

# **Socialism in Danger**

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## Preface by Elisée Reclus

The work of our friend, Domela Nieuwenhuis, is the result of patient studies and personal experiences very profoundly lived; four years were spent writing this work. In a time like ours, in which events go by quickly, in which the fast succession of facts makes harder and harder the critique of ideas, four years is already a long time, and certainly, during this period, the author has been able to observe many changes in society, and his own spirit went through an evolution. The three parts of the work, published at various long intervals in *La Société Nouvelle*, testify of the steps traversed. Firstly, the writer studies the “various tendencies of Social Democracy in Germany”; then, terrified by the retreat of the revolutionary spirit which he has recognized in German socialism, he asks himself whether socialist development is not in danger of being confused with the innocuous demands of the liberal bourgeoisie; finally, resuming the study of the manifestations of social thought, he notes that there is no reason to worry, and that the regression of a school, in which one deals more with commanding and disciplining than with thinking and doing, is very largely compensated by the growth of libertarian socialism, where fellow workers, without dictators, without enslavement to a book or to a collection of formulas, work together to build a society of equals.

The documents cited in this book are of great historical importance. Under the thousand appearances of official policy — formulas of diplomats, Russian visits, French genuflections, toasts of emperors, recitations of verses and decorations of servants, — appearances which one is often naive enough to take for history, happens the great thrust of proletarians emerging from the consciousness of their condition, with the firm resolution to make themselves free, and preparing to change the axis of social life by the conquest for all of a well-being which is still the privilege of some. This deep movement is the real story, and our descendants will be happy to know the twists and turns of the struggle from which their freedom was born!

They will learn how difficult was intellectual and moral progress in our century which consists in “curing individuals.” Certainly, a man can render great services to his contemporaries by the energy of his thought, the power of his action, the intensity of his devotion, but, after having done his work, he should not pretend have become a god, and especially that, in spite of himself, we do not consider him as such! It would be to want the good done by the individual to turn into evil in the name of the idol. Every man weakens one day after having struggled, and how many of us give in to fatigue, or else to the solicitations of vanity, to the snares laid by perfidious friends! And even if the wrestler had remained valiant and pure until the end, some will lend him a language which isn’t his, and even the words he spoke will be used by diverting them from their true meaning.

So see how was treated this powerful individuality, Marx, in whose honor, hundreds of thousands fanaticized, raise their arms to heaven, promising to religiously observe his doctrine! A whole party, a whole army with several dozen deputies in the Germanic Parliament, do they not now interpret this Marxist doctrine precisely in a sense contrary to the thought of the master? He declared that economic power determines the political form of societies, and it is now argued

in his name that economic power will depend on a party majority in political assemblies. He proclaimed that “the state, in order to abolish pauperism, must abolish itself, for the essence of evil lies in the very existence of the state!” And we devote ourselves to his shadow to conquer and rule the state! Certainly, if Marx’s political ideas are to triumph, it will be, like the religion of Christ, on condition that the master, adored in appearance, is denied in the practice of things.

Readers of Domela Nieuwenhuis will also learn to fear the danger posed by the duplicitous ways of politicians. What is the goal of all sincere socialists? No doubt each of them will agree that his ideal would be a society where each individual, developing fully in his strength, his intelligence and his physical and moral beauty, will freely contribute to the growth of human wealth. But what is the way to get to this state of affairs as quickly as possible? “To preach this ideal, to educate each other, to join together for mutual aid, for the fraternal practice of any good work, for the revolution,” will say first of all the naive and the simple like us. “Ah! what a mistake! – we are told – the way is to collect votes and conquer the public powers .” According to this parliamentary group, it is advisable to substitute ourselves to the State and, consequently, to use the means of the State, by attracting the voters by all the maneuvers which seduce them, while being careful not to offend their prejudices. Is it not fatal that the candidates for power, led by this policy, take part in intrigues, cabals, parliamentary compromises? Finally, if they one day became the masters, would they not necessarily be trained to use force, with all the apparatus of repression and compression that we call the citizen or national army, the gendarmerie, the police and all the rest of these filthy tools? It is by this path so widely open since the beginning of ages that the innovators will come to power, admitting that the bayonets do not overturn the ballot before the happy date.

The safest way still is to remain naive and sincere, to simply say what our energetic will is, at the risk of being called utopian by some, abominable, monstrous, by others. Our formal, certain, unshakeable ideal is the destruction of the State and all the obstacles that separate us from the egalitarian goal. Let’s not play the finest with our enemies. It is by trying to deceive that one becomes fooled.

This is the moral that we find in the work of Nieuwenhuis. Read it, all of you who have a passion for truth and who do not seek it in a dictator’s proclamation or in a program written by a whole council of great men.

# Part 1

International Socialism is to-day confronted by a problem of the gravest importance. Wherever the modern spirit prevails, wherever the new conscience has come to life, are found the same divergence of opinion, the same lamentable schism. In the stream of thought that makes for the ocean of righteousness two distinct currents flow side by side: they might be styled the parliamentary and anti-parliamentary, or the parliamentary and revolutionary, or better still, the authoritarian and the libertarian.

This remarkable difference of opinion was one of the chief topics discussed at the Zurich Congress, and although a resolution was adopted which was virtually a compromise, the question remained unsettled. The motion brought forward by the Paris Central Revolutionary Committee was drafted as follows:

“The Congress decides:-

The continuous struggle for the possession of political power by the socialist and worker’s party is our chief duty, for only when the proletariat has won political supremacy will it be able by abolishing privileges and classes, and by expropriating the present ruling and possessing class, to obtain a complete hold of that power, and to found the Social Republic, firmly based on human equality and solidarity.”

All must admit that the words run glibly, but that the task is by no means easy. Indeed, one must be very simple, not to say silly, to believe that political power can be used to abolish classes and privileges, and to expropriate the possessing class. First, we must work long and hard till we have obtained a parliamentary majority, and then, that difficult business accomplished, we must calmly and serenely proceed by legal enactments to expropriate the possessing class. *O sancta simplicitas!* As if the possessing class, having at its disposal all the “resources of civilisation” would ever permit you to go so far.

A proposition of the same nature, but more cunningly formulated, was tabled by the German Social Democratic party, and submitted for discussion by the Congress! In brief, it claimed that the struggle against the rule of the exploiting classes must be POLITICAL and have for its end THE CONQUEST OF POLITICAL POWER.

The object in view, then, is to be the possession of political power, and this programme is quite in harmony with the words of Bebel at the conference of the party held at Erfurt: “We have first to win and to use political power, so as to arrive simultaneously at economic power by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Once let political power be in our hands, the rest will follow as a matter of course.”

Surely Marx must have turned in his grave when he heard such heresies defended by disciples who swear by his name. It seems to be with Marx as with Christ: many profess to worship him the better to betray his principles. Observe the language used by Bebel. He seems to wish to have it inferred that economic power will follow political power as a kind of aftermath. Is it

possible to imagine political omnipotence enthroned beside economic impotence? Up to now we have all been teaching, under the guidance of Marx and Engels, that it is economic power which determines political power, and that the political power of a class in the state is merely the shadow of its economic resources. Economic subjection is the cause of all manner of slavery and social inferiority. And now we hear it said by the little gods of the Social Democratic party that political power must first be achieved, and that economic good things will follow: whereas it is exactly the opposite which is true.

Yes, they even went so far as to say: "So only he who will take an active part in the political struggle, and will make use of all the political resources at the disposal of the proletariat, will be recognised as an active member of the international revolutionary socialistic party."

We all know the classical phrase in Germany reserved for the expulsion of members of the party — *hinausfliegen* (to put him out). At the Congress at Erfurt, Babel repeated what he had previously written (see "*Protokoll*," p. 67):

"We must make an end of this continual grumbling and of these firebrands of discord who give the impression outside that the party is divided. I will take action at the next meeting of the party so that all misunderstanding between the party and the opposition shall disappear, and so that if the opposition does not rally to the attitude and the tactics of the party it shall have the opportunity to start a separate party."

Quite in the tone of the Emperor William, is it not? Just like His Imperious Majesty when he says of dissatisfied subjects: "If that does not please them, they have only to leave Germany. I, William, I do not allow grumbling, thus saith the Emperor." "I, Bebel, I do not permit grumbling in the party; I, Bebel, have spoken." Touching analogy!

It is desired to apply internationally this peculiarly German drill. Were the proposal accepted, and were Marx still alive, he himself would have to be expelled from the party he founded, that is if the inquisitors dared in his case to be consistent. Once the heresy hunt were commenced, a 4<sup>th</sup> creed would have to be imposed, and every member of the party would have to declare with his hand on his heart that he believed implicitly in only one effective way of salvation — that through the possession of political power.

Opposed both to the French and the German resolutions on this subject at Zurich was that of the Dutch Social Democratic party, which formally declared that "the class war cannot be ended through parliamentary action."

That this contention was not devoid of interest to thinkers, and would have had many supporters among independent men is proved by the comments of an influential writer in the English socialist paper *Justice*, which were to the effect that the Dutch had raised a most effective and much needed protest, and that they led the way in which the Socialists of all countries would shortly have to follow.

We all know the fate of these various motions. That of Holland was defeated, but not ingloriously, for the Germans surrendered the most objectionable points in their manifesto, and in a manner quite parliamentary framed a feeble half-and-half declaration in the spirit of compromise, which all nationalities might be expected to tolerate for the occasion. We are proud that Holland alone took no part in this travesty of union, preferring the honour of isolation and the dignity of silence.

However, it is a most remarkable thing that Germany has been able to swallow a resolution of which the introductory words constitute a flat contradiction of the proposition brought forward

in the congress by her delegates. This freak of compromise can be proved by collating the two texts :

*German Proposition.* — The war against class rule and exploitation must be POLITICAL and have for its end THE CONQUEST OF POLITICAL POWER.

*Resolution carried.* — Considering that political action is only a means of achieving the economic emancipation of the proletariat:

1. 1<sup>st</sup>, That the national and international organisation of the workers of all countries in trades unions and other associations to fight the exploiter is an absolute necessity;
2. 2<sup>nd</sup>, That political action is necessary as much for the purpose of agitation and the consequent discussion of socialist principles as for the purpose of obtaining urgent reforms; to that end it recommends the workers of all countries to struggle for the acquisition and exercise of political rights, which may be made available to present as effectively as possible the claims of the proletariat in all legislative and administrative bodies; to obtain possession of the means of political power and capitalist supremacy, and to change them into instruments for the emancipation of the worker;
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>, The choice of methods and means of waging the economic and political war must be left, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of each country, to the different nationalities; 4 Nevertheless, the congress declares that it is necessary that, in this war the revolutionary purpose of the socialist movement be kept in the foreground, involving, as it does, the complete overthrow, in its economic, political, and moral aspects, of society as at present constituted. Political action must never be used as an excuse for compromises or alliances injurious to our principles and to our solidarity.

