

The Struggle for Freedom [Feb, 1888]

Freedom Press

February, 1888

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GERMANY AND AUSTRIA IN 1887

In no countries more than in these (Russia perhaps excepted) is the history of the revolutionary movement last year such a dreary catalog of persecutions and condemnations.

Sentences to penal servitude (Zuchthaus) and imprisonment have been dealt out with a free hand for no other offenses than distribution of prohibited papers, or even electoral manifestos. Workmen's meetings have been abruptly attacked and dispersed often by the police, sometimes even by the military, with the usual results in the form of wholesale arrests and bloodshed. Some officers and soldiers have been suspected of professing Socialist opinions, and arrested at Munich and elsewhere.

An exceptional law exceptionally administered hangs over Socialists, and when the state of siege is proclaimed in a town or a district, there is no outrage to which they are not subjected. In the course of 1887 the state of siege already existing in Berlin, Leipzig, and the larger towns, was proclaimed in Stettin, Offenbach, and other places of secondary importance.

The workmen exiled from Leipzig, Frankfurt, etc., may be numbered by thousands; and the year was inaugurated by the wholesale and violent expulsion of Russians and Poles from the Eastern provinces.

Thus the reaction triumphed all along the line in Germany as elsewhere. The Government has obtained an increase of the army; the convents are, after thirteen years, opened anew. The war scare is ably kept up and manipulated by speculators, assisted by the opportune confidence and advice of men in power.

German detectives have been very busy this year in concocting reports about Anarchists for the official press. Two of them succeeded with the connivance of the Belgian Government, in kidnapping John Neve, one of the best champions of Anarchism, and handing him over to the German Government, which by means of paid witnesses got him convicted of high treason before the Leipzig High Court, and sentenced to thirteen years' penal servitude.

The Austrian Government emulating these glorious feats of its ally and master, delivered to the Russian despot the Nihilist Jassevitch.

Nevertheless, an increase of nearly 300,000 in the number of Socialist votes at the election of 1887 over that of 1881 (an increase the most significant as it took place chiefly in districts not yet acquainted with the inanity of parliamentary tactics), shows that persecution has not suppressed the new economic ideas against which it is directed. And the beginning of the present year will most likely see Bismark defeated in his attempt to introduce further repressive legislation.

Another encouraging fact is the increasing dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Parliamentary leaders, and in general with the results of Parliamentary tactics, expressed by the State Socialist delegates at the Congress held by the party at St. Gallen in September.

We subjoin a catalog of Government persecutions enumerated in the "Freiheit":—

January.—More than 100 Socialists are exiled from Frankfurt, and two more committed to prison in Magdeburg for distribution of Anarchist papers. In Vienna, comrade Stendel is sentenced to three years' penal servitude, Sznarz and Ordreczkc to eight years of the same punishment.

February.—An electoral meeting in Stettin is attacked by the military, three workmen killed and several wounded. The state of siege is proclaimed in that town, and 80 Socialists are banished; ditto in Munich. In Posen, two Socialists are sentenced to nine months' and two years' imprisonment respectively for the usual offense—distribution of prohibited papers. In Magdeburg, 38 workmen are arrested. In Duisburg the police disperse a workmen's meeting and drag eight per-

sons to prison. In Saarburg the people fight the police, leaving a man on the battle-field. The state of siege is proclaimed in Offenbach. A Socialist in Leipzig is sentenced to four months' imprisonment for distributing revolutionary- prints in a barrack.

March.—The Commune is duly commemorated. In Vienna a demonstration of workmen is attacked by the police; near Berlin a fight ensues between gendarmes and Socialists for the possession of a red banner. In Magdeburg same event. In Lubeck a revolutionary bill is seized by the police, and eight years and two months penal servitude awarded to Drichel for an offense against the Dynamite Act.

April.—Many arrests of Socialists take place in Bielefeld, Mainz, and Hamburg. In Posen, seven Socialists are sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, ranging from two months to two years. In Vienna, where official statistics number the homeless persons at 20,000, 13 Anarchists are sentenced to penal servitude from one to twenty years. The Belgian Government bands to German detectives comrade John Neve.

May.—31 Socialists are sentenced in Magdeburg to from 9 to 36 weeks each. In Barmen two Anarchists fall in the bands of the police. In Chemnitzer, the Socialist Neuineister is imprisoned for one month. Comrade Lichtensteiger dies in Lechhausen, near Augsburg, from consumption contracted in the prison of Halle.

June.—21 Socialists sentenced in Danzig to from 2 to 48 months each; 6 more arrested in Konigsberg. In Breslau, 36 workmen arrested and charged with conspiracy. The inhabitants of Elberfeld disturbed by numerous police raids. Exiles from Leipzig pour out. Klaerig receives eight months' imprisonment for a speech at the grave of a comrade; ten more Socialists are sentenced for distributing papers. In Chemnitz, three workmen are charged with perjury in a Socialist trial, and sent to prison for one and two years. The Socialist Lutz in Karlsruhe, is sentenced to four weeks' imprisonment only. In Pfersen a fight takes place between soldiers and workmen; several arrests are made. In Frankfurt the Socialist Conradi dies in prison. In Vienna and Sechshaus, 15 workmen and two women are arrested for "Anarchist tendencies." Comrade Hajek receives four years, and comrade Markowitsch four months' imprisonment.

July.—The Socialists Schreiblechner and Bleicher die in Austrian prisons. Comrade Fischer, released from the Praga prison, enters the hospital. In Leibach several soldiers are imprisoned on suspicion of being Socialists; 80 workmen are prosecuted in Munich under the Anti-Socialist Act. In Breslau, a sentence of one year's imprisonment is passed on a Mr. Colin for offenses against the Emperor.

