it touches', often against the public interest.<sup>910</sup> On a number of issues, Durbin was no moderate: he supported nationalisations, and had previously acknowledged that planning was to 'play a part in the strategy of democratic socialism, or Social

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<sup>907</sup> A behaviour that annoyed Bevin and the TUC: see e.g. letter from E. Bevin to G. Lansbury, 8.3.1933; letter from G. Lansbury to E. Bevin, 9.3.1933, GLP/LSE/28.

<sup>908</sup> Around 1935, Dalton joked that, had he penned a resolution to socialise the Solar System, a Socialist Leaguer would have moved an amendment to add the words 'and the Milky Way.' [H. Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, 59-60] In Pimlott's pitiless analysis, 'by October 1933 the League had begun to gain a reputation as a disruptive body of middle-class intellectuals grinding a left-wing axe.' [B. Pimlott, *Labour*, 49]

<sup>909</sup> D. Jay, *The Socialist Case*, London, Faber and Faber 1937, 349, 351. Quotations are drawn from the penultimate chapter, significantly entitled 'The limits of planning'.

<sup>910</sup> E.F.M. Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism: An Essay on Social Policy*, London, The Labour Book Service 1940, 100.

Democracy.’<sup>911</sup> Yet he was also keen to stress that ‘planning does not in the least imply the existence of *a* Plan [...]. Planning does not, and should not, imply any dogmatism about the future.’<sup>912</sup> This was a clear blow to the SL.

It was only after gaining first-hand experience of the war economy that Jay dropped his reservations about state-led planning and Durbin set out more compelling arguments in its favour.<sup>913</sup> By 1945, however, the political landscape had changed so spectacularly that many of the intellectual controversies of the Thirties had been overtaken by events. Forced to grapple with reconstruction and the necessity of a steadfast recovery, socialists in power were now ready to embrace planning, and even tentatively introduce it, but still without committing themselves to a detailed Plan. The long-term consequences of this enduring pragmatism will be discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation.

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<sup>911</sup> E.F.M. Durbin, ‘Memorandum on the Principles of Socialist Planning’, January 1934, FSA/NFRB/LSE/J/25/3.

<sup>912</sup> E. F. M. Durbin, ‘The Importance of Planning’, *New Trends in Socialism*, G. Catlin (ed.), London, Lovat Dickson & Thompson Limited 1935, 147, 149.

<sup>913</sup> See e.g. D. Jay, ‘Plans and Priorities’, VV.AA., *The Road to Recovery: Fabian Society Lectures given in the autumn of 1947*, London, Allen Wingate 1948, 9-26; E.F.M. Durbin, ‘The Problems of the Socialised Sector’, *Problems of Economic Planning: Papers on Planning and Economics*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1949, 58-90. See also the draft notes for ‘Economics and Democratic Socialism’, which Durbin failed to complete before his death, in EDP/LSE/6/1.

## *Conclusion*

### **Planning without Planism?**

#### **Thoughts on Post-War Social Democracy**

While individualism and *laissez-faire* distinguished too rigidly between man as a producer and man as a citizen, do not let us rush wildly to the other extreme. Discipline and efficiency can be accepted in their limited application to the economic process of society without any corresponding regulation of the human spirit in its widest sense.

Harold Macmillan, 1933<sup>914</sup>

Nothing is more remarkable in the history of ideas than the speed and thoroughness with which the idea of planning the economic activity of human society has seized the imagination of European man.

Richard Law, 1950<sup>915</sup>

This dissertation has followed Hendrik de Man's trajectory between 1914 and 1936 circa, explaining how its unusual personal and intellectual background allowed him to become a distinguished critic of Marxism in the 1920s and a key player in Belgian politics in the 1930s, and discussing how his planism was received in Belgium, France, and Britain.

It initially investigated the paradox of Western European social democracy before 1914, arguing that the numerical strength of the movement obscured its inner ideological weaknesses, such as the difficulty of reconciling practical reformism with revolutionary verbalism and its anti-statist rhetoric, and its presumption that the proletariat had become an international unitary actor.