It is true that this resolution, itself the product of a compromise, does not as a whole dazzle the reader by its logical consistency. The first section of it contained the bait which the Dutch contingent were expected to swallow, and whereby it was anticipated that their consent to the whole resolution would be secured. In the following sections some concessions are made to the other side, for instance, where the acquisition and use of political rights are recommended to the workers; and finally, to satisfy both wings of parliamentarians, and that each might give its approval, mention is made of political power as a means of agitation as well as an instrument for obtaining urgent reforms.

In short, nothing has been effected by this resolution, constructed to conciliate both parties, and to *display at all hazards an unbroken front to outsiders*. To demonstrate the most complete international union was the purpose of the congress, and that end has certainly not been achieved. Not only was the Dutch delegation in direct opposition, but many of the Germans, too, could not possibly have approved the latter part of the proposition, for they openly declared themselves in favour of the principle of direct legislation by the people, of the initiative and referendum, and of the system of proportional representation. This is in open conflict with the views of the well-known Karl Kautsky, who writes as follows:

“Partizans of direct legislation hunt the devil from one body into many, for to grant to all citizens the right of voting upon proposed legal enactments is nothing more nor less than to carry corruption from parliament to people.”

And here is his conclusion:

“In fact, in Europe, to the east of the Rhine at all events, the bourgeoisie has become so enfeebled and cowardly that it seems as if the government of politicians armed with the sword will only be done away with when the proletariat will be able to exercise political power, as if the fall of military absolutism involved the immediate transference of authority to the workers. One thing is certain, that in Germany, in Austria, and in most European countries, the conditions indispensable to the progress of socialist legislation, and above all the democratic institutions needful to the triumph of the proletariat will never come into existence. In the United States, in England, and in the English colonies, even perhaps in France, legislation by the people might reach a certain state of development; but for us, Eastern Europeans, it must be reckoned as one of the adjuncts of Utopia.”

Is it possible that a practical people like the Germans, who pride themselves on their common sense and moderation, are at this time of day going to wax enthusiastic over an “adjunct of Utopia” and become fanatics and dreamers? Forbid the thought!

Although our motion may have been rejected, we have the satisfaction to have forced the partisans of the reactionary tendency to play a far more revolutionary role than they ever intended. First, they have acknowledged that political action is only a means of obtaining the economic freedom of the workers. Secondly, they have accepted the principle of direct legislation by the people. They have thus left the ground they originally held, and have advanced nearer to our position. And when Liebknecht said: “What separates us is not any difference of principle, but a mere revolutionary phraseology and we must get rid of the phraseology,” we are, so far as his last words are concerned, entirely in agreement with him, but we ask who is responsible for that phraseology: he and his party who lose themselves in intricate and redundant sentences, or we who use expressions that are clear, pithy, and correct?

It is recognized that success, even a temporary success, may justify a little boasting, and at the Erfurt meeting of the party Liebknecht made use of the following language: (*Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der sozial-demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, p. 805)

“Our arms were invincible. In the end brute force must ever retreat before the advance of ethical principles, before the logic of facts. Bismarck, to-day a beaten man, bites the dust, and the Social Democracy is the strongest party in Germany. Is that not a convincing proof that we have been right in the tactics we have pursued? Now what have the Anarchists done in Holland, in France, in Italy, in Spain, in Belgium? Nothing, absolutely nothing! They have failed in whatever they have undertaken, and everywhere wrought injury to the movement. And the European workers have left them severely alone.”

This is indeed “tall talk.” We need only remark, by the way, that Liebknecht has a nasty habit of calling every socialist who disagrees with him an anarchist. The word “anarchist” in his mouth



is equivalent to traitor. That is an abominable misuse of words against which we must in all seriousness protest. If we asked in turn what Germany has obtained for the workers more than the above named countries, it would be difficult to answer. Liebknecht knows that perfectly well. Just a moment before he did the “high falutin” we have quoted, he had said: (“Idem,” p. 204.)

“The fact that up to the present time we have got nothing from Parliament is not a valid objection to parliamentarianism, but is simply due to our comparative weakness in the country, among the people.”

In what then consists the superlative success of the German tactics? According to Liebknecht the Germans have done nothing, and the socialists in the countries cited have achieved the same result. Well, 0 == 0. Where are now the splendid advantages of the German method? Does not Liebknecht draw a most imposing picture of that social democracy which has absolutely done nothing?

Remark how the prestige of success is claimed an evidence that the right has prevailed. We are right for we have had some success. That was the reasoning of Napoleon the third and is the favourite 6 argument of all tyrants; and such, alas, is the best justification that can be advanced to bolster up German tactics.

The success, too, of which so much is made, is, to put it mildly, slightly mixed. What is the German party? Merely a large army of discontented citizens, not all social democrats.

Bebel said at Halle in 1890: (*Protokoll Halle*, p. 102.) “If lessening of the hours of labor, the stoppage of work by children, Sunday work, and of night work, are grounds of boasting, then nine-tenths of our agitation are wasted.”

Everyone now knows that these reforms are not distinctively socialist; any radical will support them. Bebel recognizes that nine-tenths of the agitation identified with the movement are on half of reforms not essentially socialist; now, if the party obtains a large number of votes at the elections, it is in a great measure due to the agitation undertaken to win these practical reforms, for which the radicals are quite as enthusiastic. Consequently nine-tenths of the elements which form the party are satisfied with such palliatives, and the remaining tenth may be social democrats. What resolution purely socialist in character has been brought forward in Parliament by the socialist members? Not one. Bebel said at Erfurt: (*Protokoll Erfurt*,”) p. 174.

“The great aim of parliamentary action is the education of the people with reference to the designs of our opponents, and not the immediate acquisition of a proposed reform. We have always regarded our measures from that standpoint.”

That is not quite correct. If that were so, there would be no reason for keeping the masses in ignorance of the final purpose of social democracy. Why, for instance, propose that the ten-hour day should be inaugurated in 1890, the nine-hour day in 1894, and the eight-hour day in 1898, when at Paris it was unanimously decided to agitate for a maximum eight-hour working day? No, the party tactics do not suit a working-class movement; they are better adapted to the small shopkeeper spirit; but degeneration has gone so far that Liebknecht cannot form an idea of any other method of waging the class war. Here is what he said at Halle: (*Protokoll Halle*,” pp. 56–57.)

“Is it not an anarchist way of fighting to look with suspicion upon all parliamentarianism, all legal agitation? If that be true, what other way remains open?” So to his

mind there can be no other agitation than legal agitation; a melancholy result of the fear of losing votes. That is unmistakably apparent from the report of the general committee of the party, delivered at Erfurt. (*Protokoll Erfurt*," pp. 40–41.)

Nor could the parliamentary system yield other results. A large collection of men has no single interest in common but it necessarily has many a diverse and opposite character, which cannot be regulated by the same individual or by the same assembly. Any authority which legislates on every subject and for everybody must needs be arbitrary and despotic; and the voter who imagines himself free and independent because he drops a paper in the urn at election time, while on the other hand he tamely submits to any law that may be imposed upon him, is the victims of an illusion, and in reality he is a slave in whose hand has been placed a toy sceptre.

These remarks on parliamentarianism presuppose that the vote of the citizen is unfettered and enlightened, but what shall we say of the franchise exercised by a mob steeped in poverty, brutalized by ignorance and superstition, and at the mercy of a cunning minority in the exclusive possession of wealth and power and which holds at its absolute disposal the means of existence indispensable to the majority? As a rule the poor elector is neither capable of voting with intelligence, nor free to vote as he wishes.

Without preliminary education, and destitute of the means for self-instruction, obliged to place implicit faith on what he reads in some irresponsible newspaper (assuming that he has the ability and the time to read), knowing nothing of men and things apart from his own narrow life, how can the workman know what things to ask from Parliament, or through what channel to make his wants known? Is it possible for him to have any clear idea of the nature of a Parliament?

“The committee of the party and the delegation in Parliament have not given effect to the wish expressed by the opposition that deputies instead of attending Parliament should do propagandist work throughout the country. The non-fulfilment of duties that members were elected to perform would have been favourably regarded by our political enemies only; in the first place because they would have been relieved of a persistent control in Parliament, and secondly, because such conduct on the part of our deputies would have incurred the displeasure of the great mass of indifferent voters. To convert that mass to our opinions is one of the requirements of the movement. Besides it is known that the sayings and doings of Parliament are closely studied by classes of people who are too indifferent or who have not the opportunity to be present at Social Democratic meetings. The popular agitation culled for by those opponents of parliamentary action found in our ranks will be most efficiently carried on by an active and energetic advocacy in Parliament of the interests of the proletariat, and without supplying our enemies with an accusation that we fail to do the work we have voluntarily undertaken.”

Dr. Muller in his very interesting pamphlet (*Der Klassenkampf in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, p, 38) delivers the following pertinent and just criticism on the question at issue:

“We find then that the fear of being accused, by the mass of indifferent voters, of neglecting their parliamentary duties (and thus of running a risk of not being re-elected) constitutes one of the reasons why members must devote themselves constantly to practical work in Parliament. Evidently when they have persuaded the

electors that Parliament can bestow palliatives it is their duty to do all they can to obtain such benefits. But that the proletariat can ever get from Parliament any considerable amelioration of their condition, the Social Democratic leaders themselves do not believe, and they have said so often enough. And yet they have the impudence to give the names of 'agitation' and 'development of the masses' to that fraud, that swindle of the workers. We contend that such agitation and development does harm, and instead of being useful to, it vitiates the whole movement. If Parliament be continually extolled as a possible beneficent agency, how can we expect to convert the indifferent masses into social democrats, who are the mortal foes of parliamentarianism, and see in parliamentary social reform only a monster humbug of the ruling classes to defraud the workers. By such methods Social Democracy will never convert the workers, but the bourgeoisie will corrupt and defeat Social Democracy and its principles."

Nobody has expressed himself more clearly on the futility of parliamentary action than Liebknecht himself, but it was the revolutionary Liebknecht of 1869, and not the parliamentarized Liebknecht of 1894. In his interesting treatise upon the policy of the Social Democracy, especially in its relation to Parliament, he uses the following language:

"The Progressive party afford us an example full of instruction and warning. At the time of the so-called conflict over the Prussian constitution they indulged in 'grand and potent' speeches. With what energy they protested against the reconstruction — *in words!* With what overwhelming sentiment and with what ability they undertook to defend the rights of the people — *in words!* But the government calmly disregarded all their legislative ideas. It left the law to the Progressive party, but retaining in its own hand all the resources of civilisation, used them. And what of the Progressive party? Instead of throwing aside parliamentary weapons, proved to be useless and a hollow mockery, instead of leaving the house, and forcing the government to despotic action, instead of appealing to the people, they serenely went on as before, drunk with their own verbosity, throwing into the empty air wordy protests and legal disquisitions, and passing resolutions that everybody knew to be gas and nothing more. Thus Parliament instead of being a political arena became the home of burlesque: citizens heard everlastingly the same speeches, never saw any results from them, and turned away, at first with indifference, afterwards with disgust. The events of the year 1866 were allowed to happen. The 'grand and potent' speeches of the Prussian Progressive party made the opportunity for the policy of 'blood and iron,' and they were also the funeral orations of the Progressive party itself. The party in very truth killed itself by its speeches."

