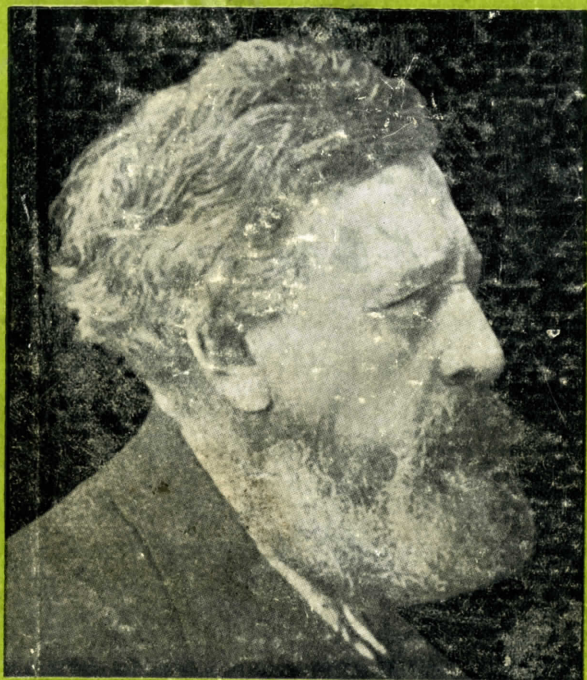


VOICES OF REVOLT



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LIEBKNECHT**

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

VOICES OF REVOLT



SPEECHES OF
WILHELM LIEBKNECHT

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VOICES OF REVOLT

VOLUME VII



SPEECHES OF
WILHELM
LIEBKNECHT

WITH A
CRITICAL INTRODUCTION



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FOREWORD

It is now more than a quarter of a century since the death of Wilhelm Liebknecht, the great leader of the German workers.

The name of Liebknecht is so closely associated with the German workers' movement, and with the revolutionary movement in Germany in general, that no other name can be compared with it. For the history of revolution in Germany has its tradition, has its forebears, as well as the history of revolution in other countries. Throughout the history of the last century of the revolutionary movement, we find the name "Liebknecht" emblazoned on all its pinnacles. Young Wilhelm Liebknecht was not only closely associated in his mental makeup with the unhappy leader of the Hessian movement for freedom—Weidig, who was driven to insanity and death by a demented police magistrate—but we find the young Liebknecht fighting in the years following after 1848, on the barricades in Southern Germany; restlessness, illegality, police chicanery, numerous arrests, trials, sentences to fortress detention, regular imprisonment, flight and tribulations are the constant accompaniment of Liebknecht's life; they recur in a rapid series and give evidence of the blessed path

of thorns pursued by every true revolutionary. For a great portion of his life, Wilhelm Liebknecht spent periods in the same prisons into which Social-Democratic Ministers and Police Presidents are now incarcerating the revolutionary workers.

It was Ferdinand Lassalle who awakened the German workers; it was Wilhelm Liebknecht who gathered and organized them and led them in two great crises: in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, he guarded them against nationalism; in the period of the Socialist Law, he saved the very existence of the German workers' movement—it was at that time that the energy inherent in a firmly built class-conscious party for the first time became apparent.

Wilhelm Liebknecht, the creator of the German Workers' Party, a champion of the proletariat, never consented to be misled into the aberrations—not to mention the outright treasons—in which his successors have now been distinguishing themselves for decades in their attacks on the German workers' movement. There are many points in which we can no longer agree with Liebknecht; times have changed, other methods are being used, we have new tactics. Even Liebknecht himself had occasion to note that one must sometimes change one's tactics. No doubt Liebknecht's writings and speeches already contain certain germs which were destined later to receive disastrous development. But who will under-

take to prove that Liebknecht would not himself later have extinguished these germs?

Liebknecht's struggle against parliamentarism, Liebknecht's conviction that the great struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat must be fought out outside the Reichstag, in what will ultimately be open civil war, Liebknecht's attitude toward imperialism and militarism, toward taxation and toward the class justice of the bourgeoisie, Liebknecht's assertion of the necessity of a proletarian state, and his unconditional determination to have the proletariat conquer power, overthrow the bourgeoisie, and create an entirely new world—these are points of contact between us and Liebknecht. And while the bourgeoisie of to-day is once more fleeing back to the "glories" of January 18, 1871, because it no longer feels any creative power in its veins, we shall also return to the revolutionary Liebknecht of those years, the Liebknecht who at that early day outlined the forms of the bourgeois state. The speeches we offer in this selection were delivered in the heyday—as it were—of the German movement; they coincided with the turning points of Liebknecht's life and reveal the entire essence of this revolutionary: his vigor and clarity, his critical acumen and dazzling eloquence, his boldness and irony, his readiness ever to take the offensive, his fearlessness, his faith in victory, and his unconditional determination to fight to the utmost. He never permitted himself to

be intimidated; his was an indestructible nature; his words flowed smoothly from his lips; his sentences were sharply turned and flashed like rapiers; yet he was always perfectly easy to understand, without ever descending to vulgarity. Any sentence produced by Liebknecht can be recognized at once, and his speeches remain to this day as living, as fluent, as vehement and as rich in topic interest, as if the speaker's voice could still be heard in our ears. The spirit of this dead man is so close to us, the truth of most of his words is still so unimpeachable, that there seems to be a secret point of contact somewhere between him and those who still live, a point that does not touch, however, those who call themselves his heirs, but are no longer interested in his work, and in whose ears each one of his words must sound like bitter irony. One of the last few pages of this small collection contains the words: *Shouts of "bravo" from the Social Democrats*; I regret to say that at the present time no Social Democrat would join in this shout, for the times have changed. But old Wilhelm Liebknecht still shouts to us from his grave: "Be ever brave soldiers of the revolution."

KURT KERSTEN.

SPEECHES OF WILHELM LIEBKNECHT

THE REICHSTAG FARCE

(From a speech delivered at the Stuttgart Congress of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party in 1870.)

I MUST first take up a question which has really been disposed of by the adoption of the Eisenach program; namely, the question whether the Socialist Party is a political party also, and whether it should concern itself with political conditions and meddle with such conditions. This question has been answered in the negative by the well-known resolution of the minority at the last congress of the Latin Section of the International Workingmen's Association at Lachaux-de-fonds; this decision was based on the contention that the present-day state is the product of society and that a fundamental change in the structure of this society will also effect a transformation of the state. The first clause is correct; the inference is fallacious. The present-day state is the expression of class rule; it represents the power of capital and is therefore obliged to oppose all those aspirations which aim at the elimination of class rule and the rule of capitalism. It must oppose such efforts, for in opposing them it is de-

fending its own existence. It will never be possible to secure an abolition of the wage labor system by means of strikes and other non-political instruments of agitation. Only after the entire present-day state has fallen will it be possible to install a new system of production. We must therefore take possession of the state and create a new state which shall not know class rule, which shall tolerate neither masters nor slaves, and shall organize society on a coöperative basis. It is not only the content of the state, but also its form, which has essential importance for us; neither can be separated from the other.

Now, though we may be international, we should yet be committing a grave error if we should entirely lose sight of national affairs. Our watchword must be *hic Rhodus, hic salta!* Germany is the place; it is here we must fight! . . .

The suffrage right granted in the North German Confederation is merely a bait for the thoughtless. The "Berlin Reichstag" is only a sham parliament. . . .

What universal suffrage really amounts to in a state that is not free has been shown sufficiently by the elections to the "Reichstag".

In Northern Germany, the Reichstag is elected on the basis of universal suffrage, but who will dare maintain that the "Reichstag" serves as an expression for the opinion of the people?

The "Reichstag" does not make history but is

merely playing a comedy; the members say and act in accordance with the prompter's instructions: and sometimes you can hear him shouting out loud. And is it to this "Reichstag" that we are to transfer the center of gravity of our struggle? No man can wish such a condition unless our whole struggle is a mere farce in his eyes. "Yes, indeed," we are told, "the Reichstag is at present of course very badly constructed, but perhaps the next Reichstag will be a better one. Let us see to it that good 'delegates' are elected." This would all be very well if the "Reichstag" were not completely impotent and if the government did not hold the elections altogether in its own hands. . . . Yet, for practical and tactical reasons, I am quite in favor of our participation in the Reichstag elections. It would result in injury to us if we should leave the field entirely to our enemies. Elections, after all, do produce a certain commotion, which it should be our duty to utilize for purposes of agitation. Yet we must not elect our delegates in order that they may take part in this farce-comedy, but for the purpose of permitting them to protest against it, of having them protest against absolutism, which conceals itself behind the forms of parliamentarism, and for the purpose of enabling them to denounce to the people those persons who permit themselves to be used in this comedy. Our delegates must not speak to the "Reichstag", but their words must pass over the

heads of the members of the Reichstag and reach the people themselves. . . .

I now come to the question of what we are to do during the elections with regard to the other parties participating. Is it possible for us to establish an alliance with other parties? Of course, no other parties could be considered in this connection except the *Fortschrittspartei* and the *Volkspartei*; but, after what I have just said, I cannot answer this question in any other way than in the negative. I should like to interpolate a little observation here. A short time ago, the newspapers printed a letter from Johann Jacobi addressed to the Committee of the League of Peace and Liberty at Geneva, in which it is stated that the main issue in the struggle is the question of monarchy or republic; Jacobi declares that all other matters are of minor importance, and not worth fighting for. Gentlemen! I cannot help remarking that Jacobi completely contradicts, in this statement, his last speech delivered in Berlin, which puts the proper emphasis on the social content of the political struggle. The question of republic or monarchy is, in part at least, a question of form only. The principle we are concerned with in the first place is the principle of equality, and this principle may be violated under a republic as well as under a monarchy. A republic based on class rule is a violation of the principle of equality that expresses itself in the person of every capitalist and

every proletarian, and vindicates the principle of equality only in its elimination of one individual: namely, the monarch. To be a Social-Democrat means far more than to be a Republican without desiring to eliminate class rule, but all those who aim at the elimination of class rule are, of course, Republicans also.

Enough has been said. Our path in the coming elections has been indicated to us: we can inflict only harm on ourselves by means of alliances with other parties; such alliances would oblige us to relinquish our place at least in part; and our very strength is in the fact that our attitude is perfectly clear to ourselves and to others, since we make no effort to conceal our goals. Our strength is in our principles. Half-way measures will destroy us. Therefore let us boldly unfurl our flags so that we may be seen by friend and foe; then we shall march surely to liberty!

THE ELECTIONS TO PARLIAMENT ARE ONLY A MEANS OF AGITATION¹

(On the subject of the political attitude of the Social-Democracy, particularly with regard to the Reichstag; a speech delivered by Liebknecht on May 31, 1869.)

SINCE it was made impossible for me to take the floor at all during the Reichstag in this session, it is doubly pleasing to me now to be given this opportunity to present my social-political point of view.

The new society is in irreconcilable contradiction with the ancient state. This new society cannot de-

¹On the subject of this speech, which was delivered in a February meeting of the Democratic *Arbeiterverein* at Berlin, and which attracted great attention, Liebknecht wrote in later years:

"If I should be permitted to follow my own wishes and inclinations, I should never set foot in the Reichstag. I am not exactly made to fit in with this parliamentary activity." But Liebknecht goes on to say that his experiences in the period of the Socialist Law had convinced him that the parliamentary activity is of great advantage to the party; of course, only if one remembers that participation in the elections and in the parliamentary work must pursue predominantly agitational purposes.

Concerning parliamentarism in general, Liebknecht said on another occasion: "In all the nations in which it (parliamentarism) is rampant, it serves for the deception and enslavement of the people; it is an actor's cloak, bedizened with the false gold of phrases, worn only to conceal absolutism and class rule, with their ugly limbs and their instruments of murder."

velop in the feudal state, in the police state, in the military state. Any one desiring the new society must aim above all things at the destruction of the ancient state.