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<sup>914</sup> H. Macmillan, *Reconstruction: A Plea for a National Policy*, London, Macmillan and Co. 1933, 127.

<sup>915</sup> R. Law, *Return from Utopia*, London, Faber and Faber 1950, 68.

De Man's evolving views from 1914 till 1919 were explored to examine why he lost faith in Marxism and came to appreciate liberal democratic values: this thesis has suggested that it was during the period of the First World War that he concluded it was possible to reform capitalism, largely due to his trips to Russia and to the United States. The thesis also explored de Man's extensive critique of Marxism published in 1926, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus*, revealing the scale of the dispute that this book led to with his former masters, Karl Kautsky and Emile Vandervelde, but also how it inspired other young Western European socialist intellectuals, all yearning for an ideological regeneration of the Left.

One of the key findings of this thesis is that de Man's conception of planning developed out of his first-hand experience of the downfall of the Weimar Republic and the outbreak of the Great Depression, and this study has emphasised de Man's rare ability to create an original intellectual synthesis to overcome the ongoing crisis of social democratic parties.

The dissertation also investigated the rise and fall of the Belgian Labour Plan, de Man's main attempt to put his ideas into practice, and argued that his endeavours to convert socialists to the ideology of planism, after a promising start, were resisted by wide sections of its own party, the *Parti Ouvrier Belge*, and that this heavily contributed to de Man's failure as party leader and Minister. This dissertation also uncovered the extent to which the Belgian Labour Plan was influential in France, pointing out that various groups drew inspiration from de Man – the neosocialists, the SFIO planists, and the CGT planists –: a key finding here is that the events of February 6<sup>th</sup> and Léon Blum's hostility to the idea of a mixed economy eventually prevented the launch of a French Labour Plan.

The reception of the Belgian Labour Plan in Britain has also been explored: this thesis argues that despite that, despite the institutional connections between the Belgian campaign for the Labour Plan, the Socialist League, and the New Fabian Research Bureau, some of the most consistent advocates of economic planning within the British Labour Party preferred to champion a more radical platform than de Man's, and thus British socialists in general paid scant attention to his views.

Altogether, as this study shows, there is little doubt that de Man's political career fell short of expectations, even before the infamous summer of 1940, when his frustration with Belgian democracy made him believe that the German occupation could at least be a deliverance from what he thought was a rigged parliamentary system incapable of self-reform. But what about his wider, more ambitious design to reinvent Western European socialism? Is it plausible to argue, as Mark Mazower did, that de Man's ideas 'bore fruit after the war' as the Labour Plan 'was in many ways the model for state planning in much of Western Europe after 1945'<sup>916</sup>?

On the one hand, de Man's name was heavily discredited because of his collaboration with the Nazis, and former POB members contributed to fuel the myth that he had joined the party after returning from Germany 'in much the same manner as a pirate boards a ship', as if they had been innocent victims of his ruthless machinations during the 1930s.<sup>917</sup> Furthermore, his looming shadow was enough to inhibit new revisionist temptations. When the new Belgian Socialist Party (PSB) was founded, in 1945, on the ashes of the POB, the delegates decided to pledge allegiance to the original *Charte de Quaregnon* written in 1894 instead of emending it because, as de Brouckère

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<sup>916</sup> M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, London, Penguin 1998, 138.

