

# Revolutions : Political and Social

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ARTICLE NO. 5.

**W**E left eastern Europe in the throes of a famine. One incident will suffice to emphasize its severity. A widow in Vienna killed one of her children to serve as food for the others, while the same day a Viennese banker gave a banquet at which strawberries were served, the cost of each single strawberry being sufficient to keep the widow and her family for a month. When people become so desperate that they kill their children for food, they require little urging to shed the blood of those they deem responsible for their troubles.

At this time, when all the wage workers and serfs were destitute of the common necessities of life and when all the professions, the merchants and the industrialists were but little removed from destitution, when for years a cumulating load of petty annoyances and regulations had exhausted their patience as a long list of repressive measures had weakened their loyalty, at this very time, characteristic of all governments Austria drew up a new College of Censorship under which booksellers found it impossible to do business. Austria, France and Prussia threatened Switzerland with a blockade if she instituted her reformed constitution. And Austria framed one of the most stupid and intolerant laws possible. Death without appeal for rioting, imprisonment for hissing, applauding, or wearing distinctive badges or colors were among its provisions. All in January and February 1848. In Germany the situation was not quite so bad, but bad enough to cause all classes, except bankers and land owners and the immediate hangers-on of the monarchy to desire an immediate and drastic change. Marx sums up the situation in short as, a "heterogeneous mass of opposition springing from various interests, but more or less led on by the bourgeoisie, in the front ranks of which again marched the bourgeoisie of Prussia, and particularly of the Rhine province." And on the other hand he continues: "In Prussia a government forsaken by public opinion, forsaken by even a portion of the nobility, leaning upon an army and a bureaucracy which every day got more infected by the ideas, and subjected to the influence, of the oppositional bourgeoisie." That will be enough to show the line-up, by "Marx himself." The same line-up in every successful revolution, no matter where it occurs.

In the midst of all this turmoil, two young men of this same bourgeois group were building the foundations of a new science. As Marx points out, in countries where the State and Church are team workers the inevitable point of attack is religion. And religion here came in for some whacks. The first medium then, chosen by Marx and Engels, the young men referred to, was "The Holy Family," a review of Bauer and his followers who had maintained an attack on religion and autocracy under the umbrage of philosophy.

Engels then wrote "The Condition of the Working Class in England," material for which he had collected while engaged in a branch of his father's factory in Manchester, and in which he forecasts an early revolution. Marx became interested in Political economy, a subject to which he gave more and more of his time until his death. These tasks brought them both into the labor movement.

The Communist League, a secret revolutionary organization soon attracted them. Previously known as the League of the Just, with headquarters in Geneva and London, it had in 1847 stepped from secretive conspiracy, a condition unavoidable in Europe under the Metternich System, to open propaganda, this largely through the influence of Marx who had been approached by an old time member, Moll by name, but who with his supporters thought secrecy no longer necessary and conspiracy foolish. Accordingly at a convention held in London in 1847

Marx was commissioned to write a Manifesto. The result was the Communist Manifesto, "wherein the Communists disdain to conceal their aims and views. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Marx then, not to make too long a story about it, though had we time we would prefer covering this point more fully, became editor of the new Rhenish Journal.

This new scientific method of labor agitation, however, was not destined to have sufficient time to have any determinant influence in the East. On Feb. 24th, the Paris mob tramped with muddy feet and sodden garments through the Tuilleries and Legislative Chambers, knocking off the hats of the mighty and otherwise setting an example which almost immediately became the fashion. On March 3rd Kussoth made a speech in the Presburg Assembly which today would not even call for comment; he scored the bureaucracy and called upon the Emperor to follow a more enlightened policy; "The bureau and the bayonet are miserable bonds," he declared. But the March days of Paris were in full swing, and although news from the Hungarian Diet, which was but a half day's journey from Vienna, usually took a week to reach the home of the Court, the speech was translated into German and circulated through the city next day. The government was thoroughly alarmed and considered an answer necessary at once; that answer might have been written in Canada in 1918 so closely does Marx parallel his fellows at all times. **It pointed to the anarchy existing in Paris.** The extremely moderate demands couched in language in which, one writer declared, servility passed into blasphemy, that had every where sprang up and been circulated and debated previous to Kussoth's speech, now became matters of cherished principle to be obtained at any sacrifice. All classes became insistent. In Germany much strong talk was heard, and the students in Vienna sent a deputation to the Emperor on March 12th. The answer was—their demands would be considered. The students—God help them—laughed uproariously, "like the neighing of all Tattersals" no doubt.

