

Of all this the virtuous Democrats in the Frankfort Assembly did just the contrary. Not content with letting things take the course they liked, these worthies went so far as to suppress by their opposition all insurrectionary movements which were preparing. Thus, for instance, did Herr Karl Vogt at Nuremberg. They allowed the insurrections of Saxony, of Rhenish Prussia, of Westphalia to be suppressed without any other help than a posthumous, sentimental protest against the unfeeling violence of the Prussian Government. They kept up an underhand diplomatic intercourse with the South German insurrections but never gave them the support of their open acknowledgment. They knew that the Lieutenant of the Empire sided with the Governments, and yet they called upon *him*, who never stirred, to oppose the intrigues of these Governments. The ministers of the Empire, old Conservatives, ridiculed this impotent Assembly in every sitting, and they suffered it. And when William Wolff,[9] a Silesian deputy, and one of the editors of the *New Rhenish Gazette*, called upon them to outlaw the Lieutenant of the Empire--who was, he justly said, nothing but the first and greatest traitor to the Empire, he was hooted down by the unanimous and virtuous indignation of those Democratic Revolutionists! In short, they went on talking, protesting, proclaiming, pronouncing, but never had the courage or the sense to act; while the hostile troops of the Governments drew nearer and nearer, and their own Executive, the Lieutenant of the Empire, was busily plotting with the German princes their speedy destruction. Thus even the last vestige of consideration was lost to this contemptible Assembly; the insurgents who had risen to defend it ceased to care any more for it, and when at last it came to a shameful end, as we shall see, it died without anybody taking any notice of its unhonored exit.

LONDON, August, 1852.

FOOTNOTES:

[9] The "Wolff" here alluded to is Wilhelm Wolff, the beloved friend of Marx and Engels, who--to distinguish him from the many other "Wolffs" in the movement at this period--was known to his intimates as "Lupus." It is to this Silesian peasant that Marx dedicated the first volume of "Capital."

"Dedicated To My Never-To-Be-Forgotten Friend The Brave, True, Noble Fighter In The Van-Guard Of The Proletariat, WILHELM WOLFF.

Born at Tornau, June 21st, 1809. Died in exile at Manchester, 9th May, 1864."

XVIII.

PETTY TRADERS.

OCTOBER 2, 1852.

In our last we showed that the struggle between the German Governments on the one side, and the Frankfort Parliament on the other, had ultimately acquired such a degree of violence that in the first days of May, a great portion of Germany broke out in open insurrection; first Dresden, then the Bavarian Palatinate, parts of Rhenish Prussia, and at last Baden.

In all cases, the *real fighting* body of the insurgents, that body which first took up arms and gave battle to the troops consisted of the *working classes of the towns*. A portion of the poorer country population, laborers and petty farmers, generally joined them after the outbreak of the conflict. The greater number of the young men of all classes, below the capitalist class, were to be found, for a time at least, in the ranks of the insurgent armies, but this rather indiscriminate aggregate of young men very soon thinned as the aspect of affairs took a somewhat serious turn. The students particularly, those "representatives of intellect," as they liked to call themselves, were the first to quit their standards, unless they were retained by the bestowal of officer's rank, for which they, of course, had very seldom any qualifications.

The working class entered upon this insurrection as they would have done upon any other which promised either to remove some obstacles in their progress towards political dominion and social revolution, or, at least, to tie the more influential but less courageous classes of society to a more decided and revolutionary course than they had followed hitherto. The working class took up arms with a full knowledge that this was, in the direct bearings of the case, no quarrel of its own; but it followed up its only true policy, to allow no class that has risen on its shoulders (as the bourgeoisie had done in 1848) to fortify its class-government, without opening, at least, a fair field to the working classes for the struggle for its own interests, and, in any case, to bring matters to a crisis, by which either the nation was fairly and irresistibly launched in the revolutionary career, or else the *status quo* before the Revolution restored as nearly as possible, and, thereby, a new revolution rendered unavoidable. In both cases the working classes represented the real and well-understood interest of the nation at large, in hastening as much as possible that revolutionary course which for the old societies of civilized Europe has now become a historical necessity, before any of them can again aspire to a more quiet and regular development of their resources.

As to country people that joined the insurrection, they were principally thrown into the arms of the Revolutionary party, partly by the relatively enormous load of taxation, and partly of feudal burdens pressing upon them.

Without any initiative of their own, they formed the tail of the other classes engaged in the insurrection, wavering between the working men on the one side, and the petty trading class on the other. Their own private social position, in almost every case, decided which way they turned; the agricultural laborer generally supported the city artisan; the small farmer was apt to go hand in hand with the small shopkeeper.

This class of petty tradesmen, the great importance and influence of which we have already several times adverted to, may be considered as the leading class of the insurrection of May, 1849. There being, this time, none of the large towns of Germany among the center of the movement, the petty trading class, which in middling and lesser towns always predominates, found the means of getting the direction of the movement into its hands. We have, moreover, seen that, in this struggle for the Imperial Constitution, and for the rights of the German Parliament, there were the interests of this peculiar class at stake. The Provisional Governments formed in all the insurgent districts represented in the majority of each of them this section of the people, and the length they went to may therefore be fairly taken as the measure of what the German petty bourgeoisie is capable of--capable, as we shall see, of nothing but ruining any movement that entrusts itself to its hands.