Just as did the Progressive party in days gone by. so the Social Democracy are acting to-day. How insignificant has been the influence of Liebknecht on his party, when in spite of the warnings uttered by himself, it has pursued the same foolish course. And in place of showing the better way, it has allowed itself to be dragged into the maelstrom of politics, there hopelessly to founder.

Where are we to look for the revolutionary Liebknecht who was wont strenuously to maintain that "Socialism is no longer a matter of theory but a burning question which must be settled, not

in Parliament but in the street and on the battlefield, like every other burning question?" All the doctrines promulgated in his treatise are deserving of the widest possible circulation, so that every one may be able to weigh the difference between the brave champion of the proletariat who lived years ago, and the shopkeepers' representative of to-day. After having said that "with universal suffrage, to vote or not to vote is only a question of expediency not of principle," he concludes:

"Our speeches cannot have any direct influence upon legislation.

"We shall not convert Parliament with words.

"By our speeches we can only scatter truths among the people that it is possible to proclaim more effectively in another way.

"Of what service then are speeches in Parliament? None. And to talk merely for the sake of talking is the business of fools!

Think of it : Not a single advantage. And here, on the other hand, are the disadvantages:

"Sacrifice or compromise of principles; degradation of a sublime political struggle into the discussion of a debating society; and encouragement of the idea among the people that the Bismarckian Parliament is destined to settle the social question.

"And for practical reasons, should we concern ourselves with Parliament? Only treachery or stupidity could persuade us to do so."

We could not give utterance to our convictions more forcibly or more exactly. But mark the notable inconsistency. According to his premises, and after having reckoned up all the profits and losses flatly to the discredit of parliamentary action, he might be expected inevitably to have given a verdict in favour of non-participation. However he delivers himself as follows: "To prevent the Socialist movement sustaining Caesarism, it is necessary that Socialism should enter into the political struggle." It is past comprehension how so logical a mind can thus bury itself in contradictions!

But they are themselves in doubt and confusion. Evidently parliamentarianism is the bait by which the catch of fish must be obtained, cued yet they try to make it look as if it were a desirable thing in itself, an end as well as a means. Thence the dubiety and indecision on the question. For instance at the Erfurt congress Bebel said :

"Social Democracy differs from all preceding parties, inasmuch as they have all been established for a totally different end. We aim to replace capitalistic production by socialistic production, and are consequently obliged to pursue our objects by ways and means radically opposed to all preceding parties." (*Protokoll*, p. 25).

Perhaps that is why they advise us to take the parliamentary road, the way pursued by all the other parties, and why they tell us it will lead us in quite a different direction. Singer found himself in a similar dilemma when he said at Erfurt: "Supposing that it is possible to obtain anything valuable through parliamentary action, that action would necessarily weaken the party, since any possible advantage can only be obtained by means of the cooperation of parties." (*Idem*, p. 199).

Isolated, the Social Democratic members can do nothing, and “a revolutionary party should hold aloof from any kind of policy which can only be pursued with the assistance of other parties.” What business then have they in such a Parliament?

The *Zuricher Sozialdemokrat* wrote in 1883: “Parliamentarianism as a general rule shows nothing which can be viewed with sympathy by a Democrat, especially by a thorough Democrat, that is a Social Democrat. For him, on the contrary, it is antidemocratic because it means the supremacy of a class, mostly the middle 10 class.” And again it affirms that “the struggle against parliamentary action is not revolutionary, but reactionary.” That is to say quite the opposite. The risk of compromise was apparent, and if the government had not been obliging enough to disturb that condition of things by the law against Socialists, who knows where we would now stand? If there had been a real statesman at the head of affairs he would have given the Social Democratic party a free hand and rope enough with which to hang itself.

With much truth the above-mentioned paper in 1881 wrote as follows: “The anti-socialist law has done much for our party, which stood in danger of enfeeblement. The Social Democratic party had become too pliable, too popular; it latterly had opened the door to ambition and personal vanity. To prevent it becoming a middle-class party, in theory as well as in action, it was essential that it should experience persecution.”

Bernstein said something similar in the *Lehrbuch fur Sozialwissenschaft*: “In the later years of its existence (before 1878) the party had wandered far from the direct road, so that the propaganda was now very different from that of 1860–1870 and of the years immediately following 1870.”

A small social democratic sheet too, edited by an enlightened socialist, A. Steck, wrote as follows:

“There are comparatively few who think that logically the whole party should forsake its principles, as it would by a union of the active and scientific Marxians with the moderate disciples of Lassalle. The watchword of the Lassalleans — ‘Through universal suffrage to victory’ — a motto often ridiculed by the Marxians before their surrender, now constitutes in very truth — shame that we should say it — the guiding principle of the German Social Democracy.”

It was just the same with the early Christians. At first the various schools of thought were in strong opposition. Do we not read that the war-cries were. “I am of Paul,” “I am of Cephas,” “I am of Apollos.” Gradually their differences became less pronounced, they became more friendly. Opposing doctrines were reconciled and at last one saints’ day was established in honour both of Peter and Paul. The antagonistic disciples were united, but at what a sacrifice of principle!

Very remarkable is the analogy between primitive Christianity and modern Social Democracy. Both found their disciples among the poor, the outcasts of society. Both were subject to persecution and suffering; and yet both grew in numbers and importance in spite of oppression. In the fulness of time came an emperor, one of the most licentious who ever climbed the steps of a throne (and that is no small thing to say, for licentiousness is at leave on a throne), who as a matter of policy became a Christian. Immediately a change took place, the salient points of Christianity were rubbed off, and it was made popular. Its adherents obtained the most lucrative posts in the state, and orthodox and sincere disciples were banished as heretics from the Christian community.

Similarly in our day we see the selfish and the powerful endeavouring to nobble Socialism. “We are all 11 Socialists now,” and we find the doctrine made acceptable to every palate; and

if we give them the chance the opportunists will triumph, while thorough and uncompromising Socialists will be excommunicated from the political party, simply because their unbending straightforwardness is regarded as hostile to the schemes of the men plotting for place and power. The victory of Social Democracy will thus mean the defeat of Socialism. just as the supremacy in the state of the Christian church was contemporaneous with the decay of Christian principles. Already international congresses are like economic councils, where the majority presume to expel those who are bold enough to differ from them in opinion. Even now there is a censorship applied to socialist writing ; only after Bernstein in London has examined it, and Engels has placed on it the seal of orthodoxy, is the pen-work regarded as canonical and permitted to be published among the faithful. The form of creed in which Social Democracy is to enshrined is ripe for promulgation. What more can they do? Ah! who can say? At any rate we have sounded the alarm and we shall see how far these absurd pretensions will be carried.

Indeed they can go far. Not long ago Caprivi in a jocular spirit called Bebel "*Regierungskommissarius*", and although Bebel replied "We have not spoken as government commissioners, but governments have adopted Social Democratic measures," everybody sees the point, and the incident is an invincible proof of how closely the once antagonistic parties have drawn together, and suggested that the spirit of fraternization may work wonders.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the bold saying "Not a man nor a farthing to the government" is quite out of date, and Bebel indeed promised his support to the government when, to meet the new situation created by the invention of smokeless powder, it asked for a giant to provide dark uniforms to the army. If they yield to militarism the sow's tail it will seize the whole hog. To-day they vote credits for dark uniforms, to-morrow for improved artillery, and the day after for an additional army corps, etc., always with the same justification.

Yes, compromise of principle marched in step with success at the polls, so that at length the exploiting classes found that an antisocialist law was not needed. We would he simple indeed to imagine that they repealed the law from a sense of its injustice! It was the inoffensiveness of Social Democracy that brought about the abolition; and do not subsequent events go far to prove that they had weighed up the party to a nicety ? Has not its degeneracy since then made progress with leaps and bounds?

Liebknecht in 1874 thus summed up the political situation:

"Every attempt at action in Parliament, every effort to help in the work of legislation, necessitates some abandonment of our principles, deposits us upon the slope of compromise and of political give-and-take. till at last we find ourselves in the treacherous bog of parliamentarianism, which by its foulness kills everything that is healthy."

Notwithstanding, what is the upshot of all this searching of heart? Why, we resolve to go on working at the dirty business. Surely that conclusion is in 12 direct opposition to the premises. and we are surprised that a thinker like Liebknecht does not perceive that by his conclusion he destroys the whole structure of his argument. Admire the logic if you can. Very suggestive are the following remarks of Steck on the two methods of work, the parliamentary and the revolutionary:

"The party of reform would achieve political power just after the style of any bourgeois party. For that purpose it avoids isolation, does not present to the world any programme of principles, and advances towards its object much the same as any

other political party, It is indefinite on all sides in its working and in its scope. Sometimes here and there, but very rarely, it acts as might a Social Democratic party, but almost always it reveals itself as a Democratic party, an Economic Democratic party, or a Workmen's Democratic party.

“The progressive democracy seeks its end in the acquisition of palliative reforms, as if that were its sole object. It accepts them thankfully from the bourgeois, with all the modifications and reductions thought necessary by the donors. It seeks alliance, if possible with the more progressive elements of the middle-class parties. In this way it is only recognised as the head and forefront of middle-class reform. There is no gulf between it and the ordinary political factions of the progressive type, because it no longer proclaims the revolutionary principles of Social Democracy. That kind of tactics may achieve some small success, such as the other parties might obtain; only such success, measured by our programme of principles, is very small and often of doubtful utility, and at its best it may be of the color but it is not of the essence of Social Democracy.

“We must not fancy, however, that a matter of tactics is unimportant. The risk of losing sight of the chief end of Social Democracy is great, although less to be dreaded among the leaders than among the rank and file. But the temporary eclipse of the socialistic ideal is already perceptible, chiefly from the fact that the minds of the people are bent on the acquisition of palliative reforms, which have been rated at far more than their intrinsic value.

“Again it is unquestionable that the habitual resort to compromise not only hinders but aggressively damages the propaganda for the principles of socialism, and prevents its healthy development. Often active workers in the cause are induced to barter their principles for some immediate political advantage.

“If this compromising spirit in the party be allowed to have the ascendancy it might easily happen that graver consequence would ensue, and perhaps even some arrangement might be made with the conservative parties by which a slightly ameliorated form of the present social order would be tolerated. The effect of such a state of things would be a reduction of privileges and an increase in the number of a still privileged class; it would improve the social position of a large number at the inevitable expense of the exploited masses, whose position would still be one of economic subjection.

“It would not be the first time a revolutionary agitation has been brought to an end by satisfying one section of the discontented at the expense of the other sections. Besides it is quite in keeping with the action of political reformers to refrain from upsetting capitalism, and slowly to transform it and make it by degrees more tolerable to the socialistic spirit of the age.

