

The People.

VOL. VIII, NO. 24

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1898

PRICE 2 CENTS

SECOND EDITORIAL

What Cause?

By DANIEL DE LEON

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry of the French Army, now a suicide and convicted of forgery in the Dreyfus case out of his own mouth, wrote before his death a letter in which he declares he did what he did “for the good of the cause.”

What “cause”?

It takes all the silliness of which our metropolitan press is capable to impute the stupendous Dreyfus incident to a petty cause, to an amour—to a woman. Granting all that the fascination of a fascinating and intriguing woman might do, it is not enough to account for a conspiracy that takes in so many people of different temperaments, and that withal was conducted in the systematic manner in which the conspiracy, nominally against Dreyfus, has, it is now evident, been conducted.

At the time of the recent triple elections in Europe—Belgium, France and Germany—it was pointed out that the result of the elections brought out the lines on which the final struggle was to be fought out. In Belgium, the capitalist class political party was virtually eliminated: it was absorbed in the Clerical party, and the two parties dividing the country were the Socialist or workingmen’s party and the Clerical party. In Germany, the capitalist political parties had lost on the whole, leaving as the two political titans on the field the Socialist and the Clerical parties. Finally, in France, the bourgeois Government went into an alliance with the Clerical element to down the Socialist, with the ultimate result that the result of the elections was “Socialist workingmen versus Clerical conspirators.” In all the three cases it became evident that the atheistic capitalist class had run for shelter behind the skirts of its old antagonist—the clergy.

The “cause” for which Col. Henry forged false testimony, is none other than the “cause” that has driven the capitalist into the arms of the parson—the endeavor to stem the oncoming revolution of the working class, the endeavor to save the neck of Privilege, Rapine, Tyranny, mental and physical Enslavement.

The details of the wide-spread conspiracy will some time be known. Its magnitude and power are appalling. And yet, what a source of gratification must it not be for the soldiers of the present Revolution to discover the inherent power of the high morality of their own Cause, and the inherent weakness of the cause of the International Crime they are struggling with, when despite their material weakness and their foes' material strength, their own great Cause steadily works its way through, throwing consternation into the midst of their foe, making its weapon turn against itself, its members physically cutting their own throats, and dark clouds of infamy settling down upon itself.

Surely, if ever the spheres fought on the side of a Cause, it is now by their interposition against the "Cause" of the rallied Crime of all centuries making its last stand before the Cause of an avenging humanity that, at least, is to enter into its own kingdom,—the full possession of the Rights to Man.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded December 2003