

## CHAPTER XV

### THE END OF THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

THE more desperate the situation in Germany became the greater hopes did the revolutionaries entertain of France. 'In France the battle will start again in the spring,' Marx wrote at the beginning of 1849. The 'revolutionary volcano' in France seemed on the eve of an eruption, and it seemed to him that its flames must inevitably overflow into Germany, Austria and Hungary. The German counter-revolution could only be, must only be an incident in the European revolution. What did Baden and the Palatinate matter? If Paris rose the whole of Europe would be in flames.

Marx went to Paris. But Paris viewed from within was different from Paris viewed from without. Cholera was rampant in the city. 'The air was sultry,' wrote Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary, who was in Paris at the time. 'A sunless heat oppressed mankind. Victims of the contagion fell one after another. The terrified population, and the procession of hearses dashing to the cemeteries as if they were racing, seemed in keeping with events'—i.e. the political events of June, 1849. The irony of history had once more placed revolutionary warfare upon the order of the day, but it was very different from what it had been a year before. At the end of May an expeditionary force of the French Republican Army, sent to Italy for the official purpose of defending Italy's freedom and independence, had stormed Rome, the last stronghold of Italian liberty, and delivered its Republican defenders into the hands of the Papal Inquisition. The French Constitution still contained the fine phrase: '*La République française n'emploie jamais ses forces contre la liberté d'aucun peuple.*'<sup>1</sup>

On June 11, only a few days after Marx's arrival in Paris, Ledru-Rollin, leader of the Montagnards, proposed in the Chamber that the President, Louis Bonaparte, and the cabinet be arraigned for violation of the constitution. To quote

<sup>1</sup> The Republic never employs its forces against the liberty of any people.

Marx's words in his *Class Struggles in France*, his words were 'plain, blunt, unpretentious, matter-of-fact, pithy and powerful.' The Chamber postponed the debate on this proposal, but its fate was not destined to be settled in the Chamber.

In the evening a meeting took place between the leaders of the Montagnards and the delegates of the workers' secret societies. Marx's account of the meeting indicates that he either was present himself or was given detailed information by one of the principals at the meeting. He very successfully fulfilled the task entrusted to him by the German Democrats, namely that of making contact with the French revolutionaries. There is some evidence that would seem to indicate that he actually became a member of one of the secret Communist organisations in Paris. As he wrote to Engels, he came into contact with the whole of the revolutionary party and had good grounds for hoping that within a few days he would have every revolutionary journal in Paris at his disposal. But a week later no revolutionary journals were left.

The Montagnards were not one whit behind the German Parliamentarians of the 'Left' in indecision. They rejected the proposal of the workers' delegates that they should strike that very night. True, the chances of a successful rising were no longer very great, but the refusal to act cost the Montagnards their last chance. For when they summoned a demonstration to the streets on June 13 the Government had long completed its preparations. It was a simple matter for their dragoons and riflemen to drive the unarmed masses from the streets. Some of the Montagnard deputies were arrested, others escaped. From that day on the National Assembly was 'nothing but a committee of public safety of the Party of Order.'

The last resistance of the revolutionaries in Central Europe collapsed at the same time. In the Danube basin the army of independent Hungary capitulated to the Russian troops, which were far superior in numbers and equipment. Those of its leaders who fell into the hands of the counter-revolution were hanged. Those who managed to escape to Turkey lived in fear of being handed over to the Austrian hangmen by the Sublime Porte. In dismembered Germany the revolution died piecemeal. Even to the very last everything was done to make

the victory of the counter-revolution as easy as possible. The risings in the spring of 1849 broke out one after another, each outbreak coinciding with the suppression of its predecessor. There was brave fighting in Dresden and on the Rhine, and many hundreds, most of them workers, left their lives on the barricades. The words 'artisan,' 'miner,' 'day-labourer,' etc., constantly recur in the lists of dead.

Many of them were members of the Communist League. Only the extreme Left wing of the workers' movement, the group that followed Gottschalk and Weitling, opposed the rising. The organ of Gottschalk's followers warned the workers against participation in a movement which was not the immediate concern of the proletariat but of the bourgeoisie. This was but a consequence of an attitude which started out from extreme revolutionism and necessarily ended in complete passivity. Whatever their position may have been in 1848 and 1849, the overwhelming majority of the members of the League flung themselves headlong into the struggle and fought to the bitter end. Joseph Moll, who was unable to return to London after his German journey, helped in the preparations for the rising in Baden. With characteristic courage he even managed to enlist in the insurrectionary army under the fire of the Prussian guns. Then he went to Baden, where he fought bravely and fell in the fighting on the Murg, shot in the head by a Prussian bullet.

Engels took part in the campaign, first as a simple infantryman, later as an adjutant to Willich, who was in command of a corps of volunteers. His was one of the best units of the revolutionary army and consisted almost entirely of workers. The sober, clear-thinking, sceptically inclined Engels entered the struggle without any great expectations, for the weak sides—and it had practically nothing but weak sides—of the whole enterprise did not escape his keen intelligence; but he could not deny himself the pleasure of heartily and unceremoniously laughing at the mixture of excitement and alarm manifested by the petty-bourgeois revolutionary statesmen. During the course of the expedition he drew nearer to Willich, the 'one practical officer' who took part in it, and he praised him as bold in action, cool-headed, clever and quick in decision. Engels took part in four engagements, two of which were fairly

important. 'I have discovered,' he wrote to Frau Marx soon afterwards, 'that the much-lauded quality of impetuous courage is one of the most ordinary properties that man can have.' He fought to the very end and marched into Swiss territory with his corps, which was one of the very last units of the revolutionary army to survive.

That was the end of the revolution of 1848, the beginning of which had been so full of promise; moreover, it was the end of the period of European history which culminated in it. But those who had been in the thick of the fray did not believe it, could not and would not believe it. The more fervently they identified themselves with the world that had departed, that world in comparison with which the new and greater world which it had engendered dwindled practically into non-existence in their eyes, the greater was their difficulty in acknowledging the existence of the new. The whole thing could not be over. To-morrow or the day after it would all break out again and everything would be altered. He who in such a situation thought anything else would have been no revolutionary. But he who remained subject to this mood too long, unable to shake it off and reconcile himself sternly to the fact that a new historical epoch had begun, was no true revolutionary either.

Marx had battled so ardently that for a time he too was subject to these inevitable illusions. He was dominated by them for a whole year. A letter he wrote to Weydemeyer on August 1, 1849, gives some clue to the extent to which his analytical intelligence, generally so accurate, could err. Disagreeable as the situation was at the moment, he belonged nevertheless to those who were *satisfaits*. '*Les choses marchent très bien*, and the Waterloo of official Democracy is to be regarded as a victory. The governments by the grace of God have taken over the task of revenging us on the bourgeoisie and are chastising them for us.'

Marx searched for the weakest point in the enemy's front. England attracted his particular attention, and he began to hope that the next blow might come from there, and that England would be the scene of the 'beginning of the next dance.' England seemed to him to be on the eve of a tremendous economic crisis, and not long afterwards he confidently predicted its outbreak for August, 1850.



In spite of the hopes he had of England in the immediate future he had no intention of going there. At the beginning of July, 1849, his wife and children came to Paris. Marx rented a small flat and settled down as if for a long stay. He was an optimist. From June 13 the Reaction was the undisputed master of Paris; and it was not to be expected that the police would allow a man like Marx to remain completely unmolested for long.

The police devoted great attention to refugees from Germany, who were said to be playing the leading part in an 'international revolutionary committee' which did not exist outside the police imagination. One prominent *émigré* after another was arrested and expelled. Marx's turn was not long postponed. His expulsion order was signed on July 19. Quite possibly the police learnt of his presence in Paris from the German Press, which was indulging at the time in 'sketches from emigrant life.' The police were not very well informed, and some weeks passed before they discovered his address.

'We stayed one month in Paris,' Frau Marx wrote in her diary, 'but we were not allowed to stay there long either. One fine morning the familiar figure of a police-sergeant appeared, to inform us that Karl *et sa dame* must leave Paris within twenty-four hours. They were kind enough to offer us permission to stay at Vannes, in Morbihan.'

Frau Marx was expecting her fourth child and Marx was in desperate financial straits. Morbihan was considered one of the unhealthiest departments of France, the 'Pontic Marshes' of Brittany. Banishment to such a place was 'equivalent to a disguised attempt at murder,' as Marx wrote to Engels. Marx did not accept it. He tried hard to have the expulsion order revoked, but in vain. He stated in an open letter to the Press that he was staying in Paris purely for purposes of scientific research. The only concession he obtained was a respite for his wife. He had no choice but to leave France. If he attempted to return to Belgium he was certain to be turned back at the frontier. In Switzerland a regular hue-and-cry after the German *émigrés* was beginning, and England alone remained. Marx crossed the Channel on August 24, 1849, and his wife followed on September 15. Fate cast him into the land in which he believed the 'next dance was going

to begin,' perhaps to cure him of his illusions the more quickly.

When Marx came to England for the third time in his life in the summer of 1849, he did not believe his visit would be much longer than the two previous ones. It might last a few weeks, possibly months, at the very most a year; but instead of the short visit he anticipated, he spent the second half of his life in England, which became his second home.

A great deal had changed in England since his last visit to London two years before. The Chartist Movement had not recovered from its serious defeat in April, 1848, and the whole political landscape had undergone a profound alteration. Marx nevertheless met some old acquaintances. The Fraternal Democrats, at whose meeting on November 29, 1847, he had hailed the approaching revolution, still existed, and so did the German Communist Workers' Educational Union, with whose leaders Marx had discussed the programme and statutes of the Communist League. Not a few of the old members had answered the call of the revolution in their native land, but many were too deeply rooted in England to be able to tear themselves away. They had shared Germany's hopes, exhilarations and disappointments. The Union was the obvious centre for the new refugees to gather in.

When Marx came to London very few of them had yet arrived. But every Channel boat brought a fresh influx. At first they were almost exclusively workers and artisans. The 'great men of the emigration,' of whom Marx was destined to have such unpleasant experiences, made their appearance gradually. The refugees arrived in a state of pitiful distress. Many had not a penny in their pockets. The continuation of the crisis meant that even the most highly skilled workers had difficulty in finding work, and often had to be content if the pittance they could pick up as day-labourers sufficed to enable them to stave off the pangs of hunger with a loaf of bread. 'Many of these unfortunates,' a newspaper recorded, 'consider themselves fortunate in finding a job the nature of which makes one recoil. The work is stamping raw pelts at a German fur factory in East London. Imagine a big barrel in a very warm room, filled to the very top with ermine and sable skins. A man climbs into the barrel stark-naked and stamps and works

with his hands and feet from morning till night. The perspiration pours from his body in streams. This soaks into the skins and gives them their suppleness and durability, without which they would be useless for more elegant purposes. Thus our rich ladies, with their boas and muffs, though they do not suspect it, are literally clothed in the sweat of the Democrats.' Most of them, however, could not even find work of this kind.

To help the hungry was the first and most important task. Marx was among the founders of the London Assistance Committee. Similar relief societies came into being wherever German refugees were gathered. The difference between the London committee and the rest was that it was controlled by Communists from the start. Of the five leading members three were Communists, with Marx at their head. This was in accordance with the social composition of the London refugees. It was a period of wearing and exhausting work, involving dozens of interviews every day, dashing from one end of London to the other, collecting money and distributing it. Marx had an enormous amount of work to do. He succeeded in inducing the Fraternal Democrats to co-operate in the work of relief, but the results were meagre. The total receipts of a fund the Fraternal Democrats kept open for three months amounted only to £1 14s.

Marx's active participation in the relief work was a matter of course, but however urgent and necessary the work of relief might be, to him political work in the Communist League was incomparably more urgent.

The London branch, which Moll had used in his efforts to resuscitate the League at the beginning of the year, had survived the revolution. The central office Marx found in London was the only one that had any sort of contacts, though not very close ones, with Germany and other refugee centres abroad. Marx at once got in touch with the branch and soon joined it. The central office was reorganised and completed in the months that followed. Willich, who had come to London with a recommendation from Engels, was at once elected to the central office. Although Engels considered him 'a "true" Socialist and a more or less tedious ideologist,' he was of the opinion that he would be useful at the central office. Engels soon appeared on the scene himself. Three of the

members—Heinrich Bauer, Eccarius and Pfänder—survived from the committee of November, 1847. A fourth, Schapper, arrived in the summer of 1850, and a number of new members were elected as well. There were altogether ten members of the central office in the summer of 1850, more than had ever been known in the history of the League.

The election of Willich was the event that had the most lasting consequences. He was a personal friend of Gottschalk and shared many of his views, though he had not gone so far as Gottschalk and Weitling in refusing to take part in the democratic insurrections. Willich was the representative of the 'Left' wing of the Communist movement. Willich's presence at the central office was an indication of Marx's and his friends' political compromise with the 'Lefts.' This compromise was the natural consequence of Marx's new estimate of the European situation, of which mention has been made above. It found its expression in the so-called first circular of the central office of March, 1850, which was drafted by Marx and Engels. Whether the document in all its details really represents Marx's ideas is difficult to decide. There is a good deal that points to the fact that at this period Marx once more considered it necessary to warn his followers against extreme maximalism. But in any case Marx believed that he could achieve a compromise with the 'Lefts' on the basis of this circular.

The document criticised Marx's own tactics of 1848 and 1849, and in particular the decision to dissolve the League and not put up workers' candidates of their own. 'A large number of members who took part in the revolutionary movement believed that the time for secret societies was past and that activity in the open was adequate by itself. . . . While the organisation of the Democratic Party in Germany, the party of the petty-bourgeoisie, constantly improved, the working class lost its one firm hold, remained at best organised for purely local aims in single localities and thus came completely under the domination and leadership of the petty-bourgeois Democrats in the general movement.' In these phrases Marx and Engels criticised themselves and admitted to the 'Lefts' that they had been wrong on a very definite issue.

But the point of the document lay not in its liquidation

of the past but in its statement of the movement's future tasks.

The fundamental assumption, on which all the rest depended, was the firm expectation of a new revolutionary outbreak in the immediate future. Marx, while engaged in drafting this document, was also busy writing the article in which he prophesied that there would be a crisis in England in August, 1850, a crisis with which the renewal of the revolution would coincide. He assured Engels that the English would take it up just at the point at which the February revolution had interrupted it. And in France and Germany it could not be otherwise. In England and France the proletariat would be engaged in the direct struggle for the state power. In Germany the revolution had suffered a defeat. The bourgeoisie had been forced once more to relinquish the power to the party of feudal absolutism, but 'all the same they had assured the conditions which meant in the long run that, because of the Government's financial embarrassments, the power would fall into their hands and all their interests would be safeguarded; it was possible that from now on the revolutionary movement might assume a so-called peaceful development.' The bourgeoisie had ceased to play a revolutionary rôle. Only two revolutionary classes were now left in Germany; the petty-bourgeoisie and the proletariat. There was not the least doubt that there would be a moment in the further development of the revolution when petty-bourgeois democracy would have the predominant influence in Germany. It was therefore imperative that the relations of the proletariat with this petty-bourgeois democracy be accurately determined. They must strive for a democratic state, whether it be constitutional or republican, which would give them and their allies, the peasants, the majority. They must fight for a change in social conditions which would render the existing state of society as tolerable and as comfortable as possible for the petty-bourgeoisie. But democracy was far from being disposed to revolutionise the whole of society for the benefit of the revolutionary proletariat. Therefore the proletariat must rise together with the petty-bourgeoisie, but it must not for one moment forget the treacherous rôle which democracy would continue to play in the future. 'While the democratic petty-bourgeoisie will be inclined to

bringing the revolution to as speedy a conclusion as possible, it is our interest and our duty to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less possessing classes are forced from power, the state-power is seized by the proletariat and the partnership of the proletarians of the world has advanced to such an extent that competition between the proletariats has ceased, not just in one country but in all the principal countries of the world, and at least the vital forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the proletariat.'

In the forthcoming German revolution the proletariat must in all circumstances preserve the independence of their organisations. 'Next to the new official government they must set up their own revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of local committees, branch councils, workers' clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic government not only be promptly deprived of the workers' support but also be supervised and threatened from the very outset by organisations which have the whole mass of workers behind them.' The immediate consequence of the downfall of existing governments would be the election of a National Assembly. The proletariat—here once more the criticism of Marx's own activities in 1848 and 1849 is particularly significant—must see to it that 'workers' candidates are put up everywhere beside the democratic candidates, even where they have no prospect whatever of being elected. The progress which the proletarian party is bound to make by coming forward independently in this way is infinitely more important than the disadvantage of a few reactionaries being elected.'

Henceforward the necessity of establishing contacts with related revolutionary parties in England and France was urgent. The Fraternal Democrats were an open propaganda society, they were capable of doing something in the way of putting workers' educational unions in touch with one another, but they were not adequate to the new tasks of the times. It was necessary to create an association of secret societies for simultaneous action in the revolution which might break out any day. The circular was issued to the branches of the League in March 1850, and an international militant alliance was formed in April. It was called the '*Société Universelle des Communistes Révolutionnaires*.' Its statutes bore the signatures of

Vidil and Adam, representing the London Blanquist 'emigrant' organisations, Marx, Engels and Willich representing the Communist League and Harney representing the Chartists. These six men also constituted the central committee of the new society.

Their programme and organisational structure are of great interest. '*Le but de l'association*,' paragraph one of the statutes reads, '*est la déchéance de toutes les classes privilégiées de soumettre ces classes à la dictature des prolétaires en maintenant la révolution en permanence jusqu'à la réalisation du communisme, qui doit être la dernière forme de constitution de la famille humaine.*'<sup>1</sup>

This goal, to which the members of the association swore an oath of loyalty, was to be attained by *des liens de solidarité entre toutes les fractions du parti communiste révolutionnaire en faisant disparaître conformément au principe de la fraternité républicaine les divisions de nationalité.*'<sup>2</sup>

The rank and file of the secret societies did not themselves become members of this secret society, which was restricted to their leaders. Thus it was a secret society of higher degree. An essential feature of this organisation was that it should not come out into the open. What appears to be an allusion to it is the statement in the second circular, issued by the central office in June, 1850, to the effect that delegates of the secret Blanquist societies were in permanent contact with the delegates of the League and that the League delegates had been entrusted by the Blanquists with important preparatory work in connection with the next French revolution. Who these delegates were and the nature of their duties is unknown. But what the Blanquists were occupied with during the years 1850 and 1851 is known. They were engaged in preparations for an armed rising, just as they had been before 1848 and just as they continued to be afterwards. They were engaged in plotting, devising schemes to gain the political power by simple surprise attacks. Their confident assumption was that a comparatively small number of resolute, well-organised men, given

<sup>1</sup> The aim of the association is to make an end of the privileged classes, to submit these classes to the dictatorship of the proletariat by maintaining a permanent revolution until the realisation of Communism, which shall be the last form of constitution of the human family.

<sup>2</sup> Bonds of solidarity between all sections of the revolutionary Communist Party by breaking down the barriers of nationality in conformity with the principle of republican fraternity.

a favourable moment, would be capable not only of seizing the rudder of the ship of state, but, by the exercise of great and unflinching energy, of maintaining their position until such time as they had brought over the whole of the people to the revolution and caused them to adhere to the small leading group. The fact that Marx accepted this kind of revolutionism, which he condemned so violently both before and afterwards, and was so utterly foreign in every way to the essential nature of the proletarian revolution, the fact that he formed an alliance with the Blanquists, proves better than anything else the extent to which his judgment had been affected by the breakdown of his immeasurable hopes. In later years Marx by no means excluded co-operation with the Blanquists as a matter of principle to be adhered to rigidly in all circumstances. However violently he was opposed to their methods, he valued their determination highly. But after 1851 it would have been inconceivable for him to have encouraged the members of any organisation which he led to join a Blanquist group. It should be observed, however, that the rules of the super-secret society assured the existence of the Communist League and—a highly important consideration in Marx's eyes—preserved it from the danger of being outvoted by the other organisations. A two-thirds majority was needed to pass a resolution and new members could only be elected unanimously.

However greatly Marx's outlook as indicated in the first circular differed from his attitude in 1848 and 1849, the same fundamental ideas were at the heart of both. Sooner or later these ideas were bound to part him from the ultra-Lefts again. Marx was in the first place convinced that the development of the revolution in one country was closely bound up with its development in all other countries; in the second place he was convinced that the revolution had quite definite phases to go through and that the various classes must necessarily come into power in a definite order conditioned by economic facts. It was at these points in the Marxian doctrine that Gottschalk had directed the spearhead of his attack. Gottschalk had criticised Marx for the 'heartlessness' with which he asked the workers to 'wait,' for his 'deviation' from action in his own country by referring to the coming revolution in France, England, etc. Marx still firmly maintained that the democratic



petty-bourgeoisie must become the ruling class before the proletariat could follow in its shoes. He yielded to his former opponents, now his colleagues, in their estimate of the time that must intervene. In Cologne he had talked of decades, but now the process of development seemed concentrated into an incomparably briefer period, though he still avoided defining it more closely than that.

Marx was in error. He had impatiently anticipated a process of development. He leapt across the years—and who at that time would not have wished to have done so? But in his fundamental attitude to the revolutionary process he took back nothing of what he had maintained in 1848 and 1849.

If the new revolution was at hand the Communist League must do everything in its power to be forearmed. Marx was intensely active in the spring and summer of 1850. Heinrich Bauer was sent to Germany as an emissary and had a successful journey through North Germany, Saxony, Württemberg and the Rhineland. Bauer was a skilful organiser and an excellent judge of men, and he was able to bring once more into the League organisation ex-members who had either lapsed into inactivity or started working independently on their own. In the summer of 1850 the League had as many as thirty branches. Karl Schurz, the subsequent American statesman, who was travelling in Germany at the time on behalf of a democratic organisation founded in Switzerland for the purpose of reviving broken contacts, was forced to admit that 'all the usable forces were already in the hands of the Communist League.'

The League was far bigger, stronger and better organised than at the time of the revolution of 1848. The revolution had come too soon for it, but the next revolution, contrary to expectations, seemed to be tarrying. Marx was convinced that an economic crisis was due in the autumn of 1850. But summer passed and autumn came and the crisis failed to appear. There was not even the slightest indication of its approach. In June Marx obtained admission to the Reading Room of the British Museum and made an intense study of the economic history of the past decade, and the economic history of England in particular. His notebooks of this period are full of long columns of figures, tables, statistical information of every kind. The more Marx mastered his material, the more

plainly did he see the vanity of his hopes. Europe was not on the verge of a crisis but on the threshold of a new era of prosperity. 'To him who had eyes to see and used them,' Engels wrote later, 'it was obvious that the revolutionary storm of 1848 was gradually dying away.'

At the beginning of 1850 Marx once more had his own paper. He had a great deal of difficulty in raising the money for it, in spite of the help of Engels and friends in Germany. 'The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, a politico-economic review, edited by Karl Marx,' appeared in Hamburg in February, 1850. It started as a monthly, but was intended to develop as soon as possible into a fortnightly or if possible a weekly, so that as soon as conditions permitted a return to Germany, it could promptly emerge as a daily again.

The first three numbers contained Engels's description of the rising in the Palatinate of Baden, as well as Marx's analysis of the revolution in France from February, 1848, to November, 1849. Marx ended his survey with an estimate of the prospects of the imminent revolution: 'The result (of Bonaparte's fight with the Party of Order) is postponed, the *status quo* is upheld, one section of the Party of Order is compromised, weakened, made impossible by the other, and repression of the common enemy, the great mass of the nation, is extended and stretched to the breaking-point, at which economic conditions will once more have reached the point of development at which a new explosion will blow the whole of these quarrelsome parties into the air, together with their constitutional republic.'

The last double number of the review appeared at the end of November. Marx summarised the result of his studies as follows: 'In view of this general prosperity, in which the productive forces of bourgeois society are flourishing as exuberantly as they possibly can under bourgeois conditions, there can be no talk of a real revolution. Such a revolution is only possible at periods when the two factors, modern forces of production and bourgeois forms of production, come into conflict. The incessant squabbles in which the representatives of the individual fractions of the continental Party of Order are now indulging and compromising one another are remote from providing an opportunity for a new revolution. On the contrary, they are only possible because conditions for the time being

are so secure and—what the Reaction does not know—so bourgeois. All attempts of the Reaction to put a stop to bourgeois development will recoil upon themselves as certainly as all the moral indignation and enthusiastic proclamations of the Democrats. A new revolution is only possible as the result of a new crisis. But it is just as inevitable as a new crisis.'

To have clung any longer to a policy which had been correct as long as a crisis and with it a revolution had seemed imminent would have meant being guided by 'sheer wish' instead of by 'real circumstances.' At first it was by no means easy for Marx to reconcile himself to acknowledging that the years that followed would belong to the bourgeoisie. Willich and his supporters simply ignored the altered situation. In their view real circumstances might be what they would. If they were adverse, all that was required was the will to change them.

Willich's immediate reaction to Marx's analysis of the class-struggle, of the position of the classes in the revolution, and of the necessary phases of the revolution was that it was nothing but a lot of intellectual theorising. He felt Marx's view of historical development was false. That the classes—capitalists, middle class and proletariat—that is to say the victory of their class-interests—must necessarily follow one another in succession seemed to him entirely absurd. He hated the middle classes and shrank from the thought that the petty-bourgeoisie would ever rule in Germany. They would smash all the big factories and there would be 'a hue-and-cry after the loot and a demoralisation that would be all the greater the more proletarians managed to grab a share of it for themselves.' Willich only admitted the existence of two social classes. One was opposed to oppression of every kind, whether on ideal or practical grounds. The other was the class of the selfish oppressors. With men of the first class he was convinced the proletariat could work together towards bringing about the downfall of the political powers-that-be. By these men the proletariat would not be betrayed.

From this simplified view of society he deduced practical consequences. Just as at night all cats are grey, political exiles are always inclined completely to deny the very power which has driven them abroad. The German exiles of the fifties were no exception. Practically all of them accused their enemies of

'every kind of oppression' and were, at least according to their words, determined to struggle relentlessly against their oppressors. Willich found in them the colleagues he sought, not just as companions for a portion of the way, as the Democrats had been for Marx in 1848 and 1849, but as comrades in the activity he was pining for. The only form this activity could take was that of conspiracy. He hatched every conceivable kind of plot with every conceivable clique of exiles. As Marx later wrote, Willich and his friends demanded, 'if not real conspiracies, at least the appearance of conspiracies, and hence direct alliance with the Democratic heroes of the day.' The more such alliances with other groups of exiles led to adventurous conspiracies the more violently Marx repudiated them.

Marx had become associated with some conspirators himself, the Blanquists. But in France conspiracy had a historical tradition. It had become an essential part of the revolutionary movement and it had to be reckoned with. Marx knew its negative sides only too well. He signed an agreement with the Blanquists in April and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung-Revue* appeared in the same month, with book-reviews by A. Chenu and Lucien de la Hodde. Marx's judgment of the professional conspirators was annihilating. 'To begin with their social position conditions their social character,' he wrote. 'Proletarian conspiracy, of course, offers them only a very limited and uncertain means of existence. They are therefore perpetually forced to lay their hands on the conspiratorial purse-strings. Many of them, of course, fall foul of bourgeois society and make more or less of a good show in the police-courts. . . . It goes without saying that these conspirators by no means confine themselves to organising the revolutionary proletariat. Their business consists in forestalling the process of revolutionary development, spurring it on to artificial crises, making revolutions extempore without the conditions for revolution. For them the only condition required for the revolution is a sufficient organisation of their own conspiracy. They are the alchemists of the revolution, and they share in every way the limitations and fixed ideas of the alchemists of old. . . . The police tolerate the conspiracies, not merely as a necessary evil. They tolerate them as centres, easy to keep under supervision, uniting the most powerful revolutionary social elements, as

workshops of insurrection, which in France have become just as necessary a means of government as the police itself, and finally as recruiting grounds for their own political spies. . . . Espionage is one of the chief occupations of the conspirator. No wonder, therefore, that the small jump from routine conspirator to paid police spy is made so frequently, encouraged as it is by distress and imprisonment, threats and promises. Hence the huge ramifications of suspicion within these organisations, suspicion which so blinds its members that they end by taking the best among their colleagues for spies and accept the real spies as reliable men.'

The conspirator, Marx continues, busy with his scheming and plotting and having no other aim before his eyes but that of the immediate downfall of the existing régime, has the most profound contempt for the theoretical enlightenment of the workers concerning their class-interests. At a moment when, in their opinion, it behoved every revolutionary to act, i.e. plot and prepare risings, Willich and his followers certainly regarded the lectures Marx delivered to the workers as a senseless waste of time. Wilhelm Liebknecht, who had come to London in the summer of 1850 and attached himself to Marx, writes vividly of Marx's lectures in his memoirs.

'In 1850 and 1851 Marx gave a course of lectures on political economy,' he says. 'He had been very unwilling to give them, but after addressing a small circle of friends a few times he allowed himself to be persuaded by us to address a larger audience. In this course . . . Marx laid bare all the broad outlines of the system which lies before us in *Das Kapital*. In the hall of the Communist Workers' Educational Union, which was full to overflowing . . . Marx manifested a remarkable talent for popularisation. No one hated the vulgarising, the devitalising, the falsifying, the watering down of science more than he, but no one possessed in a higher degree the capacity for clear exposition. Clarity of speech is the result of clarity of thought. Clear thought demands a clear form of expression.

'Marx's method was methodical. He would lay down a proposition as briefly as possible, and then elucidate it at greater length, taking extreme care to avoid using expressions unintelligible to the workers. Then he would invite questions from his audience. Should there be none, he would subject

them to an examination, exhibiting such pedagogic skill that no loopholes or misunderstandings escaped. . . . Marx had the qualifications of a first-class teacher.'

Liebnecht only heard the lectures on economics. Marx also dealt with other questions, more concrete ones, dealing with the situation as it had developed in the Communist League. In a letter he wrote in July, 1850, to P. G. Röser, a member of the League in Cologne, Marx mentions that he lectured on the Communist Manifesto at the London Workers' Union in the winter of 1849-50. Röser remembered the details of this letter four years later. In the course of an interrogation by the police Röser said that Marx demonstrated in these lectures that Communism could not be attained for a good many years yet, that Communism itself would have to go through a number of phases and that it could not be attained at all except by the way of education and gradual development. But Willich opposed him violently with his 'rubbish,' as Marx called it, and said that Communism must be introduced by the next revolution, if necessary by the power of the guillotine. Marx was afraid that the idea of advancing at the head of his bold Palatinate troops and imposing Communism by force, if necessary against the will of the whole of Germany, had become so firmly rooted in 'General' Willich's head that it would lead to a split in the Communist League.

Every word of this letter, which Röser repeated from memory, need not be weighed too carefully in the balance. But it throws light once more on the conflict between Marx and Willich. Marx assigned the Communist League one task, the task of propaganda. He repudiated conspiracy, rash adventure, insurrection. All Willich's meditations and aspirations were concentrated on insurrection. Marx saw in revolution a historical process as the result of which the proletariat could only seize the power after passing through quite definite phases, which could not possibly be skipped. Willich's attitude was: now or never. In all essentials Marx returned to his views of 1848 and 1849. One thing he stood out for, now and in the future—the absolute necessity of an independent party.

Willich regarded the theoretical discussions in the Communist League with contempt. He considered himself 'a man

of action,' and when he started to act Marx was forced to break with him. The danger that Willich might involve the Communist League in his insurrectionary adventures had become too great.

The situation in the League was a complicated one. Marx had a majority at the central office. Of the four members who had been elected at the Communist Congress of November, 1847, three, Heinrich Bauer, Pfänder and Eccarius, supported Marx. The minority supported Willich, Schapper alone of the 'old' members of the central office among them. But Willich had a majority in the London branch, as well as in the London Workers' Educational Union. There were several reasons for this. Willich's crude revolutionism was bound to appeal to the hungry, desperate workers assembled in both organisations. Moreover, Willich was closer to them as a man. While Marx, 'scholar' and 'theorist,' lived his own life and only came to the Union to lecture, Willich, who had no family, shared in the joys and sorrows of the exiled proletarians. He had created co-operative society and lived with the workers, ate with them and addressed them all in the familiar second person singular; Marx was respected but Willich was popular.

Marx proposed to the members of the central office that the headquarters of the League be transferred to Germany and that the central office transfer its authority to the central office at Cologne, the headquarters of the most important branch of the League, both by reason of its activity and its numerical strength. Marx's majority at the central office accepted his proposal, which was viewed with favour at Cologne. Willich's minority declared it to be contrary to the statutes and founded a new central office of its own. Part of Marx's speech is recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the decision was made. 'In place of a critical attitude the minority set up a dogmatic one,' he said, 'in place of a materialistic attitude an idealistic one. They make sheer will instead of real conditions the driving-wheel of the revolution. While we say to the workers: you have fifteen or twenty or fifty years of bourgeois and national wars to go through, not just to alter conditions but to alter yourselves and qualify for political power—you on the contrary say: we must obtain the power at once or we

might as well lay ourselves down to sleep. While we specifically draw the German workers' attention to the undeveloped state of the German proletariat, you outrageously flatter the national sentiment and social prejudices of the German artisan, a course which, of course, is far more popular. Just as the Democrats make a sacred entity of the word "people," so do you do the same with the word "proletariat." The meeting took place on September 15, 1850. Willich believed that the revolution would break out at any moment, and went on believing it even when the crisis, and with it the basis for the revolution, came to an end. On September 6 the Bank of England met banknotes with gold for the first time for a long period. The crisis was over.

The split in the League took place just in time, for Willich plunged into activities that were henceforward entirely quixotic. He was positive that things were going to happen quite soon, and sent off letter after letter to Germany. He had high hopes of the Cologne branch, whom he believed to be on his side, or at least hoped to bring over to his side. A conflict between Prussia and Austria was threatening, and the reserves had been called up. Willich believed the Communists should take advantage of the opportunity to seize Cologne, confiscate all private property, ban all newspapers but one, and establish a dictatorship. Thereupon he, Willich, would arrive and march to Paris at the head of the revolutionary troops, turn Louis Napoleon out, and promptly return to Germany to proclaim a one and indivisible republic, etc. He circulated his crack-brained appeals to his followers, but fortunately no one took any notice of them. The Cologne branch did everything in its power to counteract all such wildcat schemes.

Three weeks after severing connection with Willich, Marx liquidated the Société Universelle. Nothing is known of the activities of this organisation, and it is doubtful if it was ever really active at all. The Blanquists had set up a fencing and shooting establishment in London, obviously intended for training and preparing plotters for a rising. Liebknecht relates that Marx went there to practise shooting and fencing, not so much with the aim of leading an attack on the Paris Hôtel-de-Ville within the next few weeks as in memory of his year at the university of Bonn. When the Blanquists invited



Marx and Engels to a joint discussion with Willich of questions arising out of the Société Universelle, the answer given them was that Marx and his friends regarded the society as long since dead. From that time onwards the London Blanquists had the most intense hatred for Marx, and one of them, the adventurous Barthélemy, described Marx as a traitor, and 'traitors deserved death.' But the quarrel did not go farther than words.

The London Communists who stood by Marx after the split in the League were fairly regular at first in their attendance at the weekly meetings, but gradually started dropping out. Marx's own attendances became more and more infrequent. 'The public isolation in which you and I now find ourselves pleases me very much,' Marx wrote to Engels in February, 1854. 'It is entirely in accordance with our position and our principles. The system of mutual concessions and compromises, which one had to put up with for decency's sake, and the duty of bearing one's share of ridicule in common with all the other asses of the party has now ceased.' Marx had joined the revived Communist League on the assumption of the imminence of a new revolutionary outbreak, which made the League, with its secret organisations, its branches, emissaries and circulars, necessary, as it had been before 1848. The assumption had turned out to be false, and the League had lost the reason for its existence. There was no longer any necessity to make concessions to the Blanquists, compromises had become superfluous, the League itself had become superfluous. Soon after the rupture with Willich, and as soon as the danger of Willich's stirring up the branches in Germany to senseless insurrection had been eliminated, or at any rate notably diminished, Marx 'postponed' his further activities in the League 'indefinitely.' He only had occasion to busy himself with League affairs once more, but the occasion was a highly important one. It arose out of the trial of the leaders of the Cologne branch.

The Communists in Cologne, which was now the centre of the movement in Germany, had little experience of illegal work, and they worked with incredible carelessness, sometimes to the point of *naïveté*. The Prussian police were not very clever either. They themselves did not get on to the track of

the 'conspirators,' but had to be given a fillip from outside. In May, 1851, the Saxon police arrested an emissary of the League, a tailor named Nothjung, in Leipzig, and discovered from his papers the existence of the organisation in Cologne and the names of its most important members. The Prussian police took no steps whatever until practically the whole of the essential facts had been communicated to them. What they lacked in professional skill they made up for by brutal treatment of prisoners under arrest and shameless provocation.

The genuine documents which came to light in the course of the house-searches in Cologne were quite sufficient to bring the members of the Cologne branch before a court of justice. But under the *Code Napoléon*, which was in force in the Rhineland, the accused would have to appear before a jury, and police and public prosecutor, not without reason in view of past experience, feared that the accused, charged as they were with activity as part of an organisation which stood for Marx's point of view and was concerned with propaganda, might be acquitted. Therefore more substantial material must be produced. If there were none, it was necessary to create it. The authorities were aware of the existence of Willich's crack-brained letters to the Cologne Communists, and although the Cologne branch had specifically repudiated his plans for an insurrection, their repudiation made no difference. According to the police, they and Willich were all the same, and no distinctions were recognised. In the eyes of the police no such thing as a rupture because of fundamental political differences existed. Willich and Marx were the same, and the quarrel between them was a purely personal one, arising out of rivalry for the leadership of the secret society. The police made promises to all sorts of people, including convicts and prisoners on remand. They promised them every sort of favour—withdrawal of proceedings against them, quashing of their convictions—if they would agree to give suitable evidence. Not content with that, they sought for documents—evidence in writing that would compromise Marx and implicate him personally.

The Cologne police even spread their net to London, where most of the better-known refugees, above all the leaders of the

'Marx Party,' and the 'Willich Party' were living. An army of spies was set to watch the political refugees. The Germans were trailed not only by the police agents of Austria, Prussia and other German states but also by French spies, Belgian spies, Dutch spies and Danish spies. A regular trade in information about the German refugees sprang up, with a veritable market at which information was bartered or paid for in cash. Information was anxiously sought by diplomats, who used it to curry favour with the German potentates, and the agents formed rings or engaged in fierce competition with each other. It was a dirty and lucrative business.

