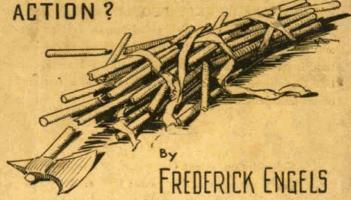
# Revolutionary Act

MILITARY INSURRECTION OR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC



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FREDERICK ENGELS

# The Revolutionary Act

Military Insurrection or Political and Economic Action?

By FREDERICK ENGELS

TRANSLATED BY HENRY KUHN

With an appendix by DANIEL DE LEON

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## PREFACE.

In view of recent events, this thesis by Frederick Engels, appearing as an introduction to one of Karl Marx's pamphlets, "The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850," comes at this time like a voice of warning from the tomb. For years past, the discussion has been going on, among groups which call themselves revolutionary, as to the proper tactics for accomplishing the Revolution; whether the Revolution could be accomplished peacefully or of necessity would have to be brought about by bloodshed, whether the political ballot backed by an adequate industrial force was sufficient to accomplish the Revolution; or whether military preparations and the necessary psychological attitude were indispensable prerequisites to enable the working class to bring the Revolution about; whether indeed the political ballot and its accompanying political agitation had any value whatsoever as a revolutionary weapon of the working class.

The physical-forcists, avowed anarchists, and veiled dynamiters, made a disproportionate amount of noise and consequently were able to find their way into the newspaper columns, but from the point of view of sound argument, the Socialist Labor Party, advocating the civilized, the political method, backed by the physical force of an integrally organized industrial union, had held the field against all comers. Anyone driven into a corner was usually willing to admit that we were

absolutely right, but . . . . .

Then came the Russian revolution. By peculiar circumstances, which it is not necessary here to enumerate, the proletarian revolution in Russia was accomplished by an easy coup d'état, a victory backed by the workers and peasants in arms. As might have been expected, this caused all the anarchist and physicalforcists' pots throughout the whole world to boil and sizzle until the contents spluttered over into the fire. Here was a living example, a proletarian revolution, the first and only real proletarian revolution in the world carried to a successful issue. How was it done? By physical force, by military action; no further proof needed; all revolutions must be accomplished by physical violence—how else could they be revolutions at all? The political weapon was effeminate, compromising, COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY. "Mass movements," "military forces," had to be gathered and organized, even though of necessity this had to be done in secret and no hidden spot could be found for this extensive maneuver larger than a six by eight room, sub-cellars or ratholes.

With brains made red hot by the Russian revolu-

tion, it was impossible to argue, it was useless for the time being to show by overwhelming argument and reasoning that the working class in the open field, armed with sticks, stones and mallets, or anything hard which they could pick up as they "mass-actioned" out of the factory, would be nothing but easy food for destruction by the well equipped capitalist military, even though this be far outnumbered.

Of course we were only the S. L. P. It was our word against the overwhelming evidence of Russia. To drown our voice the only thing considered necessary was to shout: "coward," "political compromiser," "reactionary." But here comes Engels-Marx's life-long co-worker-and who is more fit to interpret Marxism than he?—showing by facts and figures that the day of the barricade, of street corner revolution, of military action against the capitalist military forces, was a thing of the past already in the last half of the nineteenth century. Those shallow-minded phrasemongers, who have borrowed the plumage of the Russian revolution, have also continually bandied about the names of Marx and Engels. Naturally they were Marxian, Marxian to the core, since the Russian leaders were Marxian, and not to prate every moment of "mass action," street corner revolution and the "dictatorship of the proletariat," was nothing short of a betrayal of Marxism! Let them now get what comfort they can out of the authority of Engels on political vs. military action!

What is true of the strength of the military

forces of capitalism, as enumerated by Engels, is true several hundred per cent at this day and hour. Not only would the revolutionary "mass-actionist" be met with improved guns and cannons, but with additional military improvements that Engels had never dreamed of; bombs thrown from aeroplanes, tanks, poison gas, tear gas and a number of other infernal things now accessible for use against the "rabble rot" of "riotous" workmen.

The fact that Engels looked to the German Social Democracy of his day as the model Socialist political organization and that the Social Democracy has since, at the crucial moment, proven utterly ineffectual, inadequate, yes, traitorous to the movement, does not alter the general truth and sound reasoning of Engels's argument. Curious enough, it was the Socialist Labor Party. the advocate of the civilized political method, that, in the decade immediately before the War, was the most severe; yes, perhaps the only real and consistent critic of the Social Democracy of Germany. This criticism, however, was not directed at it because it was political but because its leaders had become "socialist" politicians, parliamentarians, "socialist" reformers, rolling and temporizing with capitalist society. We criticized the Social Democracy because we perceived the tendency to swing away from revolutionary Socialism, because in exchange for reforms under the present system, it was sacrificing the Revolution. It was gathering voters by the thousands and millions, but the

sound Socialist education of these voters was being neglected.

Moreover, we saw impending disaster if the political party was marching onward to political victory, as the Social Democracy was marching onward, without an adequate organized force to back up the victory at the ballot box. Force, did we say? Yes, we did, and we did so deliberately. All force is not manifested in fighting; sometimes, to be sure, the fighting force is weakness itself. Organized working class force does not necessarily (in fact we should say under modern conditions, as a rule, and certainly not previous to the political victory), imply military force. The Socialist Labor Party continually warned the Social Democracy in the decade before its fall, warned all purely political Socialists, that a victory at the ballot box without the adequately organized power of the proletariat to back it up, would mean the defeat of the Revolution.

