

In the latter period of its existence, the German Parliament served to disgrace forever that section which had ever since March, 1848, headed the official opposition, the Democrats representing the interests of the small trading, and partially of the farming class. That class was, in May and June, 1849, given a chance to show its means of forming a stable Government in Germany. We have seen how it failed; not so much by adverse circumstances as by the actual and continued cowardice in all trying movements that had occurred since the outbreak of the revolution; by showing in politics the same shortsighted, pusillanimous, wavering spirit, which is characteristic of its commercial operations. In May, 1849, it had, by this course, lost the confidence of the real fighting mass of all European insurrections, the working class. But yet, it had a fair chance. The German Parliament belonged to it, exclusively, after the Reactionists and Liberals had withdrawn. The rural population was in its favor. Two-thirds of the armies of the smaller States, one-third of the Prussian army, the majority of the Prussian Landwehr (reserve or militia), were ready to join it, if it only acted resolutely, and with that courage which is the result of a clear insight into the state of things. But the politicians who led on this class were not more clear-sighted than the host of petty tradesmen which followed them. They proved even to be more infatuated, more ardently attached to delusions voluntarily kept up, more credulous, more incapable of resolutely dealing with facts than the Liberals. Their political importance, too, is reduced below the freezing-point. But not having actually carried their commonplace principles into execution, they were, under *very* favorable circumstances, capable of a momentary resurrection, when this last hope was taken from them, just as it was taken from their colleagues of the "pure Democracy" in France by the *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte.

The defeat of the south-west German insurrection, and the dispersion of the German Parliament, bring the history of the first German insurrection to a close. We have now to cast a parting glance upon the victorious members of the counter-revolutionary alliance; we shall do this in our next letter.[10]

LONDON, September 24, 1852.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[10] After repeated search I have been unable to find the "next letter" referred to in the above paragraph; and, if it was ever written, there seems no doubt it was never published.--E. M. A.

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XX.

#### THE LATE TRIAL AT COLOGNE.

DECEMBER 22, 1852.

You will have ere this received by the European papers numerous reports of the Communist Monster Trial at Cologne, Prussia, and of its result. But as none of the reports is anything like a faithful statement of the facts, and as these facts throw a glaring light upon the political means by which the continent of Europe is kept in bondage, I consider it necessary to revert to this trial.

The Communist or Proletarian party, as well as other parties, had lost, by suppression of the rights of association and meeting, the means of giving to itself a legal organization on the Continent. Its leaders, besides, had been exiled from their countries. But no political party can exist without an organization; and that organization which both the Liberal bourgeois and the Democratic shopkeeping class were enabled more or less to supply by the social station, advantages, and long-established, every-day intercourse of their members, the proletarian class, without such social station and pecuniary means, was necessarily compelled to seek in secret association. Hence, both in France and Germany, sprung up those numerous secret Societies which have, ever since 1849, one after another, been discovered by the police, and prosecuted as conspiracies; but if many of them were really conspiracies, formed with the actual intention of upsetting the Government for the time being,--and he is a coward that under certain circumstances would not conspire, just as he is a fool who,

under other circumstances, would do so;--there were some other Societies which were formed with a wider and more elevated purpose, which knew that the upsetting of an existing Government was but a passing stage in the great impending struggle, and which intended to keep together and to prepare the party, whose nucleus they formed, for the last decisive combat which must, one day or another, crush forever in Europe the domination, not of mere "tyrants," "despots" and "usurpers," but of a power far superior, and far more formidable than theirs; that of capital over labor.