“In reply to the assertion that the organized proletariat would not be satisfied with a partial success, but would insist, in spite of leaders, in obtaining its complete emancipation, there stands out the fact that gradually the proletariat is being divided against itself, and that a higher class is being evolved from its ranks, an ‘aristocracy of labour,’ that will have the power to block revolutionary measures. A keen eye can already discern here and there symptoms of such a division.

“The revolutionary party, on the other hand, desires to obtain political power in the name of Social Democracy only, and with the party’s grand object inscribed upon its banner. It will be obliged for a long time to struggle as a minority, to endure defeat after defeat, and to suffer bitter persecution. But ultimately its triumph will be undiluted and complete, for a Social Democratic society will be in existence and supreme.”

Steck likewise recognises that “in reality the revolutionary method is the most direct.” “Our party,” says he, “ought to be revolutionary inasmuch as it possesses a decidedly revolutionary programme, and that it reveals such a character in all its political manifestoes and measures. Let our propaganda and our claims be for ever revolutionary. Let us meditate continually on our sublime purpose, and let us always net as becomes those devoted to such an ideal. The straight road is the best. Let us for ever be and remain, in life as in death, Revolutionary Social Democrats and no other. So will the future be ours.”

Now, there are two points of view taken by Parliamentary Socialists. Some there are who desire to obtain political power in order to possess themselves of economic powers; and that is the professed object of the German Social Democratic party, as witness the formal declarations of Bebel, Liebknecht, and others. But we also find there are those who will only engage in political and parliamentary actions as a means of agitation. For them all elections are merely instruments of propaganda. But here is the danger of coquetry with evil: a door should be either open or shut. We commence by nominating candidates for purposes of protest, but as the movement gets stronger they become serious candidates. At first Socialist members of Parliament assume an irreconcilable attitude, but when their numbers increase they introduce bills and try to initiate legislation. In order to make their projects successful they are forced to enter into compromises, as Singer has well remarked. It is the first step which costs, and once on the slope they are obliged to descend. Is not the practical programme authorised at Erfurt almost the same as that of the French Radicals? Is there a single subject in the work of the later international Congresses which is definitely Socialist? The real and central ideal of Socialism is relegated for its fulfilment to a distant future, and in the meantime labor is spent on paltry palliatives, which could just as readily be obtained through the Radicals.

To put the case with undressed candour, the reasoning of 14 Parliamentary Socialists is as follows: We must first obtain among the voters a majority, which will then send Socialist representatives to Parliament, and whenever we have a majority in the House, even of one, the trick is done. We have only then to make such laws as we wish for the common good.

Even losing sight of a common form of obstruction in most countries, a second or rather a fifth wheel to the parliamentary chariot, known as the House of Lords, a Senate, or an Upper Chamber, of which the members are invariably the unbending and arbitrary representatives of capital, we would be very silly to think that the executive government would get into a sweat in carrying out the wishes of a Socialist majority in the Lower Chamber. This is the way Liebknecht ridicules such an idea:

“Let us suppose that government does not interfere, perhaps in quiet assurance of its innate strength, perhaps as a matter of policy, and at last the dream of some imaginative Socialist politicians comes true, and there is a Social Democratic majority in Parliament — what would happen? Here is the Rubicon: it must be crossed! Now



has come the moment for reforming society and the state! The majority makes up its mind to do something that will make the day and the hour memorable in history – the new era is about to start! O, nothing of the kind ... A company of soldiers bids the Social Democratic majority begone or be chucked, and if these gentlemen do not leave quickly a few policemen will show them the way to the State prison, where they will have ample time to reflect on their quixotic conduct. Revolutions are not made by permission of the government; the Socialistic idea cannot be realised within the sphere of the existing State, which must be abolished before the foetus of the future can enter into visible life. *Down with the worship of universal suffrage!* Let us take an active part in elections, but only as a means of agitation, and let us not forget to proclaim that the returning officer will never issue into the world the new Democratic State. Universal suffrage will only acquire complete influence over the state and over society *after* the abolition of police and military government.”– (*Ueber die politische Stellung*, pp. 11 and 12.)

This is temperate but striking testimony that will command a powerful allegiance.

Nobody is simple enough to think that the exploiting class will surrender its property, or that the realisation of Socialism can be effected by Act of Parliament. At first we take up political action as a means of agitation, but once on the slope we slide to the bottom. As Liebknecht said at the St. Gall Congress of the party, “Let there be no mistake, once we take part in elections, we not only engage in agitation, but we expose the weakness and inefficiency of parliamentary action.” By all means let us proceed to assimilate that lesson. Vollmer on this subject was the most logical of the German Social Democrats, and his proposals mark the course of conduct that his fellow-countrymen ought to follow in the future. (See “*Les divers courants de la démocratie socialiste allemande*”, *Monde nouvelle*, 8e année, t. 1, p. 295.)

Parliamentarianism, as a method of tactics, is found wanting; even if we could improve it, it would be labor lost. Leverdays work, “*Les Assemblées Parlantes*,” is in this connection very instructive, and it deals thoroughly with the question. Why do not the apologists of Parliament try to refute that book? Legislative chambers or Parliaments are as nearly as possible word-mills, or as Leverdays says “a government of public chatterers.” An honest member confining himself to his own experience, his own views, and his own convictions would be at least as capable as any ordinary minister, assisted by the specialists of his department. But he must know something of everything, for the most divergent subjects come before Parliament. He should be a living encyclopedia. What a punishment for the poor representative who attempts the task – his simple duty – to listen to all the speeches!

“At La Haye, when you visit the prison, the gaoler tells you that in olden times criminals were laid upon their back, and upon their bare head water fell drop by drop from the roof. And the honest man always add that it was the most severe of punishment. Well, that cruel penalty has been transferred to the Chamber of Deputies, and a conscientious member must daily undergo the martyrdom torment of feeling that incessant drop, not upon his head but into his ear, in the form of speeches by honourable members.”

Such punishment is past endurance, so they have devised all sorts of recreation, so as to render life supportable. There is the dining-room, the smoking-room, tea on the terrace, the library, the

system of pairing, frequent and prolonged holidays, etc., Let us add also that it is indispensable that a man should be a partisan, for if he were to try to work in isolation he would be absolutely without influence.

On the subject of Parliaments we may quote the remark of Mirabeau on a certain occasion: They are always willing but they never do anything.” The words of Leverdays also merit reproduction: “Modern Hollanders if menaced by the invader would not break down their dykes as in the time of Louis XIV., and political Hollanders of to-day would not open the dyke to the revolution in order to drown the enemy. Save the country, if it be possible, but at all hazards preserve order! In this way they betray the masses, to lead them to the slaughter-house. As a rule, if the defence of a nation rests in the hands of exploiters only, you may feel sure it will be sold.”

There is an intimate connection between economic and political freedom, inasmuch as to each fresh economic development there is a corresponding political transformation. Kropotkin has made this clear. Absolute monarchy in the political world is mated with personal slavery and vassalage in economics. Representative government in politics goes along with the economic system of commercialism. Sometimes they are two forms of the same principle. A new mode of production is not found consistent with an outworn fashion of consumption, and does not exist contemporaneously with antique methods of political organisation. In a society where capitalist and workman would be merged in the same individual there would be no necessity for a government; it would be an anachronism, an impediment. Free workmen need a free organisation, which is incompatible with the existence of the statesman. The destruction of capitalism implies the destruction of government.

The roads taken by parliamentary and revolutionary socialism do not lead to the same destruction; no, they way run parallel but they will never meet.

Parliamentary Socialism must end in State Socialism, although the Social Democratic leaders do not yet recognise the fact, and declared in Berlin that Social Democracy and State Socialism are in irreconcilable opposition. But they commence with state railways, state apothecary halls, state education. State or Parliamentary Socialists do not want the abolition of the state, but the centralisation of production in the hands of government, that is to say, that the state should be the supreme regulator of industry. Do they not name Glasgow and its municipal undertakings as an example of practical socialism? Emile Vandervelde, in his pamphlet “*Le Collectivisme*,” makes the same city serve as a model. Well, if that is the best instance they can cite, the hopes of practical socialism do not rise very high. The number of unemployed there is appalling, the population herds together in overcrowded tenements. The same author lauds the co-operative movement in Belgium, as it exists in Brussels, Gand, Jolimont, and says that we might call it voluntary collectivism. All these cases are specimens more repulsive than attractive to him who is not dazzled by superficial appearances, and wishes to discover the true inwardness of things. Wherever the cooperative movement prospers it is at the expense of socialism ; unless, as some do at Gant and elsewhere, we give the name of socialists to co-operators. There the proletariat apparently are at the top, although it is their exploiters who rule, and freedom is undiscoverable, just as in state factories.

Liebknicht, perceiving the danger, said at Berlin :

“Do you suppose that it would be disagreeable to the English cotton manufacturers that their business should be transferred to the State? Moreover in a very short time the State will find itself forced to take over and work the mines of the country. Every

day the number of capitalists willing to resist such a proposal becomes fewer. Not only trade but even agriculture will in course of time pass into the hands of the State; that is one of the certainties of the future. If in Germany we were to take the soil away from the great landlords, paying them suitable compensation and engaging them as government officials, to be territorial captains of rural industry, in a position equivalent to that of the satraps of the ancient kingdom of Persia, would it not be a big bit of luck for the nobles, and don't you think some of the shrewdest among them have already discounted the proposal? Ah yes, they would jump at it, for it would increase both their influence and their income. But that is one of the inevitable results of State Socialism and must not be dismissed as an idle dream." (*Protokoll*, Berlin, p. 179).

Rest assured that when the doomed class of exploiters and landlords perceive that collectivism is a first-rate thing for them, and that the State is willing to buy out their bankrupt concerns, they will tumble over each other in their haste to avail themselves of the splendid market afforded by practical socialism. We see that Emile Vandervelde proclaims already that "la grande industrie is to be the field of collectivism and that is why the workers' party demands, and limits itself to demanding the socialisation of the mines, quarries, and land of the country along with the principle means of production and of transport." So the small traders and mechanics may rest in peace, for their little world is to be the home of free association : even the big men have nothing to fear, for they will be well rid of a bad business in return for a good indemnity. (Cf. "*Le Collectivisme*", p. 7.)

Bless you, they all have votes, and bearing this in mind, Kautsky assures the small shopkeepers that "The transition to socialism does not involve the expropriation of the small trader or of the peasant. On the contrary, the change will not only take nothing from, but it will increase their profits," (*Das Erfurter Program in seinen grundsätzlichen Theil erläutert von K. Kautsky*, p. 150.) Liebknecht sees the danger clearly, and we have not heard the last of the struggle for supremacy between Social Democracy and State Socialism; but he does not see that it is impossible Parliamentary Socialists should be contented with mere agitation as the end of its parliamentary action; it must have a positive object (Liebknecht proved it at the meeting of the party at Saint Gall) and it is obliged to mess about with State Socialism. At the Berlin congress of the party Bebel had enough of it, and said "that he was not at all in agreement with the theories of Liebknecht as to the meaning of State Socialism."