This organized force of the Proletariat can exist only in the Socialist Industrial Union, organized in shop and factory, mill and mine, on the railroads and other means of communication, every place where the economic power of the capitalist holds sway today and wherever the worker, by the fact that he is the producer, the wielder and operator of the tools of production, will and must become the only true source of power the moment he is organized in a classconscious Socialist Revolutionary Union.

The working out of this theory which, applied, con-

stitutes the essential and fundamental tactics of the modern revolutionary movement, that part is the contribution of Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party, building solidly upon the foundations laid in the previous generation by Marx and Engels.

THE PUBLISHERS.

# THE REVOLUTIONARY ACT.

By Frederick Engels.

The work, herewith republished, represents Marx's first attempt to explain a segment of contemporary history by means of his materialist conception upon the basis of the prevailing economic condition. In the Communist Manifesto, this theory had been applied in rough outline to the entire modern history, and in Marx's and my own articles in the Neue Rheinische Zeitung it had constantly been used for the interpretation of current political events. Here, however, it became a matter of tracing the inherent causal connection of a development extending over several years which was for the whole of Europe as critical as it was typical, that is, bringing back, in the sense of the author, upon political events the effects of what, in the last analysis, were economic causes.

In an attempt to judge events and series of events taken from current history, one will never be able to go back to the very last economic causes. Even in these days, when the professional press furnishes material so copiously, it will be impossible even in England to trace the course of industry and commerce in the world's market, or to follow the changes in production methods

day after day in such manner as to be able to draw at any given moment a general conclusion from these highly complicated and ever changing factors, factors of which the most important often work for a long time under cover before they suddenly and forcibly come to the surface. A clear survey of the economic history of a given period can never be gained at the time; it is possible only later, after the subsequent collection and assortment of the material. Here statistics are an indispensable aid, but they always limp behind the event. When dealing with current contemporary history one will often be forced to treat this, the most decisive factor, as constant and to consider the economic situation found at the beginning of a given period as governing the entire period without variation, or to consider only such changes of the situation as emanate from events plainly visible and therefore also quite manifest. The materialist method must here too often confine itself to a tracing back of political conflicts to the conflicts of interests among the social classes and class factions of a given economic development, and to prove that the different political parties are the more or less adequate political expression of these same classes and class factions.

It goes without saying that the inevitable neglect of the simultaneous changes of the economic situation, the real basis of all the events to be investigated, is bound to be a source of error. But all the conditions of a comprehensive presentation of the history of the day inevitably include sources of error—which deters no one from writing current history.

At the time Marx undertook this work, the said source of error was even far more inevitable. To trace during the revolutionary period, 1848-49, the simultaneous economic transformations, or to maintain a survey of them, was plainly impossible. Precisely so during the first months of the London exile, in the autumn and winter of 1849-50. That was just the time when Marx began this work. But despite these unpropitious circumstances, his thorough knowledge of the economic condition of France, as well as of the political history of that country since the February revolution, enabled him to give a presentation of events, which uncovered their inner connection in a manner not since attained, and which later met, brilliantly, the double test that Marx himself subjected them to.

The first test was occasioned by Marx, since the spring of 1850, again gaining some leisure for economic studies and, as a beginning, taking up the economic history of the last ten years. From the facts themselves it became thoroughly clear to him what, thus far, and from the fractional material at hand, he had half deduced a priori: that the world commercial crisis of 1847 was the real cause of the February and March revolutions, and that the industrial prosperity which arrived gradually in the middle of 1848, coming to full bloom in 1849 and 1850, was the vitalizing factor of the renascent European reaction. This was decisive. While in

the first three articles (published in the January-March issue of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, "Politico-economic Review," Hamburg, 1850) the expectation of an early renewed upward turn of revolutionary energy is still looked for, the historic review, written by Marx and myself, and published in the final double number-May-October-which appeared in the autumn of 1850, breaks once for all with these illusions: "A new revolution is possible only as the consequence of a new crisis. And it is also as certain as the latter." But that was really the only essential change that had to be made. As to the interpretation of events, given in former parts, as well as the causal connections therein set forth, absolutely nothing had to be changed, as is shown by the continuation of the review covering the period from March 10 down to the autumn of 1850. This continuation I have included as the fourth article in the present edition.

The second test was still harder. Immediately after Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état of December 2, 1851, Marx worked anew upon the history of France from February, 1848, down to the aforesaid event which, for the time being, terminated the revolutionary period. ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." Third Edition, Meissner, Hamburg, 1885.) In this brochure is treated once more, though more briefly, the period dealt with in our joint review. Compare this second presentation, written in the light of a decisive event that occurred more than a year later, with ours,

and it will be found that the author had to change but very little.

What gives to our review a decidedly special significance is the circumstance that, for the first time, it expressed the formula which today, with general unanimity of the labor parties of all the countries of the world, briefly summarizes their demand for economic reconstruction: the expropriation of the means of production by society. In the second chapter, anent the "Right to Work," which is designated as the "first awkward formula wherein the revolutionary demands of the proletariat are condensed," it is said: "But behind the Right to Work stands the power over capital, behind the power over capital stands the expropriation of the means of production, their subjection to the associated working class, therefore, the abolition of wage labor and of capital and of their mutual relations." Hence, here is formulated—for the first time—the thesis whereby modern working class Socialism is sharply differentiated, not only from all the different shades of feudal, bourgeois, petty bourgeois, etc., Socialism, but also from the confused notions of a community of goods of the utopian as well as the original labor communism.