In many reports Marx appeared as a desperate terrorist who used London as a base for organising attempts on the crowned heads of Europe. The Prussian ambassador in Brussels reported in December, 1848, that there were rumours in Belgium that Marx was preparing an attempt on the King of Prussia. Consequently, when a good royalist non-commissioned officer made an attempt on the life of Frederick William IV in the spring of 1850, special agents were sent to London who naturally confirmed the fact that Marx was the organiser of the outrage. The chief of the Belgian police passed on to the Prussians his own agents' report that Marx forgathered every evening at a tavern with a group of desperadoes, to whom he made inflammatory speeches—*'il endoctrine ses séides qu'il compte lâcher un jour individuellement en Allemagne avec une mission déterminée facile à deviner.'*<sup>1</sup>

The police also discovered that Marx, not satisfied with the assassination of German princes, had aims on the lives of Queen Victoria and the Prince Regent. The Prussian policeman who sent this sensational report to Berlin asked whether it might not be advisable, in view of the tremendous importance of the matter, to seek a personal audience of the Queen. The audience was not granted, but on May 24, 1850, Man-teuffel, the Prussian Prime Minister, sent copies of the report to the British Foreign Office. Verbal representations seem also to have been made to the British authorities, for in the summer of 1850 Marx feared he was going to be expelled from England. The English police were more intelligent than the Prussians

<sup>1</sup> He teaches his partisans whom he one day counts on sending individually to Germany on missions the nature of which may easily be guessed.

believed them to be, for they soon discovered what lay behind the Prussian denunciations.

During the preparations for the Cologne trials police activities were redoubled. Their agents, having unlimited resources at their disposal, got busy among the starving refugees and succeeded in buying several of them. One of the most important refugee-spies was the Hungarian Colonel Bangya, who was in the confidence of Kossuth and in the pay of the French, Austrian and Prussian police at the same time. The police dossiers of the time are full of reports of his having attended a refugee meeting yesterday, of having read certain letters the day before, and having gained the friendship of this leader or the other. These bought ex-revolutionaries were able to give information about Marx, and sometimes their reports were very well informed. Bangya supplied particularly detailed reports, for he enjoyed Marx's friendship for several months and was a frequent visitor at his house.

The reports of the properly informed agents did not help the police, for they tended rather to vindicate than incriminate the Cologne accused. They were unanimous in stating that Marx repudiated armed risings and plots. So the police had recourse to other methods. They had the house of one of Willich's followers broken into, and the records of the 'Willich-Schapper Party' fell into their hands almost complete. They rounded these off with letters they forged themselves. The 'Marx Party' documents were in the possession of Marx and Engels and were better looked after, but the police managed to get at them too. They manufactured a minute book with forged reports of meetings that never took place. And now the case was ready to begin.

For months Marx did practically nothing but work for the accused, to whose defence he devoted all his energies, both before and during the trial, which lasted for weeks. At the end of October, 1852, Frau Marx wrote to a friend in America:

'You will have followed the Communist monster trial in the *Kölnische Zeitung*. On October 23 the whole thing took such a splendid and interesting turn, and one so favourable to the accused, that our spirits began to revive a little again. You can imagine that the "Marx Party" is active day and night, and is working with head, hands and feet.

'The whole of the police case is lies. They steal, they forge, they break desks open, they commit perjury and give false evidence, and consider they have a perfect right to do so in the case of the Communists, who are beyond the pale. This and the blackguardly way the police have of taking over all the functions of the public prosecutor and producing as proof, as legally proved fact, unverified documents, sheer rumours, reports and hearsay evidence is really hair-raising. My husband has to work all day and far into the night, for all the proofs of forgery have to be elaborated in London. Whole documents have to be copied six or eight times over and sent to Germany by the most various routes, via Frankfurt, Paris, etc., for all letters addressed to my husband, and all letters from here to Cologne are intercepted and opened. The whole thing is now a struggle between the police on the one side and my husband on the other, for everything, the whole revolution and now the whole conduct of the defence, has been thrust upon his shoulders.

'Forgive my confused writing, but I have been somewhat immersed in the plot myself, and I have been copying so much that my fingers ache. Hence the confusion. Whole masses of business addresses and fake business letters have just arrived from Weerth and Engels to enable us to despatch documents, etc., safely. A regular office has been established here. Two or three of us write, others run messages, still others scrape pennies together to enable the writers to keep themselves alive and furnish proofs of the scandalous behaviour of the official world. At the same time my three merry children sing and whistle and their papa keeps on losing patience with them. Such a hustling and bustling.'

Marx's efforts resulted in the unmasking of some of the chief forgeries and four of the eleven accused were acquitted, but the pressure of the police and the Government on the jury was so great that the other seven were convicted. They were sentenced to from three to six years' imprisonment in a fortress.

That was the end of the Communist League. After the arrests in Cologne in 1851 it ceased to exist. In England it only continued as an organisation to help the accused. Sentence was pronounced in Cologne on November 12, 1852. Five days later the League, at Marx's proposal, was declared

dissolved. Marx's reason for this decision was that the League was 'no longer opportune.'

Marx never again belonged to a secret organisation. General political grounds and private grounds united in causing him to refrain. Some American Communists proposed to reorganise the League at the end of the fifties, but he would have nothing to do with it. He told them he was convinced he could do more good to the working classes by his theoretical labours than by participation in organisations the time for which had gone by. He refused to join any secret organisations, 'if only on the ground that such organisations might endanger human beings in Germany.' The conviction of his Cologne comrades was a terrible blow to him. Roland Daniels, the man for whom Marx had more affection than for any other, succumbed early to illness contracted in prison. 'His was a delicate, finely organised, thoroughly noble nature,' Marx wrote in his letter of condolence to Frau Daniels. 'In him character, talents and aesthetic vision were in unusual harmony. Daniels stood out among the people of Cologne like a Greek statue thrust by some whimsical mischance among a lot of Hottentots.' Marx never got over the fact of men like Daniels dying a sacrifice to Prussian police infamy. He was convinced that the time for the workers' movement in Western Europe to organise itself into secret societies had gone.

Marx wrote his pamphlet, *Revelations of the Communist Trial in Cologne*, in November and December, 1852. He exposed all the abominable practices of the police, produced documentary evidence of their forgeries, utterly demolished the web of lies that they had spun. But the pamphlet did not reach Germany. A fairly large edition of two thousand copies was printed in Switzerland, but was confiscated when an attempt was made to smuggle it over the frontier.

Another of Marx's works had not fared much better shortly before. Joseph Weydemeyer had founded a weekly paper in America, where he emigrated in the autumn of 1850. It was the only German paper at Marx's disposal after the death of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung-Revue*. Marx started writing for *The Revolution*, as it was called, an essay on *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, referring to the Bonapartist *coup d'état* of December 2, 1850. But Weydemeyer was not able to proceed

with his first number, and the most brilliant of Marx's shorter historical works, in which, as Engels said, he gives a magnificent example of how the materialist interpretation of history can explain an event which remains baffling from all other viewpoints, might have remained unpublished had a German worker not given Weydemeyer forty dollars, the whole of his savings, to enable him to print it. *The 18th Brumaire* appeared as the first number of the monthly *The Revolution*. Although several hundred copies found their way to Germany not a single one appeared in any bookshop.

After the dispersal of the Communist League Marx resigned from the Workers' Educational Union and the refugees' assistance committee. He shared in none of the busy inactivity with which the more or less well-known Democratic leaders in London, 'the great men of the emigration' as Marx called them, filled their time waiting for the outbreak of the revolution which they believed to be imminent. He had nothing but bitter sarcasm and contempt for their empty pathos, their cliques and their factions, the whole of the hollow motions through which they went. They regarded him as a mischief-maker, a proud, unsociable man who went his own way alone. They hated him for being an obstinate Communist. An example will suffice to show what excesses the bourgeois 'emigrants' were capable when they wanted to make Marx appear contemptible.

In the summer of 1851 a rumour was spread in London that Marx had become a contributor to the *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, the paper of extreme Reaction. It was partly under the control of Ferdinand von Westphalen, the Minister of the Interior of whom Marx had said to his wife in jest in 1848 that her brother was so stupid that he was sure to become a Prussian minister one day. Neither Marx nor his wife had had the slightest contact with him for many years. An obscure German paper published in London eagerly took up the slander and surpassed itself in innuendoes about the excellent relations existing between the red revolutionary and the minister of state. At that Marx, who granted the Press the right to insult politicians, comedians and other public figures, but not to slander them, lost patience and challenged the editor to a duel. The editor was frightened out of his life and

printed in his next issue the apology that was dictated to him and thus the incident was closed.

Since Engels had gone to live in Manchester, Marx was practically alone in London. Material needs became more and more pressing. In 1848, when the German revolution began to peter out, Engels looked back with a smile of regret to the 'sleepless night of exile' during the years that led up to the Revolution. The real and dreadful 'sleepless night of exile' started now.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT OF EXILE

BONAPARTE'S *coup d'état* put the finishing external touch to the European counter-revolution, which now held the whole Continent in its grip. In Hungary, where the defence had been heroic, the hangman now held sway. Austria was ruled as it had been in the time of Metternich. In Prussia nothing was left of the triumphant achievements of March but a pitiful mock-constitutionalism which served as an admirable prop of military despotism. The inner enemy was everywhere defeated. The way was once more clear for an active foreign policy.

The revolution had not succeeded in solving a single one of the numerous European national problems. Germany remained carved into little pieces, Poland remained divided, Italy was still rent asunder and Hungary enslaved. In the last resort Austria and Prussia had been saved by Russia. Russian troops had kept down the Poles and suppressed the Hungarian revolution; and now the Tsar proceeded to claim his recompense for saving Central Europe from 'chaos.' The opportunity of coming a step nearer to the capture of Holy Byzantium, the principal aim of Russian foreign policy, was more favourable than it had ever been before. Austria, just saved by Russia from Kossuth and practically bankrupt in any case, was bound to remain inactive, and Prussia was a vassal state. No danger threatened from the West. France, or so they believed in St. Petersburg, was not yet strong enough to resist Russia alone, and the Tory Government in England could not well defend the Crescent against the Cross.

The calculation was erroneous. France and England, much as they wished to avoid war, were forced to come to the assistance of Turkey. It was impossible for them to tolerate Russia, even in the guise of a champion of Christianity, gaining a foothold on the Dardanelles. In the spring of 1854 Russia found herself at war with England, France and Turkey.

This was not the war Marx had longed for in 1848 and 1849. This was no war against the stronghold of counter-revolution, but a war of the three most important counter-revolutionary powers among themselves. Marx welcomed it, for he who fought Russia was working for the revolution, though he knew it not and willed it not. Recent experience had shown once more that the overthrow of Russia was an essential preliminary to the victory of the proletariat. In the nineties Engels summarised Marx's reasons in two sentences. 'In the first place the Russian Empire constitutes the great stronghold, reserve position and reserve army of European reaction. The mere fact of its existence is itself a danger and a threat to us. In the second place it constantly interferes in European affairs with the object of securing geographical points of vantage, all with the aim of obtaining an ascendancy over Europe, and in so doing interferes with our normal development and thus makes the liberation of the European proletariat impossible.'

Being anti-Russian meant anything but being pro-English or pro-French or even pro-Turkish. In France the most arbitrary despotism held sway, in spite of, or rather because of, the universal suffrage which under the Empire had become a gigantic instrument of popular betrayal. Freedom of assembly was as good as abolished, the workers' right to combine was taken away, the increase in the severity of the conditions of the work-books made them the slaves of every minor police official, and the whole country was given over a helpless prey to the rapacity of the December bands, who did not hesitate to take advantage of their opportunity. As for England, it pretended to be waging 'a war of civilisation against barbarism,' but in defending Turkey it was really defending the flanks of the route to India, where in Marx's words, 'the real hypocrisy and the barbarism native to bourgeois civilisation appears in all its nakedness.' England treated the Irish with even greater inhumanity, if such a thing were possible, than that with which the Russian proprietor treated his serfs; England was the country whose fate was determined by its aristocracy and heartless middle-class alone, who were roused to indignation at the maltreatment of Christians in Turkey to-day, and at the suppression by the Russians of the noble peoples of the Caucasus to-morrow, but had no objection to

eleven-year-old children slaving for ten or eleven hours a day in the textile factories.

Europe was on the move again, but Marx was entirely cut off from any possibility of direct political activity. After the dissolution of the Communist League, which in any case would not have been a suitable instrument for political action, no other organisation existed. The German Press was closed to Marx. He started writing for an unimportant paper in Breslau, but that was not till the beginning of 1855, and in any case it was sheer hack-work and after a year the paper was discontinued. Marx's connections in France were even more tenuous; an occasional letter from a refugee in Paris, and that was all. In England things were slightly better.

The Chartist Movement never succeeded in recovering from its defeat in the spring of 1848. A few groups survived here and there, practically without contact with one another. Many leaders had deserted it, and with the end of the crisis the great English workers' movement seemed to be at an end too. Of the two men whom Marx knew from earlier days, G. J. Harney was undoubtedly as well-meaning and as devoted to the workers' cause as anyone could be, but he was quite obviously incapable of resurrecting the expiring movement. He was always full of enthusiasms, for Kossuth and Mazzini, for Marx and for Willich. They were all such excellent men, and he made heroes of them all. Marx and Engels had a private name for him—'Citizen Hip-Hip-Hurrah!' They soon parted from him.

The one Chartist leader with whom Marx remained in contact for long was Ernest Jones. Jones, energetic, pertinacious, clever, if sometimes over-clever, educated and an excellent speaker, well-tried in struggle—he spent two years in prison because of his part in the stormy demonstration of 1848—had all the qualities of a great agitator. His fiery spirit breathed new life into the movement. In March, 1854, he actually succeeded in causing an All English Workers' Parliament to meet in Manchester. Marx, who was invited as an honorary delegate, sent an address in which he defined the task of the parliament as 'organisation of its united forces, organisation of the working class on a national scale.' But the Chartists lacked the strength to overcome their defeat and

the movement increasingly disintegrated. Some of its old adherents merged into petty-bourgeois reformist groups, others lost interest, and Jones himself ended by joining John Bright's Radicals.

Marx found it exceedingly difficult to reconcile himself to the idea of a powerful movement, which but a few years before had been the champion of the European proletariat, ending in this way. He went on hoping that it would flare up again, be rekindled by some spontaneous act. When two hundred thousand workers, artisans and small tradesmen demonstrated against the Sunday Trading Bill in Hyde Park in June, 1855, Marx believed the affair to be no less than 'the beginning of the English revolution.' He and other German exiles took an active part in it. Liebknecht writes in his memoirs that Marx, who was liable to become very excited on such occasions, was 'within a hair's breadth of being seized by the collar by a policeman and hauled before a magistrate, had not a warm appeal to the thirst of the brave guardian of the law eventually met with success.' After a second demonstration the Bill was withdrawn and the flickering flame extinguished.

The whole weakness of the Chartist Movement in the first half of the fifties was demonstrated, among other things, by its newspapers. Harney's paper, *The Red Republican*, which published the first English translation of the Communist Manifesto, ceased to appear after a short time and its successor, *The Friend of the People*, had no better fate. From February, 1852, onwards Jones produced a weekly, *The People's Paper*, but had the greatest difficulty in keeping the 'poor sheet' (as Marx called it) alive. Marx helped to edit it for a time. From the autumn onwards he occasionally wrote articles for Jones and allowed him to reprint articles which had appeared elsewhere. But even the *People's Paper* had only a very limited circulation. It was several times on the verge of bankruptcy and ended by passing into the hands of a bourgeois radical group.

Apart from the Chartist Press, which was insignificant, the only papers in England at Marx's disposal were the Urquhartite papers. When the Oriental question cropped up once more in the spring of 1853 Marx at first paid very little attention to it. In March he was still convinced that 'in spite of all the dirty work and the ranting in the newspapers it would never

be the cause of a European war.' Six months later Russia and Turkey were at war, and when France and England entered the fray a local dispute flared up into a European war. Marx flung himself into the *détestable question orientale*, and for a time even thought of learning Arabic and Turkish. He read all the books on the Near East he could lay his hands on, and found particular interest in the writings of David Urquhart, to which Engels had drawn his attention. 'I am now reading Urquhart, the crazy M.P., who declares that Palmerston is sold to Russia. The explanation is simple; the fellow is a Highland Scot of Lowland education, by nature a Romantic and by training a Free Trader. The fellow went to Greece a philhellene and, after being at daggers drawn with the Turks for three long years, he went to Turkey and became an enthusiast for the very Turks he had just been quarrelling with. He goes into raptures over Islam, and his motto is: if I were not a Calvinist I should be a Mohammedan. In his opinion Turks, particularly those of the Golden Age of the Osmanli Empire, are the most perfect nation on earth, without any exception whatever. The Turkish language is the most perfect and melodious in the world. The Turkish constitution in its 'purity' is as fine as any there could be, and is almost superior to the British. In short, only the Turk is a gentleman and freedom exists only in Turkey.'

Urquhart went into raptures over Turkey because it was barbaric. He went into raptures about the Middle Ages and the Catholic Church for the same reason. He hated modern industry, the bourgeoisie, universal suffrage, the Chartists and revolutionaries of every kind. He was profoundly convinced that all these were nothing but the tools of Russian diplomacy, which made use of them to cause unrest in the West and deliver it a helpless prey to Russian plans of world-conquest. Marx soon saw that Urquhart was a complete monomaniac, but his hatred of Russia might make him a useful ally.

Marx frequently praised the writings of Urquhart in the articles on the Oriental question he wrote for the *New York Tribune* from the summer of 1853 onwards. Whatever else the Scot might be, he certainly knew the Near East better than most of his contemporaries. The fact that there was no infamy of which he did not think Russia capable only served to make

Marx more favourably inclined towards him. Moreover, there seemed to be an element of truth in his exaggerations. In spite of Marx's original scepticism, the more closely he studied the recent history of Anglo-Russian relations the better-founded did Urquhart's imputations against British statesmen, and Palmerston in particular, appear. Marx made an exhaustive study of Hansard and subjected the diplomatic Blue Books from 1807 to 1850 to an assiduous analysis. In November, 1853, he communicated the result of his researches to Engels: 'Curious as it may seem to you, as a result of closely following the footprints of the noble viscount for the past twenty years, I have come to the same conclusion as the monomaniac Urquhart, namely that Palmerston has been sold to Russia for several decades.'

The irresolute, vacillating manner in which England and France waged the war and their complaints of the Tsar's intransigence, which made the compromise they desired so difficult to obtain, only served to intensify Marx's conviction that Palmerston did not mean the war seriously and that the war was a sham. Marx became a monomaniac like Urquhart. He examined hundreds of diplomatic documents in the British Museum, and in his opinion they revealed a secret connivance between the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg dating from the time of Peter the Great. Marx now attacked Palmerston with great vehemence. He did not directly accuse him of being corrupted by Russia, but demonstrated 'Palmerston's connivance with the St. Petersburg Cabinet from his transactions with Poland, Turkey, Circassia, etc.'

Urquhart was delighted at Marx's articles on Lord Palmerston, which were published in the *New York Tribune* and the *People's Paper*. E. Tucker, a publisher and a friend of Urquhart's, printed fifteen thousand copies of one of these articles in the form of a fly-sheet, and not long afterwards he reproduced two more articles in the same form. In the summer of 1854 the Urquhartites, this time with the support of the Chartists, started a campaign against secret diplomacy. The campaign was chiefly directed against Palmerston. Their organs, the *Free Press* in London and the *Sheffield Free Press* reprinted many of Marx's articles. Marx maintained his contact with them until the middle of the sixties. Marx shrank at

nothing when it came to striking a blow at Russian Tsarism. Later he actually wrote anti-Russian articles for Conservative papers.

Apart from the Chartist movement and the Urquhartite committees, some unimportant weeklies, and two or three pamphlets, Marx's voice in England was echoing in the void. For ten whole years Marx had only one big newspaper through which to speak, though his voice did not reach the English, French and German proletariat for whom his words were meant. From the summer of 1852 onwards Marx was a regular correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, which in the middle of the fifties had the largest circulation in the world.

The *New York Tribune* was founded in April, 1841, as an organ of the advanced bourgeois intelligentsia, by Horace Greeley, a former compositor who became a journalist. Greeley was a friend of Albert Brisbane and the Rev. George Ripley, two zealous disciples of the Socialist teaching of Fourier. In the spring of 1842 he put his paper at the disposal of Fourierist propaganda. Fourierism had many followers among the educated classes in America at the time. Its colony at Brook Farm, near Boston, was visited and encouraged by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emerson, Channing and Margaret Fuller. It was destroyed by fire in 1846 and financial difficulties prevented its reconstruction. Many of the colonists went to New York, where Charles A. Dana became city editor and Ripley critic of the *New York Tribune*. It had a roll of contributors unequalled by any other American paper, an uncommonly high literary and political standard, and excellent European correspondents, but was only moderately successful prior to 1848, when, as the best-informed paper in America, its circulation increased as a consequence of the outbreak of the revolution. Dana was sent to Europe as a special correspondent. He was in Paris during the June rising, went to Berlin in the autumn and in November went to Cologne. It may have been Brisbane, who was in Berlin at the time and had met Marx in Paris, who drew Dana's attention to him. Dana paid Marx a visit and spent a 'delightful' evening with him, as he was fond of recalling in later years, and took away with him an abiding impression that in Marx he had met the most acute and far-seeing of the revolutionaries. In July,

1850, he wrote to Marx from New York that he always kept himself informed of Marx's activities and whereabouts and asked him whether he would not like to come to America. Marx's answer is unknown. At the time Marx certainly had plans to emigrate to America, as will be mentioned later.

After the collapse of the German revolution a great stream of emigrants poured into the new, the free world. Half a million Germans landed in New York in the years 1852 to 1854 alone. They took with them a lively interest in the affairs of their native land. Even the native Americans, who did not generally pay much attention to Europe, took much more notice of it now than formerly. The *New York Tribune*, with its excellent connections among the Democrats of the emigration, advanced in circulation by leaps and bounds. At the beginning of August, 1851, Dana invited Marx to contribute.

Between August, 1851, and September, 1852, eighteen articles on the revolution and counter-revolution in Germany appeared in the *New York Tribune*. They appeared over Marx's signature, though not one of them was written by him. Marx was so fully occupied on the great economic work which he was anxious to complete as quickly as possible that he asked Engels to write them in his stead, and Engels wrote them, as he later wrote many more articles for Marx, either entirely or in part. In May, 1852, Dana asked Marx to send him articles on 'current events which throw light on the brewing revolutionary crisis.' Marx submitted the first article in August. As his English was not yet adequate, he wrote in German, which Engels translated. From February, 1853, onwards Marx wrote his English articles himself. From then onwards Marx worked very hard for the *New York Tribune*. During the first year he sent no fewer than sixty articles to New York.

The work Marx did for the *New York Tribune* was not that of an ordinary foreign correspondent. He contributed articles which were comprehensive evaluations of recent events. Sometimes he wrote regular essays. They were composed hurriedly, because the steamer sailed twice a week, and if Marx missed the mail an article was lost and he was £2 the poorer. But every line he wrote was based on careful study. Marx lacked both inclination and ability for the work of a newspaper correspondent proper. He had little contact with



political circles, still less with bourgeois circles, he avoided journalists and could not dance attendance on the latest sensations. From ten in the morning till seven at night he sat in the Reading Room of the British Museum. Before writing an article on British rule in India he studied dozens of books on the subject, and before his series on the Spanish revolution he went through the whole of ancient and modern literature relevant to the subject. Engels co-operated valiantly in his own departments, i.e. military matters and geography. The *New York Tribune* was more than pleased with the work of its contributor. Sometimes Marx's contributions were printed as leading articles, and Dana did not shrink from inserting sentences here and there and altering the beginning and end to make it appear that the articles had been written in the office. Engels's military articles on the Turko-Russian War attracted so much attention that their author was taken to be the prominent General Winfield Scott, who was friendly with Greeley and stood as a candidate for the presidency.

The *New York Tribune*, which was not so anxious to let its readers see how much of the work was not its own, started omitting Marx's name more and more frequently. Marx eventually insisted that either all his articles be signed or none, and from the spring of 1855 they all appeared unsigned. At first other Germans had contributed to the *New York Tribune*, including Freiligrath, Ruge and even Bruno Bauer, but from the middle of the fifties Marx was its only diplomatic correspondent in Europe.

The fees paid Marx for his articles were hardly in accordance with the *New York Tribune's* appreciation of him as 'its most highly-valued contributor.' For the first article Marx was paid £1, and the fee was then raised to £2. Marx was not paid for all the articles he submitted but only for those that were printed. The greatest concession that Marx ever obtained was in the spring of 1857, when the *Tribune* agreed to pay him for one dispatch a week, whether it were used or not. The remainder were only to be paid for if they actually appeared. The number of articles paid for rose and fell in accordance with American interest in events in Europe, whether because they directly affected the United States or whether such things as wars, risings or crises were 'sensational'

enough for them. 'It is really disgusting,' Marx wrote to Engels in January, 1857, 'to be condemned to take it as a favour that such a rag admits you to its company. To pound and grind dry bones and make soup of them, as paupers do in the workhouse, that is the sum total of the political work to which one is generously condemned in such society. Although I am only an ass, I am conscious of having given these rascals, I will not say recently, but in former years, too much for their money.'

Irregular and uncertain as Marx's income from the *New York Tribune* was for nearly ten years, it was all he earned. In spite of Engels's unlimited sacrifices he would have been lost without it.

When Marx arrived in London he was not in the least worried about his immediate monetary prospects. He was convinced that he would soon succeed in putting the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on its feet again in the form of a review. But negotiations with the publishers dragged on for month after month, and then Marx was taken ill. The contributions were not ready in time and the first number appeared at the beginning of March, 1850, instead of on January 1. The money Marx brought with him—his wife had sold the furniture in Cologne and she had pawned the silver in France—quickly vanished. Other exiles, poverty-stricken themselves, were unable to help. Marx had to provide for his wife, four young children (Guido, his second son, was born in October, 1849) and Lenchen Demuth, the faithful housekeeper. The household was reduced to an appalling state of destitution. At the end of March, 1850, they were evicted. About this time Frau Marx wrote to Weydemeyer: 'I shall describe one day of this life as it really was, and you will see that perhaps few other refugees have had to suffer so much. Since the cost of a wet-nurse is prohibitive here, I decided, in spite of continual and terrible pains in the breasts and the back, to nurse the child myself. But the poor little angel drank in so much sorrow with the milk that he was continually fretting, and in violent pain day and night. He has not slept a whole night through since he was born, but sleeps at most two or three hours. Recently he has been subject to violent cramps, so that he is continually hovering on the brink of life and death. When he

was suffering in this way he sucked so violently that my nipple became sore and bled. Often the blood streamed into his little mouth. As I was sitting like this one day our landlady suddenly appeared. In the course of the winter we had paid her more than two hundred and fifty thalers, and we had arranged with her that in future we were not to pay her but the landlord, who had put in an execution. Now she denied this agreement and demanded the £5 we still owed her. As we could not pay this sum at once two brokers entered the house and took possession of all my belongings; bedding, linen, clothes, everything, even the poor baby's cradle and the better toys belonging to the girls, who stood by, weeping bitterly. They threatened to take everything away in two hours' time, when I should have had to lie on the bare floor with my freezing children and my aching breast. Our friend Schramm hurried into the town to seek help. He got into a cab, but the horses ran away. He jumped out and was brought back bleeding to the house, where I was in despair with my poor shivering children.

'We had to leave the house next day. It was cold and rainy and dreary. My husband tried to find a lodging for us, but no one was willing to have us when he mentioned the four children. At last a friend helped us and we paid what was owing. I quickly sold all my beds in order to settle with the chemist, the baker, the butcher and the milkman, who were all filled with alarm when they heard the broker's men were in and rushed to send in their bills. The beds I sold were taken to the street door and loaded on to a hand-cart—and what do you think happened? By this time it had grown late and it was long after sunset, after which moving furniture in this way is illegal by English law. The landlord appeared with a number of constables, and said that some of his property might be on the cart, we might be escaping to a foreign country. In less than five minutes a crowd of two or three hundred people had gathered outside our front door—the whole Chelsea mob. The beds were brought in again, and could not be sent to the purchaser until next morning. Now that the sale of our goods and chattels had enabled us to pay our debts to the last penny, I moved with my little darlings to two tiny rooms at our present address, the German Hotel,

1, Leicester Street, Leicester Square, where we found a human reception for £5 10s. a week.

'Do not imagine that these petty sufferings have bent me. I know only too well that our struggle is no isolated one, that I belong to the favoured and the fortunate, since my dear husband, the mainstay of my life, is still at my side. The only thing that really crushes me and makes my heart bleed is all the pettinesses that he has to suffer, the fact that so few have come to his aid, and that he, who has so willingly and gladly helped so many, should be helpless here. But you are not to think, my dear Herr Weydemeyer, that we are making claims on anyone. The only thing that my husband might have expected of those who have had so many ideas, so much encouragement, so much support from him was that they might have devoted more practical energy to his *Review*, might have taken a greater interest in it. I am proud and bold enough to suggest this. That little I think they owed him. But my husband thinks otherwise. Never, even at the most terrible times, has he lost his confidence in the future, or even his cheerful humour.'

In the middle of May Marx and his family moved to Soho, the quarter where the most poverty-stricken refugees lived. He rented two small rooms in Dean Street, and there he lived for six years, in a noisy, dirty street, in a neighbourhood where epidemic after epidemic raged. In 1854 the cholera was worse in Soho than anywhere else. Three of his children died there. Those were unspeakably dreadful years.

The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung-Review* brought Marx in less than thirty thalers in all, and it was impossible to go on with it. Marx sold his library, which he had left in Cologne, got into debt, pawned everything that was not nailed fast. After the miscarriage of their literary plans Engels could no longer remain in London. He returned to 'fiendish commerce' in the autumn of 1853 and went to Manchester, to his father's cotton-mill, where he worked at a moderate salary as an ordinary employee. Engels's conviction that the revolution would soon free him from his 'Egyptian bondage' enabled him to tolerate a life he hated. But his chief aim was to help Marx. Marx, the brains of the revolutionary party, the genius, in comparison with whom he felt his own gifts to be merely ta'ents, must not

be allowed to perish in poverty-stricken refugeedom. For twenty long years Engels worked at a job he hated, abandoning his own scientific work in order to make possible the work of his friend. He wrote newspaper articles for him and gave him as much money as he could. During the early years this was not a great deal. Engels's salary increased only gradually, and he had considerable social responsibilities of his own. He had to maintain a 'respectable' household, and another in which he lived with an Irish daughter of the people named Mary Burns, and he kept Mary's relatives as well, but every pound he could possibly spare was sent to Marx, whose position became more and more desperate every month. In the autumn of 1850 Marx seriously considered the idea of emigrating to America, where he hoped to be able to found a German paper. Rothacker, who had taken part in the rising in Baden, was asked to prepare the ground among friends and acquaintances in New York. He wrote to Marx in November, saying that the prospects were as bad as they could possibly be. The immediate prospects in London, whatever they were, were better than they were in New York. Little Guido died, 'a sacrifice to bourgeois misery,' as Marx said to Engels. A daughter, Franziska, was born in March, 1851. When she died, barely one year old, Marx was forced to borrow money from a French *émigré* to pay for the coffin.

Marx wished to continue the review as a quarterly, but the publisher refused. Marx devoted all his energy to his book on economics. He and his friends in Germany spent months negotiating with every conceivable publisher, but not one of them was willing to have anything to do with him. Marx's name alone was sufficient to put them into a panic. Hermann Becker tried to get Marx's *Collected Essays* published in Cologne. One volume appeared and that was all. Marx offered the publishers a pamphlet on Proudhon, then a translation of *Misère de la Philosophie*; he offered to contribute to periodicals and was willing to write 'completely innocuous' articles. But all his suggestions were declined. Had friends—notably the excellent Daniels—not helped him, he would have starved in 1851. 'You can well imagine that the situation is very gloomy,' Marx wrote to Weydemeyer. 'It will be the end of my wife if it goes on much longer. The never-ending worries of the

petty, paltry, bourgeois struggle are a terrible strain on her. To add to it there are all the infamies of my opponents, who never dared attack me but avenge themselves for their impotence by spreading the most unspeakable infamies about me and making me socially suspect. I should, of course, only laugh at the filth. I do not let them disturb me for one moment in my work. But you will understand that my wife, who is ailing, and has to endure the most dismal poverty from morning till night, and whose nervous system is upset, is none the better for having to listen to stupid go-betweens who daily report to her the outpourings of the democratic cesspools. The tactlessness of some of these people is often amazing.'

Naturally Marx did not receive a single penny for his *18th Brumaire*. That was work for the Party. His battle for the defendants at the Cologne trial and his unmasking of the police in his *Revelations* was Party work too. During the second half of 1852 these activities occupied all his time. All this work was carried out under the most unspeakable difficulties. In February he reached the 'pleasant point' when he could not go out because his coat was in pawn and he could no longer eat meat because he could not get any more credit. His wife, little Jenny and Lenchen Demuth were taken ill. 'I could not and cannot fetch the doctor,' Marx wrote to Engels, 'because I have no money for medicine. For the last eight to ten days I have fed my family on bread and potatoes, and to-day it is still doubtful whether I shall be able to obtain even these.' Towards the end of the year the situation at last began to improve. Engels was able to send more money and the first payments arrived from the *New York Tribune*. But up to 1858 there were always times, even in the 'good' years, when Marx scarcely had a penny in his pocket. The children learned to resist the siege of creditors—the butcher, the milkman, and the baker—by saying: 'Mr. Marx ain't upstairs.' Once Marx was forced to fly to Manchester because of a doctor who threatened to sue him for a £26 debt, and the gas and water were going to be cut off. The following description of Marx's household, written by a Prussian spy who managed to ingratiate his way into it, is not without malice and is not to be credited word for word, but gives a pretty good idea of the general atmosphere of the life Marx led in 1853.

'The chief leader of this party, (i.e. the Communists) is Karl Marx; the minor leaders are Friedrich Engels in Manchester, Freiligrath and Wolff (called "Lupus") in London, Heine in Paris, Weydemeyer and Cluss in America. Bürgers and Daniels were the leaders in Cologne and Weerth in Hamburg. All the rest are simple members. The moving and active spirit, the real soul of the Party, is Marx, for which reason I propose to give you a personal description of the man.

'Marx is of medium stature, and is thirty-four years of age. Although he is still in the prime of life, his hair is turning grey. His frame is powerful, his features bring Szemere (a Hungarian revolutionary) to mind very strongly, but his complexion is darker and his hair and beard quite black. Lately he does not shave at all. His big, piercing, fiery eyes have something demoniacally sinister about them. The first impression one receives is that of a man of genius and energy; his intellectual superiority exercises an irresistible power on his surroundings.

'In private life he is an extremely untidy and cynical human being. He is a bad host and leads a regular Bohemian existence. Washing and combing himself and changing his linen are rarities with him, and he likes getting drunk. He often idles away for days on end, but when he has a great deal to do he works day and night with tireless endurance. He has no fixed times for going to bed or for getting up. He often stays up for whole nights, then lies down fully clothed on the couch at midday and sleeps till evening, untroubled by people coming in or going out, for everyone has a free *entrée* to his house.

'His wife is the sister of von Westphalen, the Prussian Minister, and is a cultured and charming woman, who has accustomed herself to this Bohemian existence out of love for her husband, and she now feels quite at home in poverty. She has two daughters and a son, and all three children are really handsome and have their father's intelligent eyes.

'As husband and father, Marx, in spite of his restless and wild character, is the gentlest and mildest of men. He lives in one of the worst, therefore one of the cheapest neighbourhoods in London. He occupies two rooms. The room looking out on the street is the parlour, and the bedroom is at the back. There is not one clean or decent piece of furniture in either

room, but everything is broken, tattered and torn, with thick dust over everything and the greatest untidiness everywhere. In the middle of the parlour there is a large old-fashioned table, covered with oil-cloth. On it there lie manuscripts, books and newspapers, besides the children's toys, bits and pieces from his wife's sewing basket, and cups with broken rims, dirty spoons, knives, forks, lamps, an ink-pot, tumblers, some Dutch clay-pipes, tobacco ash—all in a pile on the same table.

'On entering Marx's room smoke and tobacco fumes make your eyes water to such an extent that for the first moment you seem to be groping about in a cavern, until you get used to it and manage to pick out certain objects in the haze. Everything is dirty, and covered with dust, and sitting down is quite a dangerous business. Here is a chair with only three legs, there another, which happens to be whole, on which the children are playing at cooking. That is the one that is offered to the visitor, but the children's cooking is not removed and if you sit down you risk a pair of trousers. But all these things do not in the least embarrass either Marx or his wife. You are received in the most friendly way and are cordially offered pipes, tobacco and whatever else there may happen to be. Eventually a clever and interesting conversation arises to make amends for all the domestic deficiencies, and this makes the discomfort bearable. You actually get used to the company, and find it interesting and original. That is a faithful picture of the family life of Marx, the Communist chief.'

However bad things were with Marx, he always kept up the outward appearance of an orderly bourgeois life. He was unwilling to allow the 'asses of Democrats' a cheap triumph and his pride brooked no sympathy. Only his most intimate friends knew of his distressed condition. He did not bow under the burden of want, but reacted to it only with anger at its compelling him to put aside the work which alone meant anything to him and which, as he well knew, he alone could do, and forcing him to postpone it again and again for the revolting slavery of working for his daily bread. Unshakable belief in his mission kept up Jenny's courage as well as his own. Even in their most difficult years Jenny and Marx remained happy people. Unfortunately there are very few documents



that throw light on this period. There are Wilhelm Liebknecht's memoirs, a few pages from a diary of a friend of Jenny's youth, and a few letters written by other exiles. The following passage from Liebknecht's memoirs is characteristic of Marx and his friends:

'Our outings to Hampstead Heath! If I live to be a thousand I shall never forget them. A Sunday spent on Hampstead Heath was our greatest treat. The children would talk of nothing else during the whole week and even we grown-ups looked forward to it, old and young alike. Even the journey there was a treat. The girls were excellent walkers, as nimble and tireless as cats. When we got there the first thing we would do was to find a place to pitch our tent, so that the tea and beer arrangements might be thoroughly looked after. After a meal, the company would search for a comfortable place to sit or lie down, and when this had been done everybody would pull a Sunday paper, bought on the way, from his pocket, and—assuming a snooze was not preferred—would start reading or talking politics, while the children, who would quickly find playmates, would play hide-and-seek in the bushes.