What confusion there is in the definition of the state. Liebknecht describes state socialism at one time as calculated to develop the state (*eminent staatsbildend*); at another time he calls it a revolutionary force (*staatstürzende Kraft*). Sometimes they tell us: "We, the Socialists, desire to preserve the state by changing and improving it, while you others wish to maintain the present anarchist society, you ruin the existing state by the tactics you employ." Again they say: "The modern state can only be reinvigorated and brought up to date by bringing Socialism along the highway of legislation; social democracy is just the party to which the state should look for support, if there really were statesmen at the head of affairs." How different from the independent spirit of these words: "Socialism is not an academic discussion, but a burning question that parliaments will never be able to solve, but that must be finally settled in the street and on the battle-field!" Sometimes Bebel holds "social reform through the state to be very important;" at other times he considers it of trifling value. Now he speaks of the fall of bourgeois society as

being very near, and strongly advises the discussion of principles; and again, he advocates practical reforms, because bourgeois society is still strong and “the discussion of principles might give the impression that the social revolution is close at hand.” On the one hand they criticise those who in their impatience think we are near the revolution, and yet Bebel and Engels have named a year, the year 1898 to wit, as the year of salvation, the year of victory, parliamentary methods, by means of the polling-booth. Can that be the great “*Kladderadatsch*” that is believed to be near?

Liebknrecht even speaks of the outgrowth of 18 socialist society. He now believes that it is possible to reach the solution of the social question by the way of reform. Are we to believe that the state, the existing state, can do this? Were Marx and Engels in error when they taught “that the state is the organisation of the possessing classes to effect the complete subjection of the non-possessing classes?” Was Marx mistaken when he said “that the state in order to abolish pauperism must abolish itself, for the kernel of the evil lies in the very existence of the state?” And Kautsky controverted the opinion of Liebknrecht, when he wrote in the *Neue Zeit*:

“Political power, so called, is the force organised by one class to suppress another (*Manifeste communiste*). A class state to characterise the existing state, appears to us an inappropriate name. Can there be any other state? You may answer ‘the democratic state (Volksstaat).’ By that is meant the state conquered by the proletariat. But that also would be a class state.’ The proletariat would have other classes in subjection. The great difference between the future state and the existing states will consist in this: the interest of the proletariat demands the abolition of all class distinctions. The workers will use their supremacy to banish as quickly as possible the separation of classes; that is to say that the proletariat will take possession of the state, not to make of it a true state, but to abolish it altogether; not to fulfil the real purpose of the state but to render it useless for any purpose.”

Compare this quotation with those from Liebknrecht and Bebel, and you will see that they flatly contradict each other. The latter are the essence of state socialism against which Kautsky protests. We must choose between the two : *Either* we are working (as Bebel says) to get what we can in the way of reform, and to palliate as much as possible the evil conditions imposed upon the workers under the present social régime (and this constitutes practical politics), the policy by which the German Social Democratic party obtain at the ballot box so great a number of votes; *or* we embrace the opinion that under existing social conditions the situation of the proletariat cannot be appreciably improved. If we adopt the first hypothesis we prolong the suffering of the workers, for all these palliatives have only the effect of reinvigorating the present society. Yet Bebel professes to recognise, so as not to run entirely out of gear with Engels, that in the last resort we must decide upon the abolition of the state, which in reality “is merely an organisation to maintain the business of production and exchange on its present basis, in other words, an organisation which has nothing in common with the ideal state.” As a fact he practically works to consolidate the present state, while he declares as a matter of theory that ultimately the state must be abolished. In such a position there is neither rhyme nor reason.

Bebel said in Parliament:

“I am convinced that if existing society continues its evolution in peace, so that it shall reach the highest stage of development, it is quite possible that the change from

the present social system into a socialist society may also take place in peace and at no distant date; just as the French in 1870 became Republicans and rid themselves of Napoleon, after he had been vanquished and made prisoner at Sedan.”

What meaning but one can we attach to that language: If everything comes off peaceably, everything comes off peaceably? Let us nominate men fit to do their duty — that is the phrase used. As if it were men, and not the system, that were at fault! Are we not obliged to breathe a tainted air when we enter a room where the atmosphere is impure? It is just as if he said: I am convinced that if the birds do not fly away we shall catch them. When ... but that is just the difficulty. And such language is delusive for it arouses among the workers an idea that indeed everything will take place peaceably, and once that idea takes root, the revolutionary character of the movement disappears. Has not Frohme, a German deputy, said that “he cannot in all conscience imagine that the German social democracy should wish to abolish the state?” We even read in the *Hamburger Echo* of 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1890:

“We tell the chancellor frankly that he has no right to denounce Social Democrats as enemies of the state. We do not fight the state but state institutions, and a social system which does not agree with the true idea of the state and of society and with their mission. It is we Social Democrats who wish to perpetuate the state in greatness and purity. That has really been our mission for more than a quarter of a century, and Chancellor von Caprivi ought to know it. Only where there exists a true ideal of the state can there be a true affection for the state.”

When we hear and read about “true socialism,” and “a true ideal of the state,” there comes to our minds the old-time phrase “true christianity.” And the more’s the pity that just as there have been twenty, aye a hundred “true christianities,” each of which excommunicated and excluded all others, so there are to-day twenty and more true socialisms. We would long ago have liked to shut our eyes to this foolishness, but., alas! it is impossible.

Not only can the state not be preserved, but on the advent of socialism it will show itself to be not worth preserving. No, this possibilist, opportunist, reforming, parliamentary action is good for nothing, and simply stifles among the workers the revolutionary idea that Marx tried to instil into them.

Childishly we attribute to commonplace and corrupt persons and parties the results of the evolution of civilisation. What guarantees do we possess that politicians of our party will be better than their predecessors? Are they infallible? No. Others have been corrupted and so will ours be, because man is the product of circumstances and is moulded by the environment in which he lives.

Engels has commented so severely upon the practical policy of parliaments that we are at a loss to understand how he has come to approve the tactics of the German Social Democratic party. Here is the opinion he used to hold:

“A kind of shopkeeper socialism has its advocates in the Social Democratic party, even among its parliamentary representatives, and these advocates while endorsing in a vague way some socialist principles, and granting grudgingly that the future belongs to collectivism, think that future is very far distant, not within measurable

distance. They aim at patching up the 20 present social system, and in default of doing anything better, they fling themselves with enthusiasm into the efforts of the reactionaries to promote the so-called 'raising of the working classes.'"

That is exactly what we have been saying. In the distance the parliamentarians speak about the abolition of private property, but coming to close quarters they busy themselves with practical politics. It is really sad to find men like Liebknecht handling this rubbish. Listen to his words at the Paris International Congress of 1889: "Practical reforms, reforms to be had at once and of immediate utility, are first in our programme, and that is their place by right, as they are the recruiting inducements to enlist the proletariat in the socialist party and who clear the road for socialism. Fancy Socialists as recruiting sergeants! Not so thought they who used these words: *'Whoever talks with the enemy parleys with him; whoever parleys bargains with him.'*"

In this way they slide down the slope of compromise, and at last they base the whole agitation on the solution of the land question, and formulate such blood-curdling reforms as those submitted to the Workers' Congress of Marseilles in 1892, among which may be named with bated breath the easy transference of small properties, readjustment of taxation, and farm laborers' allotments. A nice programme certainly, just such a one as has been accepted by the Belgian Workers' party; while the Swiss proletariat are to be endowed in the same handsome fashion. That is what they call practical socialism!

## Part 2

The state has always been the powerful instrument of the oppressors 1 against the oppressed. Hence it is that “the working classes cannot take possession of the machinery of the state for the purpose of using it to win emancipation.” We read in the preface of Engels’ 1891 address:

“According to the philosophic conception, the state is ‘the realization of the idea’ of the kingdom of God upon earth, the domain where eternal truth and eternal justice realize themselves or ought to realize themselves. The result is a superstitious reverence for the state and for everything in connection with it, which is all the more evident because we are accustomed from childhood to suppose that public business and the common interests of society cannot be cared for in any other way than they have been up to date, that is to say, through the state and its well-paid employees. And we fondly think we have made a great step in advance when we have lost faith in the hereditary monarchy and when we lay claim to a democratic republic. In fact the state is nothing else but an instrument of oppression used by one class over another, and quite as much so under a democratic republic as under a monarchy; and in any case it is an evil which, in the struggle for class supremacy, must in turn be used by the victorious proletariat, which will necessarily suffer some injury from its use (as did the Commune) until the mischievous working of it is abated, introducing an era when a future generation, raised in new and free social conditions, will be strong enough to throw aside the paraphernalia of the state.”

Engels writes to the same effect in several of his works. In his important pamphlet, *“Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums, und des Staates,”* (On the origin of the family, private property, and the state) pp. 189, 140, he says:

“The state does not then exist from eternity. There have been communities which existed without the state, completely ignoring the state and its power. To a certain stage of economic development, necessarily linked with the division of society into classes, the state in consequence of that division became a necessity. We are now rapidly approaching a stage of development in production where the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity, but constitutes a positive obstacle to production. Those classes will inevitably disappear in the same way they formerly came into existence. With them will likewise disappear the state. Society will reorganize production upon the basis of free and equal association of the producers, and will relegate state machinery to a suitable place: the 2 archeological museum, in just position to the spinning-wheel and the bronze hatchet.”

Such is the development of the state in a class society, and that is the way in which it is regarded by anarchists. In his other pamphlet, *“Dühring’s Umwälzung der Wissenschaft,”* pp. 267, 268, he says:

“The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its personification in a visible body, but inasmuch as it was the state it only stood for the class which represented in itself the whole of society. When it really became the representative of a complete society, *it became superfluous*. As soon as there are no classes in society to oppress, as soon as class supremacy and the struggle for existence disappear, with their antagonisms and their extravagances resulting from the anarchy dominating production, there is no longer anything to subdue, nothing calling for measures of oppression. The first act performed by the state when really representing the whole of society, i.e. the seizure of the means of production in the name of society, will also be the last act performed by it in its office as state. The intrusion of state authority to social situations becomes gradually superfluous in any circumstances and disappears of itself. In place of a government of persons arises a government of the business of production. The state is not ‘abolished’, it dies. It is from that point of view we must consider ‘the free popular state’, both in the light of the law of its temporary action and of its final demonstrated inadequacy, and likewise the so-called anarchist doctrine affirming that in the fulness of time the state will be abolished.”

It is a strange thing to prove, that Engels who controverts the anarchists, is himself an anarchist in his conception of the rôle of the state. His thought is anarchistic but by the associations of the past he found himself attached to the German social democracy.

The latest edition of a few essays, “*Internationales aus dem Volksstaate*” (1871–75), contains a preface by Engels in which he says that in these essays he has always with intention called himself a Communist, and although he accepts the name of social democrat he finds it inappropriate for a party “whose economic program is not only completely socialist, but straightforwardly communist, and whose final political purpose is the disappearance of the state and at the same time of the democracy.”