If, later, Marx extended the formula to the expropriation of the means of exchange, this extension, which became a matter of course after the Communist Manifesto, simply expressed a corollary of the main thesis. Some wise people in England have recently added that the "means of distribution" should also be assigned to society. It would be difficult for these gentlemen to explain what are these means of distribution as distinct from the means of production and exchange—unless political means of distribution are meant, taxes, doles to the poor, including the Sachsenwald (communal forest) and other endowments. But these, in the first place, are means of distribution already in the possession of society, the State or the Municipality; and, second, it is we who would abolish them.

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At the time the February revolution began, in so far as our conception of the conditions and the course of revolutionary movements are concerned, we were all subject to the prevailing historic experience, notably that of France. It was just the latter that had dominated the entire European history since 1789, and from whom now again had come the signal for a general transformation. And thus, inevitably and as a matter of course, were our conceptions of the nature and course of the "social" revolution proclaimed in Paris in February, 1848, the revolution of the proletariat, strongly colored by the memory of the prototypes of 1789 and 1830. And, finally, when the Paris uprising found its echo in the victorious insurrections in Vienna, Milan and Berlin; when all Europe was drawn into the movement, all the way to the Russian border; when in June the first great battle for dominance was fought in Paris between proletariat and bourgeoisie; when even the victory of its class so shattered the bourgeoisie that it fled back into the arms of the same monarchist-feudal reaction that had just been overthrown, there could be, under the conditions prevailing, no doubt for us that the great decisive struggle was at hand, that it would have to be fought to a finish in one long revolutionary period and with shifting fortunes, but that it could end only in the final victory of the proletariat.

By no means did we, after the defeats of 1849, share the illusions of vulgar democracy, grouped in partibus about the provisional future governments. These reckoned with an imminent, once for all decisive victory of the "people" over its "oppressors"; we reckoned with a long struggle, after the elimination of the "oppressors," among the antagonistic elements concealed among that very "people." Vulgar democracy expected a renewed outbreak from one day to another; we, already in the autumn of 1850, declared that the first phase of the revolutionary period had closed and that nothing could be looked forward to until the advent of a new economic world crisis. Wherefore we were banned with bell, book and candle as traitors to the revolution by the same people who, later on, almost without exception made their peace with Bismarckin so far as Bismarck considered them worth while.

But history also proved us in the wrong, and revealed our opinion of that day as an illusion. History went even farther; not only did it destroy our former under which the proletariat will have to battle. The fighting methods of 1848 are today obsolete in every respect, and that is a point which right here deserves closer investigation.

Hitherto, all revolutions implied the elimination of one form of class rule by another; hitherto, all ruling classes formed but small minorities as compared with the ruled popular mass. Whenever one minority was overthrown, another minority instead took hold of the reins of power and remodeled the State institutions according to its interests. In every instance it was that minority group which, according to the degree of economic development, was capable and therefore called upon to rule, on that account and principally, because it always happened that the ruled majority either aided the revolution on the side of the ruling minority, or at least passively tolerated the same. But, leaving aside the concrete contents in each case, the common form of all these revolutions was that they were minority revolutions. Even when the majority cooperated, it was done-consciously or not-only in the service of a minority; and the latter obtained thereby, or even through the passive, unresisting attitude of the majority, the appearance of being the representative of all the people.

After the first great success, the minority as a rule split; one half was content with what had been gained, while the other half, wanting to go further, set up new demands which in part were really or apparently in the interest of the great mass of the people. The more radical demands would in some isolated cases be enforced, but more often only for the moment; the more moderate party would again get the upper hand and that which had been won last was again lost in whole or in part; the vanquished would then shout treason or would attribute the defeat to accident. In reality the lay of the land was usually this: the gains of the first victory were made secure only through the second victory of the radical party; whenever that, and thereby momentary needs had been attained, the radicals and their successes would vanish from the scene.

All the more modern revolutions, beginning with the great English revolution of the 17th century, exhibited these features which seem inseparable from every revolutionary struggle. They appear applicable also to the struggles of the proletariat for its emancipation, applicable the more so since, just in 1848, those could be counted who even in a measure understood in which direction emancipation was to be looked for. The proletarian masses themselves, even after their Paris victory, were absolutely at sea as to the course to be pursued. And yet, there was the movement-instinctive, spontaneous, irrepressible. Was not that just the situation wherein the revolution must succeed, led by a minority, it is true, but this time not in the interest of that minority but in the most specific interest of the majority? If in all the longer revolutionary pe-

riods the great popular masses were so easily won over by the merely plausible lures of the forward-pushing minorities, why should they be less accessible to ideas that were the very reflex of their economic condition, nothing but the clear, logical expression of their needs not vet understood and only vaguely sensed by them? True, this revolutionary disposition of the masses had most always, and often very soon, made way for lassitude or even a reversal into its opposite as soon as the illusion had been dispelled and disenchantment had come. But here was not a case of lures but one of the attainment of the very interests of the great majority itself, interests then by no means clear to that majority, but which soon had to become clear through convincing demonstrations in the course of their realization. And if then, as shown in the third article of Marx, in the spring of 1850 developments had concentrated the real ruling power in the bourgeois republic that had emanated from the "social" revolution of 1848 in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, which, on top of all, entertained monarchistic desires, while all other social classes, peasants as well as petty bourgeoisie, had been grouped about the proletariat in such manner that in case and after a common victory not the bourgeoisie but the proletariat made wary by experience would become the decisive factor-in such case were not the chances favorable for a reversion of the revolution of the minority into the revolution of the majority?