'But this placidity sometimes demanded a change, and we would run races, to say nothing of indulging in wrestling, stone-throwing and similar forms of sport. The greatest treat was a general donkey-ride. What laughter and jubilation a general donkey-ride caused! And what comic scenes! And how Marx enjoyed himself and amused us too. He amused us doubly; in the first place by his more than primitive horsemanship and secondly by the fanaticism with which he asserted his virtuosity in the art. The virtuosity was based on the fact that he once took riding lessons during his student years, but Engels maintained that he never had more than three lessons, and that when he visited him in Manchester once in a blue moon he would go for one ride on a venerable Rosinante. On the way home we would usually sing. We seldom sang political songs, but mostly popular songs, especially sentimental ballads and "patriotic" songs from the "Fatherland," especially *O Strassburg, O Strassburg, du wunderschöne Stadt*, which enjoyed universal popularity. Or the children would sing nigger songs and dance to them. On the way there and back politics or the plight of the refugees were banned as subjects of conversation.

But to make up for it we would talk a lot about literature and art, and Marx had the opportunity of displaying his astonishing memory. He would declaim long passages from the *Divina Commedia* and scenes from Shakespeare, in which his wife, who was also an excellent Shakespearian scholar, often relieved him.'

Among the Marxes Shakespeare was a regular family cult. Frau Marx oncé wrote to Frau Liebknecht, telling her with great satisfaction that her youngest daughter had made a Shakespeare museum of her little room. When Marx wanted to perfect his English, at a time when he could read but not speak it, he sought out and listed all Shakespeare's own expressions. In later years the whole Marx family would often walk all the way from Haverstock Hill to the Sadlers Wells Theatre, to see Phelps, the Shakespearian actor. They used to stand, for they could not afford seats. The children knew whole scenes of Shakespeare by heart before they could read properly.

In January, 1855, Frau Marx, who was then forty-one years old, had a daughter. 'The "bona fide traveller" is, I regret to say, of the sex *par excellence*,' Marx wrote to Engels. He had wanted a son to replace the dead Guido, who had been called 'Foxie,' after the popular Fawkes of the Gunpowder Plot. Everyone was given a nickname in Marx's house. Marx himself was called 'the Moor,' as he had been called ever since his student days on account of his dark complexion and black hair, and his wife and children and all his acquaintances called him that too. The children varied 'Moor' mostly with 'Devil' or 'Old Nick.' Frau Marx was never called anything but 'Möhme.' The eldest daughter, Jenny, was called 'Qui-qui,' 'Di' and even the 'Emperor of China.' The next daughter, Laura, was called 'Hottentot' and 'Kakadu,' the son, Edgar, was called 'Musch' or, more respectfully, 'Colonel Musch,' and the youngest daughter, who was named Eleanor, was at first called 'Quo-quo' then 'Dwarf Alberich' and finally 'Tussy.' Tussy described some of the incidents of her childhood in *Loose Leaves*, which she wrote in 1895. She remembered how Marx carried her on his shoulders, and put anemones in her hair. 'Moor was certainly a magnificent horse. I was told that my elder sisters and brother used to harness Moor

to an armchair, seat themselves in it and make him pull it. Indeed he wrote several chapters of *The 18th Brumaire* in his rôle as "gee-up neddly" to his three children, who sat behind him on chairs and whipped him.'

Everyone intimate with Marx—Liebknecht, Lessner, Lafargue, and even only occasional visitors to his house—spoke of Marx's unbounded love for his children. Marx often remarked that what he liked best about Jesus was his love of children, and his daughter had heard him say that he could forgive Christianity a great deal for teaching the love of children. A year before his death Marx wrote to his daughter, Laura, that he was coming to Paris to find peace there. 'By peace I mean family life, children's voices, the whole of that "microscopic little world" which is so much more interesting than the "macroscopic" world.'

The voice of his favourite child was extinguished on April 6, 1855, when little Musch died. Marx generally hid his feelings, even from his closest friends. He was by nature so shy that he, a German, behaved with English reserve when it came to expressing his feelings. But in the letters he wrote during the days that followed the child's death his grief broke through the barriers. The beginning of a letter to Engels written on March 30 is quite matter-of-fact. He said that he had put off sending a daily health-bulletin, because the course of the illness was so up-and-down that one's opinion changed almost hourly. Finally the illness had turned into abdominal tuberculosis, and even the doctor had seemed to give up hope. For the last week his wife had been suffering from a nervous breakdown more severe than she had ever had before. Marx's next words were: 'As for me, my heart bleeds and my head burns, though of course I have to keep control of myself.' The next sentence sounds as if Marx were making an apology. That a father should so far forget himself as to talk of his heart bleeding over the death of his favourite child seems to him to demand an explanation. 'During his illness the child did not for a moment act out of harmony with his original, kind and independent character.' On April 6 he wrote: 'Poor Musch is no more. He fell asleep (literally) in my arms between five and six o'clock to-day. I shall never forget how your friendship helped us through this terrible time. You understand my grief for the

child.' A week later he wrote: 'The house is naturally utterly desolate and forlorn since the death of the dear child who was its living soul. It is impossible to describe how we miss him at every turn. I have suffered every kind of misfortune, but I have only just learned what real unhappiness is. . . . In the midst of all the suffering which I have gone through in these days, the thought of you and your friendship, and the hope that we may still have something reasonable to do in this world together, has kept me upright.' At the end of July Marx answered a letter of condolence as follows: 'Bacon says that really important people have so many contacts with nature and the world, have so much to interest them, that they easily get over any loss. I am not one of those important people. My child's death has affected me so greatly that I feel the loss as keenly as on the first day. My wife is also completely broken down.' The wound never completely healed. Even after ten years and more Jenny Marx had not overcome her grief. 'The longer I live without the child, the more I think of him and with the greater grief,' she wrote to a friend.

In the summer of 1856 Frau Marx went to Trier with her daughter to visit her mother. She found her dying. An uncle of hers had died not long before, but he was an old man of eighty-seven whom she barely knew, and his death, as Marx put it, 'was a very happy event.' The bequest from the two relatives made it possible for them to pay their old debts. In the autumn of 1856 they were at last able to change their two-room dwelling in Soho for a comfortable little house on the outskirts of the city at 9, Grafton Terrace, Maitland Park, Haverstock Hill. But the improvement did not last for long. the *New York Tribune* accepted fewer and fewer of Marx's articles. They needed practically all their space for American politics and articles on the presidential elections, which had to be given preference to events in Europe, and then the approaching crisis began to cast its shadows before.

Marx and Engels had expected the crisis even sooner. As early as January, 1855, England, in Marx's opinion, was in the midst of a great trade crisis. Yet the *dies irae*, which, Engels hoped, would 'ruin the whole of European industry, glut all the markets, involve all the possessing classes, and cause the complete bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie,' did not arrive

until the autumn of 1857, and then not nearly so dramatically as Engels expected, though assuredly it was terrible enough.

The first great crisis of the capitalist world started in America and embraced the leading countries of Europe; England as well as Germany and France. Marx and Engels thought their time had come. Marx wrote to his friend that, in spite of his own 'financial distress,' since 1849 he had never felt so 'cosy' as after this outbreak, and Engels himself felt 'enormously cheered.' The time had come to finish his economic work. On December 8, 1857, he wrote to Engels that he was working 'like mad' right through the night summing up his economic studies, in order to have at least the outlines in his head before the deluge.

In the winter of 1850-1 Marx had resumed work on the economic study he had started in Brussels and had had neither the time nor the inclination to complete during the years of revolution. In his thorough way he collected all the available material, made his way once more through the works of the great economists and in April, 1851, believed that after the five more weeks he intended to devote to the 'whole economic drudgery (*ça commence a m'ennuyer*)' he would be able to sit down and start to write his book. Two months later he set himself a new date. The material, he remarked to Weydemeyer, had so many damned ramifications that in spite of all his exertions he would not be ready for another six or eight weeks. All the same, in spite of all outward disturbances, the thing was hurrying to a conclusion. 'The Democrat simpletons, to whom enlightenment comes from above, naturally do not need to make such exertions. Why should they, born as they are under a lucky star, trouble themselves with economic and historical material? The whole thing is so simple, as the valiant Willich used to tell me.' But even this respite expired. First more political work intervened, and from 1853 to 1856 his theoretical economic labours languished altogether. Though Marx gave a great deal of attention to economic events, his own economic work had to give way to the task of trying to earn a living. Occasionally Marx looked through his old notebooks and read fragments here and there, but it was the crisis that first compelled him to take up the work at the point at which he had broken off more than six years before.

The crisis affected Marx personally very severely. In October the *New York Tribune* informed him that it had dismissed all its European correspondents except B. Taylor and himself, and that in future he was only to send one article a week. Distress once more entered the household from which it had only just been banished. Marx's wife was ill and the first signs of the serious liver trouble which was to attack Marx repeatedly in years to come made their appearance in the summer. Marx's financial distress increased rapidly during the winter, and at the beginning of 1858 he had reached a pitch when he wished himself a hundred fathoms deep under the earth rather than go on living in the same way. He wrote to Engels that he himself was able to escape from the wretchedness by concentrating hard on all sorts of general questions, but his wife did not have these resources. A few weeks later he wrote that it was fortunate so many cheering things were happening in the outside world, because personally he was leading 'the most troubled life that can be imagined.' There could be nothing more stupid for people of universal aspirations than to marry and give themselves up to the *petites misères de la vie domestique et privée*, he said. But even if the house tumbled about his head he was determined to finish his book. Marx worked so hard that in April, 1858, he collapsed. He complained to Engels that if he so much as sat down and wrote for a few hours it meant that he had to lie down and do nothing for a few days. In the summer the situation had become 'absolutely intolerable.' On July 15, 1858, he wrote to Engels that as a direct result of the position he was in he was completely incapable of work, partly because he lost the best part of his time vainly running about trying to raise money, partly because his powers of concentration could no longer hold out against his domestic troubles, 'perhaps in consequence of physical deterioration. . . . The inevitable final catastrophe cannot be averted much longer.' A loan of £40 which Freiligrath arranged for him and on which Marx had to pay twenty per cent interest, helped him over the worst for a few weeks.

Marx's manuscript was finished at the end of January, 1859. It was not *Das Kapital*, the great work that Marx had planned. The first volume, an edition of a thousand copies of which now appeared in Berlin—it had been very difficult to find a

publisher—was called *Critique of Political Economy* and consisted of only two chapters, on goods and money. It had appeared, as Marx hoped it would, 'before the deluge,' but that was because the deluge did not occur. In 1859 the crisis had passed, the old world had not collapsed, the revolution had not come. The effects of the crisis continued.

New political life awoke in Germany, though very faint-heartedly. In Italy the movement for national liberation flared up anew. France's industry had been hard hit by the crisis, the state finances were disorganised, the price of corn fell, the peasants, who constituted Bonaparte's strongest support, were grumbling, opposition reared its head among the petty-bourgeoisie, the workers were gradually shaking off the paralysis which had held them in its grip since June, 1848. In this threatening situation the Emperor took the way out that lay nearest to his hand and went to war—not a general European war, the consequences of which could not be foreseen, but a localised war in which he had the maximum chances of victory. A victory over Austria and the expulsion of the Austrians from Italy was bound to strengthen his position, bind the army to him once more and confirm the false Napoleon as the legitimate successor of the true.

Marx's attitude to the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 was determined, like his attitude to the Crimean War, by the interests of the revolution only. The revolutionary party, weak as it might be, must do everything in its power to prevent Bonaparte's victory. The Austrian hangman's yoke in Italy must certainly be broken, but he who assumed the task of delivering the people of Italy was the enslaver of the people of France, and victory would only confirm his power. The defeat of Austria, which since the middle of the eighteenth century had opposed the advance of Russia in Eastern Europe, though its opposition was 'helpless, inconsequent, cowardly but stubborn,' could only be advantageous to Russian Tsarism. The enemy was Napoleon III and Russia. Even if victory should liberate the Italians—as in fact it did not—the interests of the European revolution came before those of Italian national liberation.

In their attitude on this occasion Marx and Engels were practically alone in the revolutionary camp. To the German

radicals the Russian danger seemed remote, but reactionary Austria was close at hand. It was difficult to be anti-Austrian without being Bonapartist. Lassalle achieved a masterpiece. Some of the German Democratic *émigrés* were noticeably edging towards Badinguet (which was what Marx called Napoleon. He either called him Badinguet or Boustrapa or Barnum, or at most Louis Bonaparte, but Napoleon never). The German *émigrés* had political reasons for their attitude. But there were also those who proclaimed the Emperor's European and more specifically German mission in a torrent of tyrannicidal words because they were paid to do so. Among them was Karl Vogt, a former Left leader in the Frankfurt Parliament, and now a professor in Switzerland and the ideal of the 'enlightened' philistines.

A small German newspaper in London which was more or less on good terms with Marx accused Vogt of being a bought agent of Napoleon. The accusations were reproduced in a leading reactionary paper in Germany. Vogt well knew that his patron would not betray him and brought an action against the newspaper. When it came into court the people in London who had hitherto acted as if they had the clearest proofs of Vogt's venality suddenly assumed the attitude of knowing nothing whatever about it, and Vogt, though his case was dismissed on technical grounds, left the court in the triumphant rôle of injured innocent. He published the report of the trial, at the same time attacking Marx as the ringleader of those who had slandered him, in spite of the fact that Marx had nothing whatever to do with the whole affair. Vogt alleged that Marx was the leader of a gang of *émigrés* who made a good living by blackmailing revolutionaries, threatening to denounce them to the police, and by forging banknotes.

Vogt's allegations were woven into such a highly ingenious web of lies, with truth and known fact so skilfully blended with half-truths and impudent fabrications, that some of the insinuations were bound to stick in the minds of those not fully acquainted with the facts of 'emigrant' history. Marx tried in vain to bring an action against Vogt and his friends. It was impossible to allow the slander to go unchallenged. Distasteful though it was for him to reply, and hating as he did the necessity



himself, which, as he said with truth, he generally scrupulously avoided, he decided that the measure of success likely to be obtained by Vogt's tissue of lies compelled him to speak. His polemical *Herr Vogt*, a book of one hundred and ninety pages, appeared at the end of November. Marx transferred the accusation of lying to its author, and his analysis of Vogt's writings made practically a certainty of the suspicion that he was in the pay of Napoleon. Papers published by the Republican Government in 1871 supplied the documentary proof. In August, 1859, forty thousand francs had been paid Vogt out of the Emperor's private fund.

Marx's fight against the attempt to secure his political annihilation by means of these denunciations occupied more than a year of his life. He was not able to resume his economic work until the middle of 1861. The years 1860 to 1863 were among the gloomiest of Marx's life. At the end of November, 1861, his wife went down with small-pox. She had barely recovered when Marx was taken ill himself. For years he suffered from carbuncles and boils, which were apt to break out again as soon as they had healed, and often made him unable to work for weeks. He was 'plagued like Job, though not so God-fearing,' as he wrote to Engels. The doctors gave him excellent advice. 'Everything the gentlemen say boils down to the fact that one ought to be a prosperous *rentier* and not a poor devil like me, as poor as a church mouse.' When Marx said that in 1868 he was much better off than he was at the beginning of the sixties. In January, 1860, the *New York Tribune* asked him to send nothing for six weeks. After this interval his work was only accepted intermittently. A connection with the *Vienna Presse* seemed to offer a substitute, but after three months' hard work Marx only received six pounds in all. His connection with the *New York Tribune* finally ended in April, 1862. He was told that all its space was needed for American affairs, and therefore his correspondence must cease. This dried up Marx's only source of income. Engels, whose position in the firm of Ermen and Engels had gone on improving, sent Marx what he could and preserved the numerous family from the worst.

Once more everything that could be spared, and many things that could not be spared, including the children's shoes

and clothes, resumed the trail to the pawnshop. In the spring of 1861 Marx went to Holland to see his uncle, Lion Philips, who gave him an advance of £160 on his share of his mother's estate. Most of this sum went to repay old debts, and in November Marx was once more forced to write to Engels, telling him that his wife was suffering from such a serious nervous breakdown that he was afraid that if the struggle went on much longer, there would be a disaster. 'Take all in all,' he wrote in February, 1862, 'a lousy life like this is not worth living.' In the summer of 1862 Marx tried once more to persuade his mother to help him, but she would not give him a penny. 'My wife says she wishes she were with her children in her grave,' he wrote to Engels at the time, 'and I really cannot blame her, for the humiliations, sufferings and horrors which we have had to go through are really indescribable.'

Marx was determined to pursue his aim through thick and thin. In 1859 he wrote to a friend that he would not allow bourgeois society to turn him into a 'money-making machine.' But he had now reached such a pitch of distress that he wanted to become a money-making machine. In 1862 he applied for a job in a railway office, but his application was rejected on account of his bad handwriting. Jenny, the eldest daughter, unknown to her parents, wanted to go on the stage, not because she had any special inclination towards it, but for the sake of earning some money. Marx considered whether he should not break up his home, find posts as governesses for his two elder daughters and move with his wife and youngest child into a lodging house in the poorest district in London. Engels sent a five-pound note, and then another and another, and nearly lost his temper when Marx apologised for 'pressing' him.

In January, 1863, their friendship survived the first and only strain to which it was submitted. Engels lost his wife. 'I simply cannot tell you how I feel,' he wrote to Marx in a short note telling him the news. 'The poor girl loved me with all her heart.' Marx wrote back: 'The news of Mary's death has both astonished and dismayed me. She was extremely good-natured, witty and very attached to you.' He then went straight on to describe his own desperate attempts to raise money. His letter ended with: 'It is revoltingly egoistical of me to retail all

these horrors to you at such a moment. But the thing is homoeopathic. One evil cancels out another. At the end of my tether as I am, what am I to do? There is not a single human being in all London to whom I can speak freely, and at home I play the silent stoic, to counterpoise the outbreaks from the other side. Work under such circumstances is absolutely impossible. Instead of Mary should it not have been my mother, who is full of bodily infirmities and has lived her life? You see what strange notions we "civilised" people get under the stress of certain circumstances.' Engels was deeply hurt. He wrote to Marx that all his friends had shown him more sympathy and friendship than he could have expected on this occasion, which affected him deeply, and 'to you it seemed a suitable moment for the display of the superiority of your frigid way of thinking. So be it!'

Marx allowed some time to elapse before replying. 'It was very wrong of me to write that letter, and I regretted it as soon as it was sent,' he wrote. 'It was not prompted by heartlessness. My wife and children will confirm me when I say that your letter, which arrived early in the morning, affected me as much as the death of one of my own nearest and dearest. When I wrote to you the same evening it was under the stress of very desperate circumstances. The brokers had been put in by the landlord; I had a summons from the butcher; there was neither coal nor food in the house and little Jenny was ill in bed. The only way out of such circumstances that I know is, generally speaking, cynicism.' Engels thanked his friend for his frankness. 'You will understand the impression your first letter made on me. I could not get it out of my head for a whole week. I could not forget it. Never mind, your last letter has made up for it, and I am glad that in losing Mary I have not at the same time lost my oldest and best friend.'

During the course of the year Engels gave Marx £350, which was a great deal considering how bad his business was as a consequence of the cotton crisis. Marx's mother died at the end of November, and the legacy was not a large one. It mitigated at least the worst of Marx's distress. In May, 1864, the faithful Wilhelm Wolff died in Manchester and left Marx £800. From September Engels, who had become a partner in his firm, was able to give him greater financial aid. From

1864 onwards Marx's financial position was tolerable and his freedom from petty cares enabled him to devote himself to his work. But his anxieties only really ended in 1869, when Engels sold his share in the cotton mill and was able to make Marx a definite, if moderate, yearly allowance.

Das Kapital was born in the years of illness and poverty, when Marx was sometimes reduced to the point of starvation. He wrote it while harassed with cares, agonised by his children's distress, tormented by thoughts of the next day. But nothing could completely overwhelm him. From time to time Engels urged him to finish the work at last. He knew Marx's over-conscientiousness. But Marx went on pruning and filing, and keeping up-to-date with the latest literature on the subject. 'I cannot bring myself to send anything off until I have the whole before me,' he wrote to Engels. 'My writings, whatever shortcomings they may have, have one characteristic: they form an artistic whole. In my opinion that is only obtainable by never letting anything be printed before I see the whole before my eyes.'

The fair copy of the first volume was completed in March, 1867. Marx, as he wrote to Becker, 'could throw it at the head of the bourgeoisie' at last. Marx read the final proofs on August 16. At two o'clock in the morning he wrote to Engels as follows: 'So this volume is finished. Thanks are due to no one but you for making it possible. Without your self-sacrifice for me it would be impossible to carry out the three volumes of this tremendous work. I embrace you, full of thanks. I greet you, my dear and faithful friend!'

An edition of one thousand copies of *Das Kapital* appeared in Hamburg at the beginning of September.

In 1867 Marx wrote to Siegfried Meyer: 'You must think very badly of me, the more so when I tell you that your letters not only gave me great pleasure but were also a real comfort to me during the painful period during which they came. Why did I not answer you? Because I was perpetually hovering at the brink of the grave. I therefore had to use every available moment to work, in order to finish my book, to which I sacrificed health, happiness and family. I hope this explanation will be sufficient. I laugh at the so-called "practical" men and their wisdom. If one wants to be an ox, one can easily

turn one's back on human suffering and look after one's own skin. But I should have regarded myself as really impractical had I died without finishing my book, at least in manuscript.' Paul Lafargue says that Marx's favourite motto was '*Travailler pour l'humanité*,' to work for humanity.

The twelve years from 1852 to 1864, from the dissolution of the Communist League to the foundation of the International, were filled with journalistic hack-work performed to keep body and soul together, and with poverty endured for the sake of his life-work.

Apart from his contacts with Chartists and Urquhartites, which were so slight that they hardly counted, Marx, who had been at the very centre of the furious political *mêlée* of the year of revolution, kept entirely aloof from political activity. His interests were devoted to foreign politics, the war, the Indian Mutiny, the Anglo-French campaign in China, the trade crisis, the internal state of France, the anti-slavery movement in America—events which he could only observe. In the articles Marx wrote and the correspondence he conducted with Engels there is little reference to Germany, the land to which the Communists had paid chief attention in 1847 and in which the Communist League had worked under Marx's leadership. Marx certainly did not ignore developments in Germany, but he followed them only incidentally. The revival of the German workers' movement was not his work. It happened without him. It happened against him, through Ferdinand Lassalle.

Lassalle was born in Breslau in 1825. He was the son of a Jewish business man. He studied Hegelian philosophy in Berlin and adhered to it in its orthodox, idealistic form throughout his life. His political position after the middle of the forties was at the extreme Left wing of democratic radicalism. He made friends with Marx and became a Communist during his few weeks of freedom in 1848—he was in prison until the middle of August and was re-arrested at the end of October for inciting to arms against the Crown. When he came out of prison the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was on its last legs. Marx and Lassalle did not meet again until the spring of 1861.

They wrote to each other in the meantime. Lassalle was the more industrious correspondent of the two. He kept Marx informed of his literary labours—he wrote a portly philosophical

tome as well as a play—consulted him on political questions, offered and gladly gave Marx financial help. It was thanks to his mediation that the *Critique* was able to appear. He was the only man in Germany who was loyal to Marx. Marx had a high opinion of the younger man's energy and talents, though from the first he was repelled by his consuming ambition and his unbounded vanity. If no line remained of all Lassalle's writings except a letter of his dating from September, 1845, it would suffice to explain the human gulf that parted him from Marx. At the age of twenty Lassalle wrote: 'So far as I have power over human nature, I will use it unsparingly. . . . I am the servant and master of ideas, priest of the god who is myself. I would be a player, a plastic artist, my whole being is the presence of my will, the expression of the meaning I put into it. The vibrant tone of my voice and the flashing light of my eye, every line of my face must reflect the imprint which I put upon it.' Lassalle loved theatrical attitudinising, which Marx detested from the bottom of his heart. He naïvely placed personalities as far before causes as Marx did the reverse, and was utterly careless about what means he chose to achieve his ends. He was a man who was ready to sacrifice everything for immediate success. From the first Marx did not completely trust him. The Cologne Communists refused to admit Lassalle to the League. But Marx regarded Lassalle as a front-rank politician and agitator even after personal contact with him in 1861 and 1862 had enabled him to form a better opinion of the negative sides of his character than was possible from letters.

Marx visited Lassalle in Berlin in the spring of 1861. The Prince Regent of Prussia, the subsequent Emperor William I, issued an amnesty which made it possible for exiles to return on certain conditions. Marx, who did not believe he would be able to hold out much longer in London was thinking of returning to Germany. Lassalle proposed that Marx should collaborate with him in publishing a paper. Marx said to Engels that Lassalle might be very useful under strict supervision as a member of an editorial staff; otherwise he could only be harmful. The plan, however, came to nothing. Marx's attempt to re-acquire Prussian nationality, an essential preliminary to assure his being able to remain in Prussia, came

to nothing too. The police suspected him of Republican or at any rate of non-Royalist views.

After the passing of the economic crisis in Germany a period of prosperity set in. The consequence in the political field was a revival of Liberalism. The Progressive Party in the Chamber opposed the Government more or less violently, and outside it tried to win over the 'fourth estate' (the tactical resources of the bourgeois revolution are very limited and always repeat themselves). Workers' educational associations, founded by Democratic intellectuals, sprang up on every side. Life revived in the workers' movement. Lassalle went to London in the summer of 1862 and proposed to Marx that the two of them together place themselves at the head of the new movement.

Marx refused, both on personal and political grounds. He could not interrupt his work on economics. His personal distaste for Lassalle had developed into a violent aversion. 'Lassalle is now set up not only as the greatest scholar, the most profound thinker, the most brilliant of investigators, etc., but also as a Don Juan and a revolutionary Cardinal Richelieu, with his everlasting chatter, unnatural falsetto voice, his un-beautiful demonstrative gestures and his didactic tone on top of it all.' That was how Marx wrote to Engels while Lassalle was in London, and it was one of the mildest of his utterances. The political and economic theoretical foundations that Lassalle proposed for the new workers' party were completely unacceptable to Marx. Lassalle's party was to start by demanding that the state should put capital at the disposal of the workers to found co-operative societies. Lassalle knew very well that even if these co-operative societies materialised, which was more than doubtful, they would at best create a few enclaves within capitalist economy. Concentrating on the co-operative movement meant weakening at the outset the proletarian struggle which had only just begun. Marx foresaw that Lassalle, 'like every man who believes he has a panacea for the sufferings of the masses in his pocket, will give his agitation the character of a religious sect.' Lassalle put the Chartist demand for universal suffrage on his programme side by side with the demand for state aid. 'He overlooked the fact that conditions in Germany and England were entirely different,' Marx later wrote. 'He overlooked the lessons of

the *bas empire* concerning universal suffrage.' In London Lassalle did not mention the over-cunning tactics he had prepared for leading the workers' movement and started to apply as soon as he returned to Germany.

Lassalle conducted his propaganda in speech and writing from 1862 until his early death in the late summer of 1864. His speeches were brilliant, his pamphlets magnificently written. He did in fact create a German workers' party. The General Union of German Workers was founded in May, 1863. But before it started its existence Lassalle had started to negotiate with Bismarck.

The conflict between the Prime Minister of Prussia and the Progressive majority in the Chamber was becoming more and more acute. Anything or anybody likely to damage them was welcome to Bismarck, even a Socialist and Jewish agitator like Lassalle, for whom the Prussian Junker would otherwise not have had much use. Most of the workers who were at all politically awake adhered to the Progressives. Lassalle's first task was necessarily to part them from the bourgeoisie. That the Liberal opposition would be temporarily weakened as a result was not of great importance. For once the workers' party was formed it would have to fight not only the Liberal bourgeoisie but the incomparably more resolute militaristic monarchists. Bismarck was aware of this. In making a compact with Lassalle he acted like a power coming to terms with a party which might be a power in the future, but for the time being was only a pawn on the chess-board next to other and more powerful pieces. Bismarck did not betray his class, but Lassalle nearly betrayed the workers' movement to Bismarck. How far Lassalle went with Bismarck Marx never knew as long as Lassalle lived, and even after his death he never learned the whole truth. It did not come to light until an old cupboard in the room of the Prime Minister of Prussia was opened in 1927. It contained the letters exchanged between Bismarck and Lassalle. The Workers' Union was so organised that its president, who of course was Lassalle himself, ruled over it like a dictator. Lassalle was justified in calling it his 'kingdom.' He was able to show Bismarck how gladly the workers subjected themselves to a dictatorship when they saw that it was working in their interests, and even how ready they would be to honour



the king as the Socialist dictator. Lassalle believed in *Realpolitik*, which meant, in Marx's words, that he only admitted as real what was immediately in front of his nose. In this case what was in front of his nose was the good-will of the Government in its fight with the Progressives about the independent workers' party. The workers were to start establishing their independence by renouncing it to the party of Reaction. Lassalle was on the point of turning the General Union of German Workers into a small auxiliary corps of feudal reaction against the bourgeoisie. Even his state-aid slogan prompted him to seek Bismarck's friendship. Lassalle told the workers that if only the State helped, the co-operative societies could be formed at once. That State was the existing State, the Prussian monarchy. Lassalle, by limiting the proletarian struggle to one small aim, was bound to compromise with the rulers of Prussia, for it was they and not some power in the dim and distant future who were to help.

It was impossible for Marx in London to know how deeply Lassalle was involved with Bismarck. Lassalle believed he could outmanœuvre Bismarck, but was in fact outmanœuvred by him. Lassalle sought Bismarck's help—only temporarily, of course, for as long as he should need it against the Progressives, after which, when it was no more needed, he would free himself from his powerful patron. But in fact this strange alliance only resulted in his increasingly becoming Bismarck's tool. Marx could not possibly know the full extent of Lassalle's deviation. Nevertheless he followed Lassalle's agitation with the most extreme suspicion. It became clear that he would have to oppose the fatal tendencies of the new movement. Marx broke off personal relations with Lassalle in 1862. Lassalle still sent Marx his pamphlets, but without a line of greeting. Marx found nothing in them but unskilful plagiarism of the Communist Manifesto and his later works, which Lassalle knew very well. Marx never replied.

In spite of all his deficiencies and mistakes, his compromises and his manœuvres, in spite of his dictatorial attitude, which was fundamentally inimical to the workers' movement, in spite of the limitations of his economic insight, Lassalle has the immortal merit of having revived the workers' movement in Germany. The creed of Lassalle remained that of a sect.

After some vacillations and hesitations the German proletariat followed another route to that which Lassalle showed them.

On August 30, 1864, Lassalle was killed in a non-political duel. Four weeks later the International Working Men's Association was founded in London.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

IN the long years of exile Marx had so consistently declined to associate himself with any sort of political organisation that he felt that the change of attitude indicated by the appearance of his name on the list of founders of a new international workers' organisation in the autumn of 1864 required an explanation to his friends and sympathisers. On November 29, 1864, he wrote to his old friend Weydemeyer that he had consented 'because it is an affair in which it is possible to do important work.' The initiative for the formation of the new organisation had come from men who were leaders of really active mass-organisations. That was the factor that distinguished it from its predecessors, and it was the decisive factor in causing Marx to abandon his customary aloofness. He saw its negative sides plainly enough. He was only too well aware of its heterogeneous nature and the wavering and unclear political views of many of those who were at the back of it. Nevertheless he joined it. 'I knew that this time real "forces" were at work both on the London and the Paris sides,' he explained to Engels on November 4, 'and that was the reason why I decided to depart from my otherwise inflexible rule to decline any such invitations.' Engels approved of both Marx's decision and Marx's reasons. It was necessary, he said, to be guided by the 'real circumstances.' To accept contact with the active leaders of a real movement was their duty. 'It is good that we should once more be coming into contact with people who at least represent their class. After all, that is the main thing in the end,' he wrote.

It was indeed the main thing. The immediate future demonstrated what a huge sphere of activity the new organisation opened up for Marx. The new organisation was the 'International Working Men's Association,' which was so soon destined to become famous and is known to-day as the First International. • A new epoch in the history of the workers'

movement and in Marx's life began with its foundation. The 'sleepless night of exile' was over, and with it the loneliness and isolation from active, practical life. Marx became once more, for the second time in his life, the organiser of the political struggle of the working class.

At the beginning of the sixties there was an upsurge of the workers' movement not only in Germany, as has already been mentioned, but 'also in England and in France, the two countries which took the chief part in the formation of the International Working Men's Association. After a decade of apathy and paralysis, in which the active struggle of the proletariat was practically at a standstill, the workers once more took up the weapon of the strike and showed a new tendency to organise. The workers in France had different traditions and fought under different conditions from those of the workers in England, and their principles and practice necessarily differed, but on both sides of the Channel they sooner or later realised that without independent organisations of their own they must necessarily remain impotent. Even if theoretical clarity were sometimes wanting, experience in the end compelled it.

French and English very soon saw that it would be necessary to get together. There were two outstanding reasons for this. The strike movement, which assumed particularly large dimensions in England, demanded a close *entente cordiale* with the workers of the other country, from which the employers attempted to import strike-breakers. In addition there arose at this time a whole series of international questions in which French and English workers must make common cause.

The first contacts between English and French workers were made in 1862. The great World Exhibition took place in London in that year. It was visited by a delegation of French workers. The idea of this visit arose in Bonapartist circles which nourished a 'Caesarian Socialism' of their own and aimed at propitiating the workers with the Empire. They had the support of the Emperor's cousin, Prince Napoleon, the so-called 'Plon-Plon,' who saw to it that the workers were allowed to form their own organisations in the factories to elect their delegates and raise funds to finance the journey. Such a 'legal opportunity' had of course to be exploited. Among those who

took part in the electoral campaign and were elected to the delegation were men who had inaugurated an independent workers' movement in France. Many other delegates were inevitably Bonapartists to a greater or less degree, but the representatives of the most active English workers' associations were not represented on the London committee formed to welcome the French delegation either. The London committee owed its formation to moderate Liberal Members of Parliament and equally moderate men of the co-operative movement—people who represented the extreme Right wing of the workers' movement and took their stand on the principle of class peace, with which the speeches made at the meeting of welcome on August 5, 1862, were in entire conformity. The English speakers declared that 'good understanding between our employers and ourselves is the only way to smooth the difficulties by which we are at present surrounded.'

The meeting was really tame, with unctuous speeches and love, friendship and fraternal kisses. Festival of harmony though it was, with it the history of the 'Red International' begins. Apart from the beautiful ceremonies, the independent French delegates met the young English trade union leaders, entirely unfêted, and sowed the first seeds of the Anglo-French workers' alliance, the fruits of which manifested themselves in the following year.

The old sympathy for Poland and the old hatred of Russian absolutism were still alive in England and France. Both drew fresh strength from the Polish rising of 1863. The workers in both countries demanded intervention on Poland's behalf. Petitions to Napoleon bore hundreds of signatures, and a huge workers' meeting in England sent a deputation to the Prime Minister. The French Emperor declined to receive the workers, but Prince Napoleon gave them to understand that France would like to intervene, in fact it would prefer to do so to-day rather than to-morrow, but unfortunately action was hampered by English sabotage. On the English side Palmerston deplored the impossibility of stepping in on Poland's behalf, however much he would have liked to have done so, because France, unfortunately, insisted on standing aside. Then there arose a plan for a joint Anglo-French pro-Polish demonstration. It took place in London on July 22, 1863.

A special delegation came from Paris, and this time it consisted exclusively of adherents of the independent workers' movement. The demonstration failed in its purpose, if for no other reason than that by this time the Polish rising was on the verge of collapse. But before the French delegates left England a decision had been made which was destined to be of great historical importance. They and the representatives of the English workers 'agreed in principle to the foundation of an international association of workers and elected a committee to do the work preparatory to an inaugural meeting. The preliminaries dragged on for more than a year, 'addresses' were exchanged about the duties of the future association, manifestoes were drafted, and finally the inaugural meeting took place in 'St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, on September 28, 1864.

Marx took no part in the preliminary work. He read about the meeting of July 22, 1863, in the newspapers, followed the course of the Polish rising with passionate interest, became indignant at the attitude of British diplomacy, and was considering writing a pamphlet on the Polish question. The Anglo-French workers' demonstration could not possibly have escaped his notice. But he had no direct contact with the organisers of the meeting and knew nothing of the preparatory work that was quietly going on. He only heard of the organisers' plans a week before the inaugural meeting. A young French exile, Le Lubez, a Republican, was the contact man between the French workers and the English trade unionists, and he told Marx who were at the back of the movement and what their intentions were and invited him to take part in the meeting as the representative of the German workers. Marx recognised that this was a serious undertaking and accepted the invitation. Marx suggested his friend Eccarius, an old member of the Communist League, as spokesman for the Germans and he himself 'assisted as a silent figure on the platform.'

The meeting was a complete success. The big hall was filled to the point of suffocation. Speeches were made by Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians and Irish. An unanimous resolution was passed to found an International Working Men's Association, with headquarters in London, and a committee was elected to draft the programme and statutes. Marx was elected a member of this committee. •

The committee was far too big. It had fifty-five members, of whom twenty-seven were English. These were mainly trade union leaders. Of the rest the French and Germans had nine representatives each, and the Italians, the Swiss and the Poles two each. The majority of the non-English members were *émigrés*. Politically the committee was heterogeneous, including as it did old Chartists and Owenites, Blanquists and followers of Proudhon, Polish Democrats and adherents of Mazzini. Its social composition, however, was far more uniform. Workers formed the preponderating majority.

In these circumstances it was not very easy to agree on the fundamental aims of the association, its programme and its statutes. Marx was unable to take part in the committee meetings during the first few weeks, partly because he was ill, partly for the simple reason that the invitations never reached him. In the meantime the committee asked Weston, an old Owenite, to draw up a draft programme, a task to which he devoted himself with the most righteous zeal, pondering over each sentence for weeks at a time. The task of translating the statutes of the Italian workers' association, which it was intended to make the basis of the associations' own statutes, devolved upon Major Wolff, Mazzini's secretary. When the two finally laid the fruit of their labours before the committee, its inadequacy was patent even to the least exacting. Weston's exposition, in Marx's opinion and everybody else's too, was 'full of the most extreme confusion and unspeakably verbose.' His suggested statutes were more impossible still. Mazzini repudiated the class-struggle and believed in solving the problems of modern industrial society with sentimental phrases of the kind that had been the fashion in the thirties. The old Carbonaro, who had been the leader of the movement for national liberation in Italy for generations, placed the national question above all else and could conceive of no method of organisation other than that of the Carbonari. The Italian workers' organisations which adhered to him were nothing but benefit societies founded to help in the national struggle. Apart from its other shortcomings, the Italian draft was rendered impossible by the fact that, in Marx's words, 'it aimed at something quite impossible, a kind of central government of the European working class (of course with Mazzini in the

background).’ The committee gave both drafts to Le Lubez to revise. The result was, if possible, worse than ever. Le Lubez presented his text at a committee meeting on October 18, the first that Marx attended. Marx, as he wrote to Engels, ‘was really shocked as he listened to good Le Lubez’s frightfully phrased, badly written and entirely ill-considered preamble, pretending to be a declaration of principles, with Mazzini peeping out through every word, and encrusted as it was with vague scraps of French Socialism.’ Marx made ‘gentle’ opposition and succeeded in having Le Lubez’s draft passed to a sub-committee to be revised again.