The organization of the advanced Communist party in Germany was of this kind. In accordance with the principles of the "Manifesto"[11] (published in 1848), and with those explained in the series of articles on "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany," published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, this party never imagined itself capable of producing, at any time and at its pleasure, that revolution which was to carry its ideas into practice. It studied the causes that had produced the revolutionary movement in 1848, and the causes that made them fail. Recognizing the social antagonism of classes at the bottom of all political struggles, it applied itself to the study of the conditions under which one class of society can and must be called on to represent the whole of the interests of a nation, and thus politically to rule over it. History showed to the Communist party how, after the landed aristocracy of the Middle Ages, the monied power of the first capitalists arose and seized the reins of Government; how the social influence and political rule of this financial section of capitalists was superseded by the rising strength since the introduction of steam, of the manufacturing capitalists, and how at the present moment two more classes claim their turn of domination, the petty trading class and the industrial working class. The practical revolutionary experience of 1848-1849 confirmed the reasonings of theory, which led to the conclusion that the Democracy of the petty traders must first have its turn, before the Communist working class could hope to permanently establish itself in power and destroy that system of wage-slavery which keeps it under the yoke of the bourgeoisie. Thus the secret organization of the Communists could not have the direct purpose of upsetting the present Governments of Germany. Being formed to upset not these, but the insurrectionary Government, which is sooner or later to follow them, its members might, and certainly would, individually, lend an active hand to a revolutionary movement against the present *status quo* in its turn; but the preparation of such a movement, otherwise than by spreading of Communist opinions by the masses, could not be an object of the Association. So well was this foundation of the Society understood by the majority of its members, that when the place-hunting ambition of some tried to turn it into a conspiracy for making an extempore revolution they were speedily turned out.

Now, according to no law upon the face of the earth, could such an Association be called a plot, a conspiracy for purposes of high treason. If it was a conspiracy, it was one against, not the existing Government, but its probable successor. And the Prussian Government was aware of it. That was the cause why the eleven defendants were kept in solitary confinement during eighteen months, spent, on the part of the authorities, in the strangest judicial feats. Imagine, that after eight months' detention, the prisoners were remanded for some months more, "there being no evidence of any crime against them!" And when at last they were brought before a jury, there was not a single overt act of a treasonable nature proved against them. And yet they were convicted, and you will speedily see how.

One of the emissaries of the society was arrested in May, 1851, and from documents found upon him, other arrests followed. A Prussian police officer, a certain Stieber, was immediately ordered to trace the ramifications, in London, of the pretended plot. He succeeded in obtaining some papers connected with the above-mentioned seceders from the society, who had, after being turned out, formed an actual conspiracy in Paris and London. These papers were obtained by a double crime. A man named Reuter was bribed to break open the writing-desk of the secretary of the Society, and steal the papers therefrom. But that was nothing yet. This theft led to the discovery and conviction of the so-called Franco-German plot, in Paris, but it gave no clue as to the great Communist Association. The Paris plot, we may as well here observe, was under the direction of a few ambitious imbeciles and political *chevaliers d'industrie* in London, and of a formerly convicted forger, then acting as a police spy in Paris; their dupes made up, by rabid declamations and blood-thirsty rantings, for the utter insignificance of their political existence.

The Prussian police, then, had to look out for fresh discoveries. They established a regular office of secret police at the Prussian Embassy in London. A police agent, Greif by name, held his odious vocation under the title of an attaché to the Embassy--a step which should suffice to put all Prussian embassies out of the pale of international law, and which even the Austrians have not yet dared to take. Under him worked a certain Fleury, a merchant in the city of London, a man of some fortune and rather respectably connected, one of those low creatures who do the basest actions from an innate inclination to infamy. Another agent was a commercial clerk named Hirsch, who, however, had already been denounced as a spy on his arrival. He introduced himself into the society of some German Communist refugees in London, and they, in order to obtain proofs of his real character, admitted him for a short time. The proofs of his connection with the police were very soon obtained, and Herr Hirsch, from that time, absented himself. Although, however, he thus resigned all opportunities of gaining the information he was paid to procure, he was not inactive. From his retreat in Kensington, where he never met one of the Communists in question, he manufactured every week pretended reports of pretended sittings of a pretended Central Committee of that very conspiracy which the Prussian police could not get hold of. The contents of these reports were of the most absurd nature; not a Christian name was correct, not a name correctly spelt, not a single individual made to speak as he would be likely to speak. His master, Fleury, assisted him in this forgery, and it is not yet proved that "Attaché" Greif can wash his hands of these infamous proceedings. The Prussian Government, incredible to say, took these silly fabrications for gospel truth, and you may imagine what a confusion such depositions created in the evidence brought before the jury. When the trial came on, Herr Stieber, the already mentioned police officer, got into the witness-box, swore to all these absurdities, and, with no little self-complacency, maintained that he had a secret agent in the very closest intimacy with those parties in London who were considered the prime movers in this awful conspiracy. This secret agent was very secret indeed, for he had hid his face for eight months in Kensington, for fear he might actually see one of the parties whose most secret thoughts, words and doings, he pretended to report week after week.

