

MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

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... was the execution of Clement Thomas, the man of June, 1848, the insulter of the revolutionary battalions who was caught examining the barricades, and another -- General Lecomte -- who was dragged into his garden by the soldiers and shot. The officers of the National Guard made desperate efforts to have them tried by court-martial, but the multitude were impatient and Lecomte who, in the morning had three times commanded fire upon the people, wept, begged for pity, was forced against the wall and fell under the bullets. When the Paris Commune was defeated by the aid of Bismarck's troops, and after the release of the Napoleon prisoners of war, then we find the true nature of the Versailles Law and Order group. The blind fury of the soldiers, encouraged by the men of law and order, pillaged the shops of the tradesmen who had supplied the Commune. Theft followed massacre. The soldiers smashed the furniture and carried off jewels, wine, liquors, provisions, linens, etc., in their knapsacks. In the darkness of the night a Versailles officer was surrounded by the Commune outposts and shot, "without respecting the laws of war," said M. Thiers the next day. Though during the four days he had been mercilessly shooting thousands of prisoners, old men, women, and children. The wholesale massacre is estimated at 20,000. The chief military justice admitted 17,000 shot. The municipal council of Paris paid the expenses of the burial of 17,000 corpses, but a great number were killed outside of Paris. Numbers were shot and buried before they were dead, as sometimes a hand would be stuck up through the earth where they were buried; the inhabitants of the houses close by could hear the moans of the buried alive in the stillness of the night. Some were taken prisoners to Versailles and made to kneel down in front of aristocratic clubs, and churches amidst an infamous mob of lackeys, fashionables, and prostitutes crying "Death! death!" do not go any further; shoot them here."

During these atrocities, where even some women were disembowelled and a soldier of law and order amused himself by dividing the protruded entrails with the end of his bayonet, the officers a few steps off allowing him to do so, the bourgeoisie raised its bloody hands to heaven, undertook to incite the whole world against the Commune people, who after two months domination and the massacre of thousands, had only shed the blood of 63 prisoners. All social powers covered the death rattle of the victims with their applause. The priests, those great consecrators of assassination, celebrated the victory in a solemn service, at which the entire Assembly assisted.

Lissagaray says: "Twenty-five thousand men, women and children killed during the battle; three thousand at least dead in prisons, the pontoons, the forts or in consequence of maladies contracted during their captivity; thirteen thousand seven hundred condemned, most of them for life; old men deprived of their natural supporters or thrown out of France, one hundred and eleven thousand of victims at least; that is the balance sheet of the bourgeois vengeance for the solitary insurrection of the 18th of March."

Karl Marx's "Civil War": "In all its bloody triumphs over the self-sacrificing champions of a new and better society, that nefarious civilization, based upon the enslavement of labor, drowns the moans of its victims in a hue and cry of calumny, reverberated by a world-wide echo. The serene workingmen's Paris of the Commune is suddenly changed into a pandemonium by the bloodhounds of "order." And what does this tremendous change prove to the bourgeois mind of all countries? Why, that the Commune has conspired against civilization."

"The workingmen's Paris, in the act of its heroic self holocaust, involved in its flames buildings and monuments. While tearing to pieces the living body of the proletariat, its rulers must no longer expect to return triumphantly into the intact architecture of their abodes. The Government of Versailles cries: "Incendiarism," and whispers this cue to all its agents down to the remotest hamlet, to hunt up its

enemies everywhere as suspects of professional incendiarism. The bourgeoisie of the whole world, which looks complacently upon the wholesale massacre after the battle, is convulsed by horror at the desecration of brick and mortar."

"When the governments give State license to their navies to kill, burn and destroy, is that a license for incendiarism? When the British troops wantonly set fire to the capital at Washington and to the Summer Palace of the Chinese Emperor, was that incendiarism? When the Prussians, not for military reasons, but out of the mere spite of revenge, burned down, by the help of petroleum, towns like Chateaudun and innumerable villages, was that incendiarism? When Thiers, during six weeks bombarded Paris under the pretext he wanted to set fire to those houses only in which there were people, was that incendiarism? In war, fire is an arm as legitimate as any. Buildings held by the enemy are shelled to set them on fire. If the defenders have to retire, they themselves light the fires to prevent the attack to make use of the buildings. To be burned down has always been the inevitable fate of buildings situated in the front of the battle of all regular armies of the world. But in the war of the enslaved against the enslavers the only justifiable war in history, this is by no means to hold good."