Marx now got to work himself. He summed up the sub-committee’s duties in his own characteristic way. It was decided ‘if possible not to leave a single line of the thing standing.’ The sub-committee left him a free hand. In place of the declaration of principles Marx wrote an ‘Address to the Working Classes.’ The only thing it had in common with the draft was the title of ‘statutes.’ ‘It is very difficult,’ he wrote to Engels, ‘to manage the thing in such a way as to make our views appear in a form which make them acceptable to the workers’ movement at its present standpoint. Time is required to give the re-awakened movement its old boldness of speech. *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo* is what is required.’

The sub-committee accepted Marx’s proposals, and only added a few moralising phrases. These were so placed ‘that they could not do any harm.’ The ‘inaugural address’ was unanimously and enthusiastically accepted at a meeting of the general committee. The ‘International’ had its constitution, and now it started its work.

The fundamental idea of the inaugural address and of the statutes was expressed in the phrase: ‘The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.’ The International served this aim by founding proletarian mass-organisations and uniting them in joint activity. Point 1 of the statutes said: ‘This association was founded in order to create a central means of unity and co-operation between the associations of workers which already exist in the various countries and aim at the same goal, namely, the protection, the rise and the complete emancipation of the working class.’ The International left complete freedom to its various



national sections as to the form their organisation might take, and refrained from prescribing any definite methods of conducting the struggle. Only one thing did it rigorously insist on. That was the absolute independence of the member-organisations. The inaugural address also demonstrated from the experience of the English workers that the 'capture of political power has become the great duty of the working class.'

The inaugural address and the statutes are typical of the work Marx did for the International in the five following years. Marx saw it to be his duty to educate the masses, and gradually and carefully, but firmly and surely lead them towards a definite goal. The groundwork of all his labour was a profound belief in the sound instinct of the proletarian mass-movement. Bitter experience in the years of revolution and still more in the years of exile had convinced him that it was necessary to keep aloof from all intermediary groups, especially organisations of exiles. He had also become convinced that great workers' organisations, able to develop freely within their own country, associated with the class movement as a whole, would find the right way in the end, however much they might vacillate and go astray. The inaugural address and the statutes and Marx's work in the International were founded on the sound instinct of the proletarian movement. The task that Marx set before his eyes was to help it, bring it to awareness and theoretical comprehension of that which it must do and of the experiences through which it must pass.

As Marx said, his old ultra-Left opponents in the forties had made the same error as Proudhon, the error into which Lassalle also fell. They did not seek, in Marx's words, 'the right basis for agitation in real conditions, but wanted to prescribe the course of the latter by certain doctrinal recipes.' Marx sought its basis in the forms of the movement which life itself created. He avoided giving prescriptions. That does not of course mean that he let things take their own course. What he did rather was to help every movement to get clear about itself, to come to an understanding of the connections between its particular interests and the whole, of how its special aims could only be realised by the realisation of the demands of the whole class, by the complete emancipation of the proletariat. An excellent example of Marx's tactics in the International was

the way the inaugural address dealt with the co-operative societies. The co-operative movement was important at the time, and its influence was not always to the advantage of the workers' movement as a whole. The idea of independent co-operation was not seldom substituted for the idea of the class-struggle. Protection of the workers, the trade-union struggle, and even the downfall of capitalist society seemed superfluous, if not actually noxious to many, who believed the co-operative movement capable of emancipating the working class. Marx did not attack the co-operative societies outright. By so doing he would have alienated from the International the groups of workers who adhered to the co-operative ideal. He said that the value of the great social experiment represented by the co-operative movement could not be over-estimated. The co-operatives, particularly the co-operative factories, had demonstrated that large-scale production, production in harmony with modern scientific developments, was possible without the existence of a class of *entrepreneurs* employing a class of 'hands.' The co-operative societies represented a victory of the political economy of the working class over the political economy of ownership. But experience had also demonstrated that, in spite of the excellence of their principles and their usefulness in practice, the co-operative societies were confronted with limits which they could not overstep. The co-operative movement, to save the working masses, must be developed on a national scale and consequently be promoted by national measures. Thus the adherent of the co-operative ideal was forced to the conclusion that he who wanted co-operative enterprise must necessarily desire the capture of political power by the working class.

The fundamental idea of the inaugural address and of the whole of Marx's activity in the International was that the workers, acting on the basis of 'real conditions,' which of course differed in every single country, must create independent parties, take part in the political and social life of their country and so make the proletariat ripe for the capture of political power.

In the General Council, as the committee elected at the inaugural meeting soon came to be called, Marx was the acknowledged leader. The work to be done was more than

ample. The magnitude of the need that the International fulfilled and the timeliness of its foundation were proved by its extraordinarily rapid growth. On February 23, 1865, Marx wrote to Kugelmann that the success of the International in London, Paris, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy had exceeded all expectations. On April 15—six months after the meeting in St. Martin's Hall—he wrote to one of the leaders of the Belgian section that there were more than twelve thousand members in England. Inquiries, suggestions, requests showered in upon the General Council from all sides. News of new sections being formed poured in. All sorts of questions concerning matters of organisation, inevitable in the case of any big new body, continually cropped up. 'The French, particularly the Paris workers, regard the London Council as a regular workers' government for foreign affairs,' Marx wrote to Engels at the beginning of March, 1865. The General Council, and in most cases that meant Marx, had to give instructions and advice and answer inquiries and incessantly take up positions towards political and economic events. Marx complained to Engels in the middle of March, 1865, that the International took up an enormous amount of his time, because he was in effect the head of the whole affair. He gave an example of how he had recently been occupied. On February 28 he had had a meeting with the Frenchmen, Tolain and Fribourg, who had come from Paris. The meeting, which lasted till twelve o'clock at night, was in conjunction with an evening meeting, at which he had to sign two hundred membership cards. On March 1 there was a Polish meeting. On March 4 a meeting of the sub-committee dealing with the French question lasted till one o'clock in the morning; on March 6 another meeting also lasted till one o'clock in the morning; on March 7 a meeting of the General Council lasted till midnight. 'Well, *mon cher, que faire?*' Marx wrote. 'If you have said "A" it follows that you go on and say "B."' Marx often grumbled, but never missed a meeting of the General Council. If at first it had seemed that the pressure of work was only going to be so great at the beginning, the belief soon turned out to be illusory. It very soon became clear that the demands the International made on Marx were going to increase with every month. One question gave rise to two others.

It was inevitable and right that it should be so. The International developed, not according to a system, but according to the inner logic of the movement, according to the 'real conditions.'

In the case of internal questions within the organisation Marx declined to exercise pressure, and he insisted that the General Council adopt a strictly above-party attitude in all disputes between the various groups. 'Whom they have for a leader is their business and not mine,' he said on the occasion of an internal German dispute in 1868. At the beginning of 1865, when violent disputes arose between a group of workers, led by Tolain and Fribourg, who took their stand by Proudhon, and another, led by Lefort and Le Lubez, who were Republicans and Socialists, Marx made every effort to compose the dispute and keep both parties in the International.

The International had no programme if by 'programme' is meant a single, concrete, detailed system. Marx had intentionally made the statutes so wide as to make it possible for all Socialist groups to join. An announcement in the spring of 1870 declared that it was not the duty of the General Council to express a theoretical opinion on the programme of individual sections. Its only duty was to see that they contained nothing inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of the statutes. Marx, in his pamphlet on the apparent rifts in the International written in 1872, again emphasised that the International admitted to its organs and its congresses all of Socialist views without any exceptions whatever.

It must not be concluded that Marx's toleration of all the political lines of thought represented in the International meant that he abandoned his own critical attitude. His letters, especially those to Engels, contain the severest judgments on the confused mentalities with whom he had to deal. The illness from which he suffered during the first few years that followed the foundation of the International did nothing to make his mood milder; and in fact a good many of the things the sections did were more than a little trying. What is remarkable is not that Marx grumbled to his friends about the Proudhonists and the rest but the consistency and pertinacity with which he maintained his attitude and the restraint with which he tolerated all the conflicts that were bound to arise in

the young movement. It was not infrequent for him actually to defend a group on some internal matter whose programme, if what they stood for can be dignified with such an expression, he contemptuously dismissed in private letters.

Tolerant as Marx was towards the various under-currents within the workers' movement, he resolutely fought all attempts to anchor the International to the programme of any single group or take away its character as a class movement. It was on the latter question that the first conflict arose. Mazzini's followers demanded the deletion from the inaugural address and the statutes of certain passages which emphasised the class-character of the International. The General Council emphatically refused. The Italian Workers' Union in London, which had been founded and set going by followers of Mazzini, broke with its 'fathers.' This was the first victory of the 'Internationalists' in their long struggle with Mazzini. An echo of it is the judgment of Marx made by Mazzini years later. 'Marx,' he said, 'a German, a man of penetrating but corrupting intelligence, imperious, jealous of the influence of others, lacking strong philosophic or religious convictions, has, I fear, more hatred, if righteous hatred, in his heart than love.'

The struggle with the followers of Mazzini was but a small prelude to the far more important struggle between Proudhonists and Collectivists which filled the whole first period of the International up to 1869.

During the first years of the International its main support came from English and French workers' organisations. There was a fundamental difference in the nature and political outlook of the two.

England was economically the most advanced country in the world. Big industry had developed more rapidly in England than anywhere else, and for this reason class-contradictions were pronounced and the workers' movement on a relatively high level. The workers were able users of the weapon of the strike. Just at the time when the International arose one wave of strikes after another swept across the country. At the beginning of the sixties flourishing trade unions developed from the benefit societies they had hitherto mainly been into fighting organisations raising their own strike funds. They constituted the most important group within the International. The

number of organisations formally associated with the International was not large. Even the London Trades Council, one of the most resolute bodies in the trade union movement, did not accept the International's invitation to join. But some trade unions did join the International and were on its membership list. From the beginning British trade union leaders had an important voice on the General Council. Interested in immediate, practical results, they were utterly indifferent to theoretical questions and the ultimate aims of the International as Marx conceived them. They understood very well the importance of working-class legislation, upon which, under Marx's influence, the International laid great stress. But they preferred conducting the struggle for it, like the struggle for electoral reform, through the channel of Liberal and Radical Members of Parliament rather than as an independent party. Among them there were always a few who insisted that the movement must not assume an explicit class-character. But so far as the day-to-day struggle of the proletariat was concerned the young English trade union leaders had incomparably more experience than all the workers' leaders of the Continent combined. The main thing that interested them in the International was the possibility of using it for gaining victories in strikes. They were attracted by the possibility of making the International use its connections with countries abroad to prevent the introduction of foreign strike-breakers, which was a favourite expedient of the employers at the time. Fribourg, one of the founders of the International, said that the English regarded the International purely as an organisation from which the strike movement could receive great assistance.

France was far behind England in the industrial respect. In France the handicraftsman was still supreme, particularly in Paris, with its art and luxury trades. It was natural enough that many of the leaders of the movement in France should be followers of Proudhon, whose teaching expressed the interests of the small independent artisan or trader, the small business man and the peasant. The 'mutualists,' as the followers of Proudhon described themselves at the time, demanded cheap credit, assured markets, co-operative societies and the same measures that hard-pressed master-craftsmen have always

demanded everywhere. To most of them the slogan of the collectivisation of the means of production sounded absurd, unjust and evil. Hence also they were in favour of peaceful, gradual development, and they flatly repudiated revolutionary methods. From his point of view Fribourg regarded the International as an instrument 'for aiding the proletariat in legally, pacifically and morally gaining the place in the sun of civilisation to which it is entitled.' They had very little trust in legislation or state measures for the working classes, and they regarded strikes as extremely dangerous, though sometimes inevitable; in any case as always undesirable. Varlin, one of the leaders of the International in Paris, who fell in the bloody week of May, 1871, declared as late as 1868 that the International repudiated strikes as an anti-economic weapon. The mutualists wanted an International which should occupy itself with investigating the position of the workers, cause alterations in the labour market and thrash out these problems theoretically.

Marx saw the weaknesses of the mutualists and of the English trade unions alike. He did not have a particularly high opinion of the trade union leaders. He said later that he regarded some of them with suspicion from the first, as careerists in whose devotion to the working-class cause he found it difficult to believe. But in relation to the immediate tasks of the International, the tactics of the day-to-day struggle, he stood far nearer the Englishmen than the Proudhonists. 'The gentlemen in Paris,' he wrote to Kugelmann in 1866, 'had their heads full of Proudhon's emptiest phrases. They chatter of science, knowing nothing of it. They scorn all revolutionary action, i.e. which springs from the class-struggle itself, all concentrated social movement, that is to say movement realisable by political means (for example, the legal shortening of the working day).'

In spite of all his dislike of Proudhonist phraseology, Marx stuck to his tactics. In drafting the agenda for the first Congress of the International in 1866 he took pains to avoid anything that might have given rise to general theoretical discussions, and he confined the programme 'to points which permitted of immediate accord and immediate concerted action of the workers, corresponded directly to the needs of the class-struggle and the class organisation of the workers, and at the same time

spurred the workers on.' The strike question was certainly a question of the moment, but Marx did not put it upon the agenda as such but in the form of 'international assistance for the struggle of Labour with Capital.' He wished to avoid alienating the Proudhonists. He instructed the London delegates not to discuss the usefulness or the reverse of strikes but to put in the foreground the struggle with the strike-breakers, which the Proudhonists could not repudiate.

It was not Marx and his followers but the Proudhonists who opened the fray. The Proudhonists wanted to anchor the International to their own system. The most important thing to them was not those things on which all were agreed but their own particular hobby-horse, their 'mutualism.' The first Congresses took place in Latin Switzerland, for which reason the majority of the delegates came from western Switzerland and adjacent France, i.e. from the areas where the Proudhonists predominated. At the Lausanne Congress of 1867 they were fairly successful. The representatives of the General Council were not sufficiently prepared—Marx was busy at the time with the publication of *Das Kapital* and was not present. But their success was their own downfall. At a time when the strike movement was constantly extending and affecting even France and western Switzerland, the rejection of the strike-weapon was going too far even for many of the Proudhonists. There was a rift, which soon spread to other questions too.

The Proudhonists were the first to bring up for discussion of the fundamental question of the socialisation of the means of production. At the Congress of 1867 they raised the question of the socialisation of the means of transport. At the time the railways were using their monopoly to favour big industry at the expense of the small producer. So the principal opponents of collectivisation decided that an exception must be made in the case of the railways, which must be collectivised. Very well, their opponents replied, why stop at collectivisation of the means of transport? To their horror and alarm the Proudhonists saw opponents rising within their own ranks. Young heretics, led by César de Paepe, a Belgian, arose among the orthodox and tried hard to reconcile their mutualist doctrines with the ideal of collectivisation. This breakdown on the part of the Proudhonists assured the success of the collectivist



idea in the International. The Young Proudhonists became more enthusiastic about collectivisation than anyone, and it was thanks to them that the International came out for collectivism in its official resolutions. In 1868 Marx was still opposed to declarations of principle on such critical questions. 'It is better not to make any general resolutions,' he wrote to his closest colleagues, Eccarius and Lessner, who represented the General Council at the Congress of 1868. It was only in the last stages of the debates on collectivisation that Marx intervened. He drafted the resolutions on the nationalisation of the soil which were accepted by the Bâle Congress of 1869.

Marx, who in other respects demonstrated the most extreme tolerance, only abandoned his restraint when the problem of political struggle arose acutely within the International and he began to feel that, unknown to it, something had formed behind the scenes, something that aimed quite systematically at forcing the International in a direction which was completely unacceptable to him and, after the experiences he had had, he was convinced would be injurious to the workers' movement.

Everybody in the International had been agreed from the start that the workers must take an active part in the political struggle. The English trade unionists naturally supported the movement for the extension of the franchise in every way they could. Those Proudhonists who had co-operated in the foundation of the International were all in favour of taking part in the political struggle, and would have regarded any discussion of the advisability of doing so as a sheer waste of time. Their leading Paris group had originated out of an attempt to set up an independent workers' candidate in 1864, and Proudhon himself had given his enthusiastic consent to this step in his work, written shortly before his death, *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières*. The German workers' movement—though it had played no great rôle in the inner life of the International it had a notable influence upon the development of its ideas—fought, as Lassalle had taught it, for universal suffrage. Even the Swiss 'Internationalists' took part in the elections as a matter of course. The Lausanne Congress of 1867 passed a resolution—the minority was only two—to the effect that the conquest of political power was an absolute necessity for the working class. This was the Congress at which the

Proudhonists were in a majority, and among those who voted for the resolution were many who were later among the most resolute opponents of any political activity whatever.

The situation altered pretty quickly. In 1867 and 1868 the International made extraordinary progress. The economic crisis which was setting in intensified social antagonisms, and one strike after another broke out in the countries of Western Europe. The International very soon proved a useful instrument in the direct economic struggle of the proletariat. It succeeded in many cases in preventing the introduction of strike-breakers from abroad, and, in cases where foreign workers did strike-breaking work without knowing it, succeeded in causing them to practise solidarity. In other cases it organised the raising of funds for the relief of strikers. This not only gave the latter moral support but caused real panic among the employers, who no longer had to deal with 'their own' workers alone but with a new and sinister power, an international organisation which apparently had resources at its disposal with which the individual employer could not compete. Often the mere rumour that the International was going to intervene in a strike was sufficient to cause the employers to grant all the workers' demands. In its panic the reactionary Press exaggerated the power of the International beyond all bounds, but this only resulted in enhancing the respect in which it was held by the working class. Every strike, whether it succeeded or not, resulted in all the strikers joining the International, the Conservative, E. Villetard, wrote in 1872 in his history of the International. In those years it often happened that the whole of the workers at a factory would join the International together. No government repressive measures, arrests or trials succeeded in stemming the movement's advance; they merely served to drive the workers into the revolutionary camp and strengthen the International thereby. Its sections seemed to spring up like mushrooms. At the 1866 Congress only four countries were represented—England, France, Germany and Switzerland—but at the Congress of 1869 there were nine, America, Austria, Belgium, Spain and Italy being the newcomers. Individual sections had arisen in Hungary, Holland, Algiers, South America and elsewhere. Because of big fluctuations and the weak development on the organisational side it is difficult to

establish how many members the International really had. Eight hundred thousand workers were formally associated with the International in any case. At the International trial in Paris the public prosecutor, who had access to the papers of the French section, stated that there were four hundred and forty-three thousand members in France alone. At the Bâle Congress of 1869 the English claimed two hundred and thirty sections with ninety-five thousand members. In Belgium in the summer of that year there were more than two hundred sections with sixty-four thousand members. The membership of the workers' organisations which declared their solidarity with the International was greater by far. The International was acknowledged in 1869 by the English Trades Union Congress, in 1869 by the Nurnberg Congress of German Workers' Educational Unions, in 1868 by the Association of German Workers' Unions in Austria, in the same year by the Neuchâtel Congress of German Workers' Educational Unions in Switzerland, in 1869 by the American Labour Union, etc. Testut, who wrote his history of the International on the basis of police reports, estimated its number of members as five millions, and the newspapers of the International actually put the figure as high as seven millions. These figures are, of course, utterly fantastic. But the *élite* of the European proletariat adhered to the International. In the last third of the sixties it had become a power to be reckoned with.

At the same time political questions developed from theoretical propositions to be discussed at Congresses into practical questions requiring a practical answer. The two groups within the German workers' movement, the followers of Lassalle and the 'Eisenacher,' were the first to take part, in 1867, in the North German Parliamentary elections. In 1867 and 1868, after the extension of the suffrage to workers having a house of their own, the English labour movement prepared to enter the electoral fray. In 1869 the French workers set up their own candidates in many places. The International now had to decide what attitude to take up to other parties, and to elections. The weak organisation of the sections and the political inexperience of their leaders made mistakes and differences of opinion inevitable as soon as the question of voting became an actual one, and this led to a reaction. A

section arose who opposed participating in elections and 'politics' as a whole.

In Latin Switzerland the Internationalists made particularly grave mistakes. The pioneer of the International there was Dr. P. Coullery, an old Democrat who had long been interested in social problems. He was an official of the Radical party, had a high reputation, and represented it as deputy to the cantonal legislative council. Dr. Coullery founded the first section of the International in Latin Switzerland in 1865, and worked for the extension of the International in the western cantons, and in 1867 his paper, *La Voix de l'Avenir*, became the chief organ of the section of that area. His activity on behalf of the International led to a rupture with the radicals. When he became a candidate for the office of *juge de paix* in La Chaux des Fonds the radicals opposed him. That induced the Conservatives to vote for Coullery, and it was due to their aid that he was elected. By the election of 1868 Coullery's *rapprochement* to the Conservatives had proceeded so far that he actually made a regular pact with them. The local Press called it '*la coalition aristo-socialiste*.' The list of candidates went under the name of the International, but on it the names of members of the International were next to those of extreme Conservatives. Other sections of the International in western Switzerland protested violently against this policy, particularly the section at Locle. Its founder and leader was a young school-master, James Guillaume, who was later a very prominent member of the anti-Marxist group in the International. He was a former member of the Radical party, and he and his group, which had started as the 'Jeunesse Radicale,' continued to support the Radicals in local questions. The slogan in the fight against Coullery was: 'The International keeps out of political strife'; which in this case was equivalent to support of the Radicals. Gradually the Locle group generalised their views and ended by absolutely repudiating the policy of participating in elections. Coullery, it maintained, was bound to err, to compromise the International, as was anybody who participated in elections. Coullery's tactics had, of course, nothing whatever in common with the tactical line of Marx. Marx always vigorously opposed any coalition of the revolutionary proletariat with the reactionaries against the bourgeois

Democrats. When Lassalle's followers started openly practising this policy, which Lassalle himself initiated, Marx publicly and ruthlessly broke with them. What Marx demanded of the workers' parties was that they should criticise the Government and the reactionaries no less severely than they did the bourgeois Democrats.

The Locle group of 'Internationalists' formed the kernel of the later anti-authoritative faction, whose struggle against the General Council led to the split and the downfall of the International. Its leader was Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MICHAEL BAKUNIN

BAKUNIN was born in 1814 in the Government of Tver. He was the son of a prosperous and noble landed proprietor. He became an officer but soon left the Army and in 1840, being an enthusiastic Hegelian, went to Germany to study philosophy at Berlin University. His teachers were partly the same as Marx's. Bakunin entered the Left Hegelian group and it was not long before he was in the thick of the revolutionary movement. His bold and open opposition to Russian absolutism attracted universal attention, and Europe heard the voice of a Russian revolutionary for the first time. In 1848 Bakunin was a close associate of Herwegh's and he shared the poet's visionary dream of a European revolutionary army which should set forth against the realm of the Tsars. During the years of revolution he went from place to place in Germany, always on the look-out for an opportunity of carrying the agitation into Russia and the other Slavonic countries. He was in contact with the leaders of the German Democratic movement, founded a Russian-Polish revolutionary committee, and prepared a rising in Bohemia. But not one of his numerous plans bore fruit. He participated in the rising in Dresden in May, 1849, more in a mood of desperation than of faith in victory. He was arrested and sentenced to death by a Saxon court. The Austrians, to whom he was handed over, sentenced him to death a second time, and he spent months in chains in the condemned cell. Then the Austrian hangmen handed him over to the gaolers of Russia, who kept him for five years in solitary confinement, first in the fortress of Petropavlovsk, then in the Schlüsselburg. His treatment was unspeakably dreadful. He contracted scurvy, lost all his teeth, and was only amnestied and banished to Siberia after writing a humiliating petition to the Tsar. At last, after five years, there came an opportunity to escape, and he returned to Western Europe by way of Japan and America.

His first meeting with Marx was at an international Democratic banquet in Paris in March, 1844, but the two had heard

of each other before. They had a good deal in common. Both had become revolutionaries by way of Hegelian philosophy and both had trodden the path from theory to revolutionary practice. But they differed entirely in their idea of revolutionary practice; in fact in their whole conception of the revolution they were as the poles asunder. In Marx's eyes the revolution was the midwife of the new society which had formed in the womb of the old. The new society would be the outcome of the old, and a new and higher culture would be the heir of the old culture, preserving and developing all the past attainments of humanity. For Bakunin the revolution meant a radical annihilation of existing society. What were all its so-called attainments but a chain by which free humanity was held in bondage? For him the revolution, if it did not mean making a clean sweep of the whole of this accursed civilisation, meant nothing at all. Not one stone of it should remain upon another. Bakunin dreamed of a 'gigantic bonfire of London, Paris and Berlin.' His was the same hatred as that which drove insurrectionary peasants to burn down castles and cities—not just the hated prison and tax office but everything without exception, including schools and libraries and museums. Mankind must return, not just to the Middle Ages, but to the very beginning, and from there the history of man must start again. Weitling and Willich, with whom Bakunin was acquainted, had similar ideas, but compared to the master of complete and absolute negation they were but pitiful and harmless pupils.

It was evident that in these circumstances it was impossible for Marx and Bakunin to come very close to one another. Bakunin appreciated Marx's clear and penetrating intellect, but flatly repudiated his political activity. At the beginning of 1848, when he met Marx in Brussels, he said to a friend that Marx was spoiling the workers by turning them into *raisonneurs*. Marx was giving his lectures on wage-labour and capital at the time, summarising the results of his investigations into the structure of capitalist society. Bakunin was convinced that this could have but one consequence; theorising was bound to paralyse the workers' revolutionary will, their 'spirit of destruction,' which for him was the only 'creative spirit.' Marx never had the slightest sympathy for such incendiary fantasies. He had a fundamental mistrust for preaching such

as his, and it was impossible for him not to mistrust Bakunin personally. Marx printed a letter in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* which accused Bakunin of being in the pay of the Russian Government. The letter had been sent him by Polish Democrats, and when the groundlessness of the accusation was demonstrated Marx apologised and explained that he had necessarily believed that the Poles must be well-informed about Russian affairs.\* At that time the whole of revolutionary Europe looked at Russia through Polish spectacles, and in this Marx differed in no way from everybody else. He admitted having been hasty and did what he could to make good the wrong to Bakunin. Marx publicly defended Bakunin when a similar rumour was spread about him during his imprisonment in Russia. But Bakunin could not forgive Marx the mistake of 1848, which went on rankling for a long time. To make matters worse Bakunin was persuaded by evil-tongued go-betweens, who did not mention Marx's defence of him during his compulsory silence, that Marx actually repeated the old slander.

Bakunin visited Marx in London at the end of October, 1864, when he was writing the inaugural address for the International. The meeting passed off in an entirely amicable manner. Marx wrote to Engels that Bakunin was one of the very few people who after sixteen years had not receded but had gone on developing. What Bakunin said to cause Marx to pass this favourable judgment on him is not known. In his long years of imprisonment Bakunin had suffered greatly and thought much. He had altered, and no longer wanted to make giant bonfires of capital cities. In Siberia he had almost got to the point of repudiating his revolutionary way of thinking altogether, and when he was free once more he spent a considerable time hesitating whether to adhere to the bourgeois radicals or to the Socialists. He then started returning step by step to his original negative anarchism. In his conversation with Marx he asserted that henceforward he would devote himself to the Socialist movement alone, and said that in Italy, where he was just going, he proposed working for the International.

Marx did not know Bakunin well enough to realise how little these words were to be credited. There was a streak of naïve



slyness in Bakunin's character, and he was skilful at adapting his speech to his company. Bakunin would by no means say all he thought; indeed, he would quite often say the reverse. A story of how he tried to make a revolutionary of the Bishop Polykarp, an adherent of the Old Faith, provides a pretty instance of Bakunin's way of tackling people he wanted to win over. According to the story Bakunin entered the Bishop's room singing a sacred song and requested an explanation of the difference between the persecuted Old Faith and the prevalent orthodoxy. He said he was willing to become an Old Believer himself if the Bishop could convince him. After listening humbly to the Bishop he drew a magnificent picture of the revolution, by which the true Old Faith would be allowed to triumph over the Orthodox Church and cause the Tsar himself to be converted, and much more of the same kind. This story need not be credited entirely, but it illustrates in all essentials how far Bakunin could occasionally go.

Bakunin had no intention of keeping his promise to work for the International in Italy. Even before starting on his journey he set about the formation of his own secret society, which had nothing whatever to do with the International, either in programme or organisation. In respect of organisation Bakunin was a revolutionary of the old school. He belonged entirely to the epoch of the Illuminati and the Carbonari. In his opinion the one thing necessary to prepare the way for the revolution and consolidate it after victory was a highly conspiratorial band of determined men, a band of professional revolutionaries and plotters, who lived for nothing but the revolution. 'In the midst of the popular anarchy that will create the very life and energy of the revolution, the unity of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action must find an organ. That organ must be a secret and universal association of revolutionary brothers.' That is Bakunin's own summary of his revolutionary creed. Bakunin was continually engaged in founding organisations of one kind or another, and sometimes he was engaged on several at the same time. They all had secret statutes and programmes that varied with the degree of initiation of the members, and ceremonial oaths, if possible sworn on a dagger or some similar theatrical requisite, were usual. Bakunin formed a secret society of this kind in

1865—the ‘Fraternité Internationale.’ It never entered his head for a moment to do anything for the International, and he barely answered the letters that Marx wrote him.

In the autumn of 1867 Bakunin travelled from Italy to take part in the first Congress of the League of Peace and Freedom. This organisation represented the last attempt of the Democratic celebrities of 1848 and 1849, who for two decades had been the ‘great men of the emigration,’ to venture once more into the realm of high politics. The reawakening of political life throughout Europe seemed to proffer this organisation some prospect of success, and there were some famous names upon its list of founders: Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, John Stuart Mill, Giuseppe Garibaldi. The League’s programme was a nebulous mixture of democracy, anti-clericalism and pacifism, intended to mean as much to as many people as possible. In practice it did nothing for anybody.

The League, having practically no solid popular backing of its own, was very anxious to be on good terms with the International. An attempt was made to have it incorporated as a kind of subsidiary organisation within the International, to enable it to propagate its own special aims among the proletariat. Marx was necessarily opposed to any such plan. The development of the young workers’ movement could only be hampered by connection with these generals without an army, for the important men had only lent their names to the League at its inception and in reality the movement was in the hands of Democratic leaders of the second and third rank. To involve the International with the League would mean burdening it with a swarm of ambitious, wrangling and clique-forming political intriguers.

Marx was not able to convince the International of all this until 1868. The Brussels Congress of that year unanimously carried a resolution embodying Marx’s attitude to the League. A year before not a few members of the International had sympathised with the idea of the League and had been only too pleased to take part in its Congress. The League had counted on this and held its inaugural Congress at the same time and place as the second Congress of the International, and a number of delegates remained and took part in the League Congress after the International had concluded its

deliberations. At the League Congress they made the acquaintance of Bakunin.

His appearance was an event of first-rate importance for the League. Many of the older generation knew him from earlier years, from his life of wandering before the revolution or from the exciting days of Paris, Berlin, Dresden or Prague. Everyone had heard of the man who had been dragged through the prisons of Europe and had been twice sentenced to death, and his escape from the grim horror of Siberia had already become legendary. 'I well remember his impressive bearing at the first session of the Congress,' a Russian journalist wrote in his memoirs. 'As he walked up the steps that led to the platform, with his heavy, peasant gait—he was, as usual, negligently dressed in his grey blouse, out of which there peeped not a shirt but a flannel vest—a great cry of "Bakunin!" arose. Garibaldi, who was in the chair, rose and went forward to embrace him. Many opponents of Bakunin's were present, but the whole hall rose to its feet and the applause was interminable. Bakunin was no speaker if by that word is meant a man who can satisfy a literary or educated public, who is a master of language and whose speeches have a beginning, a middle and an end, as Aristotle teaches. But he was a superb popular orator, and he knew how to talk to the masses, and the most remarkable feature of his oratory was that it was multilingual. His huge form, the power of his gesticulations, the sincerity and conviction in his voice, his short, hatchet-like phrases all contributed to making a profound impression.'

To quote another Russian writer who heard Bakunin at another meeting:

'I no longer remember what Bakunin said, and in any case it would scarcely be possible to reproduce it. His speech had neither logical sequence nor richness in ideas, but consisted of thrilling phrases and rousing appeals. His speech was something elemental and incandescent—a raging storm with lightning flashes and thunderclaps, and a roaring as of lions. The man was a born speaker, made for the revolution. The revolution was his natural being. His speech made a tremendous impression. If he had asked his hearers to cut each other's throats, they would have cheerfully obeyed.' That was how Bakunin's speech echoed sixty years later in the ears of a

man who was no revolutionary at the time and was certainly no revolutionary when he wrote his memoirs. His name was Baron Wrangel, and he was the father of the well-known General Wrangel, who fought against the Bolsheviki in South Russia in 1919 and 1920.

Bakunin's forceful personality gained him devoted followers in the League and among the members of the International. As was his invariable habit he hastened to confirm his first success by enrolling new initiates into one of his secret societies. The 'Fraternité Internationale' appears to have been somewhat reorganised on this occasion, and it may well have received a new name. (The history of Bakunin's secret societies is still in many respects uncertain. They were so often reorganised than even Bakunin himself could not remember all their ramifications and vicissitudes.) At any rate the 'Fraternité' was transplanted from Italy to Central Europe.

At the same time Bakunin became a member of the League central committee. He did all he could to make the League accept a revolutionary programme and bring it into line with the International. His undoubted aim was to bring the two organisations together and, by means of his secret organisation, become the unseen leader of both. In this he failed. The majority of the League's members were by no means revolutionary-minded, and all Bakunin's proposals were voted down. He became increasingly convinced of the impossibility of converting the League into a suitable instrument for his revolutionary work, and he awoke to the fact that there was far greater scope for his activity in the International. He met many of its members and became acquainted with the development of its ideas. He had hitherto refrained from joining it himself, but in July, 1868, he joined the Geneva branch. In the autumn, after the International had definitely broken with the League, he broke with it himself. At the second League Congress, held at the end of September, 1868, he proposed that it make a public avowal of Socialism. His resolution was obviously unacceptable, and when the League turned it down he and his followers left the Congress and resigned from membership.

He promptly summoned his followers, most of whom were adherents of the 'Fraternité Internationale,' and proposed that

they join the International in a body. This was intended to keep his followers together. Joining the International in this way would intensify rather than weaken their corporate sense. His followers approved his plan, with a few unimportant alterations. An open association, 'L'Alliance Internationale de la Démocratie Sociale,' was founded to exist side by side with the secret society. The Alliance was intended to include members outside the secret society, and thus act as a screen for the secret society. It was to have its own programme and statutes, its own leaders, its own sections in various countries, its own international Congresses to be held at the same time and place as those of the International. The plan was to form a state within a state within the International. Officially the object of the Alliance was the unpretentious one of 'investigating social and philosophical questions.' Its real purpose was to gain control of the International and lead it whither Bakunin wanted, for behind it there would be his secret organisation. There was to be a three-story pyramid, with the International as the base, the Alliance on top of it and on top of the Alliance the secret society, with Bakunin the 'invisible dictator' at the pinnacle.

The plan was too clever and consequently too clumsy to succeed. It failed to get farther than the initial stages. The Alliance was successfully founded and quite a number of respectable and deserving members of the Swiss sections of the International joined it. The statutes were duly drawn up and signed and dispatched for confirmation by the General Council. Bakunin's name was among the signatures, tucked in inconspicuously among the rest.

Marx had no means of divining the details of Bakunin's plan, but promptly discerned Bakunin's object. This was no new turn of the working-class movement, no new organisation of workers demanding admission to the ranks of the united international proletariat. This was an organisation created by a plotter of the old school who aimed at gaining control of the great new movement represented by the International, which under Marx's leadership was striving to guide the struggle of the proletariat in the only way it ought to be guided, in all openness, as an open mass-organisation. Marx had not spent twenty years fighting the methods of the Carbonari, and all

the poison-and-dagger nonsense, to let it creep into the International by the back-door now.

When the statutes of the Alliance came up for consideration by the General Council, its members, of course with Marx's concurrence, expressed a wish that the International should publicly repudiate it. Marx wrote to Engels late that night after the meeting. The thing of which he had heard previously and had regarded as still-born, he said, and had wanted to let quietly die had turned out to be more serious than he had expected. 'Herr Bakunin—who is at the back of this affair—is kind enough to want to take the workers' movement under *Russian* control.' Marx was particularly incensed at such a thing having been perpetrated by a Russian, citizen of a country that had no workers' movement of its own and was therefore less fit than anybody to grapple with the difficulties confronting the European movement. Engels pacified Marx a little. He said it was as clear as daylight that the International would not allow itself to be taken in by a swindle such as this state within a state, this organisation which had nothing whatever behind it. 'I, like you, consider it to be a still-born, purely local, Geneva affair. Its only chance of survival would be for you to attack it violently and give it importance thereby. In my opinion it would be best firmly but quietly to dismiss these people with their pretensions to insinuate themselves into the International.' Marx agreed with Engels, and the General Council declined to confirm the statutes of the Alliance as an organisation within the International. After protracted negotiations the Alliance as such was eventually dissolved. Individual groups of its members were permitted to enter the International under the usual conditions and to form local sections. No mention of the secret society was made throughout, and the General Council did not know of its existence. The secret society disintegrated once more and was once more reconstructed. Bakunin quarrelled with the majority of the *directoire centrale* of the *Fraternité Internationale*, resigned from the *Fraternité* and dissolved it, only to found it anew promptly afterwards with his own most devoted followers. His first *rapprochement* with Nechaiev, of whom more will be said later, occurred during these months.

Bakunin had not answered Marx from Italy, and he gave no

sign of life from Switzerland. Marx sent him a copy of *Das Kapital*, but Bakunin remained silent and did not even write a line of thanks. But a few days after the Alliance had submitted its statutes to the General Council Bakunin wrote. It was a long letter, overflowing with friendliness. '*Ma patrie maintenant c'est l'Internationale, dont tu es l'un des principaux fondateurs. Tu vois donc, cher ami, que je suis ton disciple, et je suis fier de l'être.*'<sup>1</sup>

This sounded genuine, upright and sincere, but it was anything but what it seemed. The letter was a calculated part of the web of intrigue that Bakunin was spinning round Marx. Bakunin certainly had a high opinion of Marx and considered *Das Kapital* to be a scientific achievement of supreme importance. He even wanted to translate it into Russian. But that did not affect Bakunin's conviction that Marx was his arch-enemy, whose main purpose was to lay snares and traps for him; and he believed himself to be thoroughly justified in fighting Marx. Some three months after this declaration of love Bakunin wrote to his old friend, Gustav Vogt, one of the founders of the League, of the 'distrust or even ill-will of a certain coterie the centre of which you no doubt have guessed as well as I.' That coterie was the General Council of the International which had been against amalgamation with the League of Peace and Freedom, and its centre was Marx, Bakunin's *cher ami*.