The petty bourgeoisie, great in boasting, is very impotent for action, and very shy in risking anything. The *mesquin* character of its commercial transactions and its credit operations is eminently apt to stamp its character with a want of energy and enterprise; it is, then, to be expected that similar qualities will mark its political career. Accordingly the petty bourgeoisie encouraged insurrection by big words, and great boasting as to what it was going to do; it was eager to seize upon power as soon as the insurrection, much against its will, had broken out; it used this power to no other purpose but to destroy the effects of the insurrection. Wherever an armed conflict had brought matters to a serious crisis, there the shopkeepers stood aghast at the dangerous situation created for them; aghast at the people who had taken their boasting appeals to arms in earnest; aghast at the power thus thrust into their own hands; aghast, above all, at the consequences for themselves, for their social positions, for their fortunes, of the policy in which they were forced to engage themselves. Were they not expected to risk "life and property," as they used to say, for the cause of the insurrection? Were they not forced to take official positions in the insurrection, whereby, in the case of defeat, they risked the loss of their capital? And in case of victory, were they not sure to be immediately turned out of office, and to see their entire policy subverted by the victorious proletarians who formed the main body of their fighting army? Thus placed between opposing dangers which surrounded them on every side, the petty bourgeoisie knew not to turn its power to any other account than to let everything take its chance, whereby, of course, there was lost what little chance of success there might have been, and thus to ruin the insurrection altogether. Its policy, or rather want of policy, everywhere was the same, and, therefore, the insurrections of

May, 1849, in all parts of Germany, are all cut out to the same pattern.

In Dresden, the struggle was kept on for four days in the streets of the town. The shopkeepers of Dresden, the "communal guard," not only did not fight, but in many instances favored the proceedings of the troops against the insurgents. These again consisted almost exclusively of working men from the surrounding manufacturing districts. They found an able and cool-headed commander in the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin, who afterwards was taken prisoner, and now is confined in the dungeons of Munkacs, Hungary. The intervention of numerous Prussian troops crushed this insurrection.

In Rhenish Prussia the actual fighting was of little importance. All the large towns being fortresses commanded by citadels, there could be only skirmishing on the part of the insurgents. As soon as a sufficient number of troops had been drawn together, there was an end to armed opposition.

In the Palatinate and Baden, on the contrary, a rich, fruitful province and an entire state fell into the hands of the insurrection. Money, arms, soldiers, warlike stores, everything was ready for use. The soldiers of the regular army themselves joined the insurgents; nay, in Baden, they were amongst the foremost of them. The insurrections in Saxony and Rhenish Prussia sacrificed themselves in order to gain time for the organization of the South German movement. Never was there such a favorable position for a provincial and partial insurrection as this. A revolution was expected in Paris; the Hungarians were at the gates of Vienna; in all the central States of Germany, not only the people, but even the troops, were strongly in favor of the insurrection, and only wanted an opportunity to join it openly. And yet the movement, having once got into the hands of the petty bourgeoisie, was ruined from its very beginning. The petty bourgeois rulers, particularly of Baden--Herr Brentano at the head of them--never forgot that by usurping the place and prerogatives of the "lawful" sovereign, the Grand Duke, they were committing high treason. They sat down in their ministerial armchairs with the consciousness of criminality in their hearts. What can you expect of such cowards? They not only abandoned the insurrection to its own uncentralized, and therefore ineffective, spontaneity, they actually did everything in their power to take the sting out of the movement, to unman, to destroy it. And they succeeded, thanks to the zealous support of that deep class of politicians, the "Democratic" heroes of the petty bourgeoisie, who actually thought they were "saving the country," while they allowed themselves to be led by their noses by a few men of a sharper cast, such as Brentano.

As to the fighting part of the business, never were military operations carried on in a more slovenly, more stolid way than under the Baden General-in-Chief Sigel, an ex-lieutenant of the regular army. Everything was got into confusion, every good opportunity was lost, every precious moment was loitered away with planning colossal, but impracticable projects, until, when at last the talented Pole Mieroslawski, took up the command, the army was disorganized, beaten, dispirited, badly provided for, opposed to an enemy four times more numerous, and withal, he could do nothing more than fight, at Waghäusel, a glorious though unsuccessful battle, carry out a clever retreat, offer a last hopeless fight under the walls of Rastatt, and resign. As in every insurrectionary war where armies are mixed of well-drilled soldiers and raw levies, there was plenty of heroism, and plenty of unsoldierlike, often unconceivable panic, in the revolutionary army; but, imperfect as it could not but be, it had at least the satisfaction that four times its number were not considered sufficient to put it to the rout, and that a hundred thousand regular troops, in a campaign against twenty thousand insurgents, treated them, militarily, with as much respect as if they had to fight the Old Guard of Napoleon.

In May the insurrection had broken out; by the middle of July, 1849, it was entirely subdued and the first German Revolution was closed.

LONDON. (Undated.)

XIX.

THE CLOSE OF THE INSURRECTION.