<sup>917</sup> J.-A. Goris [M. Gijzen], *Belgium in Bondage*, New York, L.B. Fischer 1943, 45. See e.g. E. Roselin, 'Les devoirs de l'homme et du citoyen: dire la vérité', *La Wallonie*, 22.1.1948.



warned Herman Vos, ‘innocent novelties [...] may lead to fascism.’<sup>918</sup> The backlash against planism was huge. Pietro Nenni, an exile and leader of the clandestine Italian Socialist Party, following a close reading of *Après Coup*, commented in his diary on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942 that de Man’s ‘neoreformism’ was still ‘a serious danger for the labour movement’, and had to be intellectually denounced.<sup>919</sup> For their part, Communist intellectuals used de Man’s career as a cautionary tale, ‘a story that ought to make our eternal overtakers (*nos éternels amateurs de dépassement*), and all socialists who have been offered, are offered or will be offered new, non-Marxist socialist formulas, to reflect.’<sup>920</sup>

On the other hand, most of the weaknesses de Man had denounced in the 1920s continued to haunt the socialist movement twenty years later, and the remedies envisaged by his successors sometimes echoed his recommendations. Interestingly, the first manifesto issued by the PSB unambiguously stated that ‘the Party needs intellectuals’: doctors, nurses, teachers, professors, chemists, architects, and other professionals were warmly invited to join.<sup>921</sup> This orientation became part of a broader strategy pursued in the following decade, during which the PSB gradually abandoned the Marxist jargon to woo the *classes moyennes*, and finally managed to expand its base well beyond traditional working class voters.<sup>922</sup> The party’s economic agenda, centred

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<sup>918</sup> Cited in S.P. Kramer, ‘Belgian Socialism at the Liberation, 1944-1950’, *Res Publica*, 1, 1978, 117.

<sup>919</sup> P. Nenni, *Vent’anni di fascismo*, G. Dallò (ed.), Milan, Edizioni Avanti! 1964, 327. Unsurprisingly, Nenni remained a thoroughgoing Marxist who supported an alliance with the Communist Party in the 1948 election. On Nenni’s outlook, see A. de Grand, “‘To Learn Nothing and To Forget Nothing’”; Italian Socialism and the Experience of Exile Politics, 1935-1945’, *Contemporary European History*, 4, 2005, 539-558.

<sup>920</sup> V. Leduc, *Le marxisme, est-il dépassé?*, Paris, Raison d’être 1946, 54.

<sup>921</sup> P.S.B, *La ligne politique du Parti précédé de la déclaration des principes: textes adoptés par le Congrès de la Victoire des 9, 10 et 11 juin 1945*, Brussels, SOC 1945, 47.

<sup>922</sup> See S. Timperman, ‘1945-1954: Le PSB s’ouvre aux classes moyennes’, *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 3-4, 1998 445-498. The change of name, from *Parti Ouvrier Belge* to *Parti Socialiste Belge*, somewhat anticipated these developments, watering down the class character of the party.

on the notion of *économie dirigée*, pointed to the need to spread private property instead of suppressing it, establish the ‘outline of an economic programme’ under which the ‘private enterprise and individual efforts’ could ‘develop with the highest degree of freedom’ without damaging the ‘general interests’, and ‘prevent the formation of a financial oligarchy choking industries and small businesses by a more severe regulation of credit.’<sup>923</sup> Stripped of the fiery rhetoric of the 1930s, part of the language of the Labour Plan resonated in the PSB propaganda.

These affinities were indicative of a significant change of attitude: Belgian socialists as well as their counterparts elsewhere in Europe came to terms with the mixed economy, accepting that framework as entirely compatible with their values and long-term vision of a socialist society, and in that respect de Man’s key insight was vindicated. This was especially true for British socialists who, having achieved a resounding victory at the 1945 general election, nationalised the Bank of England, civil aviation, coal, communications, transport, electricity, gas, iron, and steel, built a universal health care system, established a national insurance, and reformed housing and education.<sup>924</sup> In France, nationalisations were carried out, without much opposition, by a series of provisional, tripartite governments between 1944 and 1946, of which the SFIO was partner. A *Commissariat Général au Plan* was set up, under the direction of Jean Monnet, and given the task of rebuilding and modernising the national economy. Social security was also expanded in 1946-1947.<sup>925</sup> Yet neither in these countries nor in Belgium socialists sold these measures to the public in purely socialist, let alone

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<sup>923</sup> Exécutif du P.S.B., *Qu’entend-on par économie dirigée?*, Brussels, PSB 1949, 4, 8.