What essential difference is there between his opinion and that of Kropotkin who says, in his “*Etude sur la Révolution*,”:

“The abolition of the state, that is the task imposed upon the revolutionist, at least upon him who has the courage of his thought, without which we do not make revolutions. In that task he has against him all the traditions of the bourgeoisie. But he has on his side the evolution of humanity, which lays it upon us at this historic moment to emancipate ourselves from a form of control, rendered necessary perhaps by the ignorance of the past, but which has become hostile to all further progress.”

But it is apparent that a consciousness exists of having wandered from the former standpoint, and that it is wished to hide that divergence by battling with those who have denounced it. Although the 3 old International has recorded among its principles that “the economic struggle must precede the political struggle,” the so-called Marxists announce that we must become possessed of political power in order to triumph in the economic struggle. And *La Revolte* was right when it wrote to this effect:

“It was to be false to the principle of the International. It was to tell the founders of the International, and especially Marx, that they were fools in declaring the pre-eminence of the economic struggle over political warfare. But what was there to



gain by bourgeois leaders in an economic struggle? An increase of wages? But they are not wage slaves. A diminution of the hours of work? But they already work in their own houses, either as literary men or as manufacturers! They could only make profit out of the political contest. They sought to drive the workers in that direction. Helped by the prejudices of the proletariat they succeeded.”

It is evident that they avoid all discussion of the office of the state; in general they steer clear of the rock by the help of indefinite phraseology, without attempting to fathom the question at all. Again we are indebted to Kropotkin for treating the question in its true light in his *“Etude sur la Revolution”*:

The bourgeois knew what they wanted; they had made up their minds long ago. For many years they had entertained an ideal of government, and when the people began to wake up they set them to work out the realization of that ideal, making them a few unimportant concessions on certain points, such as the abolition of feudal rights, or equality before the law. Without bothering about details, the bourgeois had drawn up, far in advance of the revolution, the main lines of future action. But in the whole of modern socialism, we see a tendency to slur over the principles that rule modern society. Among the moderate section to talk of revolution is to incur dislike and suspicion. They treat with contempt those who discuss future society or endeavor to mark out the work of the revolution.”

True it is that it is useless labor to try and graft ideas of liberty and justice upon ancient and worn-out institutions. To endeavor to raise an edifice upon rotten foundations is certainly not the work of a good architect. Many do not apprehend the connection between power and property. These are the two main supports of one edifice, viz. modern society, and he who wishes to overturn the one and leave the other standing does only half of the necessary work. In fact we do not intentionally adopt to our injury the state machine, we take it up simply without understanding that we are introducing into the citadel the Trojan horse. Moritz Rittinghausen whose work *“La Législation directe par le Peuple.”* deserves to be read, touches the sore spot when he writes:

“If you make a mistake in the measures you take with respect to the question of government, your revolution will soon be at the mercy of the old political parties. It would be better to understand thoroughly. the nature, the essential character of democratic government, without bothering too much about the reforms that such a government advertises its readiness to carry into effect.”

Here indeed we see how applicable is that passage of the New Testament which says: “Neither do men put new wine into old bottles.”<sup>4</sup> The neglect of this elementary truth has already brought many misfortunes upon the world, for invariably people have tried to carve out a new revolution taking for their model the old ones of bygone ages.

“When we glance at the conglomeration of revolutionists, who are correlated by certain modes of thought, and not as some say by personal partizanship, when we

analyze their fundamental ideas, their purposes, and their tactics, we discover with alarm that they all have their eyes riveted upon the past, that none of them steadily contemplate the future, and that they have only one idea, to revivify some great man who has passed away.”

We must intelligently embrace the conviction that all previous revolutions have been used for the one purpose of strengthening and increasing the supremacy and power of the bourgeoisie. As long as the state based upon legislation continues to exist and gradually to develop its nature, as long as we continue to work with such cooperation, so long shall we be slaves. If in the approaching revolution the people do not rise to their great duty, which consists in abolishing the state with all its codes and in effectively hindering its taking root in the socialist society, all the blood which may be shed, and all the sacrifices of the proletariat — for the greatest sacrifices are always its portion, although they remain unrecorded — will be servicable only to some ambitious men who wish to supplant those who sit in office, and who won't hesitate to say “Get out of that, for I want to sit down”. We are not interested in a change of officials; what we want is a complete change of the social organism. More and more it will be proved true that “the future will not be concerned with the rule of men over men, but with the administration of affairs” (Aug. Comte). For it is certain that the verdict as to which is the best social system will hang upon the question: What system allows the greatest liberty and independence? For if freedom to live as we like is to be surrendered, one of the grandest characteristics of human nature, individuality, will disappear.

From this point of view Engels and the Anarchists could keep step in their progress, if they were not to be hindered by words. But that which is really harmonious will come together, [in] spite of all separating forces; and as for the opposing elements sometimes they can be brought into apparent unison, but in the end they are found to be irreconcilable. That is the thought that comforts us and brings hope to our hearts even in sight of the many controversies and divisions which arise between people who on the whole should arrive at an understanding.

Let us again take into consideration the question whether it be possible for revolutionary socialists and communist anarchists to work together. We use the names habitually employed, although we think that communism and anarchism are ideals which exclude each other. Kropotkin, on the other hand, says in his work *“La Conquete du Pain,”* p. 81, that “anarchy leads to communism and communism to anarchy, each being the expression of the tendency predominating in modern societies bent on the search for equality.” It has been impossible for me to coincide with the reasoning. When he calls “anarchism communism — a communism without government, that of free men,” and regards this as “the synthesis of the two ends pursued by mankind through the ages — economic freedom and political freedom,” we could easily find ground for debate, but a further explanation would have been desirable. Anarchists, rightly so called, are pure individualists who contend that private property is an integral part of liberty, and who neither repudiate individual production or exchange. Hence it is that men like Benjamin R. Tucker and others do not look upon Kropotkin and Most as anarchists at all. For that reason we would perhaps do better to speak henceforth of revolutionary communists. No one should find fault with that name. Respecting this question we will make further investigation under the guidance of men regarded as representative by both schools of thought. Is there any difference in principle between socialism and anarchism? The German social democratic party, at the congress of Saint Gall, passed the following resolution:

“This meeting of the party declares that the anarchist theory of society, in so far as it seeks the absolute autonomy of the individual, is anti-socialist; that it is nothing else than a partial form of the principles of bourgeois liberalism, although it proceeds from the socialist standpoint in its criticism of the existing social order. It is especially incompatible with the socialist claim for the socialization of the means of production and for the social regulation of production, and it ends in an irreconcilable contradiction, unless production reverts to the petty scale of hand-work. The anarchist religion and the exclusive recommendation of a policy of violence are based upon an erroneous conception of the part played by violence in the history of nations. Violence is a reactionary factor quite as much as a revolutionary factor, indeed more reactionary than revolutionary. The use of individual violence does not accomplish its purpose and is injurious and reprehensible in so far as it offends the feelings of justice entertained by mankind. We hold persecutors responsible for the savage acts committed by the persecuted in their frenzy, and we look upon the inclination to such acts as a phenomenon that has revealed itself in all time in similar conditions, and indeed which police spies habitually employ against the workers to the advantage of reaction.”

Liebkecht, who spoke in support, divided anarchists into three classes:

1. police agents;
2. criminals at common law who throw an anarchist cloak over their crime;
3. the so-called defenders of propaganda by deed who fain would induce or make a revolution by individual acts.

After having shown the necessity to agitate, organize and educate (a strangely arranged series of acts, as if it were possible to agitate and organize without preliminary education, that is to say, without knowing why we agitate and organize) he defines in the following style the difference between socialism and anarchy:

“Socialism concentrates its forces, anarchy divides them and is consequently in a state of political and economic impotence; it is no more consistent with revolutionary action than with modern production on a large scale. Anarchy is demonstrated to be and to remain unrevolutionary and anti-revolutionary.”

We believe this distinction to be very inaccurately drawn. In a 6 scientific demonstration we do not advance one step towards the solution by the help of grandiose language. In the first place let us settle the question — Is an Anarchist a Socialist, yes or no? And that in our view is not a matter of doubt. What is, in short, the kernel, the true inwardness of socialism? The recognition or the non-recognition of private property?

A little time ago appeared the first number of a publication, got up for the revolutionary-anarchist-socialist propaganda, entitled “*Necessité et bases d’une entente*,” by Merlino. The author says in it:

“We are above all Socialists, that is to say we wish to destroy the cause of all iniquity, exploitation, poverty, and crime, viz., individual ownership.”

That is equivalent to saying that both Anarchists and Socialists have a common enemy — private property. In like manner Adolphe Fischer, one of the Chicago martyrs, said straightforwardly

“Many would evidently like to know what is the connection between anarchism and socialism, and whether these two doctrines have anything in common. Some believe that an Anarchist cannot be a Socialist, nor a Socialist be an Anarchist. That is inaccurate. The philosophy of socialism is a general philosophy, and comprehends several distinct subordinate doctrines. By way of illustration let us take the term ‘christianity.’ There are catholics, lutherans, methodists, anabaptists, members of independent churches, and various other religious sects, and all call themselves ‘christians.’ Although every catholic is a christian it would be inaccurate to say that every christian believes in catholicism. Webster defines socialism as follows — ‘A better ordered, a more just, and a more harmonious arrangement of social affairs.’ That is the end of anarchism. Anarchism seeks a better form of society. Then every Anarchist is a Socialist, but every Socialist is not necessarily an Anarchist. Anarchists in their turn are divided into two parties — Anarchist-Communists, and Anarchists who have espoused the ideas of Proudhon. The International Workers’ Association is the body representing Anarchist-Communists. Politically we are Anarchists, and economically we are Communists or Socialists. In the matter of political organisation, Anarchist-Communists demand the abolition of political power: we deny to any class or to any individual the right to rule over another class or individual. We think there cannot be freedom as long as one man is to be found under the government of another, as long as one man remains master of his fellow in any respect whatever, and as long as the means of existence are monopolised by certain classes or certain individuals. As for the economic organisation of society, we are believers in the communist form, or in the co-operative method of production.”

We might quote still many authors who all speak to the same effect. There is therefore a common point of departure for Socialists and Anarchists.

In the second place, Merlino would like an organisation of production:

“The fundamental principle of the organisation of production, that every man must work, must make himself useful to his 7 fellows, unless he be sick or incapable — the principle that every man must make himself useful to society by means of his labour has no need to be made into a law; it must become part of morality, permeate public opinion, and become, so to speak, a part of human nature. It will be the corner stone over which will be erected the edifice of human society. No arrangement founded on that principle can produce serious and permanent injustice, while the violation of that principle will undoubtedly bring back humanity in a very short time to its present condition.”

So we are in agreement upon the Abolition of Private Property and the Organisation of Production.