In a letter he wrote Alexander Herzen on October 28, 1869, Bakunin explained in all clarity the methods he proposed to use in his campaign against Marx. Herzen had remonstrated with Bakunin for daring to attack some of Marx's followers in the Press without daring to attack Marx himself. Bakunin replied that he had two reasons for refraining from attacking Marx. The first was the real service that Marx had done by laying the foundations of scientific socialism. 'The second reason is policy and tactics. . . . I praised and honoured Marx for tactical reasons and on grounds of personal policy. Don't you see what all these gentlemen are? Our enemies form a phalanx, and to be able to defeat it the more easily it is necessary to divide it and break it up. You are more learned

<sup>1</sup> My country is now the International, of which you are one of the principal founders. You see, therefore, my dear friend, that I am your disciple, and I am proud of it.

than I, and therefore know better than I who first said: *Divide et impera*. If I started an open war against Marx now, three-quarters of the International would turn against me, and I should find myself slipping down an inclined plane, and I should lose the only ground on which I wish to stand.' To weaken the Marxian phalanx Bakunin chose to attack Marx's little-known followers, and in the meantime he stressed his friendship for Marx.

Marx was not for a moment deceived as to what his expression of friendship was really worth. He did not answer Bakunin's love letter. Marx had not a few defects. He was not always easy and pleasant to get on with, but he was incapable of simulating friendship for a person while he was busy laying a trap for him.

Bakunin worked very hard to build up and extend his secret society, and it was important to be on good terms with the group of young 'Internationalists' at Locle, who have already been mentioned. Bakunin made the acquaintance of Guillaume, their leader, in January, 1869. Guillaume invited him to Locle. He accepted the invitation and was received like a hero. Guillaume's account of the events of that day deserve to be repeated, for he paints such a characteristic picture of Bakunin, illustrating not only Bakunin as seen through his followers' eyes, but how Bakunin presented himself to them.

*'La nouvelle de la venue du célèbre révolutionnaire russe avait mis le Locle en émoi; et dans les ateliers, dans les cercles, dans les salons, on ne parlait que de lui. . . . On se disait que la présence, dans les rangs de l'Internationale, d'un homme aussi énergique, ne pouvait manquer de lui apporter une grande force.'*<sup>1</sup> Locle was an obscure provincial township, and for a celebrity to visit it was an epoch-making event; and now a rare and exotic celebrity was actually on the spot. The big watchmaking village could scarcely contain itself with excitement. *J'étais allé l'attendre à la gare avec le père Meuron, et nous le conduîmes au Cercle International, où nous passâmes le reste de l'après-midi à causer avec quelques amis qui s'y*

<sup>1</sup> The news of the arrival of the celebrated Russian revolutionary had put Locle into a state of high excitement. He was the sole subject of conversation in workshops, clubs and drawing-rooms. . . . Everyone said that the presence in the ranks of the International of a man as energetic as he could not fail to be a source of great strength.



*étaient réunis.*<sup>1</sup> The local branch, the *Cercle International*, was just celebrating the sixty-fifth birthday of 'Father' Meuron, a French *émigré*, who had been a Carbonaro in the days of the July Monarchy and perhaps in the days of the Restoration too. The Internationalists of Locle, all hungry for experience, surrounded Bakunin. '*Si l'imposante stature de Bakounine frappait les imaginations, la familiarité de son accueil lui gagnait les cœurs; il fit immédiatement la conquête de tout le monde.*'<sup>2</sup> Bakunin showed himself a blithe and sociable human being, a good raconteur, homely and simple. '*Dans les conversations, Bakounine racontait volontiers des historiettes, des souvenirs de sa jeunesse, des choses qu'il avait dites ou entendu dire. Il avait tout un répertoire d'anecdotes, de proverbes, des mots favoris qu'il aimait à répéter.*'<sup>3</sup> Guillaume particularly remembered one story which Bakunin told. '*Une fois, à la fin d'un dîner, en Allemagne, il avait, nous dit-il en riant, porté ce toast, accueilli par un tonnerre d'applaudissements: "Je bois à la destruction de l'ordre public et au déchaînement des mauvaises passions."*'<sup>4</sup> Bakunin described the seven stages of happiness as follows: '*En premier lieu, comme bonheur suprême mourir en combattant pour la liberté; en second lieu, l'amour et l'amitié; en troisième lieu, la science et l'art; quatrième, fumer; cinquième, boire; sixième, manger; septième, dormir.*'<sup>5</sup>

Twenty years before Bakunin had defined the seven stages of happiness in the same way, and he had spoken of the unleashing of the passions then too. Only in the meantime the sentiments had grown somewhat faded. Richard Wagner had heard Bakunin say all these things in 1849, only in Wagner's memoirs they sound like extracts from some dim northern saga. But retailed by Guillaume they remind one of a provincial

<sup>1</sup> I went to meet him at the station with Father Meuron, and we took him to the International Club, where we spent the rest of the afternoon talking with some friends who had gathered there.

<sup>2</sup> If Bakunin's imposing stature struck the imagination, the familiarity of his greeting gained men's hearts. He promptly made a conquest of everybody.

<sup>3</sup> In conversation Bakunin willingly related anecdotes, gave reminiscences of his youth, told us things he had said or heard. He had a whole repertoire of anecdotes, proverbs and favourite sayings that he liked to repeat.

<sup>4</sup> Once, at the end of a dinner in Germany, he had proposed a toast, he told us laughing, saying: 'I drink to the destruction of public order and the unleashing of evil passions.'

<sup>5</sup> In the first place, the supreme happiness was to die fighting for liberty; in the second place, love and friendship; in the third place, science and art; in the fourth place, smoking; in the fifth place, drinking; in the sixth place, eating; and in the seventh place, sleeping.

schoolmaster describing the bounty of some brilliant talker to an admiring audience.

Bakunin accepted Guillaume into his secret society. Bakunin no longer attached importance to swearing oaths upon a dagger. He explained the object of the society as '*Le libre rapprochement d'hommes qui s'unissaient pour l'action collective, sans formalité, sans solennité, sans rites mystérieux, simplement parce qu'ils avaient confiance les uns dans les autres et que l'entente leur paraissait préférable à l'action isolée.*'<sup>1</sup> Guillaume is no objective witness, but he must have been pretty faithful to the facts in this. However much Bakunin wanted to assimilate his organisation to the International, it remained a secret society within the International, keeping its existence secret from it and aiming at gaining control of it. Guillaume bears witness to this, for he describes how Meuron, the old Carbonaro, who joined the secret society at the same time, rejoiced. '*Il réjouissait à la pensée que l'Internationale serait doublée d'une organisation secrète qui la préserverait du danger que pouvaient lui faire courir les intrigants et les ambitieux.*'<sup>2</sup>

The contrast between the ideas of the old Illuminati, Carbonari and the rest and those whose aim was to use the International to lead the workers into forming great mass-organisations could not have been better expressed than it was by *père* Meuron. He had spent his whole life as a member of one or other small band of conspirators, and he could not conceive that a mass-organisation in which there was such a thing as an open struggle of ideas could be anything but a cockpit for the intriguing and ambitious. It seemed obvious to him that the unrestricted life of a large, public organisation, open to all the world, must be supervised by groups of the type familiar to him. These groups, set up behind the back of the mass-organisation, must obviously refrain from openly proclaiming their programmes, and even their existence must not be known of. It was these groups that must be the real controllers of the movement. Meuron and those who thought like him regarded all this as entirely open and above-board.

<sup>1</sup> A free association of men who united for collective action, without formality, without solemnity, without mysterious rites, simply because they felt confidence in one another and deemed unity preferable to isolated action.

<sup>2</sup> He rejoiced at the thought that the International would be doubled by a secret organisation which should preserve it from the dangers to which the intriguing and ambitious might subject it.

So far from regarding it as partaking of the nature of intrigue, they actually regarded it as a sure defence and shield against the ambitious and intriguing.

Bakunin managed to extend his secret society pretty quickly, in spite of obstacles. He and his friends had great hopes of the next International Congress, to be held at Bâle in September, 1869. They made every effort to be as well represented at it as possible. The secret Alliance sent instructions to its adherents in every corner of Europe, directing them whom to choose as delegates and to whom to give a mandate if they could not send one of their own men. In many areas members were very surprised indeed to find that for the first time in the history of the International the selection of delegates was not being carried out in a straightforward, open, matter-of-fact way, and letters reached the General Council asking what was in the wind.

Bakunin and his followers had not worked badly, and they were represented at the Congress in quite respectable numbers. Nevertheless their expectations were not entirely fulfilled, though they had one or two successes. The most important was in the debate on the inheritance question. The Congress rejected the resolution of the General Council, which was drafted by Marx, and accepted Bakunin's resolution instead. But they did not succeed in their principal aim, which was to have the headquarters of the General Council transferred from London to Geneva, where Bakunin would have been its lord and master.

The Bâle Congress marks an important stage in the struggle between 'Marxists' and 'Bakuninists.' The fundamental differences were not mentioned, the root-problem was not debated, and the real dispute was only hinted at. But anyone who followed the progress of the Congress attentively and had a certain experience of the history of the movement could plainly detect the call to battle. Moses Hess, the 'Communist rabbi,' had a practised ear. He had been present at Marx's struggle with Weitling and had known the cause of dissension between Marx and Gottschalk and had followed Marx's struggle with Willich and his followers in the Communist League. He attended the Congress and heard the unspoken words: 'The Collectivists of the International believe that the political

revolution must precede the social and democratic revolution.' Bakunin and his followers made the political revolution coincide with the social revolution. They made no concealment of their opinion. The organ of Bakunin's followers in Switzerland wrote as answer to Hess's utterance, 'We shall persist in refusing to associate ourselves with any political movement *the immediate and direct aim of which is not the immediate and direct emancipation of the workers.*' The qualifying relative clause is emphasised in the original. The Bakuninists did not reject political struggle of any kind, as was later supposed. If its object was the direct realisation of their ultimate aim, 'the revolution and social democracy,' they were ready to participate. They were even capable of making quite big concessions and deviating widely from their usual tactics. But they insisted that any political movement in which they took part must lead directly to the social revolution. That was the condition from which they would not depart. The emphasis was on the definition of *direct and immediate*.

About this time, at the end of 1869, the Bakuninists started proclaiming the principle of not taking part in elections for any kind of Parliament, and with this their struggle with the Marxists in Switzerland began. Taking part in the Swiss elections, i.e. in the political movement, meant embarking on a long period of patient work of enlightenment among the workers, and only those who believed that the political and social revolution could not be one could undertake it. On the other hand, in lands where the revolution was ripening quickly, the Bakuninists by no means declined to participate in elections, granted that the elections were the first step to the social revolution. But the elections had to be the first step. The second step must be the social revolution itself. Those were the tactics of Bakunin's followers in Paris, the leader of whom was Varlin, the best-known representative of the Paris section of the International at the time. He proclaimed himself, in the Press and in court, an adherent of 'anti-authoritarian Communism,' which was the name by which the Bakuninists started calling themselves.

Varlin had joined Bakunin's secret society at the Bâle Congress, and was Bakunin's closest confidant in Paris. Nevertheless at the end of 1869 he joined the staff of the *Marseillaise*,

which was edited by Rochefort and was the most influential radical paper in Paris. It was actually the organ of the General Council of the International and of Marx personally and it stood for participation in the elections. Its policy was that the electoral movement and Parliament must be used for the revolution. Varlin explained his motives in a letter to his Swiss associates. He said that the existing situation in France did not permit the Socialist party to remain aloof from politics. At the moment the question of the imminent fall of the Empire took precedence of everything else, and it was necessary for the Socialists to be at the head of the movement, under pain of abdication. If they held aloof from politics, they would be nothing in France to-day, while as it was they were on the eve of being everything. Neither the Swiss nor Bakunin himself had any objection to this policy, which in their eyes was justified if it led to the revolution and was the most direct way to the social revolution.

Whatever criticism may be made of Bakunin, he was not a man to be satisfied with empty formulas. He acted in accordance with the demands of his ideas, and he acted very energetically. Immediately after the conclusion of the Bâle Congress, at which he strengthened and extended his secret society, he set about preparing for a revolutionary rising. What his plans were, the exact details of what he was preparing for, are not known, but it is known that in December, 1869, and January, 1870, he was conducting a lively correspondence with members of his organisation in various French towns, for the revolution was to break out first in France. His people worked devotedly and successfully.

A large number of the most active members of the International, revolutionary-minded young men like Varlin and Pindy in Paris, Richard in Lyon, Bastelica in Marseilles, entered Bakunin's organisation and prepared for an insurrection. The situation seemed more favourable than ever. The prestige of the Empire was severely shaken and everyone felt that its days were numbered. The revolution, the downfall of Louis Bonaparte, might perhaps be delayed a little longer, but it was inevitable nevertheless. The policy of the General Council, led by Marx, was based on the imminence of a revolution in France. But it differed fundamentally, in general and

in particular, down to even the most insignificant details, from that of Bakunin. Bakunin's societies, unknown to the working masses, with a programme that they carefully concealed, worked outside society, worked deliberately outside society, planning and plotting violence.

The General Council strove to lead the workers as a whole, as a mass-movement, towards a political and economic struggle with the Empire that should be above-board and patent to everybody, and they strove to teach the workers the incompatibility in practice of their interests and those of their rulers. In May, 1870, the French Imperial Government started a hue-and-cry after the International, dissolving its sections and arresting a number of its leaders. To Marx this declaration of war was welcome. 'The French Government,' he wrote to Engels on May 18, 'has at last done what we have so long wanted—turned the political question of empire or republic into a question of life and death for the working class.' The International, suppressed by Napoleon, must promptly re-arise and openly defy the ban, exploiting in every one of its utterances every opportunity, however meagre, of proclaiming to rulers and workers alike its determination not to allow itself to be suppressed and its resolution to continue with its mass-propaganda. 'Our French members are demonstrating beneath the eyes of the French Government the difference between a secret political society and a real workers' movement,' Marx wrote in the same letter. 'Scarcely had the committee members in Paris, Lyon, Rouen, Marseilles, etc., been locked up (some of them succeeded in escaping to Switzerland) when twice the number of new committees immediately proclaimed themselves their successors with the most impudent and defiant announcements in the newspapers, even giving their private addresses.'

The Bakuninists went on plotting in the dark. Marx heard of their existence for the first time in the spring of 1871, and for some time all he knew about them was the fact of their existence. When material dealing with the Bakuninist organisations fell into the hands of the Paris police as a result of the arrests in May, 1871, and the public prosecutor announced in the Press that a secret society of conspirators existed besides the official International, Marx believed it to be one of the

usual police discoveries. 'It's the old tomfoolery,' he wrote to Engels. 'In the end the police won't even believe each other any more. This is too good.'

Marx did not yet know how wide the ramifications of Bakunin's organisation were. The abyss that separated his conception of programme, tactics and method from that of Bakunin at the beginning of 1870 had become so wide that it was unbridgeable. Marx had to engage once more in the struggle in which he had been engaged for the greater part of his life in constantly changing forms. Meanwhile war had become inevitable. European events postponed it, complicated it, blurred the issues. That it was bound to break out was clear to everyone in the winter of 1869.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

IN the year of the foundation of the International Prussia and Austria were at war with Denmark. Two years later there was war in Lombardy for the unification of Italy and in Bohemia for the hegemony of Germany. After 1866 war—*revanche pour Sadowa*—had become inevitable between the France of Louis Napoleon and Bismarck's Prussia. The International, from the first day of its existence, had had to take a stand towards war and foreign politics. The inaugural address had proclaimed the necessity of the proletariat's having its own foreign policy, based on the solidarity of the workers of all countries. The workers' International must answer ruling-class policy with its own. This principle was accepted as a matter of course by all groups within the International, even those of the most divergent views. But as soon as it came to putting principle into practice acute differences arose.

The Polish question was the first. Sympathy for the fate of the unfortunate people of Poland was universal among revolutionaries and mere radicals too, and this widespread feeling had contributed substantially to the foundation of the International. The International had helped to organise the meeting of July 22, 1863, summoned to consider ways and means of assisting the Polish rising. Poland enjoyed the sympathy of all. But there were not a few who shrank from the inevitable political implications of a more or less sentimental mood. Marx's phrases about Russia in the inaugural address had roused a good deal of opposition, for he maintained, just as in 1848, that Russia was still the mainstay of European reaction and that Russia must therefore be vanquished first. Marx was pro-Polish because he was anti-Russian. Poland's resuscitation would involve the break-up of the 'Holy Alliance,' which was always re-arising from its ashes in spite of the celebrations over its decease, and the end of the Russian nightmare which lay oppressively over Europe, stifling every revolutionary movement.



There were many in Germany and still more in England who thought as Marx did. In the Latin countries it was otherwise. The Proudhonists were the chief of those who repudiated Marx's 'Russophobia.' They did not deny that it had been justified in the forties, but they claimed that it was superfluous, actually harmful now. They held that however obnoxious Russian despotism might be in principle, from the working-class point of view it differed not at all from the governments of Napoleon III or Bismarck or even of the Cabinet of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. All were bourgeois governments alike. The Proudhonists declined to recognise the alleged excessive influence of Russia on the destiny of Europe. They rejected the notion of directing the whole weight of International policy primarily against Russia, and at the Geneva Congress of 1866, declined to vote for a foreign policy resolution demanding the 'annihilation of Russia's despotic influence on Europe' on the ground that the resolution should have been worded 'the annihilation of all despotism.'

In the dispute between Marx and the Proudhonists concerning the attitude to be adopted towards Russia and Poland the differences in their estimates of the historical period through which Europe was passing and the tasks that confronted the International in it emerged for the first time. They were soon to assume a more manifest form.

During the revolutionary period of 1848 and 1849 in Central Europe the demand for national unity had been intimately associated with the demand for political freedom. It was an axiom at that time that the way to national unity lay only through the overthrow of the princes. Only freedom created unity and only in unity was there freedom. This article of faith was adhered to even by the German bourgeois Democrats, though their consciences were mightily plagued by their inherited petty-bourgeois respect for every crowned head; and it remained part of the creed of the Italian Democrats. But the wars of the sixties seemed to confute it utterly. For Italy was not united by Mazzini but by Cavour, a royal minister of state, and the German people were not united by themselves, but by Bismarck, with blood and iron, under the spiked Prussian helmet.

To the Proudhonists national movements were simply

incomprehensible, and nations themselves were 'obsolete prejudices.' They could not understand how 'the social question' could be mixed up with antiquated 'superstitious ideas' about national unity and independence at a time when 'the social question' overshadowed everything else, and was indeed the only question that mattered at all. In their eyes anyone who connected 'the national question' with 'the social question' was a reactionary. That a man like Bismarck was able to assume the leadership of a national movement only confirmed them in their entirely negative judgment of what they regarded as belonging to long-obsolete historical phases. In their eyes every single state, without any exception whatever, was founded on 'centralism and despotism,' the contradictions of which, as long as the world had not found its 'economic equilibrium,' would continue to be fought out in wars. In these ever-recurring conflicts they did not regard it as the business of the proletariat to try and find out which side was objectively serving the cause of human progress, and then to support that side. No, the proletariat had only one duty. This, as de Paepe stated at the International Congress of 1868, consisted in the fundamental reconstruction of social and political institutions; because that was the only way a permanent end could be made of ever-recurring international disputes. The Proudhonists stood for energetic anti-military propaganda, demanded the abolition of standing armies and were the first to raise the question of the general strike as the weapon of the proletariat against war.

For these radical-sounding phrases Marx had little use. Ever since 1848 he had been preaching war with Russia, for he believed such a war would be a most powerful engine of the revolution. As in the past, he regarded war as a factor in historical growth and in some circumstances a factor of historical advance. Whether a particular war were really the latter or not and what attitude the proletariat should adopt towards it were questions to be decided on the merits of the particular case. In foreign just as in domestic politics Marx rejected the idea of anything being in itself 'reactionary.' Which of two warring nations gained the victory could not possibly be a matter of complete indifference to the proletarian movement,

the attitude of which should not be one of rigid adherence to a comfortable position of apparent extreme radicalism, but should be supple and pliant, ready to change in accordance with the changing situation.

In spite of Proudhonist criticism Marx remained convinced, as he had been in 1848, that national movements had a progressive function, at any rate among great peoples such as the Germans, the Italians, the Poles, and the Hungarians. In a letter to Karl Kautsky written many years later Engels neatly summarised the reasons for Marx's belief. 'It is historically impossible for a great people to be in a position even to discuss any internal question seriously as long as national independence is lacking,' he wrote. 'An international movement of the proletariat is only possible among independent nations, between equals.' In this national nihilism of the Proudhonists Marx discerned not only a remarkable form of French nationalism but the lurking assumption that the French were the chosen nation.

After a meeting of the General Council in June, 1866, at which there was a lengthy discussion of national questions, Marx described their attitude in a letter to Engels as 'Proudhonised Stirnerianism. They want to reduce everything to small "groups" or "communes," and then build up a "union" but no state. And this "individualising," of humanity with its accompanying "mutualism," is to be brought about while history in other countries stands still and the whole world waits until the French are ripe for the social revolution. They will then demonstrate the experiment before our eyes and the rest of the world, overcome by their example, will follow it. . . . It is exactly what Fourier expected from his *phalanstères*.' At the meeting in question Marx remarked that the French 'while denying all nationality appeared quite unconsciously to reconcile it with their own absorption into the model nation which was France.' True, Napoleon's hypocritical concern for the destinies of nations that had not yet achieved unity drove his opponents to the opposite extreme; and the petty-bourgeois Socialists' dislike of national concentration, i.e. economic concentration, came out in their dislike of the economic developments that led to it.

Just because he regarded the movement towards national

unity as a historical advance over the period of national subdivision into minor and petty states, Marx regarded Bismarck's policy with the greatest suspicion. For a long time he had mistrusted Bismarck's policy as an exclusively Prussian one, and held Bismarck to be the tool now of Napoleon, now of Russia. To Marx the idea that Germany could be united by being Prussianised seemed absurd. He and Engels were certainly not pro-Austrian during the Prusso-Austrian war, but still less were they pro-Prussian. Engels hoped the Prussians would 'get a good hiding' and Marx was convinced that they would 'pay for their boasting.' Marx expected that the defeat of Prussia would lead to a revolution in Berlin. 'Unless there is a revolution,' he wrote to Engels on April 6, 1866, 'the Hohenzollern and Habsburg dogs will throw our country fifty or a hundred years back by civil (dynastic) wars.' Unless there were a revolution, he repeated in a letter he wrote on the same day to his friend Kugelmann in Hanover, Germany would be on the threshold of another 'Thirty Years' War, and that would mean a divided Germany once more.

To Marx Prussia's rapid and brilliant victory was entirely unexpected. Prussian hegemony in Germany became a fact. The unpleasant prospect of Germany being merged into Prussia became a possibility to be reckoned with. That Bismarck's ambitions were not German ambitions but 'dynastic-Hohenzollern' ambitions was plain enough. But his blunt refusal to entertain the French demand for 'compensation' for having remained neutral in the Austrian war and the harshness with which he asserted Prussian demands in the dispute about Luxemburg immediately afterwards finally destroyed the suspicion that he was only a tool of Napoleon. The reactionary Junker Bismarck introduced universal suffrage into the North German Reichstag, though for reasons that differed profoundly from those for which Lassalle had agitated for it only a few years previously. The irresistible progress of the Prussianisation of Germany became clearer every day, and those in the workers' movement could afford to ignore it less than anybody. It had to adapt itself to the new situation, be as pliable and resilient as its opponent, Bismarck. Universal suffrage created a vast new field of action for it. The two Socialist parties were represented in the North German

Reichstag, the followers of Lassalle and the 'Eisenacher,' the latter led by Liebknecht and young August Bebel.

In the Paris Chamber the Opposition parties, consisting of more or less determined Republicans and Orleanists, were represented plentifully enough. But there was not a single Socialist. Germany's greater social maturity was demonstrated by that alone. German industry had already surpassed the French. New, scientifically equipped factories were rising in the Rhineland, in Saxony, in Silesia, every year, and genuine proletarian centres were forming round them, and class differences were making their appearance more rapidly and more acutely than in any other country, including France.

The traditional idea of the leading rôle played by France in social development grew less and less justified as the years went by. In the forties Marx had held up France as a model to the Germans and measured Germany's level by that of its neighbour. From the beginning of the sixties Marx gradually began to doubt the old, familiar idea. Engels had started doubting it even earlier; and as German economic developments became more and more impressive and as the process of the unification of the state, albeit in crooked, incomplete and half-feudal forms, became more manifest, Marx gradually became convinced that it was to the German workers' movement that the future belonged. In 1870, before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, he wrote to Engels: 'It is my firm conviction that, though the first impulse will come from France, Germany is far riper for a social movement and will outdistance France by far. The French are guilty of great error and self-deception if they still believe themselves to be the "chosen people."' In the middle of February, 1870, he wrote to Kugelmann that he expected more for the social movement from Germany than from France. The unification of Germany was the preliminary to and the guarantee of a proletarian movement in the heart of Europe.

In the summer of 1870, when the Franco-Prussian war broke out, Marx did not hesitate for a moment. For the patriotic excesses of the German upper class and petty-bourgeoisie he had nothing but contempt, reserving particular scorn for the dithyrambic outbursts of those who had recently been his comrades and even friends. After reading Freiligrath's war

poems he wrote to Engels that he would rather be a miaowing cat than a ballad-monger of that kind. He was indignant at the leaders of the Lassalle faction, who gave unconditional support to the Prussian Government in making war on France, but approved of Bebel and Liebknecht, who voted against war credits, though he did not agree with their reasons. It seemed obvious to Marx that in the struggle with Bismarck there could be no truce, even in war.

Germany's cause was not the Hohenzollerns' cause. Germany was attacked and not Prussia, and Germany must defend herself. But a German victory was essential above all in the interests of the workers' movement. Marx held that there were two reasons why it would be fatal for Louis Napoleon to win. In France the Bonapartist régime would be consolidated for many years and Central Europe would be thrown back whole decades, and the process of the unification of Germany would be interrupted. And then, as Engels wrote on August 15, 1870, there could be no more talk of an independent German workers' movement and everything would be absorbed in the struggle for the re-establishment of the national existence. On the other hand a German victory would mean the end of Bonapartism, and whatever Government followed the French would have a freer field. 'If the Prussians win,' Marx wrote to Engels immediately after the outbreak of war, 'the centralisation of the state power will be useful for the centralisation of the German working-class. Moreover, German preponderance will cause the centre of gravity of the workers' movement in Western Europe to be still more definitely shifted from France to Germany, and it is only necessary to compare the movement in the two countries from 1866 till now to see that the German working class is superior both theoretically and in organisation to the French.'

On July 23, 1870, the General Council issued a manifesto on the war. It was written by Marx. Addressed as it was to the workers of the whole world, it was obviously impossible for it to contain all the arguments that determined Marx's position. It stated that 'on the German side the war was a war of defence,' which immediately raised the question of who had placed Germany in the position of having to defend herself. In Bismarck Marx no longer saw a servant but rather a pupil

and imitator of Napoleon. The manifesto, which was issued when the war had only just begun, stressed the fact that the defence of Germany might degenerate into a war upon the French people. But if the German working class permitted that, victory or defeat would be equally evil. 'All the evils that Germany had to suffer after the so-called Wars of Liberation would be revived and redoubled,' the manifesto concluded. 'The alliance of the workers of all countries will finally exterminate war.'

In a letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht Marx gave his German comrades still more specific advice. This letter has not survived, but Engels's letter to Marx, dated August 15, 1870, in which he laid down the tactical line to be adopted in a manner with which Marx entirely agreed, has been preserved. He wrote: 'In my view, what our people can do is (1) associate themselves with the national movement as long as it is confined to the defence of Germany (in some circumstances an offensive persisting right up to conclusion of peace might not be inconsistent with this); (2) at the same time emphasise the distinction between the national interests of Germany and the dynastic interests of Prussia; (3) oppose the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine—Bismarck's intention of annexing Alsace-Lorraine to Bavaria and Baden has already transpired; (4) as soon as a Republican, non-chauvinist Government is at the helm in Paris, work for an honourable peace with it; (5) continually stress the unity of interests of the workers of France and Germany, who did not want the war and are not at war with each other; (6) Russia, as in the International manifesto.' There had been only one sentence in the manifesto about Russia, pointing out that its 'sinister form' was 'lurking in the background of this suicidal struggle.'

The manifesto commended the French workers for declaring themselves against the war and against Napoleon. But that was all. Neither in the manifesto nor in the correspondence between Marx and Engels is there a word about the duties of the French proletariat during those pregnant weeks. Marx, in all the years during which a stupefied world hailed Napoleon III as a genuine heir of the Corsican, clung to his opinion that he was but 'commonplace *canaille*,' and long before the rottenness of the Bonaparte régime had become manifest to

all beholders Marx held that its fate was already sealed. 'Whatever the result of Louis Napoleon's War with Prussia may be,' the manifesto stated, 'the death knell of the Second Empire has already sounded in Paris.' From the first day of hostilities Engels, as a student of war, was convinced that Germany would win. His articles on the campaign in the *Pall Mall Gazette* attracted a great deal of attention, and the accuracy with which he predicted the catastrophe of Sedan, even to the very date, confirmed his reputation as the 'General,' which was the nickname by which his friends henceforward invariably called him. Napoleon's defeat was certain, and Napoleon's defeat would mean a revolution in France. But in what a situation! 'If a revolution breaks out in Paris,' Marx wrote to Engels on August 8, 'the question arises: have they the resources and the leaders to put up serious opposition to the Prussians? It is impossible to deny that the twenty-year-long Bonapartist farce has caused enormous demoralisation. One is scarcely justified in counting on revolutionary heroism.' In the middle of August Engels still believed that the position of a revolutionary government, if it came soon, need not be desperate; but it would have to abandon Paris to its fate and continue the war from the south. It might still be possible to hold out until fresh munitions had been procured and new armies organised with which the enemy might gradually be forced back towards the frontier. But five days later Engels believed that even that possibility had vanished. 'If a revolutionary government had been formed in Paris as late as last week,' he wrote to Marx, 'something might still have been done. Now it is too late, and a revolutionary government can only make itself ridiculous, as a miserable parody of the Convention.'

The revolution was bound to come. That was certain. But Marx was just as certain that its victory in Paris could only follow defeat at the front. His certainty on this point explains the silence of the manifesto.

The French sections of the International did not allow themselves to be carried away by the wave of patriotic enthusiasm that swept the country upon the outbreak of war. Their hatred of Napoleon alone was sufficient to preserve them from that. For them to have wanted the Emperor to win the war



and thus consolidate Bonapartism would have been inconceivable; and they did not believe he would win, for the weaknesses of his system were too familiar to them. The police, as usual unremitting in the invention of falsehood, alleged that cheers for Prussia had been called for at peace meetings just before the outbreak of war. Such meetings were held in places, and it became necessary to forbid patriotic demonstrations in the suburbs of Paris, because they occasionally developed into demonstrations the very reverse of patriotic. It is quite possible that some crank, conceiving himself to be a revolutionary, may actually have called for a cheer for the Prussians, but it is certain that the workers who adhered to the International had no love for Bismarck, however much they despised Napoleon. Disunited as the French Socialists were—the '*Internationaux de la dernière heure*,' as the 'Old' Internationalists remarked, only served to bring more differences into the ranks—they certainly did not want a Prussian victory at the expense of France. Enslaved, humiliated and oppressed as their country might be at the hands of an iniquitous government, it nevertheless remained the country of the revolution, the heart of Europe, now and for the future. They did not believe in Napoleon, but they believed in France and France's mission.

Bakunin, who at this time was held in high regard by the members of the International in France, thought as they did. Nay more, he was an almost ideal embodiment of French revolutionary patriotism. Like Marx, he considered that indifference in international conflicts was pseudo-radical and could only be harmful to the revolution. Like Marx, he demanded the intervention of the proletariat to the full limit of its strength. But, unlike Marx, he regarded Germany and not Russia as the enemy and the chief bulwark of reaction; and Bakunin did not just mean contemporary Germany; in his eyes Germany had been the hub and pattern of despotism for centuries, ever since the Reformation and the suppression of the peasant risings in the first third of the sixteenth century. Though there were other despotic governments even more brutal than the German, that fundamental truth was not affected in his eyes, because 'Germany had made a system, a religious cult, of what in other countries was only a fact.' It

was a feature of the German national character. Bakunin liked quoting the saying of Ludwig Börne that 'other people are often slaves, but we Germans always lackeys.' He called the servility of the Germans a natural characteristic which they had elevated into a system, thus making of it an incurable disease. If the Germans, condemned to slavery themselves and spreading the plague of despotism wherever they went, were to conquer France, the cause of Socialism would be lost and all hope of a revolution in Germany—a hope that in any case could only be justified by a spirit of optimism that ran counter to all experience—would have to be buried for at least half a century, and France would be threatened with the fate of Poland.

• Even before the war had properly begun he believed, as Marx did, that Napoleon's defeat was inevitable; but he did not regard the defeat of France as inevitable, that is, assuming she bethought herself and a revolution broke out in time. A revolution and a revolution alone could save France, Europe and Socialism. The French, above all the workers, must rise, trample Bonapartism in the dust and hurl themselves at the enemy of France and of civilisation with the all-compelling enthusiasm of a revolutionary nation. In converting the imperialist war into a revolutionary one lay their only hope.

Bakunin became intensely active as soon as war broke out. His new activity was essentially a continuation of the old; it consisted of organising militant groups and preparing armed risings. The war had put immediate insurrection upon the order of the day. During the last days of July and the first week of August Bakunin overwhelmed his friends in France with letters, counselling them, encouraging them, urging them to immediate action. On August 11 he mentions that he had written twenty-three detailed letters to France that day. 'I have my plan ready,' he said. The details of his plan are unknown, but what they were it is not difficult to guess. On August 8, revolutionaries, led by Bakuninists, seized the town hall of Marseilles, and a rising in Paris was planned for August 9. The 'committee of action' there consisted chiefly of Bakuninists, and its leader, Pindy, was a prominent member of Bakunin's secret organisation. But the result was a fiasco,

for on the morning of the ninth Pindy and his fellow-conspirators were arrested.

Bakunin was not discouraged by these abortive attempts. What did not succeed in one place must succeed in another—*must* succeed. For time was racing by and the German army was relentlessly advancing into France. 'If there is no popular rising in France within ten days, France is lost,' he wrote to his friends, almost in desperation. 'Oh, if I were young, I should not be writing letters but should be among you.' Danton's words were constantly upon his lips. '*Avant de marcher contre l'ennemi, il faut le détruire, le paralyser derrière soi.*'<sup>1</sup>

On August 14 Blanqui and some of his followers carried out an attack on the police barracks in the Grande Rue de la Vilette. Their cry: '*Vive la République! Mort aux Prussiens! Aux armes!*' was greeted with silence by a gaping throng. The rising collapsed pitifully.

News of the disaster of Sedan reached Paris on September 4; one hundred and twenty-five thousand men had been taken prisoner, six hundred guns had been captured and the Emperor had surrendered to the Prussians. The Empire collapsed without raising a finger in its own defence. A Republic was proclaimed in Paris, and the provinces, in so far as they had not anticipated Paris, followed suit.

Napoleon left the Republic a fearful heritage. The enemy was in the land, the armies were in disorder, the exchequer was bare. Marx's anxious query about the future was destined soon to have an answer.

On the night of September 5 Marx received a telegram from Longuet: 'Republic proclaimed.' The names of the members of the Provisional Government followed, with the words: Influence your friends in Germany immediately. He need not have added this injunction. The manifesto of the Paris sections of the International, which Marx received next day, was not calculated to make him hurry. On the contrary, it merely repelled him as being 'ridiculously chauvinistic,' with its demand that the Germans promptly withdraw across the Rhine—as if the Rhine could possibly be the frontier. But it was not a question of criticising inept phraseology or the style

<sup>1</sup> Before marching against the enemy, it is necessary to destroy, to paralyse the enemy behind one.

of a well or ill-written manifesto now. This was no time for historical analyses. On September 6 Marx addressed the General Council on the fundamental alteration in the European situation brought about by the downfall of Napoleon in France. Thanks to the tremendous authority he exercised on the General Council, he succeeded in persuading it to acknowledge the young French Republic, in spite of the hesitation and vacillation of some of its English members. It was decided that the new situation merited the issue of a second manifesto. This was also written by Marx, with the assistance of Engels in those passages which dealt with military matters. It was published on September 9.

The main theme of the manifesto, on which all the rest depended, was this; after Sedan Germany was no longer waging a war of defence. 'The war of defence ended with the surrender of Louis Napoleon, the capitulation of Sedan and the proclamation of the Republic in Paris. But long before these events occurred, at the very moment when the whole rottenness of the Bonapartist armies was revealed, the Prussian military camarilla set its heart on conquest.' To refute the alleged necessity of the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine for the defence of Germany Marx used arguments with which Engels supplied him. These were convincing, but they were only calculated to make an impression on military experts. The chief emphasis lay in the political argument, which made the General Council's manifesto the most significant document of the time.

With the victory and the consequences that threatened to follow in its wake Russia, from being a shadowy figure lurking in the background, came to the fore in a fashion that grew ever plainer and ever more menacing. Marx saw it, and did all that was in his power to make it visible to the world. But in Germany he was talking to men who were dazzled and blinded. Russia was far away, but Strasbourg was near, near enough to seize, and they seized it. 'Did the Teuton patriots really believe,' the manifesto said, 'that Germany's independence, freedom and peace would be assured if they forced France into the arms of Russia? If the success of German arms, the arrogance of victory and dynastic intrigues drive Germany to rob France of French soil, only two ways remain open to Germany. She must either become a conscious vassal of

Russia's plans for self-aggrandisement, with all the risks that that involves—a policy that corresponds to Hohenzollern traditions—or, after a short rest, arm for a new “defensive” war, not one of these new-fashioned “localised” wars, but ‘a war against the allied Slav and Latin races.’ A week after Sedan Marx clearly delineated the main lines that German foreign policy was to follow up to the outbreak of the Great War; first the ‘friendship’ with Russia that Bismarck fostered, followed by preparations for war against the Franco-Russian *entente* that began as soon as that friendship was dissolved. A few sentences Marx wrote to his friend Sorge on September 1, 1870, bear brilliant witness to his foresight. ‘What the Prussian donkeys don’t see,’ he wrote, ‘is that the present war leads just as necessarily to war between Germany and Russia as the war of 1866 led to war between Prussia and France. That is the *best* result that I expect of it for Germany. “Prussianism” as such has never existed and cannot exist other than in alliance and in subservience to Russia. And this War No. 2 will act as the wet-nurse of the inevitable revolution in Russia.’ Forty-four years later Germany went to war with Russia and France, in 1917 revolution, unleashed by the war, broke out in Russia, and in 1918 the semi-feudal military might of Prussia collapsed.