History has proved us wrong and all others who

thought similarly. It has made clear that the status of economic development on the Continent was then by no means ripe for the abolition of capitalist production; it has proved this by the economic revolution which, since 1848, has affected the entire Continent and has introduced large industry in France, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and, more recently, in Russia, and has made of Germany an industrial country of the first rank-all this upon a capitalist basis which, reckoning from 1848. implies great expansive capacity. But it was just this industrial revolution that has everywhere introduced clarity in regard to class relations, which has eliminated a mass of hybrid forms taken over from the period of manufacture and, in Eastern Europe, even from guild handicraft, which has produced a real bourgeoisie and a real industrial proletariat and forced both into the foreground of social evolution. Thereby has the struggle between these two great classes, which in 1848 existed outside of England only in Paris and, perchance, in a few large industrial centers, been spread over the whole of Europe, and has attained an intensity unthinkable in 1848. We had then the many vague sectarian evangels with their panaceas; we have today the one universally accepted, transparently clear theory of Marx, sharply formulating the final purposes of the struggle. We had then the masses, divided and differentiated according to locality and nationality, undeveloped, held together only by a sense of common suffering, aimlessly driven hither and thither between

enthusiasm and despair; we have today the one great international army of Socialists, advancing irresistibly, daily growing in numbers, organization, discipline, discernment and certainty of victory. And if this powerful army of the proletariat has not yet reached the goal, if, far from winning the victory by one fell blow, it must gradually proceed by hard, tenacious struggle from position to position, it proved once for all how impossible it was in 1848 to bring about the social transformation by a sheer coup de main.

Given a bourgeoisie split in two dynastic-monarchist sections, but which above all things demanded tranquility and security for its financial transactions, and opposed to it a defeated but still threatening proletariat about which petty bourgeois and peasant elements more and more grouped themselves-a permanent threat of violent outbreaks which, however, offered no prospect for the solution-that was the situation almost made to order for the coup d'état of the third, the pseudodemocratic pretender, Louis Bonaparte. By means of the army he made, on December 2, 1851, an end of the tense situation and secured internal quiet to Europe, only to bestow upon her a new era of war. The period of revolutions from below had come to a close for the time being; there followed a period of revolutions from above.

The imperialist reaction of 1851 gave to us new proof of the unripeness of the proletarian aspirations of the time. But the reaction itself was to create the

conditions under which they had to ripen. Internal tranquility secured full development of the new industrial prosperity, the necessity to provide work for the army and to divert the revolutionary currents into outward channels produced the wars, wherein Bonaparte, under the pretext of upholding the "principle of nationality," sought to gather in annexations for France. His imitator, Bismarck, adopted the same policy for Prussia: he made his coup d'état, his revolution from above, in 1866, against the German Bund and Austria, and no less against the Prussian "conflict-chamber." But Europe was too small for two Bonapartes, and so the irony of history willed it that Bismarck overthrew Bonaparte, and that King William of Prussia not only restored the limited German empire but also the French republic. The general result was, however, that in Europe the independence and internal unity of the great nations, with the exception of Poland, had become a fact. It had done so, of course, within relatively modest limits - but at any rate so much so that the working class process of development no longer was hampered by nationalist complications. The gravediggers of the revolution of 1848 had become the executors of its last will and testament. And, beside them, already rose threatening the heir of 1848, the proletariat in its Internationale.

After the war of 1870-71, Bonaparte disappears from the stage and Bismarck's mission is finished, so that he can subside again to his status of an ordinary

Junker. The termination of this period is formed by the Paris Commune. A surreptitious attempt by Thiers to abstract from the Paris National Guard its cannon, caused a victorious uprising. It was again shown that, in Paris, no revolution is possible other than a proletarian one. Government fell, after the victory, into the lap of the working class, all by itself. And again it was shown how impossible even then, twenty years after the period depicted in our review, was the rule of the working class. On the one hand, France left Paris in the lurch, looked on while it was bled to death under the bullets of MacMahon; on the other hand, the Commune consumed itself in a futile struggle between the two parties that split it, the Blanquists (the majority), and the Proudhonists (the minority), neither of whom knew what was to be done. As sterile as the coup de main of 1848 was the gift-victory of 1871.

With the Paris Commune, the militant proletariat was considered finally buried. But, on the contrary, from the Commune and the Franco-German war may be dated its most powerful rise. By the complete transformation of the methods of warfare, through the conscription of the entire population capable of bearing arms into armies that could thereafter be counted only by the millions, through firearms, projectiles and explosives of hitherto unheard-of effectiveness, a sudden end was made, on the one hand, of the Bonapartist period of wars, and subsequent peaceful industrial develop-

ment was made secure because any war was made impossible other than a world war of unheard-of horrors and of absolutely incalculable outcome. On the other hand, this military transformation caused the cost of maintaining these armies to rise in geometric progression, drove taxation to unattainable heights and thereby the poorer classes of the people into the arms of Socialism. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, the most immediate cause of the mad competition in armaments, might produce a chauvinist cleavage between the French and the German bourgeoisie; but for the workers of both countries it formed a new bond of union. The anniversary of the Paris Commune became the first common festive day for the entire proletariat.

The war of 1870-71 and the defeat of the Commune had, as predicated by Marx, shifted the center of gravity of the European labor movement, for the time being, from France to Germany. In France, of course, years were required to recover from the bloodletting of May, 1871. In Germany, however, where industry fertilized by the French milliard indemnity was developed with hot-house rapidity, the Social Democracy grew still more rapidly and effectively. Thanks to the discernment with which the workers utilized the general franchise, introduced in 1866, the astonishing growth of the party lies in incontestable figures open before all the world. 1871: 102,000; 1874: 352,000; 1877: 493,000 Social Democratic votes. Then came the high governmental acknowledgment of this prog-

ress in the shape of the anti-Socialist law. For the moment, the party was dispersed, the vote sank to 312,-000 in 1881. But that was soon overcome, and now, under pressure of the exceptional law, without a press, without a legal organization, without the right of assembly, began the most rapid growth in spite of all. 1884: 550,000; 1887: 763,000; 1890: 1,427,000 votes. Then the hand of the State was lamed. The anti-Socialist law vanished, the Socialist vote rose to 1,787,000, more than a quarter of the entire vote cast. The Government and the ruling classes had exhausted all their means—uselessly, purposelessly, unsuccessfully. The most palpable proofs of their own impotence which the authorities, from night watchman to chancellor, had been made to swallow-and from the despised workers, at that—these proofs could be counted by the million. The State had got to the end of its resources, the workers were but at the beginning of theirs.