Here is the third point: Merlino sets out with the idea that

the expropriation of the bourgeoisie can only be effected by force, by violent procedure. The revolted workers have no need to ask anybody for permission to take possession of the factories, workplaces, shops, houses, etc., and to use them for the purposes for which they were constructed. That would however be hardly a commencement of the inevitable appropriation; it would be a mere preliminary. If each group of workmen, having taken into their hands a portion of capital or of the accumulated wealth, wish to remain absolute masters of it to the exclusion of other workmen, if one group wished to live on the heaped-up wealth, and refuse to work and to come to an understanding with the other groups for the organisation of labour, there would simply be, under other names and with a change of monopolists, the continuance of the existing regime. The mere act of appropriation by the workers can only be provisional, the wealth taken can only become common property when everybody will set himself to work, when production shall be organised for the general benefit of the community.”

Formerly Socialists were in agreement on that point, but since the parliamentary microbe has done its evil work among them it is not so.

At Erfurt, Liebknecht called violence “a reactionary factor.” How does he reconcile that deliverance with the distinct teaching of Marx, his master, by whose name he swears, who says in his *“Capital,”* “Violence is the midwife of every old society about to give birth to anew. Violence is an economic factor.” He wrote besides in the *“Deutsch-franzosischen Jahrbucher,”* “The arm of criticism cannot fill the place of the criticism that uses arms. Material violence can only be abolished by material violence; theoretical teaching itself becomes material violence as soon as it permeates the majority.” And if even that is not yet sufficiently explicit, what shall we say of that quotation from Marx in the *“Neue Rheinische Zeitung,”* “There is only one means of lessening, of simplifying, of concentrating the fatally criminal sufferings of this old society, and its heart-rending pangs in bringing to birth the new, and that is Revolutionary Terrorism.”

Engels adds, in *“The Condition of the Working-Class in England,”*

“The only possible solution is a violent revolution, which cannot be much longer on the way. It is too late now to hope for a peaceful solution. The classes are more antagonistic than ever, the spirit of revolt is penetrating the heart of the workers. Their bitterness is increasing, skirmishes are enlarging themselves into important combats, and soon but a little push will be needed to put everything in motion; then will resound the cry throughout the country ‘War to the mansions, peace to the cottages!’ And the rich will come on the scene too late to stop the onslaught.”

Marx and Engels recognise therefore violence as a revolutionary factor, and we have seen that Liebknecht calls it a reactionary factor, Is he not in complete opposition with the two first mentioned?

Surely Marx must have been a quack, a revolutionary bouncer on the bounce, a *“Maulheld,”* to use a word much in favour among German soldiers. He bluntly and without subterfuge declares that violence is a revolutionary factor, and nowhere do we read that he ever rose to the superior point of view of some modern Socialists, who describe violence as a reactionary factor.

No revolutionist will regard violence as revolutionary in all its forms and in all circumstances. In that case every riot, any considerable resistance to the police, might be characterised as tending

to revolution. But it is surprising to find that such acts as the taking of the Bastille, and the fighting of the workers at the barricades in 1848 and 1871 are to be classified as reactionary.

Is it possible that without laughing we can describe a speech in Parliament as a revolutionary act? It may be, as everything appears possible nowadays. We hear tell of parliamentary revolutionists, Yes, people have begun to regard Parliamentary Socialists as revolutionists of the first water. There are certain Socialists who for certain deeds express their gratitude to the Crown, there are even some, like Liebknecht and his colleagues in the Saxon Landtag, who swear fidelity to the King, to the royal house, and to the country. When brought to book he replied

“As for the statement of the government commissary respecting the oath, I am surprised that the president has not taken up the defence of my party; it is recognised that we hold other views about religion, but that does not exempt us from the obligation incurred in taking the oath. In my party we respect our pledged word, and just as Democratic Socialists have kept their word, they will know how to be faithful to their oath.”

Consequently they have sworn fealty to the king and his house; they are Royalist Socialists. There are some in Holland who are under high ministerial patronage because they belong to the important group (in this respect like Bebel and Vollmar) who seek an improved state of society by strictly legal methods.

Do they really believe that our present bourgeois state of society would ever have issued from the womb of feudalism without forcing the peasants from the soil and passing bloodthirsty laws against the victims of their spoilation, and without the violent destruction of all the old ideas with reference to property; and do they think that the present society will give birth to a socialist society without violent revolutions? It is impossible to be mistaken on this point, and yet they make the public believe such silliness. Liebknecht said in the Reichstag that it is possible to settle the social question by means of reforms. Ah, well! Does he believe it — yes or no? If yes, he completely repudiates the Liebknecht of the past, who taught exactly the opposite. If no, he makes people believe it and leads them by the nose. There is no escape from the alternative.

Of what use then is it to organise the workers, unless to make of them a power hostile to the power of the possessing classes? Can it be that such an organisation is also a reactionary factor? If we thought ourselves strong enough, do you think that we would endure one day longer our condition of slavery, poverty, and misery? It would be a crime to do so. The knowledge of our weakness through lack of organisation is the only reason why we tolerate the existing state of things. Governments know this better than we do. Why else should they continually seek to increase their power? The antagonistic forces both organise themselves, and each tries to force the other to ill-considered action, so as to profit by it.

Everything depends moreover on the conception of the state. Liebknecht and his anti-revolutionist friends take quite a different view of it from Marx. While the latter wrote,

The state is powerless to abolish pauperism. So far as states have concerned themselves with pauperism they have confined themselves to police regulations, charity, etc. The state can do nothing more. For really to abolish poverty the state must abolish itself, for the source of the evil lies in the very existence of the state, and not, as many radicals and revolutionists believe, in a definite ideal state, that they propose to

replace the existing state. The existence of the state and the existence of slavery are inseparable. The state and ancient slavery were not more intimately bound together than are the state and modern capitalist society.”

Liebknecht believes that it is necessary to take care of the poor, of the helpless, as long as life lasts, and in this connection he uses in Parliament the following language, which forms a striking contrast with the language of Marx:

We think this great contrast between the very rich and the very poor is a sign of our low civilisation. We think that the upward progress of civilisation will gradually cause this opposition to disappear, and we believe that the state (of which we have the noblest conception as to its end) has laid upon it the civilising mission of bridging the gulf between rich and poor, and because we attribute this mission to the state we accept in principle the bill brought forward.”

So while the one believes that the state must first be abolished, before the antagonism between rich and poor can be made to disappear, the other is of opinion that the state is inspired with a mission to abolish that antagonism.

With the first of these contentions the last is in complete opposition, just as in the following language:

“Only by legislation, not necessarily christian, but really humane, of a civilising influence, imbued with the socialistic spirit, concerning itself with the interests of work and the workers, busying itself 10 seriously and energetically with the labour problem, and restoring to the state its highest function, will you be able to avoid a revolution. In one word, you will escape revolution only by pursuing the path of reform – of real and thorough reform. If you pass the law with the amendments – with the amendments we have added to it, to correct its deficiencies, you will have made a long step in the direction of reform, By that course of action you will not undermine the foundations of socialism, but you will have done it a service, for this law is a testimony in favour of the truth of the socialist idea.”

Dr. Muller, after having quoted these declarations, aptly remarks, “A patched-up kind of state socialism is then a testimony in favour of the socialist idea!”

This is the length to which they have already travelled, and it may help us to understand things yet more surprising. But for the energy of the younger spirits, the German Social Democratic party would have sunk still more deeply in the mire.

That there is a general alarm about the growth of the parliamentarianism which subordinates the economic to the political struggle is clearly evident from the questions set for discussion at the Zurich International Congress. The Swiss Social Democratic party declared in its proposition that “Parliamentarianism, where its power is unchecked, leads to the corruption and the bamboozlement of the people.”

The Americans affirmed that it was necessary to be careful that the Social Democratic party preserved faithfully its revolutionary character, and that it did not recognise the system pursued at the present day by the governing classes.

We clearly perceive that parliamentarianism does not give sufficient guarantees. that it will preserve to socialism its revolutionary character. Whenever the social democracy falls into the danger of becoming a wreck upon the rocks of parliamentarianism, the Anarchist Communists will utter a shrill cry of alarm, and that will be a public benefit.

We believe that Anarchists and revolutionary Socialists can accept without searching of heart the following programme; moreover, the Anarchists who met at Zurich declared that it was unobjectionable:

«All those who recognise that private property is the source of every iniquity, and believe that the emancipation of the proletariat is only possible through the abolition of private property —

“All those who recognise that any organisation of production must have for its basic principle that every member of society must do some useful work in order to entitle him to a share in the products resulting from the labour of the community—

“All those who agree that the expropriation of the bourgeoisie must be aimed at by every possible means, whether legal or illegal, peaceable or violent —

“Can cooperate in the overthrow of modern society and in the establishment of a new society.”

In place of being irreconcilable opponents, revolutionary socialism 11 and anarchism can therefore cooperate. We are in harmony with Teistler when he declares in his pamphlet, “*Le Parlementarisme et la Classe Ouvrière*” (No. 1 of the Berlin Socialist Library),

“The working class will never obtain any advantage by politico-parliamentary methods. Being an oppressed social stratum it will exercise no influence so long as class predominance shall exist. It will be some time after the proletariat have come into possession of economic supremacy that the political strength of the bourgeoisie will break down. Useless therefore to reckon upon influence achieved through legislation. Besides, political power could never reach the economic end desired by the workers. For this is how events will really fall into sequence: As soon as the proletariat shall have destroyed the present form of production, the political scaffolding of the state will fall to pieces. But the whole political organisation cannot be changed by a political action. How, for example, are we by political means to dismiss or render efficient the wages question? The very supposition is absurd! The whole of modern economic legislation is only the sanction, the codification of existing circumstances, and of practices commonly occurring. Only when they shall have acquired an influential position, or when it will be for the profit of the dominant classes, will the workers obtain anything by parliamentary methods. In any case the social movement constitutes the motive power. That is why it is inexcusable to try to drive the workers from economic ground to ground purely political.”

Revolutionary Socialists, along with Anarchist-Communists if possible, should guide the class war, organise the masses, and use strikes as their medium of political power, instead of wasting their strength in the political struggle. Let us leave therefore politics to the politicians.



As long as the power of capital shall exist, so long will parliamentarianism be a weapon employed by the “haves” against the “have-nots”, And capitalism shows its hand even in the social democratic party, a fact of which we might give numerous instances, We might cite the model experiment in cooperation by the Socialists of Ghent, where tyranny is in force and where freedom of criticism is suppressed, aye, punished with the loss of employment. The same fear which hinders the workpeople of a factory, threatened with the deprivation of their daily bread, from speaking the truth against their employer, or which forces them to sign a paper in which — contrary to their knowledge of facts — they protest against some attack upon the manufacturer, that very fear hinders the Socialists of that place from corroborating the truth which I myself proclaim fearlessly because I am independent of them.

Look at countries where universal suffrage exists as in Germany and France. Is the lot of the worker there any better? Consider the United States, where, under the omnipotence of capitalism, the elections are veritable hotbeds of corruption. One of these electioneering generals (who by the large amount of money he controlled was able to secure the election of the two last presidents, Harrison 12 and the respectable Cleveland) was lately impeached and condemned to several years’ imprisonment. In fact the United States are governed by these mercenaries in the pay of the bloated financiers, who are really the men who point out the political game that is to be played.