This is a sufficient indication of the attitude of the Social-Democracy on the "rebirth of Germany". The "great deed" of the year 1866 is for German history what the *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, is for French history. Bismarck's *coup d'état*, like that of Louis Bonaparte, was aimed against democracy. These *coups d'état* are not reprehensible in our eyes because of their use of force—for the ultimate resort of nations, like that of kings, is force—but because of the fact that in the case of France, the *coup d'état* was practiced to the advantage of a host of disreputable adventurers, and in the case of Germany to the advantage of a class no longer having any right to exist, namely, the class of the junkers.

The so-called "Prussian Constitution struggle" was an attempt on the part of the people, particularly of the bourgeoisie, to attain the state power by means of parliamentary methods. The year 1866 lowered the parliamentary struggle to the status of a feat of stage prestidigitation, and transferred the true theater of war to another field. The North German "Reichstag" has absolutely no power in spite of the universal suffrage; it has not a decisive vote, only an advisory vote; and, being powerless, it

cannot be used by the democracy as a battlefield for the attainment of power.

As, in the case of France, the French democracy opposed the Emperor with every means at its disposal, so, in the case of Germany, the German democracy has opposed the North German Alliance, with all its appurtenances, in a negative and hostile manner. If we should leave this purely negative position, we should not only be relinquishing our principle and the very essence of democracy, but we should also be violating the most fundamental rule of practice.

I shall now discuss the question: is it the duty of the democracy to send delegates to the "Reichstag" at all? The question of whether we shall vote or not, once the universal suffrage has been attained, is merely a question of expediency, not a question of principle. We have a right to vote—the fact that this right has been refused us does not deprive us of our natural right—and if there is any advantage to be gained thereby, let us vote. It is from this point of view that we in Saxony judged the matter when the Reichstag was convoked. Some of us were opposed to the elections, on grounds of expediency, others were in favor of the elections. It was pointed out, by those who opposed the elections, that elections merely emphasized the utter lack of rights on the part of the people; those in favor of the elections said that if the democracy should abstain from them, their opponents would have sole

possession of the speaker's platform, would have the sole right to be heard, and could thus the more readily confuse the people's sense of justice. This consideration was triumphant—we decided to take part in the elections. My personal view was that the representatives elected by us should simply enter the "Reichstag", deliver their protest, and then march right out again, without, however, resigning their mandates. This view of mine remained that of the minority; it was decided that the representatives of the democracy should make use of every opportunity that seemed practical, to make felt in the "Reichstag" their standpoint of negation and protest, but that they should refrain from taking part in the actual parliamentary transactions, because this would be equivalent to a recognition of the North German Alliance and the Bismarckian policy, and could only deceive the people with regard to the fact that the struggle in the "Reichstag" is merely a sham struggle, merely a comedy. This is the line we actually followed in the first and second sessions of the "Reichstag". In the discussion of the "Gewerbeordnung", which constituted the principal subject of the present session, some of my party comrades considered it necessary, in the interests of the workers and for purposes of propaganda, to make an exception; I was opposed to this step. The Social-Democratic Party must not, under any circumstances, or in any field, engage in trans-

actions with its opponents. We can only transact business where there is a common basis. To do business with those who are your opponents in principle is equivalent to a sacrifice of principle. Principles are indivisible; they are either clung to in their entirety or sacrificed in their entirety. The slightest concession in matters of principle is a relinquishing of the principle. He who parliamentarizes with the enemy is fencing in the air; he who parliamentarizes compromises. Ferdinand Lassalle—and in calling attention to this fact I take the liberty of emphasizing it to all those members of the *Verein* established by him who may happen to be present—Ferdinand Lassalle condemned the procedure of the *Fortschrittspartei* most emphatically and predicted the consequences of such action. He advised the delegates to retire from the parliamentary scene and to lay down their mandates. Unfortunately, however, he did not go so far as to demand that they refuse to vote the budget, which in his day was the only means—and a sure means—of forcing the government into a corner. But however this may be, Lassalle nevertheless did succeed in exposing the erroneous and distressing consequences of parliamentary eloquence, which means eloquence for the sake of eloquence.

If the Social Democracy now commits the same error as the *Fortschrittspartei* committed six years ago, the same cause will inevitably produce the same

effect. But, altogether apart from the matter of a political point of view only, a participation by our party in the parliamentary debates cannot have the slightest practical result.

No one will pretend to say that there is any possibility, in view of the composition of the "Reichstag", of presenting motions that are important in principle, from our point of view; I think you will concede this at the outset.

"But," one of you may say, "we have the best opportunity in the Reichstag to expound the principles of the Social-Democracy." No doubt we have an opportunity, but I very much doubt whether it is the best opportunity or even a good one.

Do you believe that the "Reichstag" will permit us to use its speaker's platform as a pulpit? Let us assume that a Karl Marx should desire to deliver to the delegates a series of theoretical lectures; how long and how often do you think they would listen to him? Perhaps once, through curiosity, but never a second time.

There is no possibility of our having an influence on legislation, as I have just said;—then tell me, in heaven's name, what would be the use of a presentation of our principles in the "Reichstag"? Do you think you would convert the members of the "Reichstag"? Merely to think of such a possibility would be more than childish, it would be infantile.

It will be just as useful to preach our principles

to the waves of the sea—and not quite so ridiculous. Men like Braun and his followers know very well what we are after. As far as they are concerned, in fact, as far as any of the ruling class are concerned, who now constitute almost the entire membership of the Reichstag, socialism is now no longer a question of theory, but a question of power, a question of the type of those that are fought out not in parliaments, but in the streets, on the battlefield, like any other question of power.

“Yes, indeed, we do not have in mind any influencing of the ‘Reichstag’ itself; all that we desire is to use the speaker’s platform of the ‘Reichstag’ for the purpose of addressing the people on the outside.”

So far, so good. Even I have made use of the speaker’s platform of the “Reichstag” in my day for this purpose and shall again make such use of it in due time. But is this the best place for such theoretical discussions? It is forbidden to read one’s speech in the Reichstag, and you will all agree with me that even the most skilled orator—even assuming a condition not present in the “Reichstag”, namely, that he is given silence and attention—would not be capable of delivering a piece of learned criticism from memory and dictating it in as good form to the stenographer as he could write it at home, seated at his desk.

“But he would be able to state many things in the

‘Reichstag’ which he would not be permitted to state elsewhere.”

That is untrue. It is true that I can make in the “Reichstag” attacks on the present political order of things that would not pass unpunished in any other meeting anywhere in Prussia, but as far as *social* matters are concerned, particularly from the point of view of theory, there is nothing that cannot be said elsewhere with just as great impunity as in the Reichstag. And why should we fear to take up the struggle with the laws? The fact is that far more revolutionary things are being written and spoken in Prussia every day than can be found in all the speeches on social questions that have ever been heard in the Reichstag.

But, even assuming that it would be possible to smuggle in some great truth into the “Reichstag” which could not be spoken anywhere else—what would be the good of this accomplishment? The law, to be sure, does permit an unhindered printing of the speech in question, but the law makes the press responsible for every word of any speech printed by any newspaper either in full or in part, or if the newspaper print only one speech instead of the entire debate, or only a section of a single speech. And even the largest newspapers could not afford to print the entire debate—which they are allowed to print only from the officially approved stenographic report, because they have not space enough, which is

a condition far more unfavorable from this point of view to the small Social-Democratic sheets.

Accordingly, even if we had so cleverly smuggled important truths into the "Reichstag", we should still be left with no other means for smuggling them out of the "Reichstag" among the people again, except the official stenographic report, which is entirely inaccessible to the masses, however, because of its volume and its price.

All that the workers learn of the debates concerning the social question is given them through the labor papers, and all that these papers print in the form of parliamentary reports could be far better published—and in much more careful elaboration—in the form of independent articles and essays.

I must mention also that this practical argument as to "smuggling in" truths into the "Reichstag" seems to emanate from those whose wares have not much of the character of contraband. Just consider, for instance, Herr J. B. von Schweitzer's "great speech". In the days of censorship before March, 1848, every word of it would have passed without objection.

Permit me to recapitulate: our speeches cannot have any direct influence on legislation. We cannot convert the "Reichstag" by means of speeches. We cannot inject important truths among the masses by our Reichstag speeches, which could not be far better disseminated by other means. Therefore,

what is the "practical" value of making speeches in the "Reichstag"? There is none. And to talk without purpose is the delight of fools.

There is not a single advantage! Now, on the other side, for the disadvantages: principle has been sacrificed; serious political struggle has been lowered to the plane of parliamentary bickering; the people has been deluded into thinking that the Bismarckian "Reichstag" has been installed for the purpose of solving the social question.—And yet you ask us to parliamentarize for "practical reasons". Only a traitor or a blind man could make such a proposal.

That which is correct in principle is always the best practical resort also. Fidelity to principle is the best politics.

I do not mean to say in this statement that the parliamentary struggle must always and under all circumstances be rejected. In periods of chronic enervation, in which the blood flows sluggishly through the channels of the body politic, in which the downcast spirit of the nation can perceive no salvation ahead for decades to come, in such periods it may be of value to keep alive a little lamp of liberty in some parliament or other, which may shed its bright little light in the midst of the surrounding darkness.

And when the people, when the "battalions of workers" stand armed and accoutred at the gates of parliament, perhaps on such occasions a word flung

from the speaker's platform may have a kindling effect, may give the signal for the liberating deed like an electric spark.

But—thank God!—we are now no longer in a period of chronic passivity and, I regret to say, we are not yet at the eve of a revolutionary act about to issue forth from the inmost heart of the people.

I do not underestimate the value of the spoken word. But at moments of crisis, at moments when one world is in the moribund state and another about to be born, the representatives of the people must go among the people. For my part, I consider it not only more honorable but even more profitable to address a meeting of honest workers, than to speak in that motley company, assembled at the beck and call of a statesman who despises justice and despises men, a band of junkers, apostates and nonentities, which is known as the North German Reichstag.

But the Reichstag is the child of the universal suffrage; the universal suffrage is the will of the people, and as democrats we must respect the will of the people and—consequently—we must respect also the "Reichstag".

In this reasoning, which is rather frequently met with, we may discern that unintelligent overestimate of the universal suffrage which, based for the most part on the authority of Ferdinand Lassalle, has recently developed into a veritable idolatry. Particularly in Northern Germany, many persons seem

to consider the universal suffrage as the wonder-working root which will enable the "disinherited" to force the gates of the national authority; these persons are under the delusion that they will be able to drag themselves out of the social misery, although they are surrounded by the state of the police and the soldiery, with the aid of the universal suffrage, just as Münchhausen once dragged himself out of the morass by his pigtail. You should have Münchhausen's queue hanging down from the back of your head. To be sure, the universal suffrage is a general privilege of the entire people, a fundamental condition of the democratic state. But when isolated, when detached from the liberty of citizens, when unsupported by freedom of the press and freedom of associations, when subjected to the domination of the sword of the police and the sword of the soldiers, in a word, in the absolutist state—the universal suffrage can be nothing more nor less than a plaything and a tool of absolutism. After Louis Napoleon had assassinated the Republic, he proclaimed the universal suffrage.

When Count Bismarck had gained the victory over the Prussian particularist junkers, when he had conquered the liberal bourgeoisie by his "successes" of 1866, and rended Germany asunder, he did precisely what his great prototype had done fifteen years earlier, he proclaimed the universal suffrage. On both these occasions, the proclamation, the grant-

ing of the universal suffrage, was the keystone of the victory of despotism. This should be sufficient to open the eyes of the naïve persons who are so enthusiastic for the gospel of universal suffrage.