Marx was not deceived as to the weakness of the German workers’ movement and its inability to prevent the approaching catastrophe. ‘If the French workers were unable to check the aggressors in the midst of peace, have the German workers a better prospect of checking the victor in the midst of the clash of arms?’ he wrote. Nevertheless, however difficult the position of the German proletariat might be, he believed ‘it would do its duty.’

The fall of Louis Bonaparte opened up new and tremendous prospects to the French working classes. The General Council sent its greetings to the young Republic—to the Republic and not to the Provisional Government of National Defence. The mistrust felt for the latter in revolutionary circles was not misplaced. It consisted partly of avowed Orleanists, partly of ‘middle-class Republicans, on some of whom the insurrection of June, 1848, had left an indelible mark.’ Suspicion of the Orleanists, who occupied all the most important positions and regarded the Republic as but a bridge to the Restoration, was

well-founded. Nevertheless, or rather for that very reason, Marx decided that the most pressing duty of the French workers was to support and defend the young Republic in spite of all its defects. The situation was full of dangers and full of temptations, requiring the most extreme caution and the most courageous initiative, iron self-control and all-daring heroism.

The struggle was no longer between Louis Napoleon, that 'commonplace *canaille*,' and a Germany which was on the defensive; republican France was now defending herself against rapacious German militarism. The manifesto called on the workers of France to do their duty as citizens. Their duty was to defend the French Republic against the invading Germans. 'Any attempt to overthrow the new Government with the enemy at the gates of Paris would be a desperate act of folly.' But at the same time it was obvious that the French working class must not forget its own class duties, and the General Council bade it exploit the favourable opportunity of forwarding its own interest to the extreme. Eugène Dupont, the representative of the French sections on the General Council, wrote to the Internationalists at Lyons: 'The bourgeoisie still have the power. In these circumstances the rôle of the workers, or rather their duty, is to let the bourgeois vermin make peace with the Prussians (for the shame of doing so will adhere to them always), not to indulge in outbreaks which would only consolidate their power, but to take advantage of the liberty which circumstances will provide to organise all the forces of the working class. . . . The duty of our association is to activate and spread our organisation everywhere.' Six weeks later he wrote once more to Chavret at Lyons: 'The rôle (of the International) is to take advantage of every opportunity and every occasion to spread the organisation of the working class.'

'Restraint on the part of the International in France until after the conclusion of peace,' as Engels put it, was far from meaning that the French workers were to go on quietly and calmly organising as if they were living, say, in Belgium or in England or as if the date were still 1869. Their task was not only to participate actively in the struggle against the invaders and to continue the building up of their organisation. Marx

highly praised what the members of the International did at Lyons before Bakunin ruined everything there. On October 19, 1870, he wrote to Beesly, saying that under pressure of the local section of the International a Republic had been set up before Paris took that step, and a revolutionary government immediately established; a commune, consisting partly of workers belonging to the International, partly of middle-class Radical Republicans. The *octroi* had been immediately abolished, and rightly so. The Bonapartist and clerical intriguers had been intimidated and energetic steps were taken to arm the whole population. Activity of this kind was far more than mere work of organisation; it meant that working-class organisations were actively co-operating in introducing and consolidating the Republican régime; and this was the only way the working-class movement could grow, by co-operating in shaping the country's destiny. Independent action of the working class must be postponed till later, until after the war was over and the necessary work of preparatory organisation had been done. Engels went so far as to stress the fact that the working class 'would need time to organise' even after the conclusion of peace. Hence it was impossible to decide in advance what form its future action might take. 'After the conclusion of peace,' Engels wrote in a letter to Marx on September 12, 'the workers' prospects in every direction will be brighter than ever before.' A remark in the same letter that 'not much fear need be entertained of the army returning from internment from the point of view of internal conflicts' indicates that he reckoned on the possibility—not the probability and definitely not the inevitability—of an armed struggle. In the same letter he warned the workers against any action during the war. 'If one could do anything in Paris,' Engels wrote, 'the thing to do would be to prevent the workers from striking until after the peace. Should they succeed in establishing themselves under the banner of national defence, they would take over the inheritance of Bonaparte and the present wretched republic, and would be vainly defeated by the German armies and thrown back again for twenty years. . . . But if they do not let themselves be carried away under the pressure of foreign attacks but proclaim the social republic on the eve of the storming of Paris? It would

be dreadful if the German army's last act of war were a battle with the workers at the Paris barricades. It would throw us back fifty years, put everyone and everything into a false position, and the national hatred and the demagoguery that would take hold of the French workers! In this war France's active power of resistance is broken and with it goes the prospect of expelling the invaders by a revolution.'

For France the war was lost. He who continued it would be beaten and must humble himself before the victor. All other considerations must recede before that one decisive fact. The military situation alone forced the workers to hold back at least until the conclusion of peace. The manifesto warned them 'not to let themselves be swayed by national memories of 1792 as the French peasants had let themselves be deceived by national memories of the First Empire. Theirs was not to repeat the past but to build the future.' The argument sounded well, but if it had any validity it was but a secondary one. In the middle of August Engels had said that any government that tried to repeat the Convention would be but a sorry parody of it. After the Battle of Sedan a revolutionary war in the manner of 1792 seemed completely impossible. A letter of Marx's to Kugelmann, written on February 14, 1871, makes it clear that his attitude was determined by this estimate of the war situation. 'If France holds out, uses the armistice to reorganise her army and gives the war a real revolutionary character—and the crafty Bismarck is doing his utmost to this end—the great new German Borussian empire may still receive the baptism of a wholly unexpected thrashing.' To give the war 'a revolutionary character would be to repeat the Convention. In September, 1870, it would have only have been a miserable parody of the Convention. 'To sacrifice the the workers now,' Engels wrote to Marx on September 7, 'would be strategy *à la* Bonaparte and MacMahon.'

While Marx did all he could to prevent the workers from attempting to overthrow the Provisional Government while the war lasted, Bakunin and the 'Jacobins' held the overthrow of the Provisional Government to be their most pressing task. The 'Jacobins,' students, intellectuals, and *déclassés* of all sorts, seized on the traditions of the French Revolution—not so much those of the Jacobin clubs, for many of them considered



Robespierre to be an irresolute weakling, as to those of the Hébertists. Many of them had vague Socialist ideas, and all of them every day went politically a step farther Left than the day before. They were conspirators by tradition and inclination, completely unorganised as a group or even as a party; but they were united by that mental kink exhibited in its purest form by the Bohemians of the Left Bank, who were in revolt against absolutely everything.

In the history of London's political exiles in the sixties the 'Jacobins' did not play a very honourable rôle. Such of them as had formed a special 'French branch' of the International soon came into violent conflict with the General Council. Anyone who worked for the International in France was immediately suspect in their eyes. Such a person was bound to have inclinations towards Bonapartism, if he were not actually an agent of Napoleon. Felix Pyat, Vésinier, and others of their leaders outdid each other in radicalism. Tyrannicide was their ideal. Pyat constantly drank toasts to 'the bullet that will slay a tyrant,' and he opened a subscription to buy a 'revolver of honour' for Beresovsky, the Pole who made an attempt on the life of Alexander II in Paris in 1867, and indulged in many similar pranks. Though not himself a member of the 'French branch,' he used it as his platform and behaved as though he were the living embodiment of the International itself. The behaviour of this irresponsible would-be politician, which in other circumstances would have been nothing but a bad joke, became a matter of occasionally serious embarrassment for the International. The General Council had repeatedly to announce that Pyat and his friends had nothing to do with them. It could not allow legal organisations on the Continent to be jeopardised by Pyat's ranting. Marx had bitter contempt for Pyat, the 'mountebank of 1848,' and 'these heroes of the revolutionary phrase, who, from a safe distance of course, kill kings and emperors and Louis Napoleon in particular.'

The news of the fall of the Empire turned these people's heads completely. 'The whole French branch has set off for Paris to-day,' Marx wrote to Engels on September 6, 1870, 'to commit imbecilities in the name of the International. They wish to overthrow the Provisional Government, proclaim the

Paris Commune, appoint Pyat French ambassador in London, etc.' As Marx considered this an extremely dangerous enterprise he sent Serrailier to Paris after the Jacobins to warn people of the danger of insurrectionary action.

Bakunin did not lag behind them in zeal. The seed he had sown so carefully seemed to have ripened now. The moment had come to strike. All the old powers had collapsed; and there was only one way to save France now, Bakunin's way, anarchism. An uprising of popular passion would achieve both victory over the external enemy and the complete reorganisation of society. The two were inseparably united in his eyes. Bakunin left Switzerland on September 14. The difficulty he had in raising money for the fare cost him several valuable days, or so he feared. With a Pole and a former Russian officer as his travelling companions he went to Lyons, where his most devoted followers lived. At first there were only a very few who were willing to follow him, but he succeeded in winning over the hesitators and the doubters. Two days after his arrival he wrote to Ogarev: 'The real revolution has not yet broken out here, but that will come. Everything is being done to prepare it. I am playing for high stakes. I hope to see the triumph soon.' A week later he was as good as certain of the victory of his cause: 'To-night we shall arrest our principal enemies; to-morrow there will be the last battle and, we hope, victory.' On September 28 Bakunin and his followers seized the town hall of Lyons and proclaimed a revolutionary Commune. Paragraph 1 of the first decree stated: 'The administrative and governmental machinery of the state, having become powerless, has been abolished.' But with this the revolutionary energy of the Lyons Bakuninists was exhausted. The venture collapsed pitifully after a few hours, and Bakunin only just managed to escape. In other towns, as in Marseilles, where Bakunin tried again, and in Brest, where his followers went to work, things did not even get as far as that.

When Marx learnt of Bakunin's adventures in Lyons he was indignant. 'Those asses have ruined everything,' he wrote to Beesly. Belonging as they did to the International, the Bakuninists, Marx stated, unfortunately had sufficient influence to cause his followers to deviate. Beesly would understand,

Marx added, that the very fact that a Russian—represented as an agent of Bismarck by the middle-class newspapers—had the presumption to impose himself as the leader of a French Committee of Public Safety was quite sufficient to sway the balance of public opinion. It would have been difficult indeed to have saved France by decreeing the abolition of the state at a moment when she was engaged in a life and death struggle with a terrible enemy whose demands were increasing from day to day.

The fair words spoken by the King of Prussia at the beginning of the war—as usual, he had invoked God as his witness and declared that he was fighting Napoleon but not the people of France—were now completely forgotten. Anyone who dared remember them was denounced as a traitor. When the ‘Eisenacher’ party committee issued a proclamation to the workers protesting against the Prussian plans of conquest and demanding an honourable peace with the French Republic, a general had them arrested and led away in chains. The Government Press described the demand that a King of Prussia should keep his promises as ‘ingenuous.’

France defended herself desperately. All revolutionary elements everywhere were on her side. Old Garibaldi hurried to the assistance of the French Republic with a legion of volunteers. It was necessary to help her from without.

Immediately after the proclamation of the Republic in Paris the General Council set itself at the head of the movement that demanded that Great Britain should recognise it. On September 10 a great workers’ meeting in St. James’s Hall demanded recognition of the French Republic and the conclusion of an honourable peace. The latter demand was closely associated with and indeed followed from it. Demonstrations increased during the winter months and at the turn of the year a large number of bourgeois politicians joined the pro-French front. Not satisfied with diplomatic intervention, they actually claimed that the time had come for British military intervention as well. Marx, as a foreigner, could not come forward publicly himself, so the campaign of meetings was led by Odger, an English member of the General Council. But Marx seized every opportunity of action that came his way. In January, 1871, he learned of the difficulties of the German army in France

from an informed source, namely Johannes Miquel, a high Prussian official who had been a member of the Communist League. Marx saw to it that the news was transmitted to the Government of National Defence through Lafargue. For, as Marx once more stated in an open letter to Bismarck in the *Daily News* of January 19, 1871, 'France was now fighting not only for her own independence but for the liberty of Germany and of Europe.' The General Council of the International was behind a mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square on January 23, to which the workers marched carrying the tricolour.

Engels energetically pleaded France's cause in articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He denounced the brutal retaliatory measures the Prussians took against the *francs-tireurs*. There was an answer to these methods, he said. 'Wherever a people allowed itself to be subdued merely because its armies had become incapable of resistance it has been held up to universal contempt as a nation of cowards,' he wrote, 'and wherever a people did energetically carry out this irregular resistance, the invaders very soon found it impossible to carry out the old-fashioned code of blood and fire. The English in America, the French under Napoleon in Spain, the Austrians in 1848 in Italy and Hungary, were very soon compelled to treat popular resistance as perfectly legitimate, from fear of reprisals on their own prisoners.' Engels tried to convince the British that military intervention need only be on a very small scale to succeed. 'If thirty thousand British soldiers landed at Cherbourg or Brest and were attached to the army of the Loire, they would give it a resolution unknown before.' He followed the heroic resistance of the raw French armies with great sympathy, and with more than sympathy.

Engels sent to Gambetta's secretary, through Lafargue, a memorandum containing a carefully thought-out plan for raising the siege to Paris. The original document has never been discovered and may have perished in those agitated times. But Engel's executors, Bebel and Bernstein, found the preliminary draft after his death and destroyed it, fearing the possibility of its being used as evidence of 'treason' against the German Social-Democrats. Bernstein refused to discuss the matter during the whole of his lifetime, and that was the reason

why that very remarkable document has practically never been mentioned in print before. However, hints in memoirs, taken in conjunction with Engels's own statements in the articles he wrote on the war, enable one to form a pretty accurate idea of what he proposed. His underlying idea must have corresponded exactly with the plan that Bourbaki's army tried to carry out in December, 1870. The coincidence may have been more than accidental. Engels became so enthusiastic about his plans that he actually wanted to go to France to offer his services to Gambetta. Marx, however, was sceptical. 'Do not trust these bourgeois republicans,' he said to him, according to Charles Longuet, 'whether you are responsible or not, at the first hitch you will be shot as a spy.'

The General Council discussed the prospects of British intervention. Short reports of meetings that appeared in a local London paper, the *Eastern Post*, only give the barest outline of Marx's views. At the end of September he seems to have regarded the prospects of British intervention as very slight. Privateering, England's most powerful weapon against the Prussians, had been forbidden by the Declaration of Paris in 1856. But the situation changed on October 20, when Russia denounced the Treaty of Paris as far as the Black Sea was concerned. The transactions of the General Council on January 1, 1871, show how Marx regarded the distribution of forces then. Engels said that if England had declared war on Russia after October 20, Russia would have joined forces with Prussia. Austria, Italy and Turkey would have adhered to the side of England and France. Turkey would have been strong enough to defend herself against Russia, and Europe would have expelled Prussia from France. Such a European War would have meant the saving of France and Europe and the downfall of absolutism. At a meeting on March 14 Marx was still in favour of British intervention and a ruthless privateering war. But by the middle of March the war was over. Four days later the Commune was proclaimed in Paris.

On January 28 the Provisional Government had signed an armistice with Prussia, in spite of Bismarck's monstrous demands. The population of besieged Paris was on the point of starvation, all the French armies had been defeated, and all prospect of the fortune of war changing seemed to have

vanished. Was there really no way of saving France from dishonour? Had every possible thing been done? The Provisional Government had been accused of indecision, cowardice and even treachery before—treachery was the favourite accusation the Bakuninists and Jacobins directed at '*cette vermine bourgeoise*'—and hundreds of thousands of Paris workers and members of the petty-bourgeoisie now started wondering whether these accusations, which they had scarcely listened to before, were not, perhaps, justified after all. They started listening to them with an attentive ear. Once more they turned over in their minds all their dreadful experiences in those four-and-a-half months of siege, and found much that was strange and difficult to understand, and much that had never seemed very plausible to them, though they had accepted it at the time as military necessity, not intelligible to them with their limited view over but a sector of the front. But now they suddenly looked at everything with different eyes. It is known to-day that after the Battle of Sedan it was absolutely impossible for the French to have won the war without external aid. The question whether a revolutionary war might or might not have forced the Prussians to reduce their demands—Marx still believed this possible as late as February—is scarcely one that can be settled now. But one thing is known now. The Parisians were justified in their suspicions. Paris was not defended as it might have been. The military command was crippled not only by disbelief in the possibility of success. There were large sections among the officers who were bitterly opposed to putting arms into the hands of the 'rabble,' particularly the workers, for fear that though they might fight against the external enemy to-day, to-morrow they might turn their arms against the enemy within. And the more violently the extremists agitated—the possessing classes regarded as an extremist anyone who did not devotedly accept everything that came from above—the more acute their fear of the future became. The Prussians were their enemies to-day, but they might be friends and allies in the revolution to-morrow. Towards the end of the siege the most shameless of these people made no more secret of the fact that they would prefer the Germans to march in to having a revolution in Paris. Fear of the imminence of insurrection was not the least of the factors

that led the Provisional Government to conclude an armistice. The Germans were perfectly well aware of this. Side by side with the peace negotiations there took place negotiations concerning the assistance that Bismarck might provide.' He was prepared to release immediately as many French prisoners as might be needed to refill the ranks of the 'army of order,' and the Provisional Government pledged itself to disarm the workers of Paris as soon as possible. Rumours of this spread quickly and intensified suspicion. From this to conviction of the Provisional Government's treachery to France was but a step. The Bakuninists and their allies, the Jacobins, saw to it that the step was taken.

This is not the place to write the history of the Paris Commune. Spontaneous mass movements and the deliberate actions of organised groups were so inextricably intermingled that in spite of all that has been written about it and all the research that has been done, the tangle has never been completely unravelled. But one thing is sure. The theory that the March revolution in Paris was an entirely spontaneous rising, entirely unorganised and unprepared, does not correspond to the facts.

True, Bakunin, the arch-conspirator, took no part in it. His strength was broken by the reverse he suffered at Lyons. While still there he wrote to a friend in deep despair: 'Farewell liberty, farewell Socialism, farewell justice for the people, and farewell the triumph of humanity!' All his hopes of France had been in vain. 'I have no more faith in the revolution in France,' he wrote at the end of October, 1870. 'The country is no longer revolutionary at all. The people has become as doctrinaire and as bourgeois as the bourgeois. The social revolution might have saved it, and the social revolution alone was capable of saving it.' The people had shown itself incapable of embracing its own salvation. 'Farewell all our dreams of imminent emancipation. There will be a crushing and overwhelming reaction.'

Great as Bakunin's influence on his friends was, on this occasion they did not follow him—his friends in Paris in particular. What bound them to him was not a thought-out programme—to say nothing of a comprehensive interpretation of society—but a will to action that flinched at no obstacles,

recognised no obstacles; they were united less by community of conviction than by community of mood; and moods in besieged Paris were necessarily different from what they were at Lyons. Certainly Lyons had been a fiasco, and hard as it might be, they must be better prepared next time. That was what they thought in Paris. They did not rise but made their preparations first. They regarded the incident at Lyons, which had been a terrible blow to Bakunin, as but a preliminary skirmish. Their battle was still to come. They drew up their ranks. Their leader was Varlin.

He was not a particularly gifted speaker, but he set no great store by oratory. An able organiser, energetic and clear-sighted, he took up the cause of his class with complete devotion and utterly without personal ambition. General Cluseret called him 'the Christ of the working class,' a phrase that sounded false only to those who did not know the details of his life. The workers loved him as their best friend. His work on the *Marseillaise* had brought him into contact with the revolutionary intelligentsia, particularly with the leading men among the Jacobins. With some of them he was on terms of personal friendship and he was exceptionally fitted to re-establish political liaison between them and the Bakuninists, to whose ranks he himself belonged.

On September 4, 1870, Varlin was still in Brussels, to which he had been compelled to flee to escape the attentions of the Bonapartist police. On September 5 he made a speech to the workers of Paris. He very soon resumed the prominent position he had previously occupied in the Regional Council of the International, and there was more than enough for him to do. The minutes of the Regional Council's meetings in January, 1871, i.e. after a period of three months' intensive work, show that a delegate complained that the sections had been broken up and their members scattered—which gives an indication of the state the Paris sections must have been in during the first few weeks of the Republic. Another delegate was of the opinion that the International had been wrecked by the events that followed the proclamation of the Republic. In spite of exaggerations, due to reaction after perhaps excessive hopes, in the main these statements were correct. The International in Paris did not develop along the lines that Marx had indicated



for it. Difficult the task that confronted the leaders of the Paris sections was—it was no light task, in the midst of the feverish excitement of a besieged city, to attempt to persuade members of the profoundly agitated and half-starving working-class masses to join an organisation which was not concerned with their immediate and most pressing interests. But exceptional as the obstacles were, some if not all of them might have been overcome if Varlin and his comrades had not set themselves aims which, though important, were less important than the resuscitation of the sections. He who aimed at overthrowing the Government of National Defence in the midst of war had no time to lose with secondary things but had necessarily to go straight forward towards his goal; and conferring with the Jacobins on preparations for an insurrection was obviously more important than the troublesome effort of trying to build up the still weak sections of the International.

The most important revolutionary organisation in Paris was the Central Committee of the twenty *arrondissements*, which was intended from the first not merely to be a popular check on the Government but to be a definite substitute for it when the proper moment came. The Committee was in the hands of the Bakuninists and their allies, the Jacobins, and its paper was *Le Combat*, which was edited by Félix Pyat. There were plenty of differences between the Bakuninists and the Jacobins, but they faded into the background behind their common goal, the overthrow of the Government and the setting up of the revolutionary Commune. Bakunin at Lyons had associated himself with General Cluseret, though he had very soon regretted the decision. But the Bakuninists in Paris remained faithful to their alliance with the Jacobins almost to the last day of the Commune. Little detailed information is extant concerning the activities of the Central Committee. It had contacts with Lyons, and General Cluseret went there on its behalf, though it did not identify itself with Bakunin's attempted rising. But it did learn from it that the time to strike had not yet come. A circular signed by Varlin and Benoît Malon written at the end of 1870 stated: 'We are hurrying the organisation of our Republican committees, the first elements of our future revolutionary communes. We are not neglecting to take precautions against the scattered but menacing forces of

reaction. 'We are organising our vigilance committees with this end in view and we are planting the foundations of districts, which were so useful in '93. Our revolution has not yet come, but we shall make it, and, when we are rid of the Prussians, we shall lay the foundations in a revolutionary fashion of the egalitarian society of which we dream.'

The armistice got rid of the Prussian millstone for them, or so, at least, they thought, and now the time for action had come. The first task was to win over the National Guard, whose numbers had grown enormously and whose composition had fundamentally altered during the siege. Whereas previously it had been an instrument of the possessing classes, scarcely yielding in loyalty to the Imperial Guard itself, its ranks were now filled with workers and members of the petty-bourgeoisie. After the armistice Paris had a garrison of twelve thousand regular troops, but there were two hundred and fifty-six battalions of the National Guard. If they came over to the side of revolution victory, at any rate in Paris, was assured.

The National Guard had formed its own central committee. Within a short time Varlin and his friends had succeeded in gaining influence upon the battalions and the central committee. A meeting of the delegates of the National Guard was held on March 10, 1871, and presided over by Pindy, the Bakuninist who had attempted a rising on August 9 in the previous year. One battalion after another declared itself for the revolution. Varlin was full of confidence. P. L. Lavrov, the Russian philosopher and revolutionary, who was living in Paris and knew Varlin, describes in a letter a conversation he had with him a few days before March 18. 'Another week, Varlin said, 'and seventeen of the twenty *arrondissements* will be ours; the other three will not be for us, but they will not do anything against us. Then we shall turn the prefecture of police out of Paris, overthrow the Government and France will follow us.'

Varlin had foreseen well. A Government attempt to take away the rifles of the National Guard precipitated the outbreak of the revolution by a few days. Nevertheless Varlin's calculation was correct. On March 18 fifteen of the twenty *arrondissements* acknowledged the authority of the Central Committee

of the National Guard; two hundred and fifteen of the two hundred and fifty-six battalions adhered to it. The Commune was proclaimed in Paris.

'The International did not raise a finger to make the Commune,' Engels later wrote to Sorge. Varlin was one of the two secretaries of the Paris regional council; but his work for the Commune was not done as secretary of the International. The minutes of the meetings of the regional council during this period have been preserved, and the meagreness of references to the movement that led to the Commune is astonishing. To Lavrov, who was comparatively a slight acquaintance, Varlin made no secret of what was going forward, while at the same time those delegates of the Regional Council who were not his associates had no idea of what the morrow might bring forth. On March 17, the day before the rising, a delegate wrote in answer to Gambon, who wanted to know what the attitude of the Regional Council was to the assembly at Versailles: 'In view of the obscurity of the political situation, the Regional Council, like you, is in perplexity. What is to be done? What do the people really feel at heart?' All the same the organisers of the Commune were leading Paris members of the International, though the General Council in London did not 'raise a finger.' There is no reference in any documents or in any letter of Marx or Engels, even in those of the most confidential nature, that gives the slightest indication that the rising in Paris was demanded, much less organised, by London.

But nevertheless, as Engels wrote in the same letter to Sorge, the Commune was 'unquestionably the intellectual child of the International'; not because Marx and Engels declared complete solidarity with Varlin and his Bakuninist comrades or with the Blanquists or with Pyat and his Jacobins—they knew practically nothing whatever about the activities of these groups in February and the first half of March; not because the Commune was 'staged' by the International, which it was not; but because the Commune, with all the limitations of its time and place, with all its illusions and all its mistakes, was the European proletariat's first great battle against the bourgeoisie. Whether it was a mistake at that juncture to resort to arms, whether the time was misjudged, the leaders deluded, the means unsuitable, all such questions receded before the

fact that the proletariat in Paris was fighting for its emancipation and the emancipation of the working class. The latter was the battle-cry of the International. Marx's attitude to the Commune was determined by that fact.

Unfortunately only a few of Marx's utterances during those months have survived, but all the indications available go to show that from the first he regarded the Commune's prospects of success as very slight. Oberwinder, an Austrian Socialist, who later became a police agent, says in his memoirs that 'a few days after the outbreak of the March rising in Paris Marx wrote to Vienna that the course it had taken precluded all prospects of success.' The utmost that Marx hoped for was a compromise, an honourable peace between Paris and Versailles.

Such an agreement, however, was only attainable if the Commune forced it upon its enemy. But this it failed to do. 'If they succumb,' Marx wrote to Kugelman, 'only their kind-heartedness is to blame.' On April 6 he wrote to Liebknecht: 'If the Parisians are beaten it looks as if it will be by their own fault, but a fault really deriving from their excessive decency.' The Central Committee and later the Commune, he said, gave the mischievous wretch, Thiers, time to centralise the hostile forces (1) by foolishly not wishing to start civil war, as though Thiers himself had not started it by his attempted forcible disarming of Paris, and (2) by wishing to avoid the appearance of usurping power, wasting valuable time electing the Commune—its organisation, etc., wasted still more time—instead of marching on Versailles immediately after the forces of reaction had been suppressed in Paris. Marx believed the Government would only consent to a compromise if the struggle against Versailles—military, economic and moral—was conducted with extreme vigour. Marx regarded as one of the Commune's greatest mistakes the fact that it treated the Bank of France as a holy of holies off which it must piously keep its hands. Had it taken possession of the Bank of France it would have been able in case of need to threaten the country's whole economic life in such a fashion as to force the Versailles Government very quickly to give in. Once civil war had broken out it must be continued according to the rules of war. But during the first few weeks the Commune conducted it

sluggishly, and worse, in the face of an imminent attack it failed to consolidate the position of its weak but important outposts outside Paris. Even the steps taken in the rest of the country to weaken the enemy at the gates of Paris were only half-heartedly carried out, if not altogether neglected. 'Alas! in the provinces the action taken is only local and pacific,' Marx wrote on May 13 to Fränkel in Paris. The action in the provinces which Marx considered so necessary had, of course, nothing in common with some adventurous plans which were being hatched in Switzerland. There the old insurrectionary leaders, J. P. Becker and Rüstow, were planning an invasion of the South of France by Swiss members of the International. They believed they would carry the people with them and rescue Paris. In other words they planned a repetition of Herwegh's expedition of 1848. The 'Legion of Internationalists' would have benefited no one but the Commune's enemies. Becker complained later that 'London' would have nothing to do with the enterprise, and 'London' meant Marx. When the Commune was on the point of collapse Marx advised the leaders with whom he was in contact to transfer 'papers that would be compromising to the *canaille* at Versailles' to a safe place. He believed that the threat of publishing them might force them to moderation. All that Marx did, all the advice that he gave, was directed to one end. 'With a small amount of common sense,' he wrote ten years later to the Dutchman, Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'the Commune could have attained all that was attainable at that time, namely a compromise that would have been useful to the whole mass of the people.'

Bakunin, however, hoped not for a compromise but for a heroic defeat. He had as little faith as Marx in victory for the people of Paris. 'But their deaths will not be in vain if they do their duty,' he wrote to his friend Ozerov at the beginning of April. 'In perishing let them burn down at least the half of Paris.' He could not contain himself with joy at the thought of the day '*ou le diable s'éveillera*' and a bonfire would be made of at least a part of the old world. At Locle, where he was living at the time, he waited impatiently for 'heroic' deeds. One of his followers describes how 'he foresaw the Commune's downfall, but what he wanted above all else was that it should have a worthy end. He talked about it in

advance and said: 'My friends, is it not necessary that the Tuileries be burned down?' And when the Tuileries were burned down, he entered the group room with rapid strides—though he generally walked very slowly—struck the table with his stick and cried: 'Well, my friends, the Tuileries are in flames. I'll stand a punch all round!' Bakunin had no contacts with Paris. What happened there happened without him, without his advice or help.

Marx's opportunities of influencing the course of events in Paris were not much better. The Paris Regional Council's messages to the General Council were more than meagre. Towards the end of April Marx complained that the General Council had not received a single letter from the Paris section. True, he had had a special emissary, the shoemaker Auguste Serraillier, in Paris since the end of March, but Serraillier could do nothing in the face of the ranting of the Jacobins. Pyat and Vésinier were particularly prominent in this direction, and the help which Serraillier besought of the General Council did not avail him very much. The otherwise excellent and enthusiastic Serraillier was not even adequate as a reporter, and Marx learned practically nothing from him. The difficulties of keeping up a regular correspondence between London and blockaded Paris were, of course, very great. Marx managed occasionally to smuggle information through to Paris by making use of a German business man, and two or three letters even reached Varlin and Fränkel, the leading Communards. But these only serve to demonstrate what is also demonstrated by all the rest of the evidence; namely the smallness of the extent to which Marx was able to influence the Commune. But he could at least work for it.

From the very first day, to quote Marx's words in a letter to Kugelmann, 'the wolves and curs of the old society' descended in a pack upon the Paris workers; they lied, cheated, slandered, no means were too filthy, no sadistic fantasy too absurd to be employed. The Liberal Press yielded in nothing to the openly reactionary Press, and Bismarck's newspapers used the same phrases as did Thiers's papers and the great English Press. And they were believed. Even those who otherwise looked with favour upon the International wavered and wished to repudiate the Paris 'monsters.' Even some of the English

members of the General Council objected to the General Council's defence of the Commune, in spite of the fact that in England there was still some possibility of distinguishing the true from the false. Other countries were entirely without information. The General Council was overwhelmed with inquiries from everywhere. Marx informed Fränkel that he wrote several hundred letters 'to all the corners of the earth where we have connections,' and from time to time he managed to get an article into the Press. But that was not sufficient by far. The General Council had to proclaim the International's attitude to the Commune to the whole world.

Ten days after the rising Marx was instructed by the General Council to write an address 'to the people of Paris.' But at a meeting on April 4 it was decided temporarily to postpone it, as on account of the blockade it would not have reached those to whom it was addressed. It was also intended to issue a manifesto to the workers of other countries, but this too was postponed, and for two reasons. On April 25 Marx wrote to Fränkel that the General Council was still waiting for news from day to day, but the Paris sections remained silent; and the General Council could wait no longer, for the English workers were waiting impatiently for enlightenment. Marx was forced to toil through the English newspapers—French newspapers only reached England very irregularly—to find what he wanted. His notebooks during this period are full of excerpts from the Press. Even the apparently least important details were valuable to him; he kept them all and tried patiently to form a picture of the great event that was happening from the chaotic jumble of truth and half-truth and fiction that confronted him. On top of these difficulties another one came to hamper him. At a time when every ounce of his energy was demanded he became ill. During the first half of May he was unable to attend the meetings of the General Council; he could only report, through Engels, that he was working on the manifesto. On May 30, when at last he was able to read his address, *The Civil War in France*, to the members of the General Council, the Commune had already been honourably defeated.

In that bloody week of May twenty thousand Communards had been killed on the barricades, cut down in the streets by

the bloodthirsty Versailles troops, or massacred in the prison yards. Tens of thousands of prisoners awaited death or banishment. This was not the moment for writing an historical treatise, a cool and dispassionate analysis and critique of the Commune. The manifesto was no lament for the dead, no funeral elegy, but a rapturous hymn to the martyrs of the war of proletarian emancipation, an aggressive defence of those who were slandered even in death. Never had Marx, the passionate fighter, fought so passionately. One recalls his scepticism at the beginning of the war. He had written that after twenty years of the Bonapartist farce one was scarcely justified in counting on revolutionary heroism. The Commune had taught him he was wrong. He looked on, astonished and overwhelmed at 'the elasticity, the historical initiative, the self-sacrificing spirit of these Parisians.' In a letter to Kugelmann he wrote: 'After six months of starvation and destruction, at the hands of internal treachery even more than through the foreign enemy, they rose under the Prussian bayonets as though the war between France and Germany had never existed and the enemy were not outside the gates of Paris. History has no comparable example of such greatness.' The address hailed Paris, 'working, thinking, fighting, bleeding Paris, almost forgetful, in its incubation of a new society, of the cannibals at its gates—radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative.'

What had the Commune been accused of? Of acts of terrorism? The shooting of General Thomas and Lecomte? The execution of the hostages? The death of the two officers 'was a summary act of lynch justice performed despite the instance of some delegate of the Central Committee. . . . The inveterate habits acquired by the soldiery under the training of the enemies of the working class are, of course, not likely to change the very moment these soldiers change sides.' But the hostages were shot. Yes, that was true. 'When Thiers, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the conflict, enforced the humane practice of shooting down the Communal prisoners, the Commune, to protect their lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages had been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versailles. . . . The real murderer of Archbishop Darboy is Thiers.' A week



after the massacre of thousands of Communards criticism of the Terror was impossible. The observations in Marx's notebooks show what he thought of the senseless actions of the Jacobins. The address, without naming them, talked of people who hampered the real action of the working classes, 'exactly as men of that sort have hampered the full development of every previous revolution. They are an unavoidable evil; with time they are shaken off; but time was not allowed to the Commune.'

But although the Commune had no time to develop, although it only remained 'a rough sketch of national organisation,' to those who refused to allow their view to be obscured by secondary things, it revealed its 'true secret.' And that was that 'it was essentially a working-class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour. The Commune,' it continued, 'was the reabsorption of the State power by society as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organised force of their suppression, the political form of their social emancipation instead of the artificial force (appropriated by their oppressors) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies. The form was simple like all great things.' The workers had no ideals to realise, no ready-made Utopias to introduce by decree of the people, but they had to set free the elements of a new society with which the old collapsing bourgeois society was pregnant. 'They know that in order to work out their own emancipation and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men.' These sentences recall, even at times in their very phrasing, those that Marx addressed to Willich and his followers—the Jacobins of their time—after the final collapse of the revolution of 1848 and 1849. He warned his followers against illusions, but his warnings were not shackles put upon them, hampering them, but gave power and strength and the unshakable conviction of final victory. The address ended with these stirring words: 'Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever

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 external pil'ory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.' The final words were like the sounding of the Last Trump. The Commune was defeated, a battle was lost, but the working-class struggle was continued.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE DOWNFALL OF THE INTERNATIONAL

SOCIALISTS in France in the sixties were either Proudhonists or Blanquists, with here and there an isolated Saint-Simonist. But there were no French Marxists. Not one in a hundred members of the International in France knew that the leader of the General Council in London was a German named Karl Marx. In the other Latin countries the situation was the same. The name of Lassalle meant a great deal to the German workers, even to those who were not his followers. They sang songs about him and his picture hung upon the walls of their rooms. The older generation in the Rhineland remembered Marx from 1848, but that was nearly a quarter of a century ago, and in the meantime most people had forgotten him. To only a minute proportion of the younger generation did his name mean anything at all. Not till the middle of the sixties did this situation slowly and gradually begin to alter, but even in 1870 his name was entirely unknown to the general public. In England Marx was less known than anywhere else. Perhaps here and there some Urquhartite or former Chartist could recollect his name, but that was all. Marx, who had no wish for popularity, set no store on his name being associated with the International, and his signature, when it appeared under any of the pronouncements of the General Council, was always tucked in among those of many others. He spoke at practically no public meetings, he wrote no signed articles, and sufficed himself with the immediate task before him, that of 'influencing the workers' movement behind the scenes,' as he occasionally wrote to a friend.

The Commune made him 'the best calumniated and the most menaced man of London,' as he described himself (the English phrase is his own) in a letter he wrote Kugelmann in the middle of June, 1871. 'It really does one good after being stuck in the mud for twenty years,' he added. He was constantly pestered by 'newspaper fellows and others' who wanted to see the 'monster' with their own eyes. For the man

behind the International, that gigantic conspiracy against the whole world, who publicly declared his solidarity with its atrocious misdeeds in Paris, must necessarily be a monster. The French Government was very well informed about the International, and had had more to do with it than any other government in Europe. It had staged great trials of its members, set an army of spies after it and knew something of Marx's overwhelming influence on the General Council. On the day after the proclamation of the Commune it had an alleged letter of Marx's to the French sections of the International printed in *Le Journal*, containing the most violent criticism of their political acts. The letter reproved them for intervening in politics instead of confining themselves to the social tasks which should have been their only concern. This attempt to represent Marx as the good spirit of the 'good' International while the Communards were base renegades sadly missed its mark, for no one in Paris took it seriously. So the Versailles Government tried something else. On April 2 *Le Soir* announced that it had been authoritatively ascertained that Karl Marx, one of the most influential leaders of the International, had been private secretary to Count Bismarck in 1857 and had never severed his connection with his former patron. The Bonapartist papers spread this revelation throughout France. So Marx was a hireling of Prussia, and the real leader of the International was Bismarck, at whose instigation the Commune had been set up. This story hardly tallied with another, according to which the International was waging a war on the whole of civilised humanity, which was the reason why the Versailles Government requested and received Bismarck's help against the Commune. As Marx wrote to P. Coenen at the end of March, word was spread to the whole well-disposed Press of Europe 'to use falsehood as its greatest weapon against the International. In the eyes of these honourable champions of religion, order, the family and property there is nothing in the least wrong in the sin of lying.'

