

The Situation in France [Apr, 1889]

Freedom Press, Anonymous

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(From our Paris correspondent.) 3

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THE position of parties, political as well as Socialist, has been considerably modified in France, since three years ago. Then there were only two well-defined antagonistic camps facing each other; on the one side the middle-class–Opportunists in power, Monarchists resigned, Radicals waiting their turn; on the other the Socialists of different schools–Revolutionists, Possibilists, Marxists, Independents, Anarchists.

Now a new-comer, Boulangism, has made its appearance upon the scene, and has thrown the two camps into confusion. Exploiting the general discontent against those who govern, who have made the Republic a fraud and dishonored this name once so dear to the multitude; working on the bad feelings, the hopes, the dissatisfied and growing ambitions of the Bonapartists, the Clericals, the Republicans and the pseudo-Socialists: releasing like a tempest the jingo prejudices, the ideas of the Revenge; using as a catapult the Patriotic League, which has in France about 200,000 adherents–Boulangism has come with its bullying manner and poses as the heir to the parliamentary republic. Flattering all the parties in opposition without declaring himself in favor of any; multiplying his vague declarations, proclaiming himself a partizan of the Republic, but of the Open Republic–General Boulanger has become a sort of Sphinx whose slightest act, whose most insignificant word is commented upon by the crowd of simpletons. "For whom is the General working?" they ask one another, "for Philippe VII., Victor Bonaparte, Prince Jerome, or the people?" The answer is simple; General Boulanger is working for himself. It is important, however, to recognize that the Clericals and Bonapartists, especially the latter, form the most considerable part of his followers; whilst the Orleanists, who include the great bankers, show themselves more favorable to the present form of government when it is represented by such ministers as Ferry, Rouvier, or Tirard.

Frightened by the specter of Cesarism, and at the same time delighted to have a pretext to turn their back to the Social Revolution which they formerly, extolled in the hope of turning it to their exclusive advantage, the Possibilists, who formed the most numerous and the most moderate among the Revolutionary Socialist schools, have abandoned the principle article of their program–the Class War; they have allied themselves to the middle-class Opportunists and Radicals, with whom they founded the famous Society of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the offices of which are situated in the Rue Cadet. whence is derived the name Cadetists, which is frequently applied to the- by their opponents. The Possibilists, whose actual chief is Dr. Paul Brousse, include among their number nine municipal councilors of Paris. Their newspapers are the weekly Proletariat and the daily Parti Ouvrier. We can also almost describe as Possibilist the journal *La Bataille*, which was formerly independent and revolutionary, almost Anarchist, and ceased publication from want of funds, and which re- appeared during the recent electoral contest between Boulanger and Jacques in the Department of the Seine as a mere republican, anti-Boulangist sheet. its principal editor Lissagary is a writer of great talent but skeptical and fond of pleasure. The conditions under which *La Bataille* was resuscitated have proved 'to demonstration that the journal is supported by secret service money. The Marxist section, whose chief is Jules Guesde, an unlucky rival of Paul Brousse, includes only a few publicists, talented sectarians. It is a staff of officers without an army. By the side of the Marxist, to whom they are nearly allied a by their very authoritarian temperament, gather the Blanquists, who are also very much diminished in number. Disciplined revolutionists, rather politicians than Socialists, their ideal is limited to a Jacobin during republic. They played a great part during the Commune of 1871, and so they

have raised to the point of fetichism the worship of the Commune; and this word enables them to call themselves sometimes Communists sometimes Communalists, according to circumstances, Violent and at the same time crafty, they have been called the red Jesuits. Since Boulangism has made its appearance they have adopted quite opposite tactics to the Possibilists: patriots and authoritarians, they have allied themselves to the National Republican Party of which General Boulanger is the chief. Al. Henri Rochefort has served as their intermediary. Their leaders are Granger and Vaillant, the last of whom has a seat on the Paris Municipal Council, as also has Chauriere, the best orator of the Blanquist party. After having had as their organs L'Homme Libre, le Cri du Peuple, and recently L'Egalite, they are at the present time without a newspaper. The Independents are limited on the right by the Radicals and on the left by the Anarchists: some are voters, others abstentionists. With the exception of a few ambitious nobodies they are sincere and have maintained a straightforward 'line of conduct, combating at the same time the middle-class government and Boulangism.

The Anarchists who, although inferior in numbers to the Possibilists, have made great progress both at Paris and in the country, form the real heart of revolution and Communism. We must admit that at the outset they were rather mixed, many calling themselves Anarchists who were only unconscious rebel., or ambitious individuals wishing to fish in troubled waters. To-day this party stands free from all compromise with the middle-class parties; it is purified. It has still much to do to gain over the workers of the towns who are addicted to politics, but in the agricultural districts of the Center, and especially of the South, it has secured a very large number of adherents. The Anarchist organs are La Revolte, a weekly journal, the Coe Ira, which appears irregularly as finances permit, and the Pere Peinard, a periodical pamphlet written in the familiar language or slang of the workshop and the street. We may also add L'Attaque, a weekly journal which started as a Marxist sheet but has nearly become Anarchist. The revolutionists have not a daily organ. We may, however, mention l'Egalite which was recently in the hands of a Blanquist-Guedist-Radical coalition, and since the departure of its editorial staff has opened a "11 five tribune" in which the letters of Socialists of all shades of opinion are published. The director of this journal, M. Jules Roques, is Boulangist; but whatever may be the motives which have induced him to appeal to this economic collaboration, the propaganda will certainly benefit in some degree.

In conclusion, the old organized parties are in a state of complete confusion. Anarchism has progressed, but it is doubtful whether it will be able to successfully oppose Boulangism, which in less than a year will perhaps have swept away the parliamentary republic, and will then endeavor to dam up the revolutionary torrent. The economical situation has arrived at the acute stage, and whilst the general elections, which will take place towards the end of the year will bring upon us a lively political agitation, everything seems to show that the beginning of the year 1890 will witness a commercial and industrial crisis of the most intense kind. After the Universal Exhibition, which will have created only a fictitious burst of prosperity, the misery will appear blacker than ever; failures, strikes, great additions to the unemployed, will succeed one another. Then perhaps will be the psychological moment.

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