SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER XI.

REACTION AND REVOLUTION ON THE CONTINENT.

When the great war which Napoleon waged against Europe came to an end by his defeat and ruin, France was once more the master of the Continent. France had the flayed arms of reaction and sheer absolutism. The Holy Alliance, or union of reactionary monarchs, undertook the enterprise of crushing out all popular feeding, or even anything that could be supposed to represent it in the persons of the bourgeois.

But the French Revolution had shaken absolutism too sorely for this enterprise to have more than a very partial success even on the surface. The most powerful of the reactionary monarchs in Europe, and the chief instrument for the preservation of the principal forms of old constitutionalism—society, mostly (so-called) secret, which attracted to them a great body of sympathy, and in consequence seen far more numerous and immense, though in reality they were not. There was a mass of discontent, mostly political in character, and by no means confined to the poorer classes.

The present conflict went on gathering head, till in 1830, and again in 1848, it exploded into open revolt against absolutism all over Europe. This revolt, we must repeat, was in the main a mere counter-stroke to the reaction which was diligently striving to restore the aristocratic privilege which the French Revolution had abolished, and to sustain what of it had escaped its attack. In 1830 the revolt was purely bourgeois in character, and was in no sense social, but, as above said, political. In 1848 it had in some places a strong infusion of the proletarian element, where the latter was dominated by middle-class patriotism and ideas which led to the assertion and consolidation of nationalities. But a new element was present in these latter revolutions, more than its first disturbance, that is, diabolical action must. This was the first appearance in politics of modern or scientific Socialism, in the shape of the Communist Manifest of Marx and Engels, first published in 1842. The rise and development of this phase of the revolution, its history, and causes, form an epoch in history, and we cannot yet either sufficiently notice more than call attention to the steady and continuous influence of this last-born Socialist, compared with the rapid extinction of Babeuf’s propaganda, although he had a numerous body of adherents; since the fact must be veiled in great advance in opinion since the end of the eighteenth century.

The general effect, however, at least as seen openly, of these insurrections was the checking of absolutism, the replanting it in various degrees by middle-class constitutionallism; and also, as aforesaid, an added impulse to the consolidation of nationalities, which latter on produced the unification of Italy and of Germany, and the liberation of the Hungarian nationality.

In France the outward effects of the insurrection were most obvious and lasted the longest; but the bourgeois republic, which took the place of Louis Philippe’s corrupt constitutional monarchy asserted itself tyrannically enough against the proletariat, and in consequence had no strength left to meet the political adventurer Louis Napoleon, whose plot against the republic was skillfully made an excuse for the imperial desire of 4th of December 1851, by means of which he terrorised France for many years; although as to numbers it was quite insignificant compared with those which followed the taking of Paris by the bourgeois troops at the time of the Fall of the Commune in 1871.

This successful stroke had really no analogy to any foregoing reactionist dictatorship. It even professed to be founded on democratic federalism; but it was the assertion of the main political means of bourgeois life—the social and commercial side of it, the ideal shopkeeper grown weary of revolutions and anxious to be let alone to make money and enjoy himself vulgarly. Accordingly France settled down into a period of “law and order,” characterised by the most shameless corruption and repulsive vulgarity. She got at last into full swing of the rule of successful stock-jobbery which had already been established in England, and carried on with less hypocrisy than ourselves, but perhaps with more open blackguardism.

To sustain this régime various showy military enterprises were undertaken, in which was attempted to invest with a kind of democratic sentiment. It was also of some importance to make at least a show of giving employment to the working classes of France. This principally took the form of the rebuilding of Paris and the restoration of the national edifices—monuments, temples, national and public buildings, in which France is richer than any other country; so that this apostleship of middle-class vulgarity has left abiding tokens of its presence. The work was not in itself very difficult, but in such a country as France, the government and the attempt to gain the support of the proprietaries by gifts of “bread and pageantry,” discontent of various kinds sprang up and steadily increased. Moreover, the new birth of Socialism was because, as it might be called, a bourgeois reaction, it proved a failure, and became a purely workers’ quarter of contemplation and satire.

While all this was going on underground as it were, the Cossacks of the stock-exchange was also beginning to get the worst of it in the game of stock-jobbing; and at last the results of the consolidation of nationalities which was the chief aim of the bourgeois revolt became obvious in the revival of the old antinomies between Germany and France. Bismarck, who had become the attorney-secretary of Germany, had got to know the weakness of the showy empire of Louis Napoleon, and had a well warranted confidence in that carefully cultivated monster, the German Army. History had been the handmaiden who fell into it, perhaps not blindly, but rather driven by a kind of gambler’s last hope, akin to despair.