We are not concerned here with an examination of the motives of Louis Napoleon in proclaiming the universal suffrage. As for Count Bismarck's motives, they are quite evident.

The Three-Class Election System, undemocratic and anti-democratic as it is, is in addition anti-feudal in character, since it shifts the center of gravity of parliamentary representation to the possessing classes, who, though they are quite ready to make common cause with absolutism against the workers, against the democracy, are nevertheless—with the exception of the great landed proprietors, enemies of the absolutist state and "liberal" up to a certain point. The liberal Chamber of Deputies (Diet), the product of the Three-Class Election System, was inconvenient to the junker government; that government found it necessary to create a counterweight, and this was found in the universal, direct, and equal suffrage.

Very few persons are to be found in the present-day police state, in the state of mental and military regimentation, who are spiritually and mentally independent. The peasant population alone, which in our country is obliged to obey every whim of the authorities without a will of their own, constitutes

fully two-thirds of the whole population of the country.

Count Bismarck was well aware of this fact, and his calculations were not in error. By means of the universal suffrage, he set aside the opposition of the well-to-do classes and created a willing majority in the Reichstag, such as he could never have obtained by means of the Three-Class Election System.

In other words, the universal suffrage was not granted the population as a lever of democracy, but as a weapon in the hands of reaction.

This universal suffrage is completely under the control of the government—even more in our country than in France, where the population has more political training, where it has already passed through three revolutions and is now facing the fourth. It may be asserted with safety that no delegate can be elected in Prussia to the “Reichstag” if the government is seriously opposed to his candidacy.

Let us assume that a candidate comes up for election and that the government is absolutely opposed to having him in the “Reichstag”. The government will confiscate the newspapers that advocate his election—it will do so legally; it will confiscate his election handbills—also legally; or it will give permits for meetings of electors and then dissolve them—again legally; it will arrest the candidate’s campaign managers—quite legally; it will arrest the candidate himself—also legally; did they not arrest recently

a delegate to the "Reichstag" and would not that delegate be in prison to this day if the National Liberals had not been convinced by a smile on the part of Bismarck of the harmlessness of the "martyr"?

But let us assume that the government—either because it feels it is strong enough, or because of some other calculation—makes no use of its powers, and that it becomes possible, as some socialist statesmen of imagination still dream—to elect a social-democratic majority in the "Reichstag"—what would this majority proceed to do? *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* Now is the moment for transforming society and the state. The majority will adopt a world-historic decision; the new era is born—don't you believe it! A company of soldiers will eject the Social-Democratic majority from its stronghold and if these gentlemen make any objection to this procedure, a few policemen will take them to police headquarters and there they will have time enough to ponder the consequences of their Quixotic aspirations.

Revolutions are not made by getting the permission of the high powers that are in authority; the socialist ideal cannot be achieved within the frame of the present-day state; it must overthrow the state in order to secure the possibility of life.

No peace with the present-day state!

Away with the worship of the universal and direct suffrage!

Let us take part with all our energy, as we have done thus far, in the elections; but let us use the elections only as a means of agitation, and let us not neglect to point out that the ballot-box can never be the cradle of the democratic state. The universal suffrage will not attain its decisive and final influence on state and society until the police and soldier state has definitely been eliminated.

Liebkecht was haled to court for delivering this speech; it was declared that he had sought to weaken and injure the prestige and authority of the government. The court condemned him to imprisonment for three months. Liebkecht remained in Saxony and never served this period. The Prussian Government made every effort—but in vain—to induce the Saxon Government to incarcerate Liebkecht; Prussia was then planning to annex Saxony.

THE BATTLEFIELD, NOT THE REICHSTAG, IS THE FINAL COURT OF JUDGMENT

*(Delivered in the course of the discussions on the
new Imperial Constitution, December 6, 1870.)*

THE coronation of the new Emperor,² if it were really desired to impart to this ceremony a worthy and symbolic significance, should be celebrated out there on the *Gendarmenmarkt*; this would be the most fitting place for the coronation of the modern Emperor, for as a matter of fact this emperordom can only be maintained by a gendarme.

The thing we are dealing with here is a struggle between democracy and absolutism, which these gentlemen know as well as we do. In the year 1849, we opposed each other on the field of battle; the German question will not be solved in this Reichstag; it will be solved in the actual battle that will one day ensue between us!

² William I (1871-1888) was actually crowned less than two months after this speech was delivered, at Versailles (January 18, 1871).

THE BOURGEOISIE AND ITS CIVILIZATION

(*An extract from Liebknecht's speech, "Knowledge is Power—Power is Knowledge", delivered before the Dresden Educational Society, February 5, 1872.*)

KNOWLEDGE is power! This is indeed a true saying; knowledge is power; knowledge *gives* power, and since knowledge is power, the knowing and the mighty have ever sought to retain knowledge as their monopoly of caste, of station, of class, and to withhold knowledge from those who know not, from the powerless—who always have constituted the great mass of the population. Thus it has ever been; thus it remains to-day.

There never has existed a ruling class, a ruling caste, a ruling station, that has used its knowledge and its power for the enlightenment, the education, the training of those under it, and which has not—on the contrary—systematically cut them off from true education, from the education which makes men free.

A Frenchman³ once said, concerning the Russians: *Grattez le russe et vous trouverez le Tatar!*

³ Count Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821): "If you scratch the Russian, you will find a Tatar!"

Similarly one might say of our modern civilization: if you scratch our modern civilization, you find the barbarism under it. All civilization and the civilization of a nation represents the sum of culture present in it—is merely a thin veneer, a shining varnish on the outside, under which you will find crudity, superstition, the war of all against all, the war of destruction, in which the strong devours the weak, not literally perhaps, but none the less genuinely.

You will recall the first international industrial exposition, which took place in London in 1851. A calm had followed upon the storms of the “mad years”—1848 and 1849. The Parisian proletariat was mourning over the tombs of the June heroes. The dreams of liberty of the German people had been ended; the fighters for liberty had been court-martialed, imprisoned, and exiled. The bourgeoisie, rejoicing in the silence of the cemetery, had absorbed miraculous powers from this political decomposition and had blossomed to extraordinary prosperity. In fact, “boundless prosperity” prevailed, and the bourgeoisie of all lands and climes made pilgrimages to London to visit the Crystal Palace, the temple of the new god, who would scatter from his inexhaustible horn of plenty riches and peace over the human race, now intoxicated with joyous prospects. The “murderous swords” had been transformed into “machines of blessing”, the era of war had terminated forever; henceforth the nations would compete only in the

arena of industry and of material progress, inspired with noble emulation, to test their powers in peaceful competition.

The entire press of Europe and America gave rich expression in those days to all these illusions. But how soon was the "fair dream vanished"! The enthusiastic shouts had not ceased to echo, with which the bourgeoisie had hailed the presumable inception of the millennial kingdom, when the musket shots of December 2 (1851) were again rattling in Paris, and thousands of unarmed men, women and children were shot down by drunken soldiers like wild beasts at the command of a perjured scoundrel; and this saber-rattling, blood-dripping monster became the "deliverer of society" and had himself crowned "Emperor of the French". And the civilized world? The princes warmly embraced their "dear brother". The nobility was jubilant over this new victory over the "canaille". And the bourgeoisie, which only yesterday had dithyrambically celebrated the final triumph of the "arts of peace", the elimination of the "swords of murder", which had been magnified in prose and verse, now prostrated itself in worship before the bloody sword that had accomplished the salvation of society! Three years later, the Crimean War broke out and hundreds of thousands of men lost their lives in it, without advancing the welfare of humanity by a single inch; eight years later came the Italian War,

accompanied by similar slaughter and by the "same outcome" for humanity. And since then, if we consider only Europe and not the other continents, there have been three more wars in a single decade—each one transcending the preceding one in magnitude, in the amount of blood shed and in "glory", and in all three of these wars it was the "nation of thinkers" that led, that played the first part: the War of Prussia and Austria against Denmark (1864); the war of Prussia against Austria and the rest of Germany (1866); the war of Prussia and Germany against France (1870)! These wars destroyed the lives and the well-being and happiness of millions of men, and their result for mankind, weighed in the balance of reason, is zero! Particularly the last of these wars, blasphemously entitled the "Holy War", is profoundly and painfully interesting to the historian of civilization, to him who loves his fellowman. Two nations, each imagining itself as situated "at the head of civilization", as a matter of fact the two most distinguished representatives of civilization on the European continent, fly at each other's throats like wild beasts, rend each other's flesh, and evince a truly bestial delight in murder, without the slightest reasonable cause, merely at the wish and at the command of a few individuals who take good care of their own skins meanwhile. And this is not true only of those who are directly concerned in the slaughter; no, even

those who remain at home, seated comfortably behind their stoves or the tables in the beer-shop, all the representatives of the intelligentsia, the lights of science, the most distinguished "thinkers" of this "nation of thinkers", journalists, professors and other intellectuals—instead of protesting against the war as an act of high treason against civilization and humanity, instead of admonishing their misguided peoples to return to peace, they poured oil into the fire, they fanned the flames with mad fanaticism, the flames that were consuming the most precious achievements of civilization, and made the timely discovery that the most sublime cultural deed, the noblest activity of human virtue, was *war!* A German professor—what baseness is so low that a German professor could not be found so low to descend to it—actually proved this contention "scientifically" in an (of course) very learned dissertation, written for the purpose, which culminated in the statement: "The greater the quantity of labor devoted by a state to its mobilization, the greater the sum of the virtues produced thereby." All of which is merely a somewhat awkward circumscription of the principle: *Mass murder is the pinnacle of virtue.* The more massive this mass murder becomes, the greater the virtue; the better the mass murder is prepared, the more virtuous is the state. And I would have you mark this: this statement was not an isolated product of a diseased brain—God forbid—it was

only the expression of the generally prevalent mood, only a crass formulation of the bloodthirsty insanity which was preached day by day by our entire press—with a few hardly noticeable exceptions—to the public.

The press, this “focus of the intellectual life of a nation”—this “watch tower of right and truth”, as the saying goes in the mouths of good-natured enthusiasts, had become a torch destined to reduce civilization to ashes and to discredit every man who would offer any opposition to these shameful orgies of nationalistic insanity.

Our civilization is only skin deep: it is merely barbarism whitewashed with a few humanitarian aspirations; war had stripped it of its dazzling cosmetic of civilization; its bestiality now disported itself without a fig-leaf; and no one can be surprised but the one who has been subject to false conceptions of the nature of our present-day civilization.

I have spoken about the bulky military budgets. A not less eloquent language is spoken—on the question of the nature of our civilization—by the meager educational budgets.

The bulky military budgets and the meager educational budgets are unmistakable thermometers for our civilization, and the destructive criticism which they present to its hypocritical face cannot be mitigated by any sophistic attempts to embellish it.

Still drawing their sustenance from legend and tra-

dition, frivolous and unprincipled flatterers of nation and monarchs may trumpet out to all the world: "We are the most cultured nation in the world. We have the best educational system." Hypocritical fallacies all of them!

The thing they fail to keep in mind is that the ability to read and write is by no means equivalent to education.

And even the reading and writing taught in German schools are not without their own peculiarities. All that glitters is not gold, and many of the things traditionally supposed to glitter do not even glitter. In the levies of recruits, according to official statistics, there are found a considerable number of young persons born and "bred" in Germany who cannot read or write at all.

"Like school, like state"—this is an ideological proverb, "like state, like school"—this would be the genuine translation and transposition in a *real political* sense. The school is the mightiest instrument for liberation, and the school is the mightiest instrument for enslavement, depending on the nature and the purpose of the state. In the free state it is a means for liberation; in the unfree state the school is a means for enslavement. "Education makes free"—to expect the unfree state to educate its people would be equivalent to expecting it to commit suicide. The modern class state demands lack of freedom in its very essence. The school as it is

bears the same relation to the school as it should be as the state as it is bears to the state as it should be. The state as it is, *i.e.*, the class state, debases the school to be an instrument of class rule.