<sup>924</sup> For an overview, see K.O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1984, esp. 94-187; P. Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain, 1945-51*, London, Jonathan Cape 1992, esp. 119-215,

<sup>925</sup> For an overview, see C. Gruson, *Origine et espoirs de la planification française*, Paris, Dunod 1968, 38-47; M. Margairaz, *L’Etat, les finances et l’économie: histoire d’une conversion, 1932-1952. Vol. II*, 807-859.

Marxist, terms.<sup>926</sup> Partly, this may be explained with the atmosphere of the early Cold War, as democratic socialists felt obliged to ideologically distance themselves from the Communists.<sup>927</sup> But, from a wider perspective, this cautious approach reflected the growing awareness that, in the peculiar post-war context, capitalism could be tamed, full employment was not out of reach, and striking a fair balance between the public and the private sector was vital to ensure social stability, economic progress, and peace. As Kingsley Martin rhetorically asked in 1951, ‘if everybody were guaranteed a minimum standard of life, if the main features of political democracy were safeguarded, and, in addition to these rights of free speech and all the other civil rights won by the bourgeoisie, there were added the new guaranteed rights of social security, adequate leisure, and adequate employment, would it not be idiotic to denounce such a system as Keynesian, reformist, Kautskyist, or any other phrase from the vocabulary of Marxist controversy, and to demand, in order to produce something called Socialism, that we should fight class war to the bitter end with all that implies?’<sup>928</sup> As other self-declared socialist intellectuals, Martin had radical instincts, and he firmly denied that the Labour in power had already accomplished those goals.<sup>929</sup> Very few Western European socialists, however, would have answered “No” to his question. In practice, the accommodation with the Welfare State greatly contributed to the waning of

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<sup>926</sup> See e.g. S. Bernstein, ‘La SFIO’, *Les nationalisations de la Libération*, C. Andrieu, L. Le Van and A. Prost (eds.), Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques 1987, 168-184; C. Ellis, ‘Letting it Slip: The Labour Party and the “Mystical Halo” of Nationalization, 1951-1964’, *Contemporary British History*, 1, 2012, 47-71.

<sup>927</sup> After having elected its new secretary, Guy Mollet, on an orthodox Marxist platform in 1946, the SFIO found itself torn between allegiance to the PCF and support to the Christian Democratic *Mouvement républicain populaire*, and in 1947 chose the latter: see B.D. Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartisme, 1944-1947*, London, George Weidenfield & Nicolson 1965, 197-219, 252-265; R. Quilliot, *La S.F.I.O. et l'exercice du pouvoir, 1944-1958*, Paris, Fayard 1972, 170-184, 228-234.

<sup>928</sup> K. Martin, *Socialism and the Welfare State*, London, Fabian Tract 1951, 10.

<sup>929</sup> See *ibid.*, 10-14. For a similar point, see e.g. I. Mikardo, *The Second Five Years: A Labour Programme for 1950*, London, Fabian Society 1950; G.D.H. Cole, *Is this Socialism?*, London, New Statesman & Nation 1954.

revolutionary fervour within the socialist camp. Books like Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, which emphasised the 'diminishing area of controversy' between Left and Right on economic issues, or André Philip's *Pour un socialisme humaniste*, in which socialism was broadly defined as the 'technique of realisation of democratic values', set the tone for the new pragmatic era.<sup>930</sup>