The German workers had, moreover, rendered to their cause a second great service, besides the first of their mere existence as the strongest, the best disciplined and the most rapidly growing Socialist party; they had furnished their comrades in all countries with a new and one of the sharpest weapons, by showing them how to utilize the general franchise.

The general franchise had for a long time existed in France, but had there fallen into bad repute through the misuse it had been put to by the Bonapartist Government. After the Commune, there was no labor party in existence to use it. In Spain, too, it had existed since the republic, but in Spain abstention from voting on the part of all serious opposition parties had ever been the rule. Even the Swiss experience with the general franchise had been anything but encouraging to a labor party. The revolutionary workers of the Latin countries had got into the habit of looking upon the franchise as a pitfall, as an instrument for governmental chicane. In Germany it was otherwise. The Communist Manifesto had already proclaimed the struggle for the general franchise, for democracy, as one of the first and most important tasks of the militant proletariat, and Lasalle had again taken up this point. And when Bismarck was forced to introduce the franchise as the sole means to interest the masses of the people in his plans, our workers immediately took it up in earnest and sent August Bebel to the first constituent Reichstag. From that day on they have utilized the franchise in a manner that has repaid them a thousandfold and has served the workers of all countries as an example. They have used the franchise and, in the words of the French Marxian program, transformé, de moven de duperie qu'il a eté jusqu'ici, en instrument d'émancipation, i. e., have changed it from a means of duping into an instrument of emancipation. Even if the general franchise had offered no other advantage than to permit us to count our numbers once every threeyears:-that through the regularly demonstrated, unexpectedly rapid growth of the vote, it increased the cer-

tainty of victory on the part of the workers in the same measure that it increased the panic of the foe, and thereby became our best means of propaganda; that it informed us, accurately, of our own strength as well as of that of all opposing parties, and gave us thereby a gauge for proportioning our action such as cannot be duplicated, restrained us from untimely hesitation as well as from untimely daring-if that were the sole gain derived from the general franchise, it would be more than enough. But it has done much more. During the election agitation, it furnished us a means, such as there is no other, of getting in touch with the masses of the people that are still far removed from us, of forcing all parties to defend their views and actions against our attacks before all the people; and, in addition, it made accessible to our representatives in the Reichstag a tribune from which they could speak to our opponents in Parliament, as well as to the masses without, with much greater authority and freedom than could be done in the press and at meetings. Of what use was the anti-Socialist law to the Government and to the bourgeoisie if the election agitation and the Socialist speeches in the Reichstag constantly broke through it?

With this successful utilization of the general franchise, an entirely new method of the proletarian struggle had come into being and had quickly been built up. It was found that the State institutions, wherein the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, did furnish further opportunities by means of which the working

class can oppose these same institutions. We participated in the elections to the Diets in the Federal States, Municipal Councillors, Industrial Courts; in short, we contested with the bourgeoisie every post in the filling of which a sufficiently large part of the proletariat had a say. And so it came about that bourgeoisie and Government feared far more the legal than the illegal action of the workers' party, more the successes of the elections than those of rebellion.

For here too the conditions of the struggle have essentially been altered. The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 gave the final decision, has become antiquated.

Let there be no illusions about this: a real victory over the military in a street battle, a victory as between two armies, belongs to the greatest rarities. But the insurgents had seldom planned it that way. For them it had been a matter of disintegrating the troops through moral influences which, in the case of a fight between the armies of two warring countries, either did not come into play at all or, if so, in only minor degree. In case this succeeds, then the troops fail their commanders, these lose their heads and the insurrection wins. But if this does not succeed, then, even in case of numerical inferiority on the part of the military, the advantage of better equipment and training, the unity of command, the well-planned application of the forces at hand, discipline-all that comes into play. The utmost the insurrection can accomplish in a tactical action

is the proper erection and defense of a single barricade. Mutual support, the disposition and the use of reserves, in short, that which is needed for the mere defense of a section of a city, to say nothing of the whole of it, the indispensable cooperation and dovetailing of the separate commands can be attained in but small measure, often not at all. The concentration of battle forces upon one decisive point is thereby made impossible. Thus, passive resistance becomes the prevailing form of the struggle. The offensive will here and there rise to occasional attacks and flanking movements, but the rule will be to confine itself to the occupation of positions abandoned by retreating troops. Added to this, there is on the side of the military the control of large ordnance and of fully equipped and thoroughly trained engineering troops, means of combat which the insurgents lack in most every case. No wonder that barricade fights conducted with the greatest heroism-Paris, June, 1848; Vienna, October, 1848; Dresden, May, 1849-ended with the defeat of the insurrection, as soon as the attacking leaders, unhampered by political considerations, proceeded from purely military points of view and their soldiers remained dependable.