However although Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" had been written just 70 years, the Vienna Bureaucracy were to learn that the loud laugh does not bespeak the vacant mind, if they ever were inclined to stretch poetic instances into psychological generalities. The students decided to march from the University to the Landhaus (The States' Assembly). On the 13th they assembled; the professors who had formerly prompted their activities now became alarmed and counselled a few day's delay while the demands were being considered. Not an hour, not a moment; to the Landhaus! an appeal had been circulated to all good Austrians to assist in freeing the Emperor of his enemies, the bureaucracy. The crowd became dense, when a medical doctor hitherto unknown outside his profession, Dr. Fischhoff, was hoisted on the shoulders of some students and uttered "the first free word" in Vienna, as it was long called. The character of the demands made in this speech are illustrative of the entire conditions of that period. Freedom of the Press, of religion, of teaching, an elective ministry, connection with Germany (Vienna was a German city) and an armed people. "He who has not courage on such a day as this is fit for the nursery," he declared. The members of the Landhaus, all of the privileged classes, ceased their deliberations as the sound of Fischhoff's voice reached them; some wished to decamp, more sought to make the occasion an opportunity for forcing reforms from the government. The impatient crowd, not minded to wait their decision, burst open the doors and presented a petition in boots.

A petition of this kind has many advantages. The Landhaus leaders agreed to do almost anything in their power, but they asked for room and quiet. Fischhoff prevailed on the crowd to withdraw. The result of this quiet and roomy discussion was a feeble and worthless compromise, which was torn to pieces after being read. While this wordy struggle proceeded troops were approaching, but instead of pacifying—this aroused the crowd to fury and they commenced to arm with every available means, determined to give battle. Meanwhile some representatives of the Landhaus had hurried to the Castle by a circuitous route to warn the government of the danger. Even while Metternich with his pals were, with the stiff-necked stupidity of all their tribe and all their generations declaring that the whole affair would blow over in a few days, and was but the work of a few foreign agitators and lazy loafers, the battle in the streets broke out, war shortly raged within hearing of the Castle itself. Cannon and the Citizen Guard composed of the merchants were called out to quell the riot. The Citizen Guard joined the revolution, giving them a real armed force; the wealthy students were also alarmed; they too took their arms into the rebel camp. The depredations of the mob in destroying property led the government to hope that the property owners would fall on the mob and exact a summary vengeance; the hope was built on sand. The gunners, when ordered to fire on the mob, stood in front of their guns saying they would sooner be shot than fire on the people. A lordly archduke rushed to the Castle wringing his hands in despair at this altogether strange and confounding situation. Metternich, of course, had to be sacrificed; it was planned that he go to his country seat there to await the abating of the storm, but cruel fate determined otherwise. His villa had already been burned to the ground and he himself made such a shameful exit from Vienna as Falstaff did from the house of Mistress Page, and thence to England where Louis Philippe had preceded him by scarce three weeks. By nightfall the government had fallen, a committee of safety formed, the workers and students had organized a mobile and somewhat disciplined army, with Metternich and all he represented swept away.

The revolution had of course dislocated whatever trade there had been, and the workers had to be fed, as this could only be done from the treasury it meant heavier burden of taxation which, looming up at a time when trade was particularly bad caused the bourgeoisie to long for the paths of peace and plenty which their ascent to power promised, for the revolution had given into their hands political supremacy. They now commenced to heed what heretofore they had regarded as Metternichian lies, the cry of anarchy. An attempt was made to restore the Press and speech restrictions and otherwise make the world safe from democracy by dissolving the Committees' delegates, etc. This was met by the May insurrection. The government retreated. They did more, they fled.

At this point we will close, and turn our attention next time to the Berlin revolution.

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