Marx goes on to illustrate the Commune used fire as a defence and resorted to it when the Versailles troops had commenced the wholesale murder of prisoners. Besides, the Commune had long before warned them that if driven to extremities they would bury themselves under the ruins of Paris, and make Paris a second Moscow. The Commune knew that its opponents cared more for the buildings of Paris than the lives of its people.

P. 75, "Civil War": "All this chorus of calumny, which the party of law and order never fail, in their orgies of blood, to raise against their victims, only proves that the bourgeois of our days considers himself the legitimate successor to the baron of old, who thought every weapon in his own hand fair against the plebian, while in the hands of the plebian a weapon of any kind constituted itself a crime."

"The conspiracy of a ruling class to break down the Revolution by a Civil War carried on under the patronage of the foreign invader. . . . culminated in the carnage of Paris. Bismarck gloats over the ruins of Paris. . . . He gloats over the cadavres of the Paris proletariat. For him this is not only the extermination of the revolution, but the extinction of France. . . . With the shallowness, characteristic of all successful statesmen, he sees but the surface of this tremendous historic event. Whenever before has history exhibited the spectacle of a conqueror crowning his victory by turning into, not only the gendarme, but the hired bravo of the conquered government? There existed no war between Prussia and the Commune of Paris. On the contrary, the Commune had accepted the peace preliminaries and Prussia had announced her neutrality. Prussia was therefore no belligerent. She acted the part of a bravo, a cowardly bravo because incurring no danger: a hired bravo, because stipulating beforehand the payment of her blood money of 500 millions on the fall of Paris." "And thus, at last, came out the true character of the war, ordained by Providence as a chastisement of godless and debauched France by pious and moral Germany. And this unparalleled breach of the law of nations. . . . instead of arousing the civilized governments of Europe to declare the felonious Prussian Government the mere tool of the Prussian Cabinet, an outlaw amongst nations, only incites them to consider whether the few victims who escape the double cordon around Paris are not given up to the hangman at Versailles. That after the most tremendous war of modern times the conquered and conquering hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariat--this unparalleled event does indicate, not, as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society, but the crumbling into dust of the bourgeois society. The highest heroic effort of what the old society is still capable is national war, and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of the classes and to be thrown aside as soon as the class struggle bursts out in a civil war. Class rule

is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform. The national governments are one as against the proletariat. . . . While the European governments thus testify before Paris, to the international character of class rule, they cry down the International Workers' Association--the international counter organization of labor against the cosmopolitan of capital. . . . The working men of Paris with its Commune will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society."

"Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

The above history from Marx's "Civil War in France," could be well transported to the Russian revolution situation, where the conquered and conquerors united to put down the proletariat. The same lying press as to the conditions existing in Moscow and Petrograd is a repetition of the history of the Paris Commune.

After a knowledge of the above history there is no difficulty in understanding why the British newspapers of 1870 were against France.

The "Daily News" of 8th August, 1870, gave its views: "There is no longer any question as to whether the Germans will take or rather retake Alsace, but rather as to whether, having got it, they will give it up again. Some 200 years back Louis XIV., stole it. The lapse of years may hide a theft, but not the justification of re-conquest. The population of Alsace is German by origin, by language and by custom."

The "Times," 14th September, 1870: "Till the French are ready to recognize that they have acted unjustly towards their neighbors, and to offer sureties against a repetition of such conduct, the fair demands of the German (40 milliards and Alsace-Lorraine) cannot be considered satisfactory. We can assure France, if she finds these conditions hard, that there are many persons in Germany who consider them remarkably light, and who would be only too pleased to complain at their hereditary enemy getting off so lightly. Alsace-Lorraine--we mean German Lorraine, in other words the possession of Metz and a small strip of Lorraine with the Vosges and Alsace--is the minimum condition the peace-loving Germans can accept as a basis of peace."

For the history of European powers up to the war from 1870, read the writer's "Economic Causes of War." As I have not dealt with the dividing up of Africa, I will continue the lessons with that continent's history so far as the European powers are concerned, and conclude the series with the Irish question.

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