Was all this consistent with de Man's teachings? Only to a certain extent. Amidst the Depression, the call for "planning", an elusive catchword in itself, was widespread and de Man's followers could not retrospectively claim the monopoly over it. Furthermore, differences in scope and size of the planned sector matter. Robert Marjolin – who pursued a highly successful career as civil servant, after his early involvement in French left-wing politics during the 1930s – contended in his memoirs that pre-war planism and post-war planning should not be confused: after 1945, 'the point was to allocate scarce resources – labour, raw materials, foreign exchange, equipment – for the uses that appeared the most important. To do that, it was necessary to draw up a set of priorities. And one could do so without being *dirigiste*, interventionist on principle, and *a fortiori* socialist' whereas original planism 'was an ideological construct. It aimed to replace the market forces at a time when these could still operate and would have yielded the results sought (economic expansion, reduction of employment) if only the necessary conditions were met.'<sup>931</sup> Marjolin's statement that pre-war planism wanted to fully replace the market is inaccurate, although he may have been misled by his own experience as member of *Révolution Constructive*, which in 1933-34 joined forces other

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<sup>930</sup> A. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, London, Jonathan Cape 1956, 498; A. Philip, *Pour un socialisme humaniste*, Paris, Plon 1960, 195.

<sup>931</sup> R. Marjolin, *Le travail*, 67. For Marjolin, these 'necessary conditions' amounted to deficit spending.

radical, thoroughly anti-capitalist fringes before the Lille Congress.<sup>932</sup> Nevertheless, his remarks hint at an important difference: pre-war planning, and planism in general, often envisioned the micro-management of the economy by the state whereas post-war planning leaned towards macro-management, limiting direct interference.<sup>933</sup> Moreover, the new Keynesian synthesis stressed the importance of international cooperation and of a sound coordination between fiscal and monetary policy: markets were meant to be embedded not only nationally but also internationally, through the Bretton Woods system.<sup>934</sup> De Man did not ignore these dimensions: throughout his life, he repeatedly expressed sympathy for the vision of an economically integrated Europe<sup>935</sup> while his support for devaluation in 1934 demonstrates that he had a sharper understanding of monetary affairs than most of the socialists of the time.<sup>936</sup> Yet it remains the case that, during the Thirties, he overemphasised the ability of individual nation states to spend their way out of the Depression<sup>937</sup>, and the economics underpinning the Plan remained

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<sup>932</sup> See chapter VI of this dissertation. Marjolin, however, developed an interest in the New Deal which helps explain his subsequent evolution from left-wing socialism to liberal centrism: see R. Marjolin, *Les expériences Roosevelt*, Paris, Librairie Populaire 1934; R. Marjolin, *L'évolution du syndicalisme aux Etats-Unis: de Washington à Roosevelt*, Paris, Alcan 1936.

<sup>933</sup> In the words of David Marquand, 'the Keynesian system was quintessentially a system of indirect rule. The Keynesian managers did not have to dirty their hands in the grubby world where factories are managed, products manufactured and markets captured; they did not even have to deal face to face with those who did. They had only to pull the levers of demand from an aloof sanctum in Treasury Chambers.' [D. Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1991), London, Phoenix Giant 1999, 64]

<sup>934</sup> See J.G. Ruggie, 'International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order', *International Organisation*, 36, 2, 1982, 379-415; D. Markwell, *John Maynard Keynes and International Relations: Economic Paths to War and Peace*, Oxford-New York, Oxford 2006, 210-267.

<sup>935</sup> See chapter IV of this dissertation. An interesting comparison may be drawn with French socialists: see K. Mouré, "'Une éventualité absolument exclue': French Reluctance to Devalue, 1933-1936", *French Historical Studies*, 3, 1988, 479-506.

<sup>936</sup> See chapter V of this dissertation. See also H. de Man, *Réflexions sur la Paix*, Brussels, Éditions de la Toison d'Or 1942, in which de Man sketched out the vision of a post-war European Union based on pooled sovereignty, supranational control of armaments, the abolition of internal tariffs, a common external commercial policy, and close economic cooperation [ibid., esp. 73-76]. It would be interesting to know whether his former followers Spaak and Philip – both staunch advocates of European integration after 1945 – ever read this book, which was seized by German occupants as soon as it was published.

