

# MARX CRITICISM

## Of the Proposed Gotha Platform of 1875

[The article published below was translated for the People by Herman Simpson and appeared in its columns in the issue of January 7, 1900, under the title of "Karl Marx' Commentaries on the German Socialist Fusion Platform of 1875." The article was originally published in "Die Neue Zeit" (Stuttgart, Germany), Vol. IX, Part I, No. 18, 1890-91.

A the article is invaluable to the student of Marx, it is herewith republished. The original translation has been revised in a few places, and several sections have been added which were missing in the translation.

It needs but to be stated that the German Socialists at their fusion Congress changed the wording of some of the passages criticized by Marx. These changes are noted in footnotes which appear in that article as published in "Die Neue Zeit."—Editor, Weekly People.]

### ENGEL'S PREFACE.

The manuscript published herewith—the accompanying letter to Bracke as well as the criticism of the proposed platform—was sent in 1875, shortly before the Gotha fusion congress, to Bracke, to be further communicated to Geib, Auer, Bebel, and Liebknecht, and later on to be returned to Marx. Since the Halle convention put the discussion of the Gotha programme on the party's order of business, I would consider myself self guilty of wrongful suppression were I still longer to withhold from the public this important document—perhaps the most important document bearing on this discussion.

But the manuscript has also another and still more far-reaching significance. Here, for the first time is clearly and definitely set forth the attitude of Marx on the course followed by Lassalle since his entrance upon the agitation, both in relation to Lassalle's economic principles and to his tactics.

The relentless rigor with which the proposed platform is analyzed, the inexorableness with which the results arrived at are pronounced, and the weak points of the platform exposed—all this can no longer offend now, after fifteen years. Specific Lassalleans exist nowadays only in foreign parts, like isolated runs, and the Gotha platform was given up in Halle by its own makers as altogether inadequate.

Nevertheless, wherever it was not essential to the subject I have omitted some severe expressions and opinions concerning individuals, and indicated the omissions by asterisks. Marx himself would have done so had he published the manuscript now. The occasional vehemence of his language was provoked by two circumstances. In the first place, Marx and I were more intimately connected with the German movement than with any other; hence the decidedly backward step evidenced in this platform was particularly calculated to excite us. But in the second place, we were then, hardly two years after the Congress of the International at the Hague, involved in a most severe conflict with Bakunin and his Anarchists, who held us responsible for everything that transpired in the Labor movement of Germany; we, therefore, had to expect that the secret fatherhood of this platform would also be ascribed to us. These considerations have passed away, and with them has passed the necessity for the passages in question.

Likewise, some passages are merely indicated by asterisks, owing to considerations having to do with the press laws. Where a milder expression had to be chosen it is enclosed in brackets.

Otherwise, the publication is faithful to the letter.

FREDERICK ENGELS.

London, January 6, 1891.

### MARX' LETTER TO BRACKE.

London, May 5, 1875.

Dear Bracke:

After reading them you will be so kind as to communicate to Geib, Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht, the subjoined critical comments on the fusion platform. I am overworked and compelled to work beyond the limits prescribed by my physician. It was therefore by no means a "pleasure" for me to write such a tape-worm. But it was necessary, so that the party friends, for whom this communication is intended, may not misinterpret the steps to be taken by me later on \* \* \*

\* \* \* It is indispensable, since outside of Germany the notion—altogether erroneous, but fostered by the enemies of our party—is entertained that we secretly from here direct the movement of the so-called Eisenach party. For instance, in a recent Russian publication, Bakunin makes me \* \* \* responsible for all the platform declarations, etc., of that party. \* \* \*

Aside from this, it is my duty not to recognize, even by a diplomatic silence, a platform that is in my opinion altogether objectionable and demoralizing to the party.

Every real advance step of the movement is more important than a dozen platforms. If, therefore, it was impossible—and the circumstances of the time did not permit it—to advance beyond the Eisenach platform, then you should have simply concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy. But when you formulate platforms of principles (instead of postponing this work until such time as you have become prepared for it through continued common action), then you establish landmarks by which all the world will gauge the height of the party movement. The chiefs of the Lassalleans came to you because the conditions forced them. Had you declared to them from the outset that you would not enter on any dickering in principles, then they would have been obliged to content themselves with a program for action, or a plan of organization for common action. Instead of this you allow them to come armed with credentials; you recognize, these credentials as binding; and thus surrender at discretion to those in need of your help. To cap the climax they meet in a convention before the compromise congress, while our own party holds its convention post festum. \* \* \* Everybody knows how pleased the workingmen are with the bare fact of a union, but you are mistaken if you believe that this momentary success is not bought too dearly.

Besides, the platform is good for nothing, even irrespective of the canonization of the Lassallean articles of faith. \* \* \*

With best greetings.

Yours,

KARL MARX.

### COMMENTS ON THE PLATFORM OF THE GERMAN LABOR PARTY.

#### I.

1. Labor is the source of all wealth and of all civilization, and since useful labor is possible only in and through society, the proceeds (Ertag) of labor belong unabridged and in equal right, to all the members of society.

Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use-values (and these

certainly form the material elements of wealth) as labor, which is itself the only expression of a natural force, human labor-power. The above phrase is to be found in every child's primer and is correct in so far as it is assumed that labor starts out equipped with the requisite materials and means.