The numerous successes of the insurgents of 1848 are due to many reasons. In Paris, July, 1830, and February, 1848, as well as in most Spanish street battles, there stood between the insurgents and the military a citizens' guard, which either went directly over to the side of the uprising, or through a lukewarm in-

decisive attitude caused the troops to waver and, on top of that, furnished arms to the insurrection. Wherever this citizens' guard at the very outset took a stand against the insurrection, as in Paris, June, 1848, the latter was quelled. In Berlin, 1848, the people won, partly because of the accretion of considerable new forces during the night and the morning of the 19th of March, partly because of the exhaustion and the poor provisioning of the troops, and, finally, because of the lamed command. In every instance, the victory was won because the troops failed, because the commanders lacked decision, or because their hands were tied.

Therefore, even during the classic period of street battles, the barricade had a moral rather than a material effect. It was a means to shake the solidity of the military. If it held until that had been accomplished, the victory was won; if not, it meant defeat.

Already in 1849 the chances of success were rather poor. Everywhere had the bourgeoisie gone over to the side of the governments, "culture and possessions" greeted and feted the military marching out against the insurrections. The barricade had lost its charm; the soldier saw behind it no longer "the people," but rebels, agitators, plunderers, dividers, the dregs of society; the officer had in the course of time become familiar with the tactical forms of the street battle; no longer did he march in direct line and without cover upon the improvised breastworks, but outflanked them through gar-

dens, courts and houses; and that succeeded now with some skill in nine cases out of ten.

Since then, much more has been changed, all in favor of the military. If the cities have become larger, so have the armies. Paris and Berlin, since 1848, have quadrupled, but their garrisons have grown more than that. These garrisons, by means of the railroads, may be doubled inside of twenty-four hours, and in fortyeight hours may swell to gigantic armies. The armament of these enormously augmented troops has become incomparably more effective. In 1848 the smoothbore, muzzle-loaded percussion rifle, today the smallcaliber, magazine breech loader, shooting four times as far, ten times as accurately and ten times as quickly as the former. At that time the solid projectiles and case shot of the artillery with relatively weak effect, today the percussion shell, one of which suffices to shatter the best barricade. Then the pickaxe of the pioneer to break through the fire walls, today the dynamite cartridge.

On the side of the insurgents, however, all the conditions have become worse. An uprising wherewith all layers of the population sympathize will hardly come again; in the class struggle the middle layers will hardly ever group themselves around the proletariat so fully that the party of reaction, gathering around the bourgeoisie, will be almost eclipsed by comparison. The "people" will for that reason always appear divided, and thus a powerful lever, so effective in 1848, will be

missing. Even if on the side of the insurrection there be more trained soldiers, it will become more difficult to arm them. The hunting and sporting rifles of the warehouses-even if the police has not rendered them useless by the removal of a part of the mechanism—are no match for the magazine rifle of the soldier even at close quarters. Up to 1848 one could make his own ammunition out of powder and lead, today the cartridge for each rifle model varies, being similar only in that all of them are the product of large industry and not to be extemporized, which renders most rifles useless unless one has the special ammunition made for them. And, finally, the newly-built quarters of the large cities, erected since 1848, have been laid out in long, straight and wide streets as though made to order for the effective use of the new cannon and rifles. The revolutionary, who would himself select the new working class districts in the north and east of Berlin for a barricade battle, would have to be a lunatic.

Does the reader now understand why the ruling classes, by hook or by crook, would get us where the rifle pops and the sabre slashes? Why, today, do they charge us with cowardice because we will not, without further ado, get down into the street where we are sure of our defeat in advance? Why are we so persistently importuned to play the role of cannon fodder?

The gentlemen are wasting their importunities as well as their provocations all in vain. We are not quite so silly. They might as well ask of their enemies

in the next war to face them in the line formation of Frederick II, or in the columns of whole divisions a la Wagram and Waterloo, and with the old flint-and-pan gun in hand, at that. The time is past for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses. When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act. That much the history of the last fifty years has taught us. But so that the masses may understand what is to be done, long and persistent work is required, and it is this work that we are now performing with results that drive our enemies to despair.

In the Latin countries, too, it is being realized that the old tactics must be revised. Everywhere, the German example of the utilization of the franchise and of the conquest of all possible positions has been imitated. In France, where the soil has been raked up for more than a hundred years by revolution after revolution, where not a single party exists that has not done its part in conspiracies, insurrections and in all other revolutionary actions; in France, where because thereof the army is by no means certain for the government, and where, generally speaking, the conditions for an insurrectionary coup de main are much more favorable than in Germany—even in France the Socialists realize more and more that no durable success is possible unless they win over in advance the great mass of the people,

which, in this case, means the peasants. The slow work of propaganda and parliamentary activity are here also recognized as the next task of the party. Success did not fail to come. Not only has a whole series of Municipal Councils been conquered, but in the Chamber there are fifty Socialists, and these have already overthrown three Ministries and one President of the Republic. In Belgium, the workers have last year conquered the franchise, and have won in one quarter of the election districts. In Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, ave, even in Bulgaria and Rumania, the Socialists are represented in the respective Parliaments. In Austria all parties are agreed that access to the Reichsrat can no longer be denied us. That we shall gain access is certain, and the only question at issue is through which door. Even in Russia, when the celebrated Zemskij Sobor is assembled—the National Assembly against which the young Nicholas has so vainly balked-even there we may reckon with certainty that we shall be represented.

Of course, our comrades abroad have not abandoned the right to revolution. The right to revolution is, in the last analysis, the only real "historic right" upon which all modern States rest without exception, including even Mecklenburg where the revolution of the nobility was terminated in 1755 through the "inheritance agreement," the glorious confirmation of feudalism valid this very day. The right to revolution is so thoroughly recognized in the inner consciousness of

man, that even General von Boguslawski deduces from this popular right alone the coup d'état whereby to vindicate his Kaiser.