By the side of the school and the barracks, the press is our third great educational institution. And it is a worthy counterpart to the two I have already mentioned.

Together with school and barracks, the press completes the great holy trinity of popular stupefaction. And this holy alliance against the emancipation of humanity is encouraged by every means which the Church can contribute to its success, as must necessarily be expected by reason of the nature of the Church. While school and Church and barracks are exclusively educational institutions in the hands of the state, the press may be considered as an instrument common to the state and to society.

“Society” finds this joint operation with the “state” extremely profitable to it. The newspaper business is one of the most lucrative sources of profit. The demand for newspapers is increasing from day to day, and, since the owners of privately printed newspapers are often “aided” in such an amiable and generous manner by the state, often receiving money into the bargain—also a kind of “state aid”—they enjoy a threefold advantage: they are supplied with “good wares”, which contribute to the solidification and “perpetuation” of

the class domination; they economize in their operating costs, and thus correspondingly increase their profits; and they assure themselves of the protection of the state.

The fetishism of brute force, the cry of "Crucify him" uttered against every man who tears the mask from this rotten system of society, the distortion of all values, transforming infamy into virtue, gilding the mire, magnifying to the skies the cunning of the horse-dealer and the crudity of the stableman, which are lauded as diplomatic genius—cherishing the national prejudices, inflaming national hatreds—when did the press ever—aside from short intervals of nobler activities—pursue any other mission? A willing servant of the class state and the bourgeois system of society, it has but one lodestar: it glorifies the interests of the class state and of bourgeois society, in short, everything that is favorable to them, that supports them, though it be the basest drivel; everything that contradicts the class state and the bourgeois system of society, it bespews with venom, though it be the most precious treasure of genuine human civilization. Characterlessness is worshiped; character is dragged in the mire; injustice is lauded as a divinely ordained world order; social evils are embellished with beauty patches; in short, vulgarity, dissipation, corruption, corruption in the lowest sense: everything for money; money for everything. No political or industrial swindle

is too shameful, too base, too dirty, not to find eager and enthusiastic support in this press—for money. The sucker-baiting activities of the Stock Exchange and promotion swindlers take in their victims on a large scale, with the aid of the press; the promotion swindler sets the traps, lays the net, and the press drives in the victims, not failing to fill its own pockets in the process.

The daily press is the faithful mirror of the state and of society, and the impartial and inexorable historian of the future will find sufficient material in the issues of our newspapers for a single year to enable him to pronounce a final condemnation of our present-day system of state and society.

Workers who think, who feel themselves to be human beings, who have a conception of their rights and duties—for them the present-day employer has no use; they are a “pestilence” in the factory or workshop; they “poison” their surroundings; but the worker must have healthy limbs, strong bones, able “hands”. A vigorous, normal body, if possible without a brain—this would be the genuine model worker of the bourgeois employer. In other words, bodily defects are useful neither to the state nor to the purposes of society; mental defects are not so bad; and when we learn, therefore, that the great majority of the population suffers from some mental defect or other, we are necessarily forced to infer

that the mental defectiveness must be even far more general than that of the body.

The science of statistics, which like all the other sciences has been pressed into the service of the state and society, does not like to concern itself with this shady side of our civilization; yet even statistics have been obliged to record the fact that infant mortality in the lower classes is far more extensive, and that the average duration of life in those classes is far lower than in the upper classes. Statistics have, furthermore, been obliged to record the fact that labor, on which the state and society are based, provides those who do not labor, *i.e.*, the upper classes, with wealth and a prolongation of life, while it provides the workers themselves, *i.e.*, the lower classes, with poverty, disease, decrepitude and premature death. Our hearts recoil involuntarily when we read of the human hecatombs sacrificed by our "civilization" from time to time on the altar of the bloody god of war; and yet—what are these hecatombs of war, compared with the myriads slaughtered, murdered, year in year out, day by day, by our society, on the altar of industrialism, without interruption? Yes—I say *murdered*; any one who is obliged by his fellow humans, merely because they have the power over him, to engage in a mode of life which must necessarily lead him—according to mathematical certainty, and according to the prediction of any person capable of thought—

to a premature death, such a man has been *murdered*; and if the blame does not rest with a specific individual, it rests at least with the conditions and institutions that have caused this man's death, and in a certain unmistakable sense, all those individuals are also responsible, as a totality, who in their private and class interests have created these conditions and institutions, and maintained them in force, although their ruinous and murderous effects are perfectly obvious.

Admirers of the present-day system speak of the "battlefields of industry on which there are no corpses". What a delusion, or rather, what a fraud! No corpses! If we should gather, for the period of but a single year, and lay out in a row one next to the other, the corpses of the workers, of their wives, their children, in short, of all persons who have inhaled death in venomous workshops and factory rooms by reason of excessive work, long before the time allotted to them by nature, even before half this time has elapsed—and if we place in another row the corpses of all the soldiers who have died in all the "holy" and unholy wars of the last twenty years, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Danes, Englishmen, Americans—now all fraternally united in death—the former row, that of the workers who died in bed, died a "natural death", according to the doctor's certificate, will extend far further than

the bloody row of the tattered and torn corpses, defaced by gaping wounds, that once were soldiers. And the terrible thing is that with very few exceptions these battle victims of industry can be proved to have been slain by a vicious, conscienceless operation of business, indifferent to the life and health of the worker, in other words homicide, even according to the legal definition of the word; yet it is a sanctified, practically unpunished homicide; for State, the vulture, will take every precaution not to pluck out the eyes of Society, the vulture.

So much for the "Kultur" of our present-day society!

Thanks to the division of labor and to the work of machines, labor is being deprived more and more of the element of soul.

Far be it from me to fulminate against the division of labor. The division of labor increases the productivity of labor, and is therefore an essential element in human progress. Yet our present-day society practices a division of labor at the expense of the laboring individual, and the enhanced productivity of labor redounds to the advantage not of the generality, least of all of the workers, but of the minority which exploits labor.

I wish not to be misunderstood; I am not an opponent of the machine. The machine-breakers, who were so active among the workers of England

at the outset of large-scale industry in that country, were entirely reactionary, and were acting in accordance with a false view of things, with failure as a result—to the great good of mankind, but not of the individual working man. It is precisely the curse of our present-day civilization, that every general progress is useful only to a privileged minority, and even lowers, on the other hand, both relatively and absolutely, the position of the disinherited masses, that every “blessing” of civilization results in the decline, the extermination of entire communities of workers; as an example, I shall merely mention the extermination of the hand weavers in the *Erzgebirge*, which is now going on; a heart-moving social tragedy that arouses no one’s tears, at least no one’s that could or should remedy it. To eliminate this curse, to make the general will synonymous with the will of each individual, this is our goal. The machine will cease to oppress the working individual, will cease to debase him to the level of a purely mechanical performance—we can hardly call it an activity—as soon as it ceases to be the property of an individual, of a single class. From the moment in which the machine enters into the service of the generality, the master of the worker becomes his servant, it will free him instead of enslaving him; it will enrich him instead of impoverishing him. The Socialist Party, therefore, rightly demands the expropriation of machines, as

well as of all instruments of labor—and rightly, not only from the point of view of humanity, but also—I might also say—for *legal* reasons, in so far as machines and instruments of labor are the product of the collective intelligence as a whole, and therefore should not be claimed by any individual as an absolute isolated property.

To be sure, we are told by the spokesmen of the golden calf: “If you eliminate the prospect of gain, you will destroy inventive talent, you will destroy initiative, you will destroy progress.” Nothing could be farther from the fact. Even now, it is not the prospect of gain that spurs men on. The performances of those who are egged on by the desire for gain are of very subordinate nature when compared with the achievements of science to which we owe our progress; and it will at all periods be a very simple matter to find suitable talents for such subordinate tasks. The worshippers of the golden calf are turning the truth upside down. For every single person who is inspired by the prevailing conditions of production and by his prospect of gain, to make a useful invention, in fact, to perform any *useful* mental work, there are thousands who might under reasonable social conditions have performed useful things, things valuable to human progress, and who have been prevented from doing so and destroyed mentally by the prevailing social conditions. And the one individual who now has a useful func-

tion would have performed not just as much but far more under a sensible, *i.e.*, a just organization of society, encouraging all human capacities and satisfying all human demands. Our present-day society not only does not encourage the development of talents, but suppresses or cripples talents outright.

Present-day society, therefore, has no right to term itself a civilizing force and to call us a subversive force. This society is hostile to civilization, for it prevents its blossoming, and *we*, the champions of the *new* socialist society, are the defenders of civilization against the uncivilizing *old* society, which keeps knowledge from the people, which oppresses the people in the body and in the spirit, which sacrifices the common weal to anti-social class interests, which makes property the monopoly of an exploiting minority, degrades the worker into a thing, the family to a pious wish, as far as the proletariat is concerned, morality to hypocrisy, and education to a lie.

Property, family, morality, education! It is really an unparalleled piece of impudence for our bourgeoisie to take such words into its mouth at all. They are in favor of *property*—they mean the property they have robbed from the workers. They are in favor of the family—but they have destroyed the family of the worker. They are in favor of morality—but the morality they preach in theory is trodden under foot by them in practice, like all their fair

theories. They even preach liberty, and cast the worker back into slavery; they preach civic virtues, and grovel in the dust before the victorious saber; they preach peace, and revel in the atrocities of war; they preach the "harmony of interests" and incite social warfare. Never was this hypocrisy, this contradiction between theory and practice more crassly manifested than during the Commune at Paris last year. The program of the Paris Commune was local self-administration, the abolition of militarism, the separation of Church and School, free public instruction, the separation of Church and State, the abolition of the death penalty, all of them demands that the bourgeoisie had also espoused in theory. But no sooner did the bourgeoisie find that here an effort was really being made to put through its *own* theoretical demands in earnest, than they pounced upon the Commune movement in mad fury and hailed the victory of the Versailles hangmen with fanatical jubilation. There can be no amnesty for this shameful denial of their own creed, for this act of high treason against conscience and humanity.

And as for education—the bourgeoisie actually dares to speak of education, the bourgeoisie, which does not even content itself with sucking the marrow from the bones of the worker, its wage slave, but even robs him of his spirit, his soul, affords him and his children not even the necessary time for continuing their education, prevents him and his

children from securing any kind of culture, degrades him beneath the beast, condemns him to an existence which it would consider unworthy of its horses and its dogs!

So much for the bourgeois lie of education.

Bourgeois morality and bourgeois practice are not more crassly divergent than are the education actually handed out by the bourgeoisie and the education which its fine phrases publish as its ideal.

Another point. Let no one talk to us about *science and art* in present-day society. "Art must seek its bread", and instead of being the mold of the people it is the concubine of the great and the wealthy. Woe to the artist of to-day who, insisting on his higher calling, would dare try to be independent, would dare refrain from intriguing for the dishonoring protection of distinguished patrons, by vile flattery, parasitism and even worse, who would not pay any money for the laudations of the press—a thousand to one he will die of hunger or of a broken heart, killed by silence or killed by the written criticisms of the kept press, which brands as a rebellious criminal who must be inexorably hounded to death any artist who will not pay the tribute that is its due. And science! What has the people to do with science? What has science to do with the people? Science is not for the people. It is to be used *against* the people. Science the Queen, the liberator of the world, has become the petty

prostitute of the ruling classes. "Professors and whores can always be had for money!" was the cynical remark once made, in a moment of frankness, by the late King of Hanover.

So long as the present-day state and the present-day society continue, there will be no civilization, no education, no mental development of the people.

A SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION

From May 11 to May 26, 1872, Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel and Hepner had an opportunity to justify, in speeches directed against the bourgeoisie, their attitude in the Franco-German War of 1870-71. This trial, before the Leipzig Imperial Jury, is one of the culminating points in the German workers' movement. Liebknecht was given two years of fortress imprisonment. It was in the course of the sessions of the court that Liebknecht made the above proud confession of faith of a soldier of the revolution.

I AM what I always have been. In many ways I have continued to develop, but essentially I hold the views I held twenty-two years ago. In my emotions, in my judgment of individual men and things, I have often been mistaken; in my end, my goal, my general view of life, I have become firmer and firmer. I am not the degraded adventurer that my calumniator would make of me. Very early in my life I burned my ships behind me and have since then worked uninterruptedly for my principles. I have never sought my own personal advantage; wherever I have had to choose between my own interests and my principles, I have never hesitated to sacrifice my interests.

If I am now a poor man, after my monstrous persecutions, it is not my disgrace—I am proud of

the fact; it is the most eloquent certificate of my political honor. And again I say: I am not a professional conspirator: I am not a knight-errant of subversion. But I should have no objection to your terming me a soldier of the revolution.

A twofold ideal has inspired me from my earliest years: a free, united Germany, and the emancipation of the working class, *i.e.*, the abolition of class rule, which is equivalent to the liberation of mankind. This dual goal has been the inspiration of all my energies, and I shall fight for both these goals as long as a breath remains within me. My duty requires it.

The president of the court also takes offense at the final admonition of my speech: "Proletarians of all lands, unite!" What is the meaning of these words? They mean: you workers in the south and in the east, in the north and in the west, everywhere on the earth's surface, all you that are weary and heavy laden, you outcasts and unfortunates for whom there is no place at the banquet board of society, you who create in the sweat of your brow the riches enjoyed by others, I ask you to acknowledge the fact that in spite of the national barriers that separate you, your cause is everywhere the same, your distress everywhere the result of the same causes, and that everywhere, therefore, the same means will be necessary to terminate your misery; therefore cast aside the national prejudices that have

hitherto kept you apart, to the advantage of your common foes, and to your own great harm, in hostile camps, and often engaged in fraternal murder; unite under the banner of a love for mankind and work, filled with noble zeal, in the consciousness of a sublime common goal, as various divisions of one and the same army, as individual links of a single great human family, in the work of the general liberation! Who will have the impudence to condemn so magnificent and world-redeeming an ambition? We live in a country in which Christianity is the state religion; we face judges and jurors who accept Christianity; did not Christ himself, according to tradition, address himself chiefly to the impoverished? Is it not the principal merit of Christianity, in so far as it has not been degraded to the service of unholy national and class purposes, that it burst asunder the narrow-hearted nationalism of the Hebrews and substituted for it the idea of a universal humanity, *i.e.*, in modern words, the principal of internationalism? I do not want any one to think that I am a Christian—but a state, a society, which calls itself “Christian” has in truth no right to cast a stone at aspirations which are in harmony with the fundamental teachings of Christianity and have as their goal the realization of all these teachings, their translation from empty words into real life. And—to drop the subject of Christianity—is not the entire drift of human development international in

its evolution? Commerce, industry, art, science, are international, cosmopolitan. Every progressive step in trade, industry, art, science, means a defeat for the national principle, victory for the international principle. Only he who has an interest in the preservation of the existing evils, only he who is an opponent of human progress, can be hostile to the principle of internationalism, can feel himself threatened by that principle. It is a completely hopeless enterprise to attempt to oppose internationalism. The international principle is as immortal as mankind, and though it be calumniated, incarcerated and tried by military tribunals, it will step forth from each fiery baptism, purified and strengthened, and will continue its victorious course around the world. But those who oppose this principle are pronouncing their own condemnation; and any one who would declare our aspirations to be high treason against the State of the present day, would be thus merely deposing testimony in favor of the correctness of our view, namely, that humanity could not fulfill its destiny except in a universal republic, and that the happiness and peace of nations are incompatible with the continued existence of monarchies.

I pass over with contempt the attacks and calumnies of our enemies. I consider them an honor to me and I regard the fact that the entire feudal, clerical, and bourgeois press is now slinging mud

upon us as a proof that we are on the right path, that our blows have struck home. . . .

In the days of revolution, dictatorship is a necessity, but not the dictatorship of a single individual; we are then under the dictatorship of the club, of the people, of the workers, as was the case in France in 1793. He who would make himself an individual dictator may be greeted by laughter alone, in peaceful times, as once was Lassalle's way of putting it; but in revolutionary days, you take him out and shoot him.

SPEECH INTENDED TO BE DELIVERED BEFORE THE JURORS IN THE LEIPZIG TRIAL FOR HIGH TREASON

This speech was outlined by Liebknecht during his imprisonment in a fortress after his conviction. He had intended to deliver a similar speech at the trial, but by reason of the maltreatment of one of his legal defenders by the presiding judge, Liebknecht, Bebel and Hepner had renounced the privilege of pronouncing a speech in their own defense, on the ground that the defense had been deprived of freedom of speech.

THE Social-Democratic Party does not appeal to compassion; it appeals to the compelling interest of society. "All guilt is avenged in this world"⁴—and the vengeance is meted out in the measure of the guilt. The injustice of society takes dreadful revenge on society. All political and social catastrophes and calamities may be traced back without exception to this single ultimate cause. The injustice of society is the Pandora's Box from which all the ills, all the diseases of society proceed in an unending train. What is it that produces the terrible crises which periodically—with appalling regularity—shatter the temple of bourgeois prosperity, and bring

⁴ *Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden*: The final line of one of the stanzas of the harper's song in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (by Goethe).

trade and industry to a standstill, inject ruin and distress into immense communities, what else is it than the present system of production with its economic anarchy, its conscienceless exploitation of labor, its mad competition, its fraudulent speculation? What is it that drives the worker to a strike, that forces him in moments of savage desperation to mount the barricades—is it anything else than a feeling of injury endured? Is there a rebellion, a revolution, whose recruits had not been trained by social misery? And as for war—is it conceivable that the nations would be cutting the nations' throats if every citizen of the state could be sure that he would gather the fruits of his labor under the protection of righteous institutions? As for pestilence—you may ask the physicians whether epidemic diseases would be possible under healthy conditions, I mean just social conditions, righteous social conditions. As for crime—ask the judges how many criminals would remain if poverty and defective education were eliminated. Not one! Except perhaps a few irresponsible idiots and madmen.—People are fond of terming us subversive characters. Very well; do you think you would like to preserve the commercial and industrial crises? Do you wish to retain the class struggle in all its phases, from a comparatively harmless strike to a raging street battle? Do you wish to preserve unchanged rebellion, revolution—in the sense in which the state

attorney used the word—war, pestilence, crime? Very well, then, conserve the present-day society, with its injustice—as long as you can; it will not be very long. Injustice will soon become an economic and political impossibility; justice will be a necessity.

The continuance of the present-day mode of production is not compatible with the continued existence of society. Capitalist large-scale production was a step in progress; it has now become an obstacle. It can no longer fulfill the economic needs of society, *i.e.*, of the generality—in fact, it hardly meets the needs of the tiny minority of privileged persons who love to term themselves “society”. Altogether aside from the unjust distribution of the products of labor, capitalist production is incapable of furnishing the necessary materials for a human scale of living to all the members of society, and it must—if only for this reason, be replaced by a higher form of production which shall fulfill these requirements. But they can only be fulfilled by a universal social production, a socialist organization of labor, which will apply the concentrated total capital of society to the advantage of the totality.

Any man who would to-day propose the abolition of machines, the reintroduction of the medieval petty industry, would be considered a madman, for every one knows that the petty production of those days has been replaced by a higher, more efficient

mode of production: large-scale industry. But any one who would have said, in the Middle Ages, or even in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, that petty production was too expensive, too inefficient, that it must be swept aside by an industrial revolution which will bring another mode of production to the helm, such a man would be regarded as—something like us. Any one who would propose, fifty years from now, a reintroduction of the present conditions, will be extremely liable to become intimately acquainted with the interior of a madhouse. And we, who demand a reformation of present conditions, are in danger of becoming acquainted with the interior of prisons. Yet, it is just as certain and necessary that the present-day mode of production be replaced by a higher mode of production as that the medieval production was replaced by the present-day production. It is not we who are Utopians, impractical dreamers, as men like to term us. It is rather they who consider transitory forms to be eternal, and seek to preserve them from destruction by the use of force. "The Communists," says the *Communist Manifesto*,—a document included in the evidence against us, "do not set up any special principles in accordance with which they would mold the proletarian movement. The theoretical theses of the Communists are in no way based on ideas, on principles, invented by one world

reformer or another. They are merely the general expression of the actual conditions of an existing class struggle, of an historical movement unfolding before our eyes." . . .

LIEBKNECHT'S FIRST SPEECH IN THE GERMAN REICHSTAG

(Argument in favor of a motion to grant a furlough to imprisoned comrades. Delivered November 21, 1874.)

THE motion I am making reveals to you a picture of our German conditions. The group to which I and my fellows in making this motion belong has nine members, and of these nine members three are at present imprisoned.. We are asking for the liberation of these three men. Why are these three men imprisoned? Has there been an act of high treason? Has the Social-Democratic Party, which some are attempting to outlaw, been guilty of any traitorous actions? We have had news in recent years, and Germany has actually witnessed the fact, that monarchs have been dethroned, that holes have been shot by cannons into the rights of legitimacy, into the kingship by the grace of God, but this was not done by Social-Democrats; the Social-Democrats did not tear up the treaties of federation, did not subvert the German constitution. Those who have done this were not tried under indictments of high treason and no state attorney drew up any counts against them.

No doubt, on one occasion, an attempt was made to draw up an indictment of high treason against our party; I know—I was to be named myself; the public transactions lasted for eighteen days, after a long preliminary investigation, and in this long preliminary investigation, as well as in the eighteen-day published hearings, not even a trace was found of any material evidence against us. And although we have been sentenced, the entire press of Europe, I think I may say the public opinion of the civilized world, has expressed itself as of the view that this trial was nothing but a frame-up, in which we, the representatives of one party, were condemned by the representatives of another party, or, to put the matter more plainly, we, the representatives of one class, the oppressed, were condemned by the bourgeoisie, which sat on the jurors' benches.

Now, gentlemen, why are the three prisoners, whose liberation we are proposing, in prison? All of them for so-called abuse of free speech. But the fact remains that all the assertions for which our mandatories are now in prison would have passed by unpunished if they had been pronounced in this hall. The essential content of August Bebel's statement is—although I have just heard some one laugh—entirely right: it is true that we were promised liberty, and it is true that we have not liberty now! And that Germany is now practically a huge barracks, and that Heinrich Heine's national peniten-

tiary has become a matter of fact—this is a truth we have all been made to feel. Of course, for you, for the majority, for the ruling class, it is not a penitentiary. I was in jail for years and I can tell you from my own personal experience that when I returned from Hubertusburg it did not seem to me that I was returning to liberty, it seemed to me as if I were leaving a small prison and entering a big one. And furthermore, I lacked the feeling of security which I had had, after all, in the little jail. There at least I was safe from indictments, from trials, while here we know that wherever we may go there are traps set for us, that men are lying in wait for every word we speak.