It was necessary for the Versailles Government to disguise the warfare it was waging upon the people of Paris. The International was represented as the enemy of France and of the French. Its chief, Karl Marx, was the enemy of the human race. A flick of the hand and hey-presto! Bismarck's agent

was converted into a kind of anti-Christ. But this elevation of their political opponent, who after all really did exist in human form, into the demoniacal sphere did not suit the German philistines, who reduced him to more manageable proportions. Thus the Berlin papers invented a 'fairy-tale' of how Karl Marx, leader of the International, enriched himself at the expense of the workers he misled. This story was subsequently often repeated. Soon afterwards the announcement of Marx's death in the Bonapartist *L'Avenir Libéral* served for a few days to relieve the terrified population of their nightmare. But their relief lasted a few days only. The hated chief of the hated International lived on. His name re-echoed across Europe, through which the spectre of Communism once more stalked abroad.

The Commune made a myth of the International. Aims were imputed to it that it never pursued, resources were ascribed to it that it never possessed, power was attributed to it of which it had never dared to dream. In 1869 the report of the General Council to the Bâle Congress had poured ridicule upon the alleged wealth with which the busy tongues of the police and the wild imaginations of the possessing classes had endowed it. 'Although these people are good Christians,' it stated, 'if they had lived at the time of the origins of Christianity they would have hurried to a Roman bank to forge an account for St. Paul.' The panic of Europe's rulers elevated the International to the status of a world power. 'The whole of Europe is encompassed by the widespread freemasonry of this organisation,' said Jules Favre in a memorandum he sent on June 6, 1871, to the representatives of France abroad, directing them to urge the governments to which they were accredited to common action against the common foe. England declined the invitation, but Lord Bloomfield, the British ambassador at Vienna, illustrating British concern, made diplomatic inquiries with regard to the extent of the activities of the International in the Austrian Empire. In the course of Bismarck's conversations with Count Beust, the Austrian Chancellor, at Gastein, the subject of the struggle against the International was discussed at length. Beust mentioned with satisfaction in his memorandum that both Governments had spontaneously expressed a desire for defensive measures and

common action against it, after the 'sensational events that characterised the fall of the Paris Commune, in view of its expansion and the dangerous influence it is beginning to exert on the working class and against the present foundations of the state and society. The thought inevitably arises whether it might not be well to counter this universal association of workers with a universal association of employers, oppose the solidarity of possession to the solidarity of non-possession, and set up a counter-International against the International. The power of capital is still an assured and well-buttressed factor in public life.'

The situation, however, was not nearly so threatening as some feared and others hoped. If Bismarck behaved to some extent as though he were preparing to bow before the storm of a Commune in Berlin, he was actuated less by fear of an immediate outbreak than by his wish to frighten the Liberal bourgeoisie from forming even the loosest of alliances with the Socialist workers against the ruling Junkers. But in spite of all exaggerations and over-estimates, whether entirely fabricated or genuinely believed, one fact remained. Revolutionary workers had remained in power in Paris for more than two months. Whether the Commune had in every respect acted rightly might justifiably be doubted, but the time for criticism was not yet. One fact dominated everything else, and, in Marx's words, made the Commune 'a new point of departure of world-historical significance.' Workers had seized the power for the first time.

Hitherto the International had concerned itself primarily, though not of course exclusively, with economic matters such as the shortening of the working day, the securing of higher wages, supporting strikes, defence against strike-breaking, etc., and to the overwhelming majority of its members it had appeared as an organisation aiming primarily at the improvement of the economic position of the worker. But the situation had undergone a fundamental alteration now. History itself had placed the proletariat's struggle for the seizure of power upon the order of the day. After the Commune it was impossible for the International to continue to restrict itself to activities which were political only by implication. It was necessary to convert its sections from propagandist organisations and trade-union-like

groups into political parties. After the Communards had fought on the field of battle it was impossible for the workers of the International to revert to the narrow struggle for their immediate economic interests in the factories and merely draw public attention to themselves from time to time by issuing a political proclamation from the side-lines, which might be read or not. They must enter the political field themselves, welded into a firm organisation, with a party that openly proclaimed its programme—the seizure of the state power by the working class as the preliminary to its economic liberation. The conclusion the governments of Europe drew from the Commune was that the International was a political world-power, menacing to them all. The conclusion the International drew from it was that it was the latter that they must become.

With the ‘politicalising’ of the International the function of the General Council necessarily altered. In the past the General Council had practically not interfered at all in the life of individual sections, but now a thorough-going co-ordination of their activities, though within definite limits, had become imperative. That did not involve the assumption by the General Council of a kind of supreme command over the various sections, dictating to them from London the exact details of what they were to do. It did, however, involve a multiplication of the tasks devolving upon it, and the adoption by it of an entirely different position from that which it had adopted, and been compelled to adopt, in the past. And therewith internal questions arose of which not even the preliminaries had existed before.

Marx and Engels devoted the months that followed the collapse of the Commune to the task of energetically reconstructing the International. ‘The long-prepared blow,’ to use Marx’s phrase, was struck at a conference held in London in the second half of September, 1874. In a number of countries the sections of the International had not recovered from the blows that had descended upon them as a result of the war and its aftermath, and these countries were not represented at the conference. That was the reason for the summoning of a conference instead of a congress. On this occasion Marx presided over the discussions of the International

for the first time since 1865. He drafted a resolution concerning the question of the political struggle, which had become the central issue. The resolution observed that a faulty translation of the statutes into French had resulted in a mistaken conception of the International's position. The statutes provisionally set up by the General Council in 1864 stated: 'The economic emancipation of the workers is the great aim to which all political action must be subordinated as a means.' (The statutes were confirmed by the first Congress, held in 1866. In the French version of the Congress report issued by the Geneva section the words 'as a means' are missing. All the other versions have them. Neither in the surviving minutes of the Congress nor in the contemporary Press is there any mention of any alteration of the statutes. The fact that the last two words are missing from the French version is undoubtedly an accident and possibly merely a printer's error.) The conference reminded the members of the International 'that in the militant state of the working class its economic progress and political action are indissolubly united.'

Previous Congresses had only dealt incidentally with internal International affairs. At this conference, indicating the altered situation, they played the leading rôle. The conference adopted resolutions concerning the organisation of sections in those countries in which the International had been banned, as well as resolutions concerning the split in Switzerland, the Bakuninist Alliance, and other matters. The policy of the International Press was directed to be conducted along certain definite lines—a thing quite unprecedented in the past. All the conference's transactions were aimed at strengthening the structure of the International for the approaching political fray.

Marx, and Engels like him, believed that as soon as the period of reaction, which could not but be brief, was over the International was destined for a rapid and immense advance. For this the London conference was intended to prepare the way. But a year later the International was dead.

Of the two countries which had been its main support, France's withdrawal from the movement lasted not just for a few months or for a year but for a full decade. The advance guard of the French proletariat had fallen at the Paris barricades or was languishing in prison or perishing in banishment



in New Caledonia. The small groups that survived were insignificant. Those that were not broken up by the police dissolved gradually of their own accord.

In the other of the two countries which had been the International's main support developments were unfavourable too. In England the workers' movement had no need to be urged to take the political road. Even before the reorganisation of the International it had taken that road itself, and was now pursuing definite if narrowly circumscribed political aims; but at the very moment when it should have been marshalling its ranks for a general attack on the power of the possessing classes, it withdrew from the struggle. So many of its demands had been granted that it started feeling satisfied. Stormy meetings and uproarious demonstrations had demanded universal suffrage, and universal suffrage had been attained. England's economic strides relieved the situation to such an extent that the Government no longer had cause to fear the consequences of reform. It was able to repeal a whole series of legal enactments that imposed oppressive restrictions on the trade unions, and this deprived the trade union leaders of yet another impulse towards political action. After the collapse of the Chartist movement only relatively small groups had worked to revive an independent political movement among the workers, and such a thing looked entirely superfluous now. Many prominent trade unionists once more drew nearer to the Liberals, who took advantage of the opportunity to make the trade union cause their own; or at least acted as if they did, though a debt of gratitude was certainly due to the energy of the Radical Liberals, men like Professor Beesly and Frederic Harrison. In many constituencies Liberals supported the candidature of trade union leaders. In these profoundly altered circumstances not much attention was paid to the General Council's admonition to create an independent political movement. Opposition to the General Council, weak at first but definite nevertheless, reared its head among the trade union leaders. Several other factors contributed to this. Objection was taken to Marx's definitely pro-Irish attitude, and the General Council's uncompromising partisanship of the Commune was felt as inopportune and disturbing by Labour leaders who had started associating

themselves with the ruling system and, though the influence of this may at first only have been slight, in some cases had become members of royal commissions.

Opposition to the General Council first expressed itself in a demand for the formation of a special regional council for England. This demand was thoroughly justified according to the statutes. All the other countries had their own councils, but up to 1871 the General Council served also as regional council for England. This had come about quite spontaneously. London was the headquarters of the International and no one—least of all Marx—felt there was any necessity for a special council for England apart from the General Council. He formulated his reasons in a ‘confidential communication’ at the beginning of 1870. Although the revolutionary initiative was probably destined to start from France, he stated, England alone could provide the level for a serious economic revolution. He added that the General Council being placed in the happy position of having its hand on that great lever of the proletarian revolution, what madness, they might almost say what a crime it would be to let it fall into purely English hands! The English had all the material necessary for the social revolution. What they lacked was generalising spirit and revolutionary passion. The General Council alone could supply the want and accelerate the genuine revolutionary movement in that country and consequently everywhere. . . . If one made the General Council and the English regional council distinct, what would be the immediate effects? Placed between the General Council of the International and the General Council of the Trades Unions, the regional council would have no authority and the General Council would lose the handling of the great lever.

This argument was as valid in the autumn of 1871 as it had been in the spring of 1870, but in the meantime the centrifugal forces in England had grown so strong that it was necessary to make concessions if the International as a whole were not to be jeopardised. The London conference decided that a British regional council should be formed. The immediate consequences appeared entirely favourable. The number of British sections increased rapidly, and relations between the regional council and the trades unions became closer and better. On the other hand the General Council lost its influence in

England, and within a short time it became evident that there was a danger of the General Council severing its connection with the International altogether.

Though there were some countries in which the strength of the International had increased in 1870 and 1871, the result of the withdrawal of France and the altered situation in England was that it was extraordinarily weakened as a whole. For the advance of the German workers' movement and the shifting of the centre of gravity across the Rhine was an inadequate compensation.

These years saw the emergence in Germany of a workers' party which was the archetype and pattern of Continental workers' parties up to the Great War. It approximated closely to what Marx insisted should be the form of the political movement of the proletariat, though it failed to fulfil his demands in every way. Sharp, sometimes over-sharp criticism appear in the letters Marx addressed to the leaders of the German party. Nevertheless Marx on the whole approved of the path that the German Socialists had struck out upon. He approved of their work of organisation and propaganda, and of their attitude in Parliament and to the other parties. The party visibly grew from year to year and it was to be expected that within a short time it would play a leading rôle in the International. It never did so, for two reasons. The first was the severity of the German legal restrictions on the right of forming associations; the Government were constantly on the watch for an opportunity of suppressing the German workers' party, and its leaders therefore assiduously avoided doing anything that might have given them the opportunity of doing so under cover of legal forms. In the second place the German party was completely absorbed with its work in Germany. The German Socialists proclaimed their complete solidarity with the International, but that was practically all. The German Party remained practically without significance as far as the inner life of the International was concerned.

Marx blamed Wilhelm Liebknecht for the 'lukewarmness' with which he conducted the 'business of the International' in Germany. But it is doubtful whether anyone could have done better than Liebknecht, who was absolutely tireless and was

completely devoted to Marx. After the London conference Marx informed Liebknecht that the General Council wished him to establish direct contact with the principal places in Germany. This task Liebknecht had already begun. He actually succeeded in forming sections in Berlin and other towns. These, however, led a very precarious existence and were not of much use to the General Council. In spite of all the sympathy with which the German Socialists regarded the International, they were prevented from helping the General Council by the fact that they embodied in a pronounced fashion the very thing which, in the eyes of its opponents, made the General Council unworthy of continuing to lead the International—namely ‘authoritarian Socialism.’ For such acts of ‘subservience to the State’ as participating in elections not only failed to impress but actually went far to repel many members of the International in those countries in which Bakunin’s ‘anti-authoritarian Socialism’ was now triumphant.

The Commune had by no means corresponded to Bakunin’s ideals. He had had no great hopes of it himself, and his friends in Paris had had to acquiesce in actions that conflicted sharply with what Bakunin demanded of a revolution. This, however, did not prevent Bakunin from annexing the Commune for his own ‘anti-authoritarian Communism’ and declaring that Marx’s ideas had been thoroughly confuted by it. The pitiful end of the rising at Lyons had made him despair of the workers’ capacity for revolt, but the glow of the burning Tuileries once more illumined the future in his eyes. So all strength and passion had not yet departed from the world. The revolution was not postponed into the indefinite future but was as imminent as it had been before Sedan. It was bound to come, soon, quite soon, perhaps to-morrow. To confine oneself to petty, philistine ‘politicalising’ as the German Social Democrats did was equivalent in Bakunin’s eyes to a renunciation of the revolution. He resumed the work that he had interrupted for some months, and started spinning his web of secret societies anew. The Commune had made good the wrong done the world by the triumph of Prussia, and the workers’ hatred of the butchers of Versailles was a guarantee of ultimate victory. That hatred must not be allowed to cool. Bakunin flung himself zealously into his task.

The Latin countries, especially Spain and Italy, seemed to him to hold out the most favourable prospects for the social revolution. Spain had been the scene of a lively struggle between Republicans and Constitutionalists since the expulsion of the Bourbons in 1868. The Constitutionalists intended the vacant throne for some foreign prince. The struggle broke out sporadically into civil war, and war to the death was declared on the Catholic Church as the mainstay of reaction; and everywhere the workers were stirring. Their new-won national unity brought the people of Italy no peace. The struggle with the dispossessed Pope kept the whole country on tenterhooks. Workers and peasants were as near as ever to starvation in the new kingdom that had been united after such suffering and sacrifice, and the intellectuals were deeply disappointed by what they had so ardently longed for. Bakunin rested his brightest hopes upon Italy and Spain. Sparks from the burning South would leap across into France, Belgium and Latin Switzerland.

Of Germany Bakunin had no hopes whatever. His hopes of that country had been weak before. Now, after the German victory, he felt compelled to abandon them altogether. For were the German Socialists not manifestly paying the state the same idolatry as the German bourgeoisie? Where were they when they should have been attacking the brutal victor, Bismarck? What had they done to save the Commune? That Bebel and Liebknecht had voted against war credits, that their protest against the mad orgies of unleashed militarism had caused them to be put on trial for high treason was forgotten or did not count. In his struggle for domination of the International Bakunin exploited with great skill the chauvinistic anti-German under-currents that had been stimulated by, and had survived, the war. Germany meant Bismarck, but it meant Liebknecht and Bebel too. A German, citizen of a country inclined to despotism by its very nature, was leader of the General Council, and he was the inventor and advocate of 'state socialism,' a conception that corresponded exactly with the German temperament. The International was in the hands of a Pan-German, and the 'League of Latin and Slavonic Races' must rescue it. In his private letters Bakunin placed no bridle upon his hatred of the Germans, and fanned chauvinistic

inclinations to the utmost of his power, though in his public utterances he was noticeably more cautious.

The situation in Europe was as favourable for Bakunin's renewed struggle for the control of the International as it was unfavourable for his conception of the social revolution. Everything conspired to help him; the abstention of the Germans, the chauvinism of the Latin countries, the backwardness of Italy and Spain, where revolutionary romanticism flourished exuberantly because of the weakness of the young proletariat and the strength of the old Carbonari traditions.

Bakunin quickly realised the most effective way of conducting his attack on the General Council. The most heterogeneous elements could be united in an attack on Marx if they could be given a single aim, namely the revocation of the decisions of the London conference. The watchword of Bakunin's campaign was: Down with the General Council, who aim at forcing the sections of the International into the political struggle and usurping power over them. Down with the 'dictatorship' of the General Council!

The attack opened in Latin Switzerland, Bakunin's surest stronghold now as in the past. In 1870 there had been a split between the 'anti-authoritarians' and the groups that adhered to the General Council. The 'anti-authoritarians' had created their own regional council and become a kind of international centre of the Bakuninist movement. As soon as the decisions of the London conference were known this regional council summoned a regional congress to protest against them, and more particularly against 'the General Council's dictatorial attitude towards the sections.' The Congress met at Sonvilliers on November 12, 1871, and openly declared war on the General Council. It addressed a circular to all the sections of the International, skated cleverly over the fact that the Geneva Council had assigned the working class the duty of the conquest of political power and expanded itself at length on the latter's alleged attempt to dominate the sections. The circular stated that it was a fact, proved by experience a thousand times, that authority invariably corrupted those who exercised it. 'The General Council could not escape from that inevitable law.' The General Council wanted the principle of authority

introduced into the International. The resolutions carried by the London conference, which had been irregularly and unconstitutionally summoned, 'are a grave infringement of the General Statutes and tend to make of the International, a free federation of autonomous sections, a hierarchical and authoritarian organisation of disciplined sections, placed entirely under the control of a General Council which may at its pleasure refuse them membership or even suspend their activities.' Finally the circular demanded the immediate summoning of a general Congress.

Bakunin's posing as the advocate of complete sectional autonomy was a clever move. The difficulties and inevitable friction involved by the reorganisation of the International and the transfer of the chief emphasis to the political struggle created sympathy for Bakunin's demands among groups that otherwise had not the least use for his social-revolutionary programme. Bakunin's calculations now and subsequently proved themselves to be entirely correct.

A private circumstance compelled Bakunin to open his attack on the General Council soon after the London conference, when his preparations were not so advanced as they ought to have been. He knew that the Nechaiev affair had been raised at the conference. The conference had authorised the General Council to 'publish immediately a formal declaration indicating that the International Working Men's Association had nothing whatever to do with the so-called conspiracy of Nechaiev, who had treacherously usurped and exploited its name.' In addition Utin, a Russian *émigré* living in Switzerland, was authorised to prepare a summarised report of the Nechaiev trial from the Russian Press and publish it in the Geneva paper *L'Egalité*.

The Nechaiev affair plays such an important rôle in the history of the International, or rather in the history of its decline, that it deserves to be recounted at some length.

Nechaiev was the son of a servant in a small Russian provincial town. He put to such good use the few free hours that his work as a messenger in the office of a factory left him that he succeeded in passing his examinations as an elementary school teacher. He starved and scraped until he had saved

enough money to go to St. Petersburg, where he had himself entered as an external student at the university. In his first winter term, in 1868, he entered the student movement, in which his energy and the radical nature of his views soon earned him prominence. But that was not enough for him. He wanted to be foremost, and in order to enhance his reputation as a revolutionary he started inventing stories of his adventurous past. First he said he had been a prisoner in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Then he added an account of his daring escape. The majority of his listeners accepted all this unquestioningly, and were filled with indignation at the stories he told of his treatment by the prison warders, and a students' meeting was actually called and a delegation actually approached the university authorities. Nevertheless there were some who doubted. Some of the details of Nechaiev's prison experiences sounded improbable to the more experienced among his colleagues, and the officials declared that Nechaiev had never been under arrest.

Before this fact had been established, however, Nechaiev illegally went abroad to make contact with the Russian *émigré* leaders. He reached Geneva in March, 1869, and made the acquaintance of Herzen and Ogarev, the patriarchs of the 'emigration,' as well as of the representatives of the younger generation of refugees. He made an extraordinary impression upon them all. Herzen, who had grown old, tired and sceptical, said that Nechaiev went to one's head like absinthe. But the young student was not satisfied with praise and honour. He added details of his own. He said that Russia was on the eve of a tremendous revolutionary outbreak, which was being prepared by a widespread secret society. Of this society he was a delegate. And he repeated the story of his imprisonment and flight. In Geneva also there were a few people who refused to be taken in so easily. A number of *émigrés* had been prisoners in the Peter and Paul Fortress themselves and knew how impossible it was to escape, and letters came from St. Petersburg from people who ought to have known, saying that the secret society did not exist, or at any rate gave not the slightest sign of its existence. But those who regarded Nechaiev with suspicion belonged to groups who were hostile to Bakunin. It was these who not long afterwards formed a 'Russian



section' of the International and made Marx their representative on the General Council. This, however, cannot have been the deciding factor in causing Bakunin to ignore their warnings. He knew the Peter and Paul Fortress himself and knew—could not possibly have helped knowing—that Nechaïev was a liar. But what did it matter? Lies could be useful in revolutionising the slothful, and after all this Nechaïev was a marvellous fellow. Bakunin wrote a regular panegyric about him in a letter to Guillaume, describing him as 'one of those young fanatics who hesitate at nothing and fear nothing and recognise as a principle that many are bound to perish at the hands of the Government but that one must not rest an instant until the people has risen. They are admirable, these young fanatics—believers without God and heroes without phrases!' Bakunin and Nechaïev became fast friends.

Bakunin did not apparently formally admit Nechaïev to his secret society. The idea of his association with Nechaïev being surveyed by its otherwise fully initiated members was an uncomfortable one to him. The Bakunin-Nechaïev society was a quite intimate super-secret society, such as the old conspirator loved. Its object was the revolutionising of Russia.

In the spring and summer of 1869 Bakunin wrote as many as ten pamphlets and proclamations, and Nechaïev had them printed. Among them was the subsequently famous *Revolutionary Catechism*, which was intended to be a reply to the question of what were the best ways and means of hastening the outbreak of the revolution in Russia. The answer was to be found by the consistent application of two principles. The first was 'the end justifies the means' and the second was 'the worse, the better.' Everything—and by that Bakunin meant everything without any exception whatever—that promoted the revolution was permissible and everything that hindered it was a crime. The revolutionary must concentrate on one aim, i.e. destruction. 'There is only one science for the revolutionary, the science of destruction. Day and night he must have but one thing before his eyes—destruction.' That was Bakunin's own summary of the duties of a revolutionary. Within the revolutionary organisation the strictest centralisation and the most rigorous discipline must prevail, and the members must be completely subordinate to their leaders.

The object of this organisation was 'to use all the means in its power to intensify and spread suffering and evil, which must end by driving the people to revolt.' The *Catechism* even defended terrorism, which, however, it did not recommend against the worst tyrants, because the longer such tyrants were allowed to rage the better it would be for the revolutionising of the people.

Towards the end of the summer of 1869 Nechaiev travelled illegally to Russia, taking with him a mandate from the 'Central Committee of the European Revolutionary Alliance,' written and signed by Bakunin, recommending him as a reliable delegate of that organisation. Bakunin had actually had a special stamp prepared, with the words: 'Office of the foreign agents of the Russian revolutionary society Narodnaia Rasprava.'

Nechaiev remained in Russia for more than three months. He succeeded in forming an organisation based on, or alleged to be based on, the *Revolutionary Catechism*. Revolutionary-minded young men were not so very difficult to find, and his letter of recommendation, signed by Bakunin, whose name was universally honoured, earned him the greatest respect. He chose Moscow as his centre and it was not long before he had gathered a group about him. Had he assigned it practical aims and objects, its fate would have been the usual fate of such organisations in Russia. It would eventually have been discovered and dissolved by the police, but two or three new groups would have arisen to take its place. To Nechaiev, however, that would have appeared an idle pastime. He wished his followers to believe that there was a secret revolutionary committee which they must unconditionally obey, and, true to the injunctions of the *Catechism*, he used every means that tended to serve his aim. Once, for instance, he persuaded an officer he knew to pose as a supervisory party official sent from the secret headquarters on special duty. That ruse might pass at a pinch. But Nechaiev did not shrink from even cruder mystifications, so crude that he ended by perplexing some of his own followers. Finally a student named Ivanov announced to other members of the group that he no longer believed in the existence of any committee, that Nechaiev was lying to them and that he wished to have nothing more to do with him. Nechaiev decided that the 'criminal' must die. He

succeeded in persuading the rest of his followers that Ivanov was a traitor and that only his death could save them. On November 29, 1869, they lured Ivanov to a dark corner of a park and murdered him. Ivanov defended himself desperately and bit Nechaiev's hand to the bone as he was strangling him with a shawl. Nechaiev bore the scar for the rest of his life. The murderers were soon discovered and arrested, and only Nechaiev succeeded in escaping abroad.

Detailed reports of Ivanov's murder appeared in the papers, and the crime was remembered for many years. It armed the Russian revolutionaries against Nechaiev-like methods.

Bakunin knew the whole story in detail, but it only enhanced Nechaiev's reputation in his eyes. On learning that Nechaiev had arrived in Geneva—he was living at Locarno at the time—he leapt so high with joy that he nearly broke his old skull against the ceiling, as he wrote to Ogarev. He invited Nechaiev to Locarno, looked after him and was his friend as before. 'This is the kind of organisation of which I have dreamed and of which I go on dreaming,' he wrote to his friend Richard. 'It is the kind of organisation I wanted to see among you.' At this time Bakunin had already started his struggle against the General Council of the International on the ground of its 'dictatorial arrogance.'

To the same period there belongs the incident which, apart from the other reasons, led directly to Bakunin's expulsion from the International. His financial position had always been precarious, but in the autumn of 1869 he was in particularly desperate straits. Through some Russian students who were followers of his he was put into touch with a publisher who offered him 1,200 roubles—far more than the author himself ever got for it—for translating Marx's *Capital*. Bakunin accepted the offer gladly and received an advance of 300 roubles. He did not show himself to be in any hurry to complete the task, however, and three months later he had only done sufficient to fill thirty-two printed pages. He readily let himself be convinced by Nechaiev that he had more important matters to fill his time and that he belonged to the revolution and must live for the revolution only. So he laid the work aside and gave Nechaiev full authority to come to an arrangement with the publisher. Nechaiev set about this task in an inimitable

manner. It was impossible for Bakunin to communicate directly with the publisher himself on account of the police, and a student named Liubavin had undertaken to do so on his behalf. The contract had been formally made out in Liubavin's name and in the publisher's books Liubavin was nominally liable for the 300 roubles' advance. One day Liubavin received a letter bearing the stamp of Nechaiev's organisation. Its most remarkable passages are quoted below:

‘DEAR SIR,—On behalf of the bureau I have the honour to write to you as follows. We have received from the committee in Russia a letter which refers among other things to you. It states: “It has come to the knowledge of the committee that a few young gentlemen, dilettanti Liberals, living abroad, are beginning to exploit the knowledge and energy of certain people known to us, taking advantage of their hard-pressed financial straits. Valuable personalities, forced by these dilettante exploiters to work for a day-labourer's hire, are thereby deprived of the possibility of working for the liberation of mankind. Thus a certain Liubavin has given the celebrated Bakunin the task of translating a book by Marx, and, exploiting his financial distress just like a real exploiting bourgeois, has given him an advance and now insists on the work being completed. Bakunin, delivered in this manner to the mercy of young Liubavin, who is so concerned about the enlightenment of Russia, but only by the work of others, is prevented from being able to work for the supremely important cause of the Russian people, for which he is indispensable. How the behaviour of Liubavin and others like him conflicts with the cause of the freedom of the people and how contemptible, bourgeois and immoral their behaviour is compared with that of those they employ and how little it differs from the practices of the police must be clear to every decent person.

“The committee entrusts the foreign bureau to inform Liubavin:

“(1) That if he and parasites like him are of the opinion that the translation of *Capital* is so important to the

Russian people at the present time they should pay for it out of their own pocket instead of studying chemistry and preparing themselves for fat professorships in the pay of the state. . . .

“(2) It must immediately inform Bakunin that in accordance with the decision of the Russian revolutionary committee he is exempt from any moral duty to continue with the work of translation. . . .”

‘Convinced that you understand, we request you, dear sir, not to place us in the unpleasant position of being compelled to resort to less civilised measures. . . .’

‘AMSKIY,

‘Secretary to the Bureau.’

Bakunin subsequently stoutly denied that he knew anything of the contents of this letter, and there is every reason to believe him. But when Liubavin sent him a letter indignantly protesting against these threats, Bakunin, instead of talking to Nechaiev about it, for he must have guessed who was behind it all, took occasion to be offended at Liubavin’s intelligibly not very courteous tone. He wrote to Liubavin that he proposed to sever relations with him, that he would not continue the translation and would repay the advance. He never did repay the advance and must have known that he would never be able to do so.

In Nechaiev’s opinion this species of blackmail was not only permissible to a revolutionary but was actually demanded of him. At every opportunity he threatened denunciation or the use of force, and stole his opponents’ letters in order to be able to compromise them with the police. He shrank at nothing. He caused revolutionary appeals to be sent to one of his greatest enemies, a student named Negrescul, who was being kept under police observation, and, as Nechaiev expected, the material fell into police hands and Negrescul was arrested. He succumbed to tuberculosis in prison and died a few months after his release.

Bakunin knew what Nechaiev was capable of, as many others did by this time, but he remained loyal to him as before. Not till Nechaiev actually started threatening people whom Bakunin held dear—Herzen’s daughter for instance—did

Bakunin raise his voice against him. The final impulse that caused Bakunin to break with him seems to have been provided by Nechaiev's plan to form a gang for the specific purpose of robbing wealthy tourists in Switzerland. He even tried to force Ogárev's stepson to join him, whereupon Bakunin protested. At that Nechaiev appropriated a strongbox of Bakunin's containing correspondence, secret papers, and the statutes of his revolutionary organisations—including the original manuscript of the *Catechism*—and threatened Bakunin with publication should he take any steps against him.

That was the end of Bakunin's friendship with Nechaiev. Bakunin was horrified at the practical conclusions that Nechaiev drew from principles that he himself had helped him to formulate. The story that Nechaiev told some of his acquaintances, namely, that when he first came abroad he was an 'unspoiled, good and honourable youth' and that it was Bakunin who corrupted him, was, of course, not true. Nechaiev had started his mystifications in Russia before his first journey abroad. But Bakunin not only made no attempt to counteract Nechaiev's inclinations, he actually encouraged them by giving them a kind of theoretical foundation. Their quarrel is not sufficient to obliterate the fact that Nechaiev was very strongly influenced by Bakunin and that it was Bakunin himself who evolved the theory by which all things were permitted.

Not much more needs be said about Nechaiev's further career. He lived two more years abroad, first in London, then in Paris and finally in Switzerland. He published more revolutionary literature and threatened and blackmailed as before. Bakunin refused to have anything more to do with him and was so embittered against him that he would have liked to denounce him as a 'homicidal maniac, a dangerous and criminal lunatic, whom it was necessary to avoid.' Nechaiev was finally betrayed by a Polish *émigré* in the service of the police. He was arrested in Zurich in the middle of August, 1872, and repatriated to Russia as a common criminal. On January 8, 1873, he was condemned to twenty years' hard labour in the mines of Siberia. He was not sent to Siberia, however, but confined in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Such was his power over people that he actually succeeded in winning over the

soldiers who kept guard over him, and they helped to put him in touch with revolutionaries outside. He devised a plan for seizing the fortress during a visit of the Tsar's, but he was betrayed by one of his fellow-prisoners and transferred to severe solitary confinement. He died of scurvy on November 21, 1882.

Marx had been a close student of Russian affairs since the fifties. At first he paid attention chiefly to Russian foreign policy, but later he devoted himself with ever-increasing interest to the social movement in Russia itself. At the end of the sixties he learned Russian in order to be able to study the sources in the original. The activities of Bakunin and Nechaiev attracted his attention early. More detailed information was first supplied him by Hermann Lopatin, a respected Russian revolutionary, who settled in London in the summer of 1870 and established close terms of friendship with Marx. Lopatin had previously lived in St. Petersburg, where he had had the opportunity of observing Nechaiev's first steps at close quarters. After his first conversations with Lopatin Marx wrote to Engels: 'He told me that the whole Nechaiev yarn is a mass of lies. Nechaiev has never been in a Russian prison and the Russian Government has never tried to have him murdered; and so on and so forth.' Lopatin was the first to tell Marx of the murder of Ivanov. From the autumn of 1871 onwards another Russian *émigré*, Utin, kept him informed of everything, as we know to-day in all essentials correctly.

If the International were to survive it was necessary to purge it of Bakunin and Bakuninism. It was no longer an abstract question of 'anarchy or authority.' The International must not be a screen for activities *à la* Nechaiev. Even if Bakunin himself were incapable of drawing the practical consequences of his own teaching, as Nechaiev had done, the Nechaiev affair had demonstrated that people might always be found who would take his theories seriously. One crime like Nechaiev's carried out in Europe in the name of the International would suffice to deal the workers' cause a reeling blow. The struggle against Bakunin had become a matter of life and death for the International.

The struggle had to be fought under very unfavourable circumstances. The French sections had been swept away by

the White terror after the Commune. Those who had been able to flee were refugees in Switzerland, England or France. An immense amount of work devolved on the refugee committee of the General Council, and Marx, on whom the main burden fell, was occupied for months raising money for them, securing them work, giving them advice. He made the personal acquaintance of practically every refugee, and a number of them became his friends. The most important of the refugee Communards were admitted to the General Council, including Vaillant, Ranvier and other Blanquists. These were Socialists who, in whatever else they differed from Marx, agreed with him on the most important point of all, i.e. the necessity of the International taking its place in the political struggle. Among the multitude of refugees there were, as Engels wrote to Liebknecht, 'of course the usual proportion of scum, with Vermersch, editor of *Père Duchêne* (a paper published during the Commune) as the worst of the lot.' The Jacobins formed a 'Section Française de 1871' and relapsed into their favourite rôle of theatrical and bloodthirsty revolutionism. The General Council were far too spineless for them, and they soon started attacking it vigorously in *Qui Vive*, a paper edited by Vermersch.

In their eyes the General Council was Marx. Marx, they maintained, was living in luxury at the expense of the workers. He embezzled the workers' money, and had made the International a 'German aristocratic' domain. He was a Pan-German and a crafty servant of his master, Bismarck. All this had been said before, but by the reactionary Press. But now it was repeated and decked out with fondly invented details by the ultra-revolutionaries, the enemies of 'authority.' Their particular complaint was that the International was in German control and they played as usual on all the chauvinistic instincts, old and new. There was not a semblance of justification for their complaint. There were three times as many English as Germans on the General Council, and the Germans were outnumbered even by the French. The number of members represented by the French was certainly not very large, and the Blanquists could certainly not be reproached with harbouring affection for the new German Empire.



The French *exaltés* cost the General Council a great deal of time and a great deal of trouble, and at the same time it was compelled to occupy itself with a number of disagreeable internal disputes. Marx had secured the election of his old friend Eccarius as general secretary. The International was poor, and all it could pay its general secretary was fifteen shillings a week, and even this he did not receive regularly. So he added to his income by journalistic work, reporting International affairs for *The Times* and other newspapers. Occasionally he mentioned things that were not intended for publication, and this repeatedly led to heated arguments at General Council meetings, and sometimes Marx had difficulty in protecting Eccarius from the general indignation. Then came the London conference. It was decided that its sessions should be private and that no communications should be made to the Press, including the Party Press, and everyone but Eccarius abided by this decision. A storm of indignation arose, and Eccarius was violently attacked. This time even Marx could not help him, and ever afterwards Eccarius felt that Marx had let him down. He had long been closely associated with the English trade union leaders, and as soon as they started opposing Marx he sided with them and did a great deal to intensify personal animosities on the General Council. Occasionally its meetings were very lively indeed. 'The meetings in High Holborn, where the General Council met at that time,' Lessner writes in his memoirs, 'were the most tempestuous and exhausting that can be imagined. It was no light task to stand up to the babel of tongues and the profound differences of temperament and of ideas. Those who criticised Marx for his intolerance ought to have seen the skill with which he got to the heart of people's ideas and demonstrated the fallacies of their deductions and conclusions.' The refugee Communards brought more than enough temperament with them. Of the English members of the General Council Odger and Lucraft had resigned, having taken advantage of the International's pro-Communard manifesto to dissociate themselves from an organisation in which they, as cautious and far-sighted individuals and members of Royal Commissions and friends of some of the very best people, had long since begun to experience a sensation of discomfort. (Odger had a magnificent career,

and ended by being knighted and being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.) Those Englishmen who remained on the General Council coquetted with the Liberals, split on purely personal grounds into two and sometimes into three factions and did nothing to lessen the general friction. Engels definitely settled in London in the middle of September and Marx proposed his election to the General Council, but even his admission to that body, valuable as it was, only had negative consequences. To the Londoners Marx was an old friend. They knew him, his wife and his children, and they knew how unspeakably hard his life had been during all these years, and even those who did not like him respected him for his selfless work for the common cause. But Engels was a rich manufacturer from Manchester, a distinguished-looking gentleman, with excellent manners, and somewhat cool and distant. Certainly he was very clever and educated and a good Socialist, and many years ago he had written a book; that they either knew or heard for the first time now; but in their eyes he was first of all a stranger. And he was not always a very nice stranger either. In later years Engels himself told Bernstein that Marx generally played the rôle of peace-maker and conciliator, but when he, Engels, was in the chair the General Council meetings generally ended with a colossal row. In the editorial chair of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* it had been the same. The downfall of the International is not attributable to the friction on the General Council, but efficiency was certainly not promoted by it.

Just at this moment of internal tension it was called upon to withstand a serious test. The vigorous attack on the General Council contained in the circular issued by the Bakuninist Congress at Sonvilliers attracted a great deal of attention. It was printed and reprinted and long extracts appeared in the bourgeois Press. ('The International monster is devouring itself.') In France, where everything in any way connected with the International was wildly persecuted, it was posted up on the houses. The General Council replied with another circular, 'The Alleged Split in the International,' revealing the secret history of the Bakunin Alliance for the first time. This made the Bakuninists very angry indeed. They said a General Congress must be summoned at once. Certainly, the General

Council replied, things could not continue like this. Invitations were sent out on July 10, 1872, for a Congress to take place on September 2 at the Hague. Marx wrote to Sorge that the life or death of the International was at stake.