Messrs. Hirsch and Fleury, however, had another invention in store. They worked up the whole of the reports they had made into an "original minute book" of the sittings of the Secret Supreme Committee, whose existence was maintained by the Prussian police; and Herr Stieber, finding that this book wondrously agreed with the reports already received from the same parties, at once laid it before the jury, declaring upon his oath that after serious examination, and according to his fullest conviction, that book was genuine. It was then that most of the absurdities reported by Hirsch were made public. You may imagine the surprise of the pretended members of that Secret Committee when they found things stated of them which they never knew before. Some who were baptized William were here christened Louis or Charles; others, at the time they were at the other end of England, were made to have pronounced speeches in London; others were reported to have read letters they never had received; they were made to have met regularly on a Thursday, when they used to have a convivial reunion, once a week, on Wednesdays; a working man, who could hardly write, figured as one of the takers of minutes, and signed as such; and they all of them were made to speak in a language which, if it may be that of Prussian police stations, was certainly not that of a reunion in which literary men, favorably known in their country, formed the majority. And, to crown the whole, a receipt was forged for a sum of money, pretended to have been paid by the fabricators to the pretended secretary of the fictitious Central Committee for this book; but the existence of this pretended secretary rested merely upon a hoax that some malicious Communist had played upon the unfortunate Hirsch.

This clumsy fabrication was too scandalous an affair not to produce the contrary of its intended effect. Although the London friends of the defendants were deprived of all means to bring the facts of the case before the jury--although the letters they sent to the counsel for the defence were suppressed by the post--although the documents and affidavits they succeeded in getting into the hands of these legal gentlemen were not admitted in evidence, yet the general indignation was such that even the public accusers, nay, even Herr Stieber--whose oath had been given as a guarantee for the authenticity of that book--were compelled to recognize it as a forgery.

This forgery, however, was not the only thing of the kind of which the police was guilty. Two or three more

cases of the sort came out during the trial. The documents stolen by Reuter were interpolated by the police so as to disfigure their meaning. A paper, containing some rabid nonsense, was written in a handwriting imitating that of Dr. Marx, and for a time it was pretended that it had been written by him, until at last the prosecution was obliged to acknowledge the forgery. But for every police infamy that was proved as such, there were five or six fresh ones brought forward, which could not, at the moment, be unveiled, the defence being taken by surprise, the proofs having to be got from London, and every correspondence of the counsel for the defence with the London Communist refugees being in open court treated as complicity in the alleged plot!

That Greif and Fleury are what they are here represented to be has been stated by Herr Stieber himself, in his evidence; as to Hirsch, he has before a London magistrate confessed that he forged the "minute book," by order and with the assistance of Fleury, and then made his escape from this country in order to evade a criminal prosecution.

The Government could stand few such branding disclosures as came to light during the trial. It had a jury--six nobles, two Government officials. These were not the men to look closely into the confused mass of evidence heaped before them during six weeks, when they heard it continually dinned into their ears that the defendants were the chiefs of a dreadful Communist conspiracy, got up in order to subvert everything sacred--property, family, religion, order, government and law! And yet, had not the Government, at the same time, brought it to the knowledge of the privileged classes, that an acquittal in this trial would be the signal for the suppression of the jury; and that it would be taken as a direct political demonstration--as a proof of the middle-class Liberal Opposition being ready to unite even with the most extreme revolutionists--the verdict would have been an acquittal. As it was, the retroactive application of the new Prussian code enabled the Government to have seven prisoners convicted, while four merely were acquitted, and those convicted were sentenced to imprisonment varying from three to six years, as you have, doubtless, already stated at the time the news reached you.

LONDON, December 1, 1852.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[11] "The Manifesto." This is the celebrated "Communist Manifesto," which the Communist Congress, held in London, November, 1847, delegated Marx and Engels to draw up. It was published in 1848 (in London). The fundamental proposition of the Manifesto, Engels writes in his introduction to the "Communist Manifesto," translated by S. Moore, and published by W. Reeves, "is that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that nowadays a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class--the proletariat--cannot attain its emancipation ... without at the same time, and once and for all emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions, and class struggles." As to this fundamental proposition of the Manifesto, it "belongs," says Engels, "wholly and solely to Marx." The "Communist Manifesto" has been translated into well-nigh every language, and is, again to quote Engels, "the most international production of all Socialist literature."

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