Liebknecht now proceeds to discuss in detail the indictments raised against August Bebel, Johann Most, and Wilhelm Hasenclever, after which he continues:

The men whose liberation we propose were elected by the people with great majorities; they received, together with their mandates, a certificate of confidence from thousands and thousands of men. None of these men has been found guilty of any dishonorable offense; none of them is even suspected remotely of any dishonorable action. And while these men are obliged to remain in jail, we may witness a spectacle in which men who—if I may use a word which was recently pronounced in a trial by one of your own number—have rubbed elbows with

the penitentiary, standing high in the confidence of the highest national officials, and who in some cases are even permitted to take part in the discussions of legislative bodies—men who were involved in the promotion scandals, men whose names have not come forth without a stain from the Royal Investigation Commission. On the one hand, there is impunity for what the people consider to be a crime; on the other hand, there is severe punishment for actions that none of you would dare designate as a crime. Light weight for the rich, for the plunderers, for the nobles, for high state officials, heavy weight for the proletariat, for the workers, and their representatives. I am not under any illusion as to the result of our motion. Its adoption would mean a vote of censure for the system now observed all over Germany in dealing with our party, a system of persecutions of every kind, of punishments, of trials of all types, calculated to put down the Social-Democratic Party. The passing of our motion would mean your condemning the State in its resort to mechanical modes of oppression in its vain struggle against ideas, your thereby condemning the prevalent police system. You would be condemning the fact that we have been practically outlawed.

Not only am I under no illusions as to the outcome of my motion; but even as a party member, I am completely indifferent as to the result of the vote. No doubt, it would be a very pleasant thing for our

captive comrades to be permitted to breathe the air of freedom for a time, but our party is accustomed to struggle and persecution, and we know that persecutions can only strengthen us and lead us more swiftly to our goal. The decision you will make concerning our motion will not have the slightest influence upon the development of our party and its advance. The Social-Democratic Party will attain its goal. It will continue to live even if this Reichstag is dissolved, together with the empire of which it is a part. The Social-Democratic Party is an idea, based upon actual conditions, and ideas cannot be destroyed by destroying a few individuals. Incarcerate the idea of the Social-Democracy in the person of its representatives; shoot the representatives of the Social-Democracy, if you will, following the procedure now current in France. You will thereby strengthen the idea of the Social-Democracy. From the soil of the conditions in which our party has its roots, new champions will arise, and these new champions will in the long run multiply morally and materially into such immense masses that they will conquer their opponents, first in the spiritual field and then—if need be—in the physical field.

LIBERTY HAS BEEN OUTLAWED TOGETHER WITH US

(Delivered in the Reichstag discussion of the Socialist Law, October, 1878.)

I KNOW that judgment has been spoken in this case; when I use the word judgment, I do not mean that I recognize the Reichstag as a judge of our actions; the Social-Democratic Party stands high above the forum of this or any other body. But I know the judgment has been spoken; the blow against us has been dealt. But I should like to tell you one thing before you deal the blow: *Strike your blow, but do not calumniate*; do not calumniate the five hundred thousand German Social-Democratic voters, do not calumniate a million of citizens of the German Empire whom you are stamping as assassins or as accomplices of assassins in the words of the motivation of this law.

Freedom has been outlawed together with us, together with the Social-Democratic Party; freedom of the press, freedom of associations; all constitutional guarantees have been shattered, destroyed by this law!

However that may be, the sacrifice can no longer be prevented. The contract has been ratified and

lies before us; the sacrifice of freedom will be made. Let the responsibility for this step fall upon them who are performing it. The day will come when the German people will ask an accounting for this crime against its welfare, its liberty, its honor!

THE EIGHTEENTH OF MARCH

(From a speech delivered in the Reichstag, November 30, 1893, in the discussion of the Imperial Budget.)

THE Eighteenth of March is a double holiday—it is a day of remembrances of two great events in the history of the conflict for human freedom, a memorial day which has become an international holiday like the First of May. But there is a difference.

The First of May is the day of our demands.

The Eighteenth of March is concerned primarily with the past, with the mother of the future; it is the day of reminiscences for us Social-Democrats. It is dedicated to the memory of two great insurrections of the people: that of March 18, 1848, and that of March 18, 1871, and it may also serve to commemorate not only these two uprisings but all the other battles and deeds of prowess in the modern struggle for the liberation of nations, which is synonymous with the struggle for the liberation of the working class. And this day is sacred not only to the memory of the struggles but also to the memory of the combatants, of those brave and bold warriors who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of the proletariat and humanity.

And we are not celebrating to-day only the prominent ones among the warriors and blood witnesses of freedom. We do not favor a worship of persons—not even of the dead. And though we may not be so vain as to believe that all who have fought for our cause have performed like services, we nevertheless feel that we must pay equal tribute in honor and recognition to all who have offered and given their lives for our cause.

On February 24, 1848, the people of Paris, after a struggle lasting for three days, carried off the victory over the “bourgeois kingship of Louis Philippe” who had treacherously defrauded the people of Paris in July, 1830, of the fruits of their victory over the counter-revolution of the rotten, treasonable, Bourbon monarchy by the grace of God and the Cossacks, which had again been reëstablished in France by an act of high treason and with the aid of reactionary foreign powers, and had now been plundering France for eighteen years and handing it over to the tender mercies of a voracious and insatiable bourgeoisie. The *enrichissez-vous!* (“enrich yourselves”!) of the bourgeois minister Guizot had been the program of the government of Louis Philippe. *Enrichissez-vous!*—and they had enriched themselves, these French *parvenus*. And the bourgeoisie of all the other countries regarded Louis Philippe as the ideal of a most perfect statesmanship; and the aristocracy which was longing for a

restoration of a medieval, feudal, robber-knight policy, recognized the services of the modern bourgeois robber-knight policy—it gulped down its hatred for the bourgeois-royal “upstart” and vied with the bourgeois predatory rabble in its depredations. And now the bourgeois king had been overthrown; his throne had been burned by the people before the Column of July on the Place of the Bastille. The people of Paris, the working classes, the deceived victors of the July Revolution, the victims of the bourgeois-royal robber-knight policy—they now had their revenge. Monarchic and reactionary Europe quaked to its foundations.

The severest quakes were felt in Germany and Austria. The people, rejoicing, had their eyes on France; rejoicing, they believed it was the outbreak of a new era of liberty and human fraternity. Suppressed hopes ventured forth and expanded into demands for bourgeois liberty. Bourgeois liberty—for there was as yet no class consciousness, the necessary presuppositions for an economic evolution being not yet present. The general hatred was directed against the *Bundestag*, this deformed child of the Congress of Vienna; there was a general enthusiasm in favor of a “united, free Germany” without much mental clarity as to ways and means. The bourgeoisie was only beginning to grow; the distinction between the middle classes and the working classes had not yet been drawn.

And now a hole had been shot into the "order" of ancient Europe—the revolution, buried for eighteen years, had again come to life,—on March 18, Vienna rose in rebellion.

It was now the turn for Berlin.

Berlin had begun to ferment and boil at the moment when the revolutionary tidings had arrived from Paris. The news from Vienna encouraged the people, intimidated the government. The king granted the convocation of the united *Landtag*, on which the liberal bourgeoisie of that day placed great hopes—and also abolished the censorship. The "Royal Patent" which convoked the *Landtag* appeared on March 18. There was great jubilation. Note the date! In the afternoon thousands of persons moved toward the palace to thank the king. Suddenly, mounted dragoons forced their way into the crowd, and a detachment of soldiers with bayonets lowered advanced from the palace. There are shots and hits. Who had given the order? The voice of the people named the man—our so-called historians have been working for forty-two years to conceal him.

The scattering crowds were filled with panic terror.

"We are betrayed", was the word in Berlin, as it had been in Paris four weeks before, when shots were fired from Guizot's mansion owing to a "misunderstanding". Here also they said it was a "misunderstanding". But the answer was "Treachery!"

To arms! to arms!" and Berlin rose in rebellion; barricades grew like mushrooms. They were attacked bitterly, defended heroically. Berlin fought; it fought all afternoon and all through the night. There has never been braver fighting in any street battle.

And then the inevitable occurred. On the one side, there was no goal, no unity; on the other side there was a plan, and a gradual increase of courage. The bourgeoisie recoiled from its own deeds; it did not trust the workers; the workers had yet no class-consciousness, no program. The reaction became bolder and bolder and on November 9 of this "mad" year, on the very day on which Robert Blum was executed by a firing squad at the Brigittenau in Vienna, General Wrangel marched into Berlin and dispersed the National Assembly.

The curtain has gone down. There follows an interlude of disgrace and shame, but a new idea, a new ideal forces its way up between the disgrace and the shame—promising new life, a new birth—the curtain rises on the next act. It is again the Eighteenth of March. Twenty-three years have passed. In Germany, the policy of blood and iron has been victorious; the "question of German unity" has been solved from the dynastic standpoint; it has been solved from above instead of from below. The House of Hohenzollern has thrown the House of Hapsburg out of Germany and has gained the im-

perial crown on the blood-soaked fields of France. France has been overthrown: the German troops are still before Paris, although the war is over. They are the allies of the French bourgeois government which is afraid of the Paris proletariat and would be glad to exterminate the republic which has been established contrary to all expectations after the collapse of the Napoleonic empire at Sedan, with the aid of Germans, foreigners. These bourgeois gentlemen are so "patriotic"!

Paris was the obstacle. Paris must be disarmed, *i.e.*, the working people of Paris who had secured weapons and set up a military organization during the siege. The Paris workers did not give up their arms; they sent home the emissaries of the bourgeois government with bloody heads. That was March 18, 1871.

A few days later, the Commune was proclaimed. It lived and fought for two months. There was not a day without its struggle. The German victors delivered a daily increasing army to the conquered French Government by gradually liberating its prisoners of war, an army to be used against the socialist workers. The Commune was alone, without support. It was left in the lurch by the rest of France. French peasants and petty middle class circles still considered socialism as the "red peril".

I cannot even attempt on this occasion to give so much as an outline of the history of the Commune.

To put the matter briefly, the outcome of the unequal struggle was evident from the outset. After two months of struggle, the Commune succumbed in the "bloody May week". Although the Commune had not shed the blood of a single foe, except in honorable battle—the execution of Generals Leconte and Thomas by a firing squad took place before the days of the Commune, that of the hostages after its conclusion—the victors acted so barbarously as to reveal the entire brutality of their entire civilization. Thousands and thousands of defenseless prisoners were slaughtered after the battle, and after the military courts had harried for months, thousands and thousands of persons were sent to prison for many years, or to the "dry guillotine", to Devil's Island, in New Caledonia.

And, not content with slaughtering the conquered workers, it has attempted to assassinate even the memory of the vanquished by means of grotesque lies and misrepresentations.

Vain effort! The workers of all lands knew that the vanquished, the calumniated, were flesh of their flesh—they declared themselves to be in solidarity with the Paris workers, and on the grave of the Commune the international proletariat organized its fraternal alliance which no power on earth can destroy.

And from this new Saint Bartholomew's Day, on which the bourgeoisie imagined it had slaughtered

the entire proletarian movement, dates the rise of our party, a rise which fills all the opposing parties with astonishment and horror, and which these parties have not been able to explain to the present day. The Commune was dead, the international Social-Democratic Party set forth on its course of world conquest.

LÈSE MAJESTÉ

This speech was delivered by Wilhelm Liebknecht as the opening address of the Congress of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, which began at Breslau on October 5, 1895. Liebknecht was tried for *lèse majesté* (insult to majesty) because of this speech. He was accused of having insulted William II in the words, or rather in the pause after the words: "Very well then, as for any insult to our party, we are far above being insulted by—"

Liebknecht declared in the court transactions: "I know of no other country in which the struggle between the parties is carried on with such base weapons as is now the case in Germany with the struggle against us. We are denied any personal honorableness; we are declared to be people of a lower class, subordinate creatures, who should be excluded from the social community as well as that of the body politic of the civilized world, deprived of all social and political rights, if possible banished from the country, and preferably to be destroyed root and branch.