<sup>937</sup> Remarkably little can be found in the Labour Plan or elsewhere in de Man's writings about how to prevent capital flights at the moment of implementing the Plan. Capital flows, however, were already seen as a potential source of political instability during the interwar years. For a contemporary overview,

rudimentary, almost homespun if compared to the macro-economic models produced during and after the Second World War.

Furthermore, unlike de Man, post-war democratic socialists did not feel the necessity of combining support for planning with a commitment to thoroughgoing institutional reforms. After 1945, as Donald Sassoon pointed out, ‘the Left participated in institutional changes and constitution-making only in countries where it was necessary to do so’ but in general showed no inclination to question traditional parliamentary rule: ‘it was as if, throughout Western Europe, the socialist and social-democratic Left had accepted the Leninist view of politics with a special twist: the bourgeois state could not be reformed, it could only be smashed; as the socialists did not wish to smash it, they accepted it in its entirety.’<sup>938</sup> This streak of conservatism caught the eye of de Man. In one of his very rare post-war contributions on the prospects of socialism<sup>939</sup>, a private letter written in January 1949 and published after his death, he held that ‘the greatest fault of this last generation of socialists has been to mistake democracy with the parliamentary regime’, the latter being ‘in total decline since the end of the era of bourgeois revolutions.’<sup>940</sup> The parliamentary system, de Man continued, was only ‘a recent and transient variant’ of democracy which worked ‘well, more or less, only in Britain and Scandinavia’ but elsewhere had proved itself unable to ‘transform the social order by structural reforms’, paving the ground for ‘coalition

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see G. Pirou, *La monnaie française depuis la guerre, 1914-36: inflation, stabilisation, dévaluation*, Paris, Sirey 1936.

<sup>938</sup> D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years*, 128, 129.

<sup>939</sup> After 1945, de Man’s main intellectual concerns revolved around the development of nuclear weapons, the Cold War, and the challenge of mechanisation and technological development. His last published work was devoted to the rise and fall of civilisations, including the Western one: see H. de Man, *Vermassung und Kulturverfall: eine Diagnose unserer Zeit*, Munich, Leo Lehn 1951.

<sup>940</sup> Letter dated 29.1.1949 in ‘Henri de Man’, *Écrits de Paris: revue de questions actuelles*, 117, 1954, 94-95.

governments' dominated by 'the power of money.'<sup>941</sup> Overall, this can be regarded as too bleak picture of post-war Europe, which reflected the mounting *Kulturpessimismus* of the author. Besides, one could observe that dismissing parliamentary rule as a fraud is only a step away from slipping into authoritarianism, a mistake de Man had made in 1940. On the other hand, de Man was probably right in suggesting that, with proportional representation and upper chambers still in place, democratic socialism was bound to stay afloat, lurching from compromise to compromise, slowly losing its original impetus. Here, once again, a major intuition behind the Labour Plan was lost: planning alone was not enough, a detailed set of measures had to be clearly outlined and offered to the voters. Multi-party coalition governments made this impossible, and eventually altered the very nature of democratic socialist parties, which, by the 1970s, frequently stood for the *status quo*.<sup>942</sup> The fate of the SFIO under the French Fourth Republic is revealing in that regard, and it may not be an accident that unrepentant planists like Louis Vallon and André Philip wholeheartedly supported de Gaulle's new constitution in 1958.<sup>943</sup> Certainly a semi-presidential system was better suited to fulfil the planist vision of an energetic and accountable executive power.

All that said, there is plenty of evidence that former planists recognised the paramount role played by the Labour Plan in their *Bildung*. Most notably, Paul Henri Spaak opened his memoirs with a heartfelt, almost emphatic, tribute to de Man: he explained that the latter had 'largely contributed' to persuade him to abandon his

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<sup>941</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>942</sup> See Ralf Dahrendorf's penetrating portrait of right-wing social democrats in R. Dahrendorf, 'The End of Social-Democratic Consensus?: The Legitimacy of Political Power in Contemporary Societies', *Life Chances: Approaches to Social and Political Theory*, London, Weidenfield and Nicolson 1979, 106-121.