But a Socialist platform should not let such middle-class phrases pass, and permit, by silence, the conditions that alone give sense thereto to be suppressed. And in so far as man stands towards Nature, the first source of all the means and objects of labor—in the relation of proprietor, in so far as he treats nature as belonging to him, his labor becomes the source of use-values, hence also of wealth. The capitalists have very good reasons for imputing to labor supernatural creative powers, because from the nature-imposed necessity of labor it follows that the man who possesses no property but his labor-power must, under all conditions of society and civilization, be the slave of those other men who have made themselves the possessors of the material conditions for labor. He can work only with their permission, hence live only with their permission.

But let us take the sentence as it runs, or rather limps. What should we have expected as the conclusion? Plainly this:

"Since labor is the source of all wealth, no one in society can acquire wealth except as the product of labor. Therefore, if he does not work himself, he lives upon the labor of others, and also acquires his share of civilization at the expense of others' labor."

Instead of this, another sentence is attached by means of the phrase "and since" in order to draw a conclusion from this latter sentence, and not from the former.

Second part of the paragraph: "Useful labor is possible only in and through society."

According to the first proposition labor was the source of all wealth and civilization; hence no society was possible without labor. Now we learn, on the contrary, that no "useful" labor is possible without society.

It would have been as sensible to say that only in society can useless and even publicly injurious labor become a branch of industry, that only in society can men live in idleness, etc., etc.—in short, to copy the whole of Rousseau.

And what is "useful" labor? Plainly only the labor that produces the desired serviceable effect. A savage—and man is a savage after he has ceased to be an ape—a savage who kills an animal with a stone, who gathers fruits, etc., does "useful" labor.

Thirdly, the conclusion: "And since useful labor is possible only in and through society,—the proceeds of labor belong unabridged, in equal right, to all the members of society."

A beautiful conclusion! If useful labor is possible only in and through society, then the proceeds of labor belong to society—and the individual laborer receives only so much as is not necessary for the maintenance of the "pre-requisite" of labor,—society.

Indeed, this has been the regular claim made by the champions of each succeeding social system. First come the claims of the government and all that hangs thereby, since it is the social organ for the maintenance of the social order; next come the claims of the various sorts of private property, for the various sorts of private property are the foundations of society, etc. It is plain, such hollow phrases can be turned and twisted at will.

The first and the second parts of the paragraph can have any sensible connection only in the following form:

"Labor can become the source of wealth and civilization only as social labor," or, what amounts to the same thing, "only in and through society."

This proposition is indisputably correct, for, even if isolated labor (its material pre-requisites presupposed)

can create use-values, yet it can produce neither wealth nor civilization.

And just as indisputable is this other statement:

"In measure that labor is developed socially, and thereby becomes the source of wealth and civilization, are developed also poverty and degradation on the side of the laborer, wealth and civilization on the side of the non-laborer."

This is the law of all history up till now. Therefore, instead of talking in general terms about "labor" and "society," it should have been clearly pointed out how, under present capitalist society, the conditions, material and otherwise, are at last produced, which enable, and indeed compel, the laborers to break through that social curse.

But, in fact, the entire paragraph—faulty both in style and contents—appears here only in order to inscribe the Lassallean catchword of the "unabridged proceeds of labor" as the watchword on the flag of the party. I shall come back later to the "proceeds of labor," the "equal right," etc., as the same thing recurs in somewhat different form.

2. In present society the means of labor are the monopoly of the capitalist class. The dependence of the working-class, flowing from this, is the cause of misery and servitude in all forms.

This proposition is borrowed from the constitution of the International, but in an "improved" version, which makes it false.

In present society the means of labor are the monopoly of the landlords (the monopoly of land forms even the basis of the monopoly of capital) and of the capitalists. In the passage referred to the constitution of the International mentions neither the one nor the other class of monopolists. It speaks of "the monopoly in the means of labor, that is, in the sources of life." The addition, "sources of life," shows sufficiently that the soil is included under the means of labor.

The "improvement" was made because Lassalle, for reasons now generally known, attacked the capitalist class only, not the landlords. In England the capitalist is in most cases not even the owner of the soil on which his factory stands.

(To be continued next issue.)

### A STUDY IN ECONOMY.

The following figures, taken from Whitaker's Almanac, show the direct cost of Royalty in Great Britain and Ireland. What the indirect cost to the nation is the good Lord only knows: Their Majesties' privy purse...£110,000 Salaries of Household...125,800 Expenses of ditto...193,000 Works...20,000 Royal Bounty...13,200 Unappropriated...8,000 Queen Alexandra...70,000 Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein...6,000 Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll...6,000 Duke of Connaught...25,000 Duchess of Edinburgh...6,000 Duchess of Albany...6,000 Princess Beatrice Henry of Bat-tenburg...6,000 King Edward VII.'s daughters...18,000

£613,000 Approximately \$3,065,000.) The President of United States receives but \$75,000, with \$25,000 travelling allowance.

### AN ENGLISH PACIFIST AND HIS "GLOBE."

I have just heard that a choir of about 150 persons has been formed to sing outside the prison, where my brother and some of his brave comrades are confined. My mother goes with them. They sing "Abide with me," "Lead kindly light," "The Red Flag," and other hymns and Socialist songs.

G. RICHARDSON.