"Under these circumstances we cannot be expected to remain silent and to suffer without making a reply. We should be honorless wretches and deserve to be treated as dogs if we consented to accept these attacks in silence. Never; we shall strike back—we are not dogs who lie down as soon as a blow is directed against them.

"I have always been willing to risk my personal safety for the good cause. I have never spared my person. And I have served more than five years in

prison and spent twenty-three years in exile or banishment under the Socialist Law by reason of my convictions.

"I demand that the Court acknowledge my right to make the answer I have made to attacks of such base nature.

"I will not beg for my acquittal. You have no right to condemn me!"

The Court condemned the prisoner, then sixty-nine years old, to imprisonment for four months. Liebknecht wrote, concerning the judgment: "The sentence aroused general astonishment and met with condemnation far beyond the limits of our party. I may be perfectly content with the result of this Breslau trial. If Paris is worth a mass, this trial is worth four months of imprisonment. The gains it brings us have been purchased very cheaply."

WHEN I opened the Party Congress in Frankfort a year ago, I pointed out the fact that we were meeting on historical ground. But, as far as the history of our country is concerned, Breslau is even more memorable a place for us than Frankfort. We are meeting to-day in the place in which Ferdinand Lassalle was born, the man from whom the modern organized German labor movement takes its beginning. We are meeting in the city which harbors the last remains of Ferdinand Lassalle as well as the remains of many other champions of our party, and we are meeting in the capital of that province of Germany which passed through the first class struggle, the province in which the opposition between classes clearly expressed itself earlier than

in any other part of Germany, in which, more than half a century ago, there was fought a struggle similar to the struggle that had taken place ten years before in Lyons, the struggle of the poor against the rich. It is now a few months more than fifty-one years—it was in the summer of 1844—since the insurrection of the weavers broke out in Silesia, the insurrection that met with such bloody repression. This weavers' insurrection confronted modern society with its sins, and to this day this confrontation produces such striking effects on the conscience of this capitalist society, in view of its unatoned offenses, that this society hardly dares anywhere in Germany to permit the pale reflection of the conditions of this insurrection which a dramatist has prepared for the stage, to be publicly performed.⁵ This was the tragedy of famine, of misery, that had inspired Heinrich Heine to write what is perhaps the greatest revolutionary song of the German people—his Weavers' Song. And the heart-rending distress in this province, the frightful poverty existing by the side of the greatest wealth, also inspired Ferdinand Freiligrath to write his immortal poem, *Rübezahl*. *Rübezahl*—the spirit invoked by the poor proletarian child, was a spirit of the past; this genius could not save the child from death by hunger.

But a new spirit has come, a spirit which is

⁵ The drama *Die Weber* (1892), by Gerhart Hauptmann, deals with the conditions that gave rise to the weavers' insurrection in 1844.

capable of offering salvation and redemption: I mean socialism. It was in connection with this movement that socialism gained a foothold in Silesia, a country which attained the stage of capitalistic development and the consciousness of class oppositions even before the Rhine country. It was in Silesia that we have the first development of the communist idea, its first striking root, on German soil, without having to be imported from France or England, and by reason of the collision of social oppositions. As early as in the Forties of the Nineteenth Century, there were communist movements in Silesia, reminiscent of modern socialism. It was here that the notorious Stieber was practicing his nefarious work of unmasking communist conspiracies, in the disguise of painter Schmidt. It was here that the trials of Schlöffel, of the teacher Wander, and others, took place. And since then the source of socialist ideas has never run dry in Silesia. It was here in Breslau, on July 19, 1848, that a popular gathering passed a resolution to demand the establishment of a chair of socialism at the University of Breslau and the man who was most active in his work for socialism in this city, Nees von Esenbeck, a man of learning, was the chairman of the first German Social-Democratic Congress, which met in Breslau, in the autumn of 1848. The germ of socialism was never stifled in this city. And it is no accident that Ferdinand Lassalle, living in this historical city of socialism, became

the man he did become, a pathfinder of socialism. I need not point out what Lassalle means to us; we are not a party that worships persons. Lassalle made mistakes; he deceived himself in his political calculations; but he retains the merit of having set in motion the German organized workers' movement. He was a disciple of Marx and Engels, whose pictures I behold now by the side of his own. These three men, Marx, Engels, Lassalle, are the men who deserve the gratitude of the proletariat more than any of the others. When Lassalle, thinker and warrior, died, the German Social-Democratic movement was weak; it counted barely more thousands than it now has millions. If we look back on the history of the party, we shall rightly observe that the Social-Democratic Party is not based on individual persons of talent, of genius, but that its roots are in the conditions. None of our present-day agitators will dare compare his talent with that of Lassalle as a speaker and an orator, yet, we have gained millions of adherents, while Lassalle had but a handful. Why is this? Because the economic conditions had in his day not reached a sufficiently advanced stage and, as a consequence, it was possible for the masses still to believe in the gospel of a Schultze-Delitzsch, which declared: "Any diligent and economical person can attain economic independence." No one believes this stuff any more. It is not only the Social-Democratic agitation, but it is the *conditions*,

it is the logic of the facts of the law of evolution of society, which has forced capitalism to destroy private property in the work turned out, in the production of labor, to annihilate the middle classes and petty proprietors, and thus to proletarianize the masses of the population. The Social-Democratic Party has sown its seed in the furrows plowed in human society by capitalism. Those in power have made every effort to strike down the movement. In spite of all their persecutions, from the time of Lassalle to the present day, the Social-Democratic movement has grown. The party has taken even firmer root by reason of the storms it has faced. When we met at Frankfort a year ago, we were informed that a *coup d'état* threatened us. We then said: Let such a law be passed; no doubt it will subvert many things, but it will never kill the Social-Democracy. And what has come of this subversive movement? The man who gave his aid for the purpose of introducing the law into the Reichstag, Caprivi, has been overthrown, and his successor, Herr von Hohenlohe, who took up this task and attempted to put through the law, has since learned that in order to destroy the Social-Democracy, it will be necessary to overthrow science and art and with them the foundations of civilization. This is tantamount to recognition of the fact that the Social-Democracy, which is proud to stand on the basis of science, is the party which has the duty of defending and preserv-

ing the accomplishments of our civilization in these days of collapse of capitalist society, which, if its rule is not broken, would lead us back to barbarism. For capitalist society cannot endure together with civilization; it finds itself forced to outlaw the most powerful party in Germany, namely, the working class; it is obliged to apply its own laws by a double standard; in one way against the Social-Democrats, in another way against the capitalist parties; it must admit that the fundamental laws of the present state are not compatible with its interests, although it has made these laws itself. . . .

This subversive movement has suffered a lamentable shipwreck. A new movement is again being inaugurated against us. Under the protection of the highest power in the state, the Social-Democracy is being maligned, and under the protection of the highest power in the state and with the aid of the state power, the gauntlet has been thrown before socialism, challenging it to a life and death struggle. Very well then, as for any insult to our party, we are far above being insulted by . . . And if we are offered battle, well, we shall fight. We shall fight on the basis of our ancient tactics, which have always defeated our enemies, and we shall not permit ourselves to be enticed beyond the bounds of these tactics. As Friedrich Engels has shown, things have now reached a point where capitalism can no longer maintain its rule by its own laws, where these laws

must be defended by the Social-Democratic Party, at least in part, against their own originators.

I conclude with an expression of the wish that this Congress may strengthen our party within and without as all the preceding congresses have done, and aid it in facing the new struggles before us. The logic of events, which far surpass the power of any individual, though he be supported by millions of bayonets, is in our favor. The struggle does not frighten us. The wilder, the more violently the battle rages, the shorter it will be; the more quickly it will pass. We know we shall be victorious, victory is in our hands unless we shamefully relinquish it!

NOT A MAN AND NOT A PENNY FOR THIS SYSTEM!

WHAT is the internal situation of Germany? We are told many things about distress. No doubt there is distress; but there are two kinds of distress: there is a distress of the rich, of the sated; and there is a distress of the starving. The distress of the rich, of those who have eaten their fill, but who are "insatiable", and therefore "cry out"—"cry out"—"cry out"—because they always want more—we know all about that. We Socialists have no compassion with this distress. But there is another distress, a poverty that expresses itself in the statistics of unemployment—not gathered by the state, by the way—and in the reports of the trade union offices and chambers of commerce—a distress that must be evident to any man who looks at the newspapers, or ever sees the streets of the city—the distress of those with the "weak shoulders", on whom the new taxes are to be placed, the distress of those who are about to be sacrificed to militarism. I recall the Congress of Tobacco Workers to which you were all invited: there you might have seen poverty; there you might have heard the cry of distress of the despairing poor,—a distress gnashing its teeth when even the last vestiges of subsistence are taken from

under its feet and when unemployment is artificially brought about for thousands and thousands of persons. This was real distress; the cry of poverty was genuine; and furthermore, you had been invited; but the Imperial Chancellor and the gentlemen of the *Bundesrat* and the high imperial officials—not one of these men appeared at the congress, with the exception of the Social-Democratic deputies. And then you say we are the demagogues, who are inciting the people! Why did you not go to the Congress and prove by your presence that you have a heart for the people? There, you might have heard the voice of the people. What you read in the official reports, and what your dignitaries tell you, these things are not the truth. Between you and the people there is a magic wall, a wall through which you can hear nothing. At the congress, you might have heard the mutterings of anger at your attempt to depress a class of the poorest persons, the tobacco workers—already receiving starvation wages—to a zero point, a famine point, below which there is no possibility of living at all,—to destroy this class economically by means of the taxes in favor of militarism. There you could have heard the people protest against the taxes which it is now proposed to lay on weak shoulders! And the remarkable—though quite natural—thing is that everything that has been said thus far in favor of the government's policy has been a conscious effort to show that the

poor alone must bear these taxes, that the rich are too poor to bear them.

This is what we always hear when the imperial inheritance tax or an imperial income tax is to be combated as impractical or unjust, and when we are told: "This will not do; it will destroy property; it is of no use to the heirs, etc." But, why should you impose taxes on the shoulders of the poor? The proposed new taxes are as if calculated to lighten the burden of the rich. By the proposed tobacco tax you are not only placing a far greater percentage on the shoulders of the poor than on those of the rich, but you are incidentally destroying a great number of workers, at least fifty thousand, who are now engaged in the tobacco industry. No doubt, he who knows only the interests of the rich, and who believes that the poor exist not only to create wealth for the rich, but also to pay his debts and taxes for him, will consider it quite reasonable to have the taxes destined to cover the military budget imposed upon the mass of the poor. We protest with all our might against so outrageous an injustice and hope—although it is a hope against hope—that those who, with "reluctant heart", as they say, voted in favor of the military budget in the first short session of this Reichstag, with the reservation that the costs should be distributed upon shoulders that could bear them—will remain faithful

to their promise and vote against this "bouquet of taxes".

But we may be asked: "Where shall we get the money for the army?" Our answer is: "If you have made a law without providing means for defraying its expenses, if your militarism has jumped into the water together with its military budget, as it were, and if we are now expected to save it from the water—you are really expecting too much from us. Save your militarism yourself! Let it drown, for all we care!" If the military budget could be rendered nugatory by lack of taxes to cover it, I should use every effort to secure as unanimous a vote as possible in this session of the Reichstag against these taxes. But, of course we shall see. You will make effort to secure some other remedy; if this Reichstag is not tractable, you will probably dissolve it. The word has been spoken. Go on! You have twice appealed to the German people and twice it has declared itself against militarism, the third time you will not have only a majority of a million and one hundred thousand votes against militarism, but this majority will increase with the force of an avalanche, and the system will be swept away with the energy of the elements!