<sup>943</sup> In fact, Vallon did much more than this, as he joined de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du peuple français* in 1947, becoming the leader of the social wing of the party. He was one of the few planists who sought to draw links between de Man's thinking, pre-war planism and his own conception of a planned economy. Vallon endorsed François Mitterrand in the 1974 and 1981 presidential elections. On Vallon, see *Louis Vallon ou la politique en liberté: de Jaurès à de Gaulle*, G. Brun (ed.), Paris, Economica 1986, esp. 186-218.

‘romantic and unrealistic’ positions of the early 1930s, confessed he had been ‘seduced, perhaps even a bit subdued’ by his personality, and wished that, despite his ‘severe blunders’ during the war, the father of the Labour Plan would be eventually acknowledged as ‘the most authentic socialist thinker of the twentieth century’ as well as ‘one of the greatest socialists of our time.’<sup>944</sup> More prosaically, André Philip and Jules Moch drew heavily from the CGT Plan of 1934-1935 in setting out their schemes for the future nationalisations and reorganisation of the state during the Resistance period.<sup>945</sup> Furthermore, former planists occupied key positions in the early post-war years. Paul Ramadier served as Prime Minister in 1947 whilst Robert Lacoste became a highly influential Minister of Labour between 1945 and 1950.<sup>946</sup> Hugh Dalton, Stafford Cripps, and Hugh Gaitskell – however loosely associated with de Man <sup>947</sup> – were pivotal figures in the 1945-51 Labour governments.<sup>948</sup> The PSB gained much of his electoral strength under the leadership of Buset, who served as President for nearly fifteen years.<sup>949</sup> Marjolin and Hendrik Brugmans were instrumental to the advance of European integration through their involvement in the implementation of the Marshall Plan and in the founding of the European Movement respectively.<sup>950</sup> Planism was defeated but planists gained power.

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<sup>944</sup> P.-H. Spaak, *Combats inachevés*. Vol. I, 25-26.

<sup>945</sup> For further discussion, see R.F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1981, 173-179; M. Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie: histoire d'une conversion, 1932-1952*. Vol. II, 739-742.

<sup>946</sup> See J.-J. Becker, ‘Paul Ramadier et l’année 1947’, *Paul Ramadier, la République et le socialisme*, S. Bernstein (ed.), Brussels, Complexe 1990, 221-237; P. Brana and J. Dusseau, *Robert Lacoste (1898-1989): de la Dordogne à l’Algérie, un socialiste devant l’histoire*, Paris, L’Harmattan 2010, 129-175.

<sup>947</sup> See chapter VII of this dissertation.

<sup>948</sup> For an overview, see J. Tomlinson, *Democratic Socialism and Economic Policy: The Attlee Years, 1945-1951*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997.

<sup>949</sup> See R. Falony, *Le Parti Socialiste: un demi-siècle de bouleversements, de Max Buset à Elio Di Rupo*, Brussels, Pire 2006, esp. 15-20.

<sup>950</sup> See R. Marjolin, *Le Travail*, 177-205; H. Brugmans, *A travers*, 213-260.



Hence, the final and most difficult question to raise is therefore not whether de Man had influenced a number of democratic socialists at individual level – because he did –, but whether his role in ushering in a new phase in social democratic politics could not have been greater, had the Western European Left been less reluctant to throw off the Marxist heritage at an earlier stage. No conclusive answer can be given but the doubt seems legitimate. If we accept the argument that the establishment of the mixed economy was not only a step forward in economic and social policy but also a major accomplishment for Western European social democracy, then we may speculate whether an earlier, more constructive engagement with planism would have strengthened the appeal of democratic socialism during the interwar years as well as after 1945. Critics blamed de Man and planists in general for having moved too far away from orthodox Marxism. In retrospect, one could at least wonder whether interwar social democratic leaders who opposed de Man were really so wise in their unbending adherence to Marxist theory.

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## DISSERTATIONS

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