However, happen what may in other countries, the German Social Democracy holds a specific position and, for that reason and for the time being, faces a specific task. The 2,000,000 voters whom it sends to the hustings, plus the young men and women non-voters standing behind them, these form the most numerous, the most compact "shock troops" of the international proletarian army. This mass already furnishes more than 25 per cent of the total vote cast; and, as shown by the special election for the Reichstag, the Diet elections in the several States, the Municipal Council and the Industrial Court elections, it is growing apace uninterruptedly. Its growth is so spontaneous, so steady, so irresistible and yet at the same time as quiet as that of a natural process. All governmental interference with it has proved futile. Today, we may figure with 2,225,000 voters. If this goes on, we shall at the close of the century win over the greater part of the middle social layers, petty bourgeoisie as well as small peasants, and we shall come to be the decisive power in the land. before which all other powers must bow whether they like it or not. To keep going this growth without interruption until it swamps the ruling governmental system, that is our main task. And there is but one means whereby the steadily swelling growth of the militant Socialist forces in Germany could for the moment

be stemmed, or could even for a time be thrown back: a collision on a large scale with the military, a blood-letting like that of 1871 in Paris. In the long run, that too would be overcome. To shoot out of existence a party numbering millions, that is not possible with all the magazine rifles in Europe and America. But normal development would be hindered, the decision delayed, prolonged and coupled with heavy sacrifices.

The irony of history turns everything upside down. We, the "revolutionists," the "upsetters," we thrive much better with legal than with illegal means in forcing an overthrow. The parties of order, as they call themselves, perish because of the legal conditions set up by themselves. With Odilon Barrot they cry out in despair: la légalité nous tue—legality is our death—while we with this same legality acquire swelling muscles and red cheeks and look the picture of health. And if we are not insane enough to favor them by letting them drive us into street battles, nothing will in the end be left to them but themselves to break through the legality that is so fatal to them.

Meantime, they are grinding out new laws against the revolution. Again, everything has been set up head down. The fanatics of anti-revolution of today, are not they themselves the revolutionists of yesterday? Did we perchance bring about the civil war in 1866? Did we depose and drive away from their ancestral legitimate realms the King of Hanover, the Elector of Hesse, the Duke of Nassau and annex their patrimo-

nial dominions? And these destroyers of the German Bund and of three crowns bestowed by the Grace of God complain about revolution?! Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes? — Who could permit the worshippers of Bismarck to revile the revolution?

Let them force through their anti-revolutionary legislation, make it even worse and transform the entire penal code into caoutchouc, they will accomplish naught but a new demonstration of their impotence. Seriously to assail the Social Democracy, they will have to have recourse to entirely different measures. The Social-Democratic revolution, which is getting on first rate while abiding by the law, they can only get at by means of a revolution made by the law and order party, which cannot live without breaking the law. Herr Rossler, the Prussian bureaucrat, and Herr von Boguslawski, the Prussian general, have shown them the only way to get at the workers, who refuse to be lured into a street battle,-violation of the constitution, dictatorship, back to absolutism, regis voluntas, suprema lex! Take heart, gentlemen, here no pursing of the lips will do, here you must whistle!

But do not forget that the German Reich, like all smaller German States, and, indeed, like all modern States, is the product of a covenant; first, of a covenant among the rulers themselves, and, second, of a covenant of the ruler with the people. If one party breaks the agreement, the whole of it falls, the other party being no longer bound by it.

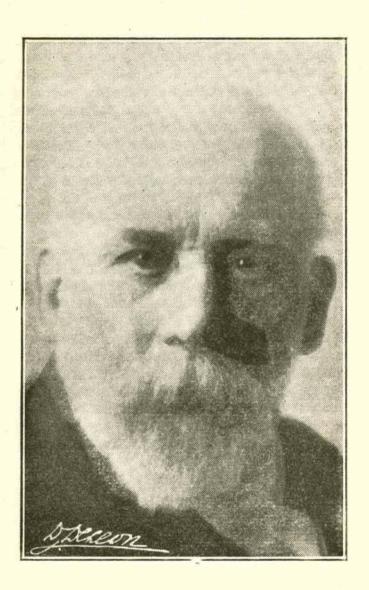
Now almost 1,600 years ago, there was at work in the Roman empire a dangerous revolutionary party. It undermined religion and all the foundations of the State; it denied point blank that the emperor's will was the highest law, it was without a fatherland, international, it spread out over the entire realm from Gaul to Asia, and even beyond the borders of the empire. It had long worked underground and in secrecy, but had, for some time, felt strong enough to come out openly in the light of day. This revolutionary party, known under the name of Christians, also had strong representation in the army; entire legions were composed of Christians. When they were commanded to attend the sacrificial ceremonies of the Pagan established church, there to serve as a guard of honor, the revolutionary soldiers went so far in their insolence as to fasten special symbols-crosses-on their helmets. The customary disciplinary barrack measures of their officers proved fruitless. The emperor, Diocletian, could no longer quietly look on and see how order, obedience and discipline were undermined in his army. He acted energetically while there was yet time. He promulgated an anti-Socialist-beg pardon-an anti-Christian law. The meetings of the revolutionaries were prohibited, their meeting places were closed or even demolished. the Christian symbols, crosses, etc., were forbidden as in Saxony they forbid red pocket handkerchiefs. The Christians were declared unfit to hold office in the State. they could not even become corporals. Inasmuch as

they did not at that time have judges well drilled as to the "reputation of a person," such as Herr Koller's anti-Socialist law presupposes, the Christians were simply forbidden to seek their rights in a court of law. But this exceptional law, too, remained ineffective. In defiance, the Christians tore it from the walls, yea, it is said that at Nikomedia they fired the emperor's palace over his head. Then the latter revenged himself by means of a great persecution of Christians in the year 303 A. D. This was the last persecution of its kind. It was so effective that, seventeen years later, the army was composed largely of Christians, and that the next autocratic ruler of the entire Roman empire, Constantine, called "the Great" by the clericals, proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the State.