Similar conditions were witnessed somewhat more than a century ago in a neighboring country. The ancient system there had also come to the end of its rope, to the end of its money, of its credit; the

notables, *i.e.*, the rich, were convoked. At that time also, there were persons with broad shoulders and persons with weak shoulders. The broad-shouldered fellows were in the government—they still are—and they said: “We shall pay no taxes; let the *miseria contribuens plebs*, the poor tax-paying people with the weak shoulders pay all the taxes.” And they continued running the country for a while by this method; there arose a subterranean muttering and finally came the day of judgment. The men with the weak shoulders, upon whom the state burdens had been imposed, cast them off, took muskets in their hands, and conquered the state power. They overthrew the men with the broad shoulders. This was the French Revolution, and it was “made” by the misguided men with broad shoulders, who became its victims.

The representatives of our government themselves admit that the conditions are not promising; they admit that the people are heavily burdened; but they are all at sea when they face the true conditions of distress. They have no understanding for the situation and the movement among the people. We have a remarkable evidence of this in a document that came to our editorial desk only a few days ago, a decree by Eulenburg.

I have not now the time to discuss this document at length. But if I would write a commentary on the famous words of the great Imperial Chancellor

of Sweden, Oxenstjerna: "It is remarkable with how little wisdom the world is governed", and attempt to justify this saying, I think it would be sufficient merely to reprint this document. There could be no better or more striking justification for the epigram in question. The document admits that the Social-Democracy is continuing to make progress; it shows understanding for the fact that the advances of the Social-Democracy are due to the general discontent. It is admitted that the social and economic conditions are favorable to socialism; and yet, it is desired to obstruct and force back the Social-Democracy; the authorities are called upon to proceed energetically against it; the provincial officials, the police, the gendarmerie, all the forces of the present-day state are set in motion by a secret memorandum, destined if possible to destroy this redoubted and hated Social-Democracy. This shortsightedness, characteristic of the whole document, expressed in its every sentence, is almost incomprehensible in a period like ours. There is not the slightest indication of a higher point of view, not a suspicion of the laws operative in society, not a trace of the causes, the nature and the aims of so gigantic a movement as the Social-Democratic movement, a movement which is really an international cultural movement, a claim which it may genuinely put forth, while the anti-Semitic movement may only put it forth dishonestly, and not an

artificial product of demagogical agitation and propaganda. There is not a trace of understanding for the movement, for the currents of the time, for the conditions—and therefore no sign of an effort to deflect it into other channels. There is nothing but discomposure and blindness and a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of the present-day state, of which there has never been a clearer and crasser expression by any government. This document reminds me of an anecdote that is told in England: An old lady who had been told—she lived by the seaside—that the tide was rising and threatening to surround her house, ran quickly to the window with a bucket in order to bale out the inflowing waters. But you are trying to bale out the ocean of the Social-Democratic movement, not with buckets, but with spoons, a movement which constitutes the pinnacle, the consequence, of the entire modern economic and cultural tendency! One can only laugh at you or pity you. . . .

I have spoken concerning the socialist bacillus which you are unable to shut out of any of your barracks. You will not be able to keep this socialist bacillus out of any workshop, or office, or ministerial department; the bacillus is there; it is everywhere. . . .

We have incurred such a difficult and unwholesome situation in Germany, that things cannot continue in the present strain. Our persistence on the

path of militarism will necessarily lead us to bankruptcy. Our army system is already so top-heavy, that the resources at the disposal of the German people can no longer afford any increase or enhancement of it. Fortunately, militarism is slaughtering itself, like the machines which it has placed in its service, and which become useless by reason of their own exaggerated efficiency. The German people demands that we break with this system. There is another principle which is generally recognized in theory: "*Salus reipublicæ lex suprema*", the welfare of the commonwealth is the supreme law. The welfare of a specific class, of a specific group, is of no importance—although a righteous and humane state is obligated to consider the interest of all its members. And how shall the totality find expression in any modern state? Through the majority of the people! In cases in which minority and majority are opposed to each other, in which two different principles are defended, one by a minority, the other by a majority, it is proper not for the majority to yield to the minority, but for the minority to yield to the majority, and the German people has declared by a tremendous majority that it is opposed to militarism. If you have any doubts, dissolve the Reichstag, but our watchword is: "*Populi voluntas lex suprema*", the will of the people is the highest law. Any one opposing this law is a rebel, a traitor to the majesty of the people. This

will of the people must be put through, it will be done; if you (*the speaker addresses the Right*) will have it so, in a peaceful, legal way, the way of reform and gradual transition, opportunity for which must be afforded by the powers above. If you wish it otherwise, the thing will come in another way—as it came in France more than a century ago. Governments and parties that will not learn must suffer. I have finished my address (*shouts of: "Bravo!"*). You flatter me; I only hope you will learn something. I conclude with our old slogan: Not a man and not a penny for this system! And I add, no new taxes! Neither good ones nor bad ones!

WE ARE A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

(*From the debate on the "State of the Future", in 1893.*)

We have not abjured revolution; we shall never abjure revolution. Under the Socialist Law, when each of us had hanging over him the sword of Damocles, of banishment and of the worst form of expatriation, we always asserted, with our heads held high: "We are a revolutionary party." We repeat the same thing to-day and shall repeat it forever. We have not changed and shall not change.

THE END

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Allgemeiner deutscher Arbeiterverein ("General German Labor Union"): an organization founded by Ferdinand Lassalle in 1863.

Bebel, August (1840-1913): German Socialist leader, anti-militarist; his autobiography has been published in an English translation; a volume of this series is devoted to his speeches.

Bismarck, Prince Otto von (1815-1898): German statesman; founder of the German Empire; famous for his "Exception Laws" (the *coup d'état* referred to in the text is, however, Bismarck's action securing hegemony in Germany to Prussia instead of Austria) directed against the Socialist movement of Germany.

Blum, Robert (1807-1848): German writer and Socialist leader (born at Cologne); one of the principal leaders in the Vienna uprising of 1848; executed by a firing squad November 9, 1848.

Braun, Karl (1822-1893): member of the German Reichstag (1871-1887), leader of the National Liberal Party, a pronounced enemy of Socialism.

Caprivi, Count Leo von (1831-1899): Chancellor of the German Empire (1890-1894), succeeding Bismarck; secured a renewal of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy).

Communist Manifesto: The first popular declaration of the principles and program of Scientific Socialism, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and printed in 1847.

Congress of Vienna (1815): the Congress at which all the monarchs of Europe except Napoleon disposed of the enormous empire that had been torn from him.

Crimean War (1852-1854): A war, of which the Crimea was the principal theater, between Turkey, England, France and Sardinia, on the one hand, and Russia on the other; terminated by the Treaty of Paris.

Devil's Island: French penal colony off the coast of South America, to which criminals and political prisoners are still sent for life banishment.

Engels, Friedrich (1820-1895): Co-founder with Karl Marx of Scientific Socialism. *See* Marx, Karl.

Eulenburg, Count Botho (1831-1912): Prussian reactionary; advocated the exception laws against Socialists.

Fortschrittspartei: *See Progressive Party.*

Freiligrath, Ferdinand (1810-1876): German poet and radical publicist, in many ways resembling the French Victor Hugo. *See* Franz Mehring: *Social Forces in German History*, 1928.

Gendarmenmarkt: a public square in Berlin, named after the *gensdarmes*, the most distinguished regiment of cuirassiers in the

old Prussian kingdom, whose guardhouse stood on this site up to 1782.

George V (1819-1878), King of Hanover (1851-1866): indolent and dissolute monarch dethroned by Prussia (1866).

Gewerbeordnung (adopted June 21, 1869; last revised, under the new name *Gewerberecht*, on June 28, 1924): legal provisions controlling the exercise of trades and the organization of trade unions.

Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume (1787-1874): French statesman, historian, and eclectic philosopher; author of *History of France*, etc.

Heine, Heinrich (1797-1856): German lyricist, also the most fluent prose writer of Germany. While not a member of any revolutionary movement, Heine was impelled by his ardent hatred of tyranny to favor many manifestations of discontent.

Hasenclever, Wilhelm (1837-1889): German Socialist leader; editor of the Leipzig daily *Vorwärts*, conjointly with Wilhelm Liebknecht (1876-1878).

Hic Rhodus, hic salta! (Latin): Æsop's Fables 203 and 203b tell of a boaster who declared he had once made a great jump at Rhodes, calling upon eye-witnesses to bear him out, whereupon he was told: "If the tale is true, you will need no witnesses; *here is Rhodes, here jump!*"

Jacobi, Johann (1805-1877): German democratic leader, participated in the Revolution of 1848 in Germany; imprisoned many times; he joined the Socialist movement a few years before his death.

Hubertusburg: royal hunting-lodge and prison in Saxony, where political prisoners were frequently placed in fortress detention (*Festungshaft*).

Hohenlohe, Prince Chlodwig (1819-1901): Succeeded Caprivi as Chancellor of the German Empire (1894-1900).

Lassalle, Ferdinand (1825-1864): One of the founders and leaders of the organized German labor movement; a volume of this series is devoted to selections from his speeches and writings.

July Revolution: The revolution of 1830, which deposed Charles X and raised Louis Philippe, the "Citizen King," to the throne.

Louis Napoleon (1808-1873): Nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte; President of the Second French Republic, later Emperor of France (until 1871). See Karl Marx: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1926.

Louis Philippe (1773-1850): The "Citizen King" of France; abdicated 1848; died in England.

Marx, Karl (1818-1883): For a study of his life and work, see D. Riazanov: *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, 1927.

Most, Johann: German socialist who later developed anarchist tendencies, left Germany for Buffalo, later living in New York

where he was active in the anarchist movement; died in Cincinnati, March 17, 1906.

Nees von Esenbeck (1776-1858): German botanist, entomologist, and liberal leader.

Oxenstjerna, Count Axel (1583-1654): Chancellor of Sweden under and after Gustavus Adolphus.

Paris is well worth a mass (in the original French: *Paris vaut bien une messe*): famous saying attributed to Henry IV of France.

Progressive Party (also called *Fortschrittmänner*, "Men of Progress"): A liberal party founded in Prussia in 1861 and predominant in the Prussian Diet until 1866, when the National Liberal Party was formed from it.

Rübezahl: A giant in the legends of the Erzgebirge somewhat resembling Santa Claus.

Schultze-Delitzsch, Hermann (1808-1883): Reactionary German statesman and economist; see Franz Mehring: *Social Forces in German History*, 1928.

Schweitzer, J. B. von (1833-1875): German Socialist, publicist, editor of the periodical *Der Sozialdemokrat*, beginning January 1, 1865; see Franz Mehring: *Social Forces in German History*, 1928.

Socialist Law: A series of measures adopted by the German Government in 1878 to put down the Socialists, and continued in force until 1890. Sponsored by Bismarck, these measures resulted in much hardship to the workers, but strengthened the movement in general. See Franz Mehring: *Social Forces in German History*, 1928.

Three-Class Election System (*Dreiklassensystem*): An election system in which the suffrage right was divided into three classes, in accordance with the amount of taxes paid by the voter; this system was introduced in Prussia in 1849 and remained in force (with extensive alterations dating from 1893) until the Revolution of November 9, 1918.

Versailles: The center of counter-revolution in France; in 1871, the Commune at Paris was put down by troops recruited at Versailles.

Weidig, Friedrich Ludwig (1791-1837): One of the associates of Georg Büchner (1813-1837), in the organization of a revolutionary movement in Hessa in 1835. After his imprisonment, it was announced that he had committed suicide by cutting open his veins with pieces of glass, but a later investigation made it seem probable that he had died of physical maltreatment at the hands of persons in the jail.

Wrangel, Friedrich Heinrich Ernst (1784-1877): Prussian counter-revolutionary general; entered Berlin, November 9, 1848, to put down the popular "excesses" and restore the authority of the monarchy.

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