We cannot condemn the poor devil who prefers to accept a few francs for his vote rather than suffer starvation along with his wife and children. It is the most natural thing in the world. Whoever shall offer him the most shall enrol him either as a clerical, a liberal, or an enthusiastic Socialist. He is driven to the political manger by hunger, and for that reason we have not the heart to condemn him.

On this subject the remark of Henry George is much to the point: “The millionaire always supports the party in power, however corrupt it be. He never tries to introduce reform, for instinctively he fears change. Never does he fight with a bad government. If he is threatened by those who hold political power he does not stir, he makes no appeal to the people, but he corrupts the opposing force with money.” In reality politics has become a matter of business and nothing else. Is it not true “that a society made up of the excessively rich and the excessively poor becomes an easy prey to those who seek to possess themselves of power?”

Ah well! if that be true, we are persuaded that the political war does not help us — could not help us. For meanwhile the economic evolution will be on us with the tide. A democratic constitution and a bad government can travel in harness. The key to every political problem is the social question, and those who endeavour to get hold of political power do not attack the evil at a vital point.

We must vote rightly, and if parliamentarianism has given us nothing up to now it is because we have voted wrong. Try to get men capable of doing their work, cry the political quacks. Exactly, reply we, let us try to catch birds by putting salt on their tails.

The collectivists take occasion to be satisfied with the march of events. Emile Vandervelde says in his pithy pamphlet,

“Looking only at the prospect of material wealth, the impelling force of the two systems would be appreciably equivalent. But we must take into account, to the credit of the collectivist solution, a moral factor whose influence will go on continually increasing. In place of being the subordinates of an anonymous society, those who

actually guide the industrial army would become public men, endowed by the workers themselves with a certificate of confidence.”

But he forgets to add that, according to his idea, the workers will all be “the subordinates of a great anonymous society,” namely the state—that is to say, that there will not be much advance. Let us endeavour to abolish tyranny altogether, not merely to have a change of tyrants. By collectivism we succeed only in changing our masters, not in suppressing them. Such a state will be infinitely more tyrannical than the existing state.

Plato, in his “*Republic*,” made the following reflection:

\*For this reason good men refuse to govern, either for money or for honour, for they are unwilling to be considered either mercenaries or thieves in publicly accepting or privately appropriating money; neither do they attach value to honours. By force and penalties we might constrain them to accept power, but they think the conduct of him scandalous who seeks a governmental position and does not wait till he be forced to accept it. Actually the greatest punishment for those who are unwilling to govern is that they must become subject to the morally inferior, and it is to avoid that, I believe, that good men take up the business of government. But then they do not accept it as a thing that will bring much pleasure, but as an unavoidable task that they cannot turn over to others. For that reason I think that if ever there should exist a state exclusively composed of good men they would seek as much not to govern as there are some now anxious to govern, and it would be demonstrated that a true government does not seek its own interest, but that of its subordinates, and that consequently every wise man would prefer to find himself under the direction of others rather than to be himself burdened with power.”

Which proves that Plato had also some anarchist tendencies.

Actually it is often said: Whatever happens, we must in any case pass through the state socialism of the Social Democrats before we realise a better society. We do not confidently say “No.” But if that must be so, we shall yet have far and long to fight our way. If the signs of the times do not deceive us we see already the lower middle class, in combination with the aristocracy of the workers, preparing to take over political power from the hands that hold it today. That will be the dictatorship of the fourth state, behind which has already formed a fifth. And do not think for a moment that the fifth state will be happier under the rule of the fourth than the fourth is now under the domination of the third. Judging from some recent events we may very justifiably entertain reasonable apprehensions. What is left of freedom of thought and speech in the official German Social Democratic party? The discipline of the party has become a tyranny, and woe to him who opposes the leaders of the party — they make short work of him. What liberty is there in the much belauded cooperative societies of Belgium? We could produce evidence to prove that such a liberty is a more grievous despotism than is ordinarily met with. In any case the fifth state will have the same struggle to maintain, and a stupendous effort will be necessary to free it from the domination of the fourth state. And if there should subsequently be a domination of the fifth state to the detriment of the sixth, and so on, how very prolonged will be sufferings of the proletariat? Once a social democratic state has been established it will not be easy to abolish it, and it is very possible it may be less difficult to strangle it at its birth than to depose it when it shall

have been established. We cannot expect that the people, after having exhausted their strength in a Homeric contest with the bourgeoisie, will be ready at once to enter upon a struggle with the bureaucratic State of the Social Democrats. If we ever become the subjects of 14 such a state we will be for a long time the victims of its blessings. From the christian revolution at the commencement of our era — which had in the beginning a similar communist tendency — we have fallen into the hands of clerical and feudal despotism, and we have actually been subject to it for nearly nineteen centuries.

If that can be avoided, let us try our best.

Liebknrecht, at Berlin, expressed his belief that state socialism and social democracy were on the eve of their final battle. The further capitalism goes to ruin, rot, and dissolution, the more clearly does bourgeois society perceive that in the end it cannot defend itself against the attacks of socialist ideas, and so much nearer do we approach the moment when state socialism will be seriously proclaimed: and the last battle that social democracy has got to wage will be begun under the device, “Here social democracy: there state socialism.” The first part is true, the second not. It is evident that by that time Social Democrats will have been so absorbed by the State Socialists that they will fight as allies. Let us not forget that to all appearance the revolution will not be brought about by the Social Democrats, who for the most part have thrown off — except in words — their revolutionary character, but by the mob who having become impatient will begin the revolution against the advice of their leaders. And when the mob shall have risked its life, and the revolution shall have been completed, the Social Democrats will suddenly rush to the front and try to appropriate (without striking a blow) the honours of the revolution, and claim it as their own work.

In truth, Revolutionary Socialists are not without responsibility; it lies with them to sanction a dictatorship, or to usher in an era of freedom. It ought to be their endeavour that after the struggle the mob be not dismissed with thanks for services rendered, and that it be not disarmed, for those who have might can assert the right. They must prevent others from starting up and organising themselves as a central committee, or as a government under any form whatever, and especially, of course, they must not reveal themselves in these objectionable shapes. The people must be allowed to manage their own affairs and to defend their own interests if they do not wish to be again defrauded. The people must look with suspicion upon eloquent dissertations on the rights of man issued on paper, and take care that when the socialisation of the means of production is decreed they do not pass again in reality under the power of new rulers, chosen under the mischievous influence of electoral intrigues (not unknown where universal suffrage prevails) and under the disguise of a sham democracy. We have had enough of reforms on paper. It is time that we had something genuine in the way of reform, and that will only come about when the people really hold the reins of power. Let there be no more play on the words “evolution” and “revolution”, as if they were opposites. Both have the same meaning — their only difference consists in the time of their appearance.

Deville, whom nobody will suspect of anarchism, but who is known 15 and recognised as a Social Democrat, and who wields some influence, recognises this fact, as we do. He writes: “Evolution and revolution do not contradict each other; on the contrary, they succeed and complete each other — the second is the conclusion of the first. Revolution is only the characteristic crisis which effectively ends a period of evolution.”

In fact revolution is nothing else than the inevitable final phase of all evolution, but there is no opposition between these two terms, as is often suggested. To avoid all confusion, and that it

may be remembered, we may briefly state the difference. A revolution is a rapid change, easily noticed, from one condition to another. An evolution is a much slower transition, with progress less perceptible.

Let us now endeavour to establish the conclusion that SOCIALISM IS IN DANGER in consequence of the tendency of the vast majority. The chief danger is the influence of capitalism on the social democratic party. Indeed the less revolutionary character of the party in some countries arises from the fact that a far greater number of adherents of the party there have something to lose if a violent social change were to take place. That is why the social democracy shows itself by degrees more moderate, well-beloved, practical, diplomatic (in its own language, more cunning), until ultimately it will become thin-blooded by reason of its cunning, and so pale that it soon won't know itself. Social democracy will capture still more votes, although the increase is not as rapid as Messrs. Engels and Bebel imagined it would be, there will be more members of Parliament, more communal councillors and other socialist dignitaries, more newspapers, book shops, and printing offices; in countries like Belgium and Denmark there will be more bakeries, drug shops, co-operative stores, etc.; Germany will furnish more cigar merchants, brewery firms, etc.; in a word, a great number of persons will be economically dependent on the future "peaceable and calm development" of the movement; that is to say, that any really revolutionary action would be dangerous to their interests. And these are precisely the leaders of the party, and, in consequence of the "discipline", almost omnipotent. In this case as in others it is economic conditions which guide the policy of the party. When we see the German party patted on the back by the bourgeois press, as is sometimes done, putting it in contrast with vulgar Revolutionary Socialists, it gives material for reflection. One of our leading newspapers published the following paragraph, in which there is something suggestive for the thoughtful observer: "Our Socialists in these later years have become so refined, have so curled and pomaded themselves in the most recent parliamentary style, that we may say that we are witnesses of the beginning of the gradual transformation of a party most revolutionary into a party not exactly radical, but which considers the existing framework of society sufficiently elastic and roomy to accommodate it, even with all its discontent."

The actual development of German socialism is a very important subject, which it is not our business to treat in the present essay. 16 Even if the number of socialist deputies in the Reichstag has risen from 60 to 70 there is not yet anything to cause dread to the German empire. In the first place, socialism manifests its weakness in becoming a party numerically strong in Parliament, for its adherents then expect results from it more positive than a parliamentary fraction can obtain, even by increased tameness and compliance. In the second place, we may be sure that the non-socialist parties will smooth down all opposition existing between them in proportion as Socialists attack them more vigorously as an influential party in the legislature.

But the danger which threatens us is not after all so great — it is evidently a phase of evolution. It is not our business to form a movement according to our caprices, but we have to analyse the situation. Spite of all the efforts of leaders to send the movement through an artificial canal, the economic development pursues its steady advance, and men will be forced to conform their actions to that development, for it will never accommodate itself to their whims or preferences.

It is not surprising that backward countries like Germany and Austria are favourable to the principle of authority. When western nations like France, England, the Low Countries, and Belgium had for long quaffed the cup of freedom, Germany did not even know how to spell the word "liberty". That is why political development in that country is almost at a standstill, and although

she has overtaken other countries on the lines of economic development her political development remains very far behind. He who understands to some extent the state policy of Germany (and this is even more true of Austria) knows how retrograde it is. And although Belfort-Bax considers the German Socialists as the natural leaders of the international socialist movement, we think that the guidance of such a movement, cannot be trusted to an oriental people.

We regard the future with calmness because we have the assured conviction that events will not follow our or any other theories, and that the future belongs to those who will have most closely reckoned up the items that constitute progress — who will have analysed most accurately the signs of the times.

For us truth is found in the following words: Theft is the modern deity, Parliamentarianism is his prophet, and the State his executioner. That is why we remain in the ranks of Free Socialists, who do not exorcise the Devil by Beelzebub, the chief of devils, but who go straight to the end, without compromise, and without laying any offerings upon the altar of our corrupt capitalist society.

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Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis  
Socialism in Danger  
1894

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