August.—Two officers are arrested in Munich for Socialistic propaganda. Popular meetings in Leipzig and Ludwigshafen are dispersed by the police. Revolutionary placards are affixed to the walls at Berlin.

September.—Six Socialists in Mannheim are sentenced to prison from 3 weeks to 10 months. In Zwickau a spinner gets 6 months of the same punishment for distributing an electoral manifesto. In Dresden a reserve man gets 8 months for Socialistic propaganda. The Socialists Schuhman and Szukalski are tortured to death in German prisons; six more workmen exiled in Leipzig. In Halle, several arrests. The Socialist Neissel sentenced to 8 months imprisonment.

October.—Our comrade John Neve is arraigned before the High Court of Leipzig and sentenced to 15 years' penal servitude. In Mainz several Socialists receive sentences of three and six months imprisonment; the Socialist Grunberg in Kiel gets three months of the same; 17 Socialists more are expelled from Leipzig. In Vienna, comrades Dam and Futz are arrested. The Nihilist Jassevitch is handed over to Russian vengeance.

November.—Five agitators are rewarded with various terms of penal servitude, whilst a policeman, who had murdered a workman, returns safe and sound from the hands of "justice" to his old pursuits. In Stuttgart comrade Waibel is sentenced to two months for distribution, etc., as above. In Vienna, Kral arrested.

No doubt in this black list, which concludes with November, there must be several omissions. But, even as it stands, it implies a total amount of suffering inflicted on workmen and their families which is simply appalling. When is this tyranny to have an end?

IRELAND

The new feature in the Irish persecution is that of the landlords or their emergency men, accompanied by a police escort, going into the shops of men, known to be leading Nationalists, and demanding, in as offensive terms as may be, some article or other which the shopkeeper may not have to sell. The refusal to furnish the required ware, on no matter what grounds, serves as an excuse for summoning before a "Pair of Patent Convictors" the objectionable Nationalist, who is forthwith clapped into jail for a month, with hard labor. Unfortunately for Balfour and Co., the wife and children, thanks to the National League, do not starve while the breadwinner is in quod; and aggravatingly, too, the prison doors never fail to reopen for a hero, however obscure a man the good Nationalist went in. But it no doubt serves some Governmental purpose to put out of the way, for a time even, the most active spirits in the village communities, and then what a balm it must be to the outraged feelings of the landlords.

The horrible story of Greally, his wife and three young children, has no doubt been read by many in all its heartrending details in the pages of the "Star" or "United Ireland." But for those who may not have seen those papers we may recapitulate it briefly. Thrust out from his little holding, although a kind priest offered to pay a year's rack-rent and to guarantee future payments, the unfortunate man built a hut to shelter his little ones from the wintry blasts. For this crime he was imprisoned, with an arm broken by a blow from the bastard son of the landlord, who undertook the extermination of the family. Naturally when Greally got out of jail he again constructed a shelter of some kind, which the bastard fired over the heads of these unfortunate creatures, and the father was again dragged to prison. Next time they sought shelter under the arch of a bridge, where every tide drenched their poor bodies with cold slush. One child here sickened and died of a loathesome disease, contracted from exposure and want, her little throat actually rotting away. To reach the shelter of the bridge a portion of the landlord's ground had to be crossed, and Greally was arrested and imprisoned for trespassing. He was once more freed, only to again seized for trespass, this time with his wife. Their two helpless little ones attracted by their cries the attention of a priest, who with some neighbors undertook to take; them from their fearful asylum and to build them a hut on a bit of common land. For this charitable act these Good Samaritans were threatened with an action, but the Government withdrew the prosecution, on condition of the but's being removed to another site and the people's refraining from making any demonstration of joy over the saving of the poor children.

SPAIN

Another promising popular movement seems to have shared the fate of the Belgian strike last year. The workers employed in preparing the Universal Exhibition at Barcelona struck early in December for shorter hours, Both skilled and unskilled men went out, and they were joined by others employed in the town. The police violently interfered, arrested right and left, and did their best to stir up divisions among the men. Nevertheless the strikers unanimously refused the compromise of an increase of wages, offered for the purpose of stirring up dissensions, and the affair might have become formidable, but that the strike, committee were taken with the unhappy idea that they must "satisfy public opinion alarmed by the danger threatening the honor of Barcelona, because of the engagements undertaken in reference to the Exhibition," and accordingly they must needs "propose to prove that the sons of toil are friends of progress, and refrain from putting obstacles in the way of a competition which shows that our town has reached the degree of civilization attained by the foremost nations of Europe". So spoke and acted the committee at the end of December; and of course the outbreak has collapsed, like the Midland strike, where the same sort of misdirected social feeling crippled the action of the men. Surely it is far more important for the whole community in England and Barcelona that the wronged and oppressed men there shall obtain justice, than that the traffic shall be uninterrupted, or the exhibition held at the right date. And yet the workers have not enough confidence in their cause to understand that, for the whole community as well as for themselves, its triumph is of far more real importance than any other consideration.

The Spanish labor papers are saying that the strike failed because the men were not sufficiently organized; but facts seem to indicate that, like the Belgians, they were organized too much, or rather on a false principle, so that the scruples and terrors of one central committee could undo all that the workers' private initiative had accomplished.

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Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, Vol. 2, No. 17, online source RevoltLib.com,
retrieved on May 8, 2020.
Freedom Press (ed.)

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