The real race of Socialism, the natural and inevitable outcome of which was the hopeless defeat of the French army, led as it were by mere selfseekers and corrupt soundbeads, most of whom lacked even that lowest form of honour which makes a Dugald Dalgety faithful to his employers under the handicap of the man who pays him away.

The new Republic proclaimed after the collapse at Sedan still kept up a hopeless resistance to the unbroken strength of Germany— since 1840, and the corruption of the social bewildering bourgeois republic, as typified in the person of the political gamer, Gambetta. Paris was besieged, and taken after a long resistance, which reflected infinite credit on the general population, who bore the horrors of the siege with unutterable suffering and endless disgrace on those who pretended to organise its defence, but who were really far more inclined to hand over the city to the Germans than all the vigoitions after the allies of the revanche Party, charity.

All this must be looked upon by us as Socialists as merely the prelude to the great drama of the Commune, whose aims and influence will form the subject of another chapter.

E. BORST BAX AND WILLIAM MORSE.

CORRESPONDENCE.

INTERNATIONALISM.

As the references to the starting of various associations in “Socialism from the Root-up” are necessarily brief, I desire as one who took a part in the management of these together with Mr. Hall and for a time managed to select the period immediately subsequent to the death of Robert Owen, we look upon a gloomy phase of working-class history. Remnants of the great Chartist, and Socialist, and agricultural associations of the time were led by Brunner O’Brien and Ernest Jones; the former attacking the evils of Midlandism, and pointing the way of an all-Socialist, or a mixture of Individualism and Socialism as a remedy, and the latter seeking through political Parliamentary means to alleviate social ills. Away from the chartist men there was a mass of wrongs, the interests of the artizans of Chartist workers, men who probably never were so sincere in their temporary adhesion to the great principles put forward during the previous insurrections, but also sought to gain objects of their own by a sentiment of the People’s Cause. All sorts of middle-class humbug was upheld by them, and they were attacked by the French revolution and the German Malthusian—be a host of bourgeois associations sprung into existence for several objects, and one or two middle-class savours of Society became the banner-bearers of working men to the cities, and our old friend Samuel Morris might consider this a personal reference. How these fellows scrambled for the middle-class gold thrown amidst them? How they belittled the great principles which they had formerly professed, and derided the enthusiasm of young men who sought to carry those principles forward, is well known to many who have witnessed the present Socialist revival.

The birth of the International was a glas of hope for the workers, but even upon that body they intruded their presence; sleek trade unionists, who only believe in a corrupt aristocracy of labour for" rights of those who can get them," irrespective of those who are entitled, joined with the aforesaid middle-class backs in an hypocritical make-believe of adapting themselves to the dynamic thirst of Marx and the working men. But whilst the English delegates were playing a rôle, the foreigners were in earnest, and the International became a mere gamester’s club. We never saw upon those members of the British Federation, and they hastened to assure their patrons that they had no sympathy with violence, and a few belonging to the International knew that violence was necessary to break the chains of the gamester. Benefactor Bennet, went to Paris and went to the heads of the effigy of the exiled Archbishop of Paris, and thus added insult to the injuries endured by the martyr Parisian people in striving to prevent the re-imposition of the shackles of Capitalism. Favourable mention must be made of those members of the Federation who did honour to the memory of the Parisian workers, but their enthusiasm could not withstand the dull apathy and hostility of the masses—apathy in a large degree due to the absence of any attempt to prevent the establishment of the formation of a club in 1875, which, however, was short-lived, and the earlier celebrations of the Communist uprising as a consequence were almost impeded by the Germans in London, and some other English Law London refugees to establish relations with English workmen resulted in a meeting of English, French, and German nationals, who had agreed to form an International Club, and a few months saw its inauguration at Rose Street, Soho. I might record that they had previously rendered service to the English Trades Union by carrying the return of a large number of German men, who, through the misrepresentations of the employers, were inveigled over here during the present strike; Ellis works were fought, and whilst International Broadhurst rushing into print to defy that the International had any hold in the business. Stylistically, and in the return of the German crowd it with exiles, and clearly demonstrated the putty of lawful agitation against depreciation. The sudden strain of supporting a mass of expatriated men, warned them that they were met and overcome. Suffice it to say that, outside of the few Englishmen comprising the English section, not one of the Englishmen in the German or French sections showed any signs of taking up a stand and humbling which the enemies of progress were indulging in. Anti- revolution maths were held, with the monopolists and their tactic, and the unemployed were stirred to resist the process of slow starvation. The execution of the Czar, and the prosecution of most for commenting upon this event in the German, Frieden, together with the publication by the English section of a manifesto and English edition of the Frieden, drew general attention to the principles of