London, March 6, 1895.

MILITARISM OR INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM?

By Daniel De Leon.



## MILITARISM OR INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM? By Daniel De Leon.

Since the closing of the discussion "As to Politics" was announced in these columns a correspondent, who prefers not to have his name published, sent in this question:

"I'm no 'pure and simple political Socialist,' as you will see; and I am no 'pure and simple physical-forcist,' as you will also see. I believe with you that political action is necessary. The Labor Movement may not step down from the plane of civilized methods. If it did, none would be better suited than our capitalist masters. I hope I've set myself clear on that score. I also believe with you that the ballot is just so much paper thrown away, without the physical force to back it up, or, as you have neatly said, 'to enforce the Right that the ballot proclaims.' I've set myself clear on that score also, I hope.

"Now, what I want to know is this: Does it follow, as you seem to think, that we must have the Industrial Workers of the World, I mean an Industrial Union, to supplement the ballot? I think not. I think we should concentrate our efforts, instead of dividing them. Why should we divide our efforts, and our money, and our time between a political and an economic organization?

I'll watch the Letter Box."

The answer merits more thorough than offhand treatment in the Letter Box. Both the question and the answer will fitly supplement the discussion which closes in this issue with the answers to Rice's questions.

What our correspondent desires is to avoid a division of energy. A wise desire. Does his plan answer his desire? Evidently he fails to see that it does not. The only interpretation his plan admits of is the organizing of a military, of an armed force to back up the revolutionary ballot. The division of energy is not avoided. It is only transferred to an armed, instead of to an economic organization.

Seeing that, in either case, the evil of divided energies is incurred, and cannot be escaped, the question resolves itself into this—which of the two organizations is it preferable to divide energies with, the economic or the military?

A military organization implies not one, or two, it implies a number of things. Bombs, explosives, generally, may be left out of the reckoning. They may be of incidental, but not of exclusive, use by an organized force.

First of all powder is needed. The best of powder needs bullets and balls to do the business. The best of powder, bullets and balls are useless without guns. Nor are inferior guns of much avail when pitted against the up-to-date guns at the command of the capitalist class. The military organization of the revolutionary proletariat will need the most effective weapons. The question

has often been asked from capitalist sources, Where will you get the money from to buy the railroads and the other capitalist plants? The question is silly. No one proposes, nor will there be any occasion, to "buy" those things. Not silly, however, but extremely pertinent, is the question, Where will the proletariat get the billions needed to purchase such a military equipment?

Suppose the billions be forthcoming. Weapons, in the hands of men unskilled in their use, are dangerous, primarily, to those who hold them. Numbers, undrilled in military evolutions, only stand in one another's way. Where and how could these numbers practice in the use of their arms, and in the military drill? Where and how could they do the two things in secret? In public, of course, it would be out of question.

Suppose, finally, that the problem of the billions were solved, and the still more insuperable problem of exercise and drill be overcome. Suppose the military organization of the proletariat took the field and triumphed. And then-it would immediately have to dissolve. Not only will it not have been able to afford the incidental protection that the revolutionary union could afford to the proletariat while getting ready, but all its implements, all the money that it did cost, all the tricks it will have learned, and the time consumed in learning them, will be absolutely lost. Its swords will have to be turned into pruning hooks, its guns into ploughshares, its knowledge to be unlearned.

How would things stand with the integrally organized Industrial Union?

First, its cost is trifling, positively within reach;

Secondly, every scrap of information it gathers while organizing is of permanent value;

Thirdly, it will be able to offer resistance to capitalist encroachments, and thereby to act as a breastwork

for its members, while getting ready;

Fourthly, and most significant and determining of all, the day of its triumph will be the beginning of the full exercise of its functions—the administration of the

productive forces of the Nation.

The fourth consideration is significant and determining. It is the consideration that Social Evolution points the finger to, dictating the course that the proletariat must take; -dictating its goal; -dictating its means. The proletariat, whose economic badge is poverty; the proletariat, whose badge, the first of all revolutionary classes, is economic impotence;-for the benefit of that class, apparently treated so stepmotherly by Social Evolution, Social Evolution has wrought as it has wrought for none other. It has builded the smithy of capitalist industrial concentration; and, in keeping with the lofty mission of the Working Class to abolish class rule on earth, Social Evolution has gathered ready for the fashioning, not the implements of destruction, but the implements of future peace, withal the most potent weapon to clear the field of the capitalist despotthe industrially ranked toilers. The integrally organized

Industrial Union is the weapon that Social Evolution places within the grasp of the proletariat as the means for their emancipation.

Division of energy being unavoidable, can there be any doubt what organization should divide the energies of the proletariat with their political organization—the military or the Industrial?

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industrial Socialist society, pointing to the purely transitory nature of the political state, emphasizing time and again the pregnant truth that if civilization is to continue in its onward march, the working class of the world must rear the new Republic of Labor, and that the woof and the warp, so to speak, of the new social fabric, must be wrought in accordance with the occupational or industrial mould of present-day society, with an industrial administration, or an Industrial Council, to take the place of the antiquated state machinery. He further emphasized the necessity of the workers' now preparing to build that new society by organizing into industrial unions.

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