The Bakunist sections in the Latin countries promptly protested at the choice of the Hague. The *Fédération Jurassienne* wrote that the Congress ought not to meet in a *milieu germanique* and suggested Switzerland instead. From their own point of view they were quite right. The sections' limited funds meant that to a certain extent the composition of the Congress depended on where it took place, for the cost of travelling necessarily limited the number of delegates who could travel from a great distance. It was therefore intelligible that the Swiss were in favour of Switzerland. They expected their argument that Bakunin would not be able to travel to Holland either through France or through Germany, because in both countries he would be liable to arrest, to carry particular weight. But Marx was in a similar position. The same reasons would make it impossible for him, as well as other members of the General Council, to travel to Switzerland. But antagonism had by this time become far too profound for material considerations to carry any weight. The Bakunists considered the advisability of being represented at the Congress at all. On August 4 the Italians at Rimini decided not to be represented at the Hague, and proposed the summoning of an opposition Congress at Neuchâtel, also on September 2. The Swiss Bakunists did not go so far as that. They decided, with Bakunin's consent, to be represented at the Hague. Even the moderate spirits among them could no longer conceal from themselves the fact that a split was inevitable. In the last resort the differences between Marx and Bakunin boiled down to the differences between the historical tasks necessarily confronting the proletariat in countries in which capitalism was fully developed and the illusions to which the semi- and demi-semi-proletarians living in countries in which capitalist development was only just beginning were equally necessarily subject. Even the most intelligent of the Bakunists formed a most distorted picture of the situation. Malon, for instance, had for a long time resisted the tendencies making for a split. Now he reconciled himself to it. 'Now that I am calm and

alone, I see that the split was inevitable,' he wrote to a friend at the end of August. In his opinion it was inevitable because of the temperamental differences between the Latin and the German races. One day this, like everything else that divided the nations, would disappear 'into the infinite of the human race.' But now these differences still existed, and the recent war had only intensified them. It would be in vain to go on trying to unite the incompatible. Everyone who attended it knew that the Hague Congress would be the last of the united International.

When it met at the Hague on September 2, the town was swarming with journalists and secret agents. No assembly of the International had roused the world's attention like this one. It was the first after the Commune—a 'declaration of war of chaos on order.' An attempt had been made to persuade the Dutch Government to forbid the Congress. Jules Simon had travelled from Paris to the Hague to present his Government's request to this effect, but he had as little success as others who wanted the same. Next it had been announced that the Congress would resolve on acts of terrorism, and that it was a rendezvous of regicides. But the Dutch Government refused to be intimidated. Next an attempt had been made to incite the population against the Congress. The *Haager Dagblaad*, for instance, warned the citizens of the Hague not to allow their wives and daughters to go out alone during the sessions of the Congress, and called on all the jewellers to draw their shutters. The police, however, took no action and seemed actually to regard the Congress with benevolence. A Berlin secret police agent reluctantly reported that up to September 5 all the meetings were strictly private, and 'not only does the Dutch police keep no watch whatever on them but protects the meeting-place in the Lombardstrasse so scrupulously that the public is not even allowed a look into the ground-floor where the meetings are held, or even so much as make an attempt to overhear through the open window a single word of what is taking place within.' As long as the sessions remained secret there was nothing for the journalists to do but wander round the meeting hall and describe their 'impressions.' A few 'faked' interviews with Marx. Others described the delegates, and Marx in particular. The correspondent of the

*Indépendance Belge* wrote that the impression that Marx made on him was that of a 'gentleman farmer,' which was friendly at any rate.

The Congress was not very numerously attended. No more than sixty-five delegates were present. Congresses of the International had been better attended in the past, and among the delegates were many who were not known from before. But it was the first International Congress attended by Marx and Engels. The first and private sessions were devoted to examination of the delegates' mandates, and there was bitter strife about each one, for each one was important. At previous Congresses this part of the proceedings had been regarded as but a superfluous formality. It soon became clear that there was a majority for Marx, with forty votes to twenty-five. There were two opposing factions, each united as far as internal questions affecting the International were concerned, but far from united politically. The opposition was held together by antagonism to Marx. It consisted of all the Belgian, all the Dutch, all the Jurassian and nearly all the English and Spanish delegates. The majority was more united, consisting of the Germans, the German-Swiss, the Hungarians, the Bohemians, the German *émigrés* from America, but included many French *émigrés* and delegates of illegal sections in France. The Blanquists were particularly well represented among the French *émigrés*.

This grouping by no means bore out the theory of the contrast between the state-worshipping Germanic races who were loyal to Marx and the freedom-loving, anti-authoritarian Latins. Guillaume, leader of the Jurassian section, was extremely astonished when Eccarius told him '*que le torchon brûlait au Conseil Général.*' He had believed that the English delegates, who were trade unionists, were devoted followers of Marx. He now found out that they were '*en guerre ouverte avec ceux qui formaient la majorité.*' He was just as surprised when he found there was Dutch opposition to the General Council. Attempts to unite the opposition were made before the opening of the Congress, but it was only towards its close that the fundamental political differences between the various groups made it possible to come to a common understanding.

Violent disputes took place during the examination of the mandates. The English delegates were unwilling to admit their fellow-countryman, Maltman Barry, who was provided with a mandate from an American section, on the ground that he was not a known trade union leader. At that Marx sprang indignantly to his feet. It was an honour to Citizen Barry that that was so, he exclaimed, because almost all the English trade union leaders were sold to Gladstone or some other bourgeois politician. That remark was held against Marx for a long time. The mandates of the delegates of the German sections were also disputed. During their trial for high treason at Leipzig in 1872 Bebel and Liebknecht had declared the solidarity of their party with the International, though the party did not belong to the International and its local groups were not sections of the International. This was formally correct. To prevent their party from being banned Bebel and Liebknecht could not have done otherwise. The Bakuninists, relying on this statement, demanded that the German delegates' mandate should not be recognised. Now the sections the German delegates represented were not very big and had only been formed specially for the Congress, but behind many a Bakunist mandate there was not exactly a mass organisation either. The German mandate was accepted.

Fully three days were occupied with these and similar matters. The real Congress did not begin until September 5. It met in a working-class quarter of the town. A French newspaper remarked sarcastically that next to the Congress hall was a prison, 'then laundries, small workshops, many pothouses, tap-rooms, here called *taperij*, and clandestine establishments such as are used, as one would say in Congress style, by the Dutch proletariat.' The sessions took place in the evening, in order to enable workers to attend. 'The workers certainly did not fail to put in an appearance. Never have I seen a crowd so packed, so serious, so anxious to see and hear.' The events of the evening of September 5 were described by *Le Français* as follows: 'At last we have had a real session of the International Congress, with a crowd ten times greater than the hall could accommodate, with applause and interruptions and pushing and jostling and tumultuous cries, and personal attacks and extremely radical but nevertheless

extremely conflicting declarations of opinion, with recriminations, denunciations, protests, calls to order, and finally a closure of the session, if not of the discussion, which at past ten o'clock, in a tropical heat and amid inexpressible confusion, imposed itself by the force of things.'

The first question discussed was that of the extension of the General Council's powers in accordance with the resolution passed at the London conference. The opposition not only wanted no extension of the General Council's powers, but objected to the powers the General Council already possessed. They wanted to reduce it to a statistical office, or even better, to a mere letter-box, a correspondence office. These advocates of autonomy were opposed by Sorge, who had come from New York. He said that the International not only needed a head, but one with plenty of brains. Guillaume, who describes the scene, says that at this people looked at Marx and laughed. The Congress gave the General Council its extended powers. The resolution stated that it was the duty of the General Council to carry out the decisions of the International Congress and to see that the principles and general intentions of the statutes were observed in every country, and that it had the power to suspend branches, sections, committees and federations until the next Congress. Thirty-six delegates voted for this resolution, with fifteen against and six abstentions.

When the ballot was over Engels rose and proposed in his own and Marx's name that the headquarters of the General Council be transferred from London to New York. This caused an indescribable sensation. A few weeks previously, when somebody had suggested removing the headquarters of the International from London, Marx had opposed it strenuously, and now here he was proposing it himself. Vaillant, speaking for the Blanquists, made a passionate protest. So far as he was concerned, transferring the General Council to New York was equivalent to transferring it to the moon. The Blanquists could not possibly have any influence on the General Council unless it remained where it was, i.e. in his place of exile, London. But Marx had calculated rightly. If the Blanquists, who otherwise supported him, opposed him in this, there were plenty of opposition delegates to support

him. A General Council in America would obviously mean a General Council without Marx. And so they voted for the resolution. It was carried by twenty-six votes to twenty-three.

Then the political debate began. The General Council proposed that the following resolution of the London conference be incorporated in the statutes. 'In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes, the proletariat can only act as a class if it constitutes its own distinct political party, opposed to all the old parties formed by the possessing classes. The forming of a political party by the proletariat is indispensable in order to assure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate object, the abolition of all classes. The coalition of working-class forces, already obtained in economic struggles, must also serve as a lever in the hands of that class in its struggle against the political power of its exploiters. The lords of the earth and the lords of capital always use their political privileges to defend and perpetuate their economic monopolies and to enslave Labour, and therefore the conquest of political power is the great duty of the proletariat.' Every point of view was represented in the discussion, from that of the extremists opposed to political intervention of any kind on the one hand to that of the Blanquists, who had no patience with the economic struggle, on the other. The Blanquists accepted the principle of the strike as a means of political action, but their real interest remained the barricade. They wanted to put 'the militant organisation of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat and the proletarian struggle' on the programme of the next Congress. Guillaume, as spokesman of the 'anti-authoritarians,' stated that the majority wanted the seizure of political power and the minority wanted its annihilation. The General Council resolution was carried by twenty-nine votes to five, with eight abstentions. By this time many delegates had left, being unable to remain at the Hague any longer, and others no longer took part in the voting, having lost interest. The Blanquists attacked the General Council for having caused the revolution to take flight across the ocean and left the Congress. The Bakuninists, however, decided after reflection that the situation was far better than it had seemed at first. 'The authority of the



General Council, voted for in principle by the majority, is in fact abolished by the choice of New York,' Guillaume wrote in triumph.

On the last day the Congress discussed the desirability of expelling members of the Bakuninist Alliance from the International. A special committee was appointed to examine the evidence submitted to it by the General Council. Guillaume was invited to appear before it but refused, giving the same explanation as he had given at the Congress in Latin Switzerland in April, 1870. 'Every member of the International has the full and complete right to join any secret society, even the Freemasons. Any inquiry into a secret society would simply be equivalent to a denunciation to the police,' he maintained. The utmost to which he would consent was to a 'private conversation' with members of the committee. Clever as he was, he could not answer the weighty evidence against him. Nechaiev's letter to Liubavin made a great impression. Bakunin and Guillaume were expelled from the International.

The Congress ended on September 7. On September 8 a meeting, organised by the local section, took place at Amsterdam. Among the speakers were Marx, Engels, Lafargue, Sorge, Becker and others. Marx's speech was reported in *La Liberté*, the Brussels organ of the International, and in the *Allgemeen Handelsblad* of Amsterdam, and was by far the most important made by him at the time of the Congress. In it he summed up its results. 'He proclaimed the necessity of the working classes fighting the old, decaying society in the political field and in the social field alike. The worker must one day seize political supremacy in order to establish the new organisation of labour. He must overthrow the old politics sustaining the old institutions.' The International had proclaimed the necessity of the political struggle and repudiated pseudo-revolutionary abstention from politics. But he indicated the future path in general outline only. No prescription for the seizure of political power was valid for all countries and all times, as the Blanquists, and others too, pretended. 'But we have never said that the means to arrive at these ends were identical. We know the allowance that must be made for the institutions, manners and traditions of different countries.

We do not deny that there exist countries like America, England, and, if I knew your institutions better, I would add Holland, where the workers may be able to attain their ends by peaceful means. If that is true we must also recognise that in most of the countries of the Continent force must be the lever to which it will be necessary to resort for a time in order to attain the dominion of labour.'

Marx ended his speech with a defence of the decision to transfer the General Council to America. America was the land of the workers, to which hundreds of thousands emigrated every year, whether banished or driven by want, and in America a new and fruitful field was opening for the International. As far as he himself was concerned, he was retiring from the General Council, but he denied the rumours that he was retiring from the International. On the contrary, freed from the burden of administrative work, he would devote himself with redoubled energy to the task to which he had devoted twenty-five years of his life and would continue with until his last breath, namely his work for the liberation of the proletariat.

Marx's motives for transferring the General Council to New York have been much discussed. At the Congress he had done all in his power to gain the victory, and he had gained it, though in some things his victory was more apparent than real. He had conducted a ruthless struggle against the Bakuninists and seemed determined to conduct it to the very end, i.e. the complete extermination of anarchism. And then all of a sudden he caused the General Council to be banished from Europe. He must obviously have realised that his influence on the life of the International would be very seriously impaired. It has been suggested that Marx had grown weary of the strain and the petty cares that his work on the General Council involved, of the ever-increasing burden of correspondence that he had to conduct, the exhausting and fruitless debates with the English members, the meetings and conferences and visits, and the whole troublesome, time-robbing labour that devolved mainly upon his shoulders. It has been suggested that he wished to be free of all this and to return to his most important task, the completion of *Das Kapital*. Certainly Marx often complained of how little time his work

on the General Council left him for his scientific work. But he always laid everything else aside when the International demanded it. 'He was first of all a revolutionary.' One recalls those words of Engels. Besides, after the Hague Congress, Marx could have done much more scientific work without sacrificing any of his political work whatever, for Engels now lived in London and could have represented him on the General Council and carried out his wishes. But in spite of this he insisted on the General Council moving away from London.

Marx had other reasons. For the General Council to have remained in London would have spelled the ruin of the International. Bakunin had been expelled, but the spirit of Bakunin lived on. Nearly all the sections in Southern Europe, in Italy and Spain, were 'anti-authoritarian.' The Commune inspired and inflamed them, and their watchword was action, action all the time. They wanted all or nothing, and their only battle-cry was the social revolution. Marx and Engels saw the danger. 'Spain is so backward industrially that there can be no talk of an immediate, complete emancipation of the working class. Spain must pass through various stages of development before it comes to that, and a whole series of obstacles must be cleared out of the way.' The Bakuninists violently attacked the young Spanish republic, which was threatened on all sides as it was. Marx and Engels regarded the blind, impetuous radicalism of the Bakuninists as fatal. 'The republic offered the opportunity of compressing those preliminary stages into the shortest possible time, and of rapidly removing those obstacles.' But the Bakuninists did not listen and did not look. Anything but attack and again attack and barricades was 'politics,' 'idolising the state,' cowardly and counter-revolutionary. It was necessary for the International to part from them. 'If we had been conciliatory at the Hague,' Engels wrote to Bebel at the end of June, 1873, 'if we had hushed up the split, what would the consequences have been? The sectarians, namely the Bakuninists, would have had a whole year's time to commit far greater stupidities and infamies in the International's name.'

The Hague Congress had also shown that all the Proudhonist groups, the Dutch, the Belgians and others as well, would have

been ready to follow the Bakuninists as soon as they left or were expelled from the International, and all that would have remained would have been the group that supported Marx during the Congress. It would very soon have melted away. The German Party was bound to avoid anything that might imperil its legal status, particularly after the outcome of the Leipzig high treason trial. Marx approved of their policy in this. It would be impossible for them to share in the life of the International, at least for a long time to come. Of Marx's majority at the Congress that only left the Blanquists.

Marx esteemed Blanqui very highly and had a high opinion of the Blanquists' courage, and he had not a few personal friends among them. But a whole world divided him from them politically. He had had several serious disputes with them even before the Congress. At the Congress they had followed him as long as it was a question of fighting against the 'anti-politicians,' the 'destroyers of the state.' The Blanquists stoutly asserted the omnipotence of the state. It must not be destroyed but seized, but there was only one way of seizing it, and that was the barricade—whether in Spain or France, England or Germany made no difference. In their eyes the single duty of the International was to organise armed risings.

We shall return to Marx's Amsterdam speech in another connection. It alone gives the explanation of the decision to transfer the General Council to New York. Had it remained in London, Marx would only have been able to maintain his ground with the aid of the Blanquists. The International would have become Blanquist, and its programme would have shrunk to the single word: barricade.

The Congress had decided to transfer the General Council to New York for the year 1872-3. Marx was convinced that developments in Europe would be so rapid and so favourable that after a year the General Council would be able to return from exile. This was a mistake. Marx correctly estimated the direction the workers' movement was taking; as happened more than once, he was mistaken about its tempo. He soon recognised his error. A year after the Hague Congress he gave up the International for lost. Its history in America is that of its gradual death. Its slow decline was occasionally

interrupted by petty crises, by splits and splits again, and it is impossible to establish for certain even the date when it finally expired. When Engels rose at the Hague Congress and proposed that the General Council be transferred to America, the International ceased to exist.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LAST TEN YEARS

MARX was so identified with the International in the public eye that people refused to believe that the chief of the general staff would remain in London after the general staff had been transferred to New York. English newspapers announced that Marx was preparing to emigrate to America. In 1876 Professor Funck Brentano actually told the Le Play Society in Paris that Marx had been living in the United States ever since the Hague Congress.

Marx, however, remained in London, still occupied with work for the International, though to a smaller extent than before. His first task was to supervise the publication of the decisions of the Hague Congress. His friend Sorge kept plying him from New York with requests for instructions. The furious attacks of the Bakuninists, who now shrank at nothing, had at least occasionally to be answered with a few sharp blows. A split occurred in the British Regional Council and Marx had passages of arms with Hales, Mottershead, Jung and Eccarius.

From the spring of 1873 onwards it became clearer every month that what had at first appeared to be only the liquidation of a phase in the life of the International culminating in the Hague Congress was in fact the liquidation of the International itself. In September Marx advised Sorge to 'let the formal organisation of the International recede into the background for the time being, but not to let the headquarters at New York out of his hands, in order to prevent idiots or adventurers from gaining control and compromising the cause.' Events and the inevitable evolution of things would lead to the resurrection of the International in an improved form; for the time being it was sufficient not to let the connections with the best men in the various countries lapse. Marx summed up the situation in a letter to Sorge in April, 1874. He said there could be no question at the moment of the working classes playing a decisive rôle in Europe. In England the International

was for the time being (once more 'for the time being') as good as dead, the new French trade unions were but points of departure from which development would take place when freer movement became possible again, and in Spain, Italy and Belgium the proletariat was to all intents and purposes impotent. Germany, practically the only country in which the workers' movement was in the ascendant, did not count in the International. Contrary to his hopes, for practically a year after the Hague Congress Marx had no time to resume his theoretical work but had to devote himself almost entirely to International affairs; and what time was left to him he had to devote to the settling of matters he believed to have been settled already.

*Das Kapital* was to have been translated into French at the end of 1867. Elie Reclus, brother of Elisée Reclus, an anarchist who subsequently became a well-known geographer, undertook the task, but soon abandoned it. Two years later another Frenchman undertook it but did not get very far. Not till the winter of 1871 was a French publisher found who was willing to take the risk (for a risk it was at that time). There were difficulties of all kinds from the first. The publisher, a bookseller named Lachâtre, lived abroad, having been condemned to twenty years' imprisonment for his part in the Commune, and his business was managed by a legal administrator. Next there was a shortage of funds. Marx invited his cousin, August Philips, who lived in Amsterdam, to share in the cost of publication, but Philips said he would not think of furthering Marx's revolutionary aims. In the end *Das Kapital* was published in French, though it only came out in instalments published at intervals. Marx wrote to Lachâtre that this method of publication gave him particular satisfaction. '*Sous cette forme l'ouvrage sera plus accessible à la classe ouvrière et pour moi cette considération l'emporte sur toute autre.*'<sup>1</sup> Roy, the translator, did his work well, but Marx had 'the deuce of an amount' to do all the same; not only had he to revise the translation, which was no light task in view of the condensed style of the original and the play made with Hegelian phraseology in the chapter on the theory of value, but he simplified passages here and

<sup>1</sup> The work will be more accessible to the working classes in this form, and for me that consideration takes precedence of all others.

expanded passages there, amplifying the statistical data and indulging in controversies with French economists. The final instalment did not appear till May, 1875, for there were periods when he had to stop work on it altogether and others when he could only continue by exerting himself to the utmost, for he was a sick man.

In autumn, 1873, he broke down altogether. He had been suffering from headaches and insomnia during the summer and was ordered by his doctor not to work more than four hours a day. Then his health improved somewhat, but in November it grew worse again. The 'chronic mental depression' grew worse and worse. The doctor ordered complete cessation of work, and his friends feared the worst. Once more he recovered, but in the summer of 1874 he again had to take a 'complete rest.' After years of superhuman toil on *Das Kapital*, carried out under the most adverse circumstances in the hunger and poverty of exile, harassed by cares about to-morrow's bread to feed his wife and children, followed by the work of building up the International and the exhausting struggle to hold it together into which he cast the last ounce of his resources, his old liver trouble broke out again. He never again shook it off completely, though three visits to Carlsbad and a cure at the German resort of Neuenahr caused such an improvement that it never became threatening again. His first visit to Carlsbad in the summer of 1874 was somewhat risky, as it was by no means certain that the German and Austrian police would allow the 'chief of the Red International' to go unmolested. In August, 1874, Marx applied to the Home Office for British citizenship, but the application for naturalisation was refused on the grounds (which of course Marx never knew) that 'this man was not loyal to his king.' In Carlsbad, as the police boasted, he was 'continually and uninterruptedly watched,' but gave 'cause for no suspicion,' so they did not trouble him any more. After the enactment of the Socialist law of 1878 the route through Germany was closed to him, but he no longer needed the German and Bohemian watering places. The headaches and insomnia, the 'nervous exhaustion' as Engels called it, remained.

After 1873 Marx never regained his old capacity for work. He remained the insatiable reader that he had always been; he



continued indefatigably making extracts from what he read, he went on collecting material, but he no longer had the capacity to organise it. Again and again he sat down and started and in the autumn of 1878 believed that the second volume of *Das Kapital* would be finished within a year, but he never completed more than a few pages of the fair copy. Marx had learned Russian. England had served as the main illustration of theoretical development in the first volume of *Das Kapital*, and he intended to use Russia as the basis of his treatment of ground rent in the second volume. Marx could not get enough Russian literature. After his death Engels found two whole cubic metres of Russian statistical material. It was not conscientiousness alone that drove Marx on in his everlasting search for new material. He used it also to hide from himself the crippling of his creative powers. Engels hated those piles of Russian books and once said to Lafargue that he would have liked to burn them. For he suspected Marx of sheltering behind them in order to find peace from the pricks of his own conscience and the urging of his friends. But Engels did not discover how little had been completed of what he had believed to have been completed, in spite of all his suspicions, until after Marx's death, when he examined his manuscripts. 'If I had known,' he wrote to Bebel in the late summer of 1883, 'I would have given him no peace by day or night until the whole thing had been finished and printed. Marx himself knew this better than anyone, and he also knew that if it came to the worst, as it has, the manuscript could be edited by me in his spirit. He actually said so to Tussy.' The second volume of *Das Kapital* was completed by Engels and published in 1885. The third volume appeared in 1894. After 1877, when he wrote a contribution to Engels's attack on Eugen Dühring, as well as a few articles opposing Gladstone's Russian policy, Marx published practically nothing.

The latter appeared in Conservative newspapers. There was no Socialist Press in England, but when it came to attacking Russia Marx was willing to enter into alliance with the devil himself. The Franco-Prussian War had enormously strengthened Russia's position in Europe, and Russia remained the 'so far unassailed bulwark and reserve army of the counter-revolution.' Russia was still an oppressive nightmare over

Europe. Anyone who fought Russia was objectively fighting in the service of the revolution.

The International was broken. In the middle of the seventies there was no proletarian army anywhere but in Germany. Under Marx's leadership it did all in its power to denounce Bismarck's servility towards the Tsar, in the Reichstag, in its newspapers, in pamphlets, like Liebknecht's *The Oriental Question, or shall Europe become Cossack?* which Marx approved of, although he usually did not see eye to eye with Liebknecht. But the German Party was far too weak to affect German foreign policy in the slightest degree. The European proletariat, split, scattered or not organised at all, was powerless. Marx was convinced that the future belonged to it, and whatever happened in Europe nothing could shake his conviction of its ultimate victory. 'So far I have always found,' he once wrote to Johann Philipp Becker, 'that all really sound men who have once taken the revolutionary road invariably draw new strength from defeat and become ever more resolute the longer they swim in the stream of events.' The bourgeois world was destined to destruction, though how and when was uncertain, for it depended on factors over which the proletariat so far had no control. 'General conditions in Europe are of such a kind that they are heading more and more towards a European war. We must go through it before there can be any thought of the European working classes having decisive influence.' That was what Marx thought in the spring of 1874. War might advance the rise of the proletariat to power or might impede it. Marx closely followed the foreign politics of the great European countries. In February, 1878, when his wife was ill and he was suffering from headaches by day, insomnia by night, and bad fits of coughing, he wrote two long letters to Liebknecht which show how carefully he followed political and military events during the Russo-Turkish war, which ended with the preliminary peace of Adrianople at the end of January.

In 1874 Marx still expected a resurrection of the European workers' movement as a result of a general European war. For as long as the stronghold of the counter-revolution had not fallen, as long as its shadow still lay over Europe, all hope of a victory for the revolution was in vain. The movement might

gain success in one or other or all the countries of Central and Western Europe, but the last word would still be spoken by the Tsar. And the Tsar could only be overthrown in a war with another Great Power. The foundations on which Russian absolutism rested were still too strong to be shaken by anything less than a European war. Up to the middle of the seventies Marx was extremely sceptical of all news of revolutionary movements in Russia, and the Nechaiev affair was not calculated to make him change his mind.

But the more thoroughly he studied Russia, the more Russian literature he read, the more Russian statistics he examined, the more probable it began to appear to him that this colossus with feet of clay only needed a slight blow from without to cause it to collapse. When Russia declared war on Turkey in 1877 he felt practically certain of a Turkish victory, which would be followed by a Russian revolution. And when the Turks really did gain a victory he believed revolution in St. Petersburg to be at hand. 'All classes of Russian society are economically, morally, intellectually in complete decay,' he wrote to Sorge at the end of September, 1877. 'This time the revolution will begin in the East.' On February 4, 1878, he explained to Liebknecht that 'we are definitely on the side of the Turks for two reasons: (1) Because we have studied the Turkish peasant, i.e. the Turkish masses, and we have learnt that the Turkish peasant is without doubt one of the most capable and moral representatives of European peasantry (this argument could of course also have been used of the Serbian and Bulgarian peasants whom the Turks oppressed); (2) because the defeat of the Russians will considerably hasten the social revolution in Russia, the elements of which already to a great extent exist, and thereby also hasten the revolution in all Europe.' When Marx wrote this Turkey had already been defeated. But Marx did not abandon his idea of the necessity of a European war.

There was now a revolutionary movement in Russia that was incomparably stronger than could have been hoped for two years previously. The Narodnaya Volya ('People's Will') Party attacked absolutism with the only weapon the revolutionaries had. That weapon was Terrorism. In 1879 and 1880 members of this Party made several abortive attempts on

the life of the Tsar. Many paid for them with their lives. Those who managed to escape abroad (Leo Hartman, N. Morosov, and others) were received by Marx as friends. Alexander N was assassinated by a member of the Narodnaya Volya Party in March, 1881. On April 11 Marx wrote to his daughter Jenny that the Terror was 'a historically inevitable means of action, the morality or immorality of which it was as useless to discuss as that of the earthquake at Chios.' The Russian Terrorists were 'excellent people through and through, *sans phrase mélodramatique*, simple, straightforward, heroic.' It was no longer necessary for the fortress to be stormed from without, for it was crumbling by itself. War had become superfluous. Nay more, it would actually be harmful now.

Engels wrote to Bebel in the middle of December, 1879: 'In a few months things in Russia are bound to come to a head. Either absolutism will be overthrown, after which, the stronghold of reaction having collapsed, a wind of a different kind will blow through Europe, or there will be a European war which will bury the present German Party in the struggle which every country will have to fight for its national existence.' On September 12, 1880, Marx wrote to Danielson that he hoped that there would be no general European war. 'Although in the long run it could not hold up social development, and in that I include economic development, but would rather intensify it, it would undoubtedly involve a futile exhaustion of forces for a longer or shorter period.' Three months before Marx's death Engels wrote to Bebel, repeating Marx's views as follows: 'I would consider a European war a misfortune; this time a terrible misfortune. It would inflame chauvinism everywhere for years, as every country would have to fight for its existence. The whole work of the revolutionaries in Russia, who stand on the eve of victory, would be annihilated and made in vain, our party in Germany would be temporarily swamped and broken up in the chauvinist flood, and the same thing would happen in France.'

Russia was 'sinking into a morass.' Tsarism was succumbing in peaceful putrefaction and its last supports were being smashed by the revolutionaries' bombs. Marx over-estimated the disintegration of Russian society and the strength of the revolutionary movement. The power of absolutism, though

weakened, was not shaken nearly to the extent that Marx believed. It had become improbable that Russia would actively intervene as in 1849 and give military aid in suppressing a Central European revolution. The weight with which Russia had overlain Europe for decades had become lighter. Europe could go its own way without the fear of finding it barred at all decisive points by Russian troops—but only if peace were kept, and a struggle of warring peoples did not come to bar the way and hold up the struggle of the rising proletarian class and throw it back for ten, twenty years or even more.

In the seventies and the beginning of the eighties the European workers' movement took great steps forward and advanced faster than Marx expected after the death of the International; and it did so without passing through a general European war. True, it did not always take the path that Marx considered the right one. He found much to criticise in the German Party, and later in the French. But in spite of its faltering and its uncertainties and all its temporary deviations it was on the right track.

The 1874 elections showed that the 'Eisenacher,' the followers of Liebknecht and Bebel, and the followers of Lassalle were practically equal in strength. During the decade that followed Lassalle's death the movement he had founded lost a great deal of its sectarian character. The specific Lassallean demands still remained on its programme, but they were not believed in with much conviction and in the end survived practically only out of sheer tradition. The two German workers' parties grew nearer and nearer to each other. They both fought the same enemy, they were both persecuted alike, and gradually the wish to surmount the breach and unite became so strong that towards the end of 1874 amalgamation into one great German workers' party was decided on. Marx and Engels were indignant at the news. When Marx was sent a draft of the programme of the new party, he wrote his observations on it and sent them to the 'Eisenacher.' He took the programme point by point, subjecting each to devastating criticism, proving the whole to be a hash of ill-understood scientific Socialism, vulgar Democratic phraseology and long-obsolete Lassallean demands, and he ended by threatening to

attack it publicly if it were adopted. It was adopted, and became the programme of the German Social-Democratic Workers' Party, founded at Gotha at the end of May, 1875. Marx, in spite of his threat, made no public attack on it, because the programme was regarded as Communistic by workers and bourgeoisie alike. Nor did the split, which Marx regarded as inevitable, occur. The Party remained united, and in 1891, at Erfurt, adopted a pure Marxist programme.

Marx had made a mistake and recognised it. He never regarded himself as infallible. Engels, in a letter to Bebel of November 4, 1875, described the place that Marx and he assigned themselves in the international workers' movement. Their task, he said, was 'uninfluenced by details and distracting local conditions of the struggle, from time to time to measure what had been said and done by the theoretical principles that are valid for all modern proletarian movements.' They demanded one thing only from the Party; that it remain true to itself. Bakuninists and bourgeois politicians accused Marx of enthroning himself as Red Tsar in London, sending out ukases for which implicit obedience was required; and they said that these often led to prison, death and destruction. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. 'It is easy for us to criticise,' Engels acknowledged in a letter to Frau Liebknecht, when Wilhelm Liebknecht was once again in prison, 'while in Germany every imprudent or thoughtless word may lead to imprisonment and a temporary interruption of family life.' Another time he wrote to Bebel: 'It is easy for us to talk, but we know that your position is far more difficult than ours.'

After the enactment of Bismarck's Socialist law in 1878, when the Party spent some time in hesitating uncertainty and many thought that the right policy was to be absolutely loyal and not provoke the enemy, in the hope of causing him to moderate his severity, Marx attacked them furiously. Though once more he threatened to attack them publicly, he did not do so. On November 5, 1881, he wrote to Sorge that the 'wretched' attitude of the *Sozialdemokrat*, the paper the Party published at Zurich and smuggled into Germany, led to constant disputes with Liebknecht and Bebel in Leipzig, and that these disputes often became very violent indeed. 'But we have

avoided intervening publicly in any way,' the letter continued. 'It would not be decent for people living abroad in comparative peace to provide an edifying spectacle for the bourgeoisie and the Government by aggravating the position of men working in the most difficult conditions and at great personal sacrifice.' The same trust in the logic of development that had guided Marx as leader of the General Council of the International determined his attitude to the growing German Party now.

In France the Socialist ranks that had been scattered by the Commune gradually re-formed towards the end of the seventies. A fair number of them were former Bakuninists who drew nearer and nearer to Marxism. Prominent among them were Jules Guesde and Benoît Malon. In November, 1877, Guesde founded *L'Égalité*, a weekly to which Bebel and Liebknecht contributed from Germany. Although not at all clear in its views, the circle grouped round *L'Égalité* nevertheless contributed substantially towards the propagation of the basic ideas of modern Socialism. So rapidly did the movement grow that in October, 1879, the Fédération du Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes was founded at a Congress at Marseilles. Its programme, adopted at a Congress at Le Havre in November, 1880, was fundamentally based on Marx. Guesde visited London and the new party's minimum programme was the joint labour of Marx, Engels, Guesde and Lafargue. It did not correspond with the wishes of Marx and Engels in every way. Among other things Guesde insisted on inserting a demand for a minimum legal wage. Marx opposed this, saying that if the French proletariat were still childish enough to need such a bait it was not worth while drawing up a programme for them at all. But Guesde insisted and the demand remained in the programme. But this did not cause Marx to withdraw his advice and help from the new Party, any more than he had done in the case of the German Party when it drew up its Gotha programme. He knew that it would overcome these infantile ailments. He did not believe the young party to be united enough to survive for long. This time he was right. No sooner had it been founded when it split into two. Marx's connection with the Parti Ouvrier, led by Guesde, was a very slender one. Engels wrote to Bernstein in October, 1881, that Marx had given Guesde advice from time to time through

Lafargue, but it was scarcely ever followed. In the violent dispute that broke out between the two groups after the split at the Congress at St. Etienne in September, 1882, Guesde and his friends were continually attacked for 'submitting to the will of a man who lived in London outside any party control.' They did not submit to his control and had no justification whatever for their claim that theirs was the scientific Socialism that Marx had founded. A remark that Marx once made to Lafargue has often been quoted. 'Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que moi je ne suis pas Marxiste.'<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the movement in France made progress while the working classes in England, the most industrialised country in the world and the country in which Marx lived, remained silent and inactive. Occasionally the British working classes seemed to stir, but no attempt to form a proletarian party ever got beyond the preliminary stages. In the spring of 1881 Marx tried to bring the trade union leaders into contact with the radical politicians. Engels, optimistic as ever, already visualised a 'Proletarian-Radical Party' led by Joseph Cowen, M.P. for Newcastle, 'an old Chartist, half, if not a whole Communist and a very fine fellow.' A year later he wrote to Kautsky 'There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals.' Yet Marx's ideas gradually penetrated even in England. The first and by far the most important English Marxist was H. M. Hyndman. He had read *Das Kapital* in French and was converted at once. He attached himself to Marx, they frequently exchanged visits, and at Marx's quiet retreat in Maitland Park Road, they would often talk till late into the night. But in the summer of 1881 the friendship abruptly terminated. Hyndman wrote a book, *England for All*, in which he popularised *Das Kapital* and did so very well. But he did not mention Marx's name, though he incidentally remarked that he owed a great deal to an important thinker. Marx took this seriously amiss and refused to accept the excuse that Englishmen did not like being taught by foreigners. Hyndman was a vain man, with a strong inclination to political adventurism, and his silence about Marx was not due to objective reasons alone. Hyndman's alleged sole motive for silence about Marx was paralleled by Guesde,

<sup>1</sup> What is quite certain is that I am not a Marxist.



who gave the same reason for asking Malon to give out his programme, which Marx had co-operated in drafting, as his own. Hyndman said that Engels's jealousy was to blame for the breach. Objective and personal reasons may have been combined. To the end of his life Marx remained practically unknown in England.

The old International was incapable of resurrection. In February, 1881, Marx wrote to Domela Nieuwenhuis, the Dutch Socialist, that the right moment for the formation of a new workers' association had not yet come. But the right moment was drawing nearer every year. The old General Council was dead, and the new was only in the making. There were no congresses, no resolutions to which the movements in the various countries could adhere. But Marx was alive. His significance for the proletarian movement after the dissolution of the International cannot be better illustrated than by a few sentences from a letter Engels wrote to Bernstein in October, 1881. 'By his theoretical and practical work Marx has acquired such a position that the best people in the workers' movements in the various countries have full confidence in him. They turn to him for advice at decisive moments, and generally find that his advice is the best. He holds that position in Germany, France and Russia, not to mention the smaller countries. Marx, and in the second place myself, stand in the same relation to the other national movements as we do to the French. We are in constant touch with them, in so far as it is worth while and opportunity is provided, but any attempt to influence people against their will would only do harm and destroy the old trust that survives from the time of the International. In any case, we have too much experience in revolutionary matters to attempt anything of the sort. It is not Marx who imposes his opinions, much less his will, upon the people, but it is they who come to him. That is what Marx's real influence, which is of such extreme importance for the movement, depends on.'

Marx issued no orders and set no patterns which the class war should follow. Just as he believed the idea of commanding the European workers' movement from London to be absurd, so did he abstain from devising a plan of action that should be valid for all countries and all times. The speech he made at

Amsterdam after the Hague Congress has already been mentioned. It had an unusual fate. When it appeared in the *Volksstaat* in October, 1872, those passages in which Marx spoke of force as the lever of the revolution in most Continental countries were missing. It had been necessary to omit them for fear of police persecution. In recent years it has again been quoted, but once more in abbreviated form, though needlessly row; and this time the omitted passage is that in which Marx spoke of the possibility of a peaceful seizure of the state power by the proletariat in England and America. Only the whole speech is the whole Marx. In 1881, the year in which Marx welcomed the Russian Terrorists' attempted assassination of the Tsar, he said to Hyndman: 'If you say that you do not share the views of my party for England I can only reply that that party considers an English revolution not necessary but—according to historic precedence—possible. If the unavoidable evolution turns into a revolution, it would not only be the fault of the ruling classes, but also of the working class. Every pacific concession of the former has been wrung from them by "pressure from without." Their action kept pace with that pressure and if the latter has more and more weakened, it is only because the English working class know not how to wield their power and use their liberties, both of which they possess legally. In Germany the working class were fully aware from the beginning of their movement that you cannot get rid of a military despotism but by a revolution. England is the one country in which a peaceful revolution is "possible, but," he added after a pause, 'history does not tell us so.'

Hyndman quoted this conversation correctly. Three years after Marx's death Engels wrote in the foreword to the English translation of *Das Kapital*: 'Surely, at such a moment the voice ought to be heard of a man whose theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic conditions of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit without a "pro-slavery rebellion" to this peaceful and legal revolution.'

The proletariat would win, peacefully perhaps in the countries where there was an old and deeply rooted democracy, but by force in those countries that were in the hands of despotism. When his daughter Jenny gave birth to a son in April, 1881, Marx wrote to her: 'My "womanly half" hopes that the "new-comer" will increase the "better half" of humanity; so far as I am concerned at this turning point in history I favour children of the masculine sex. They have before them the most revolutionary period mankind has ever known. It is bad to be an old man at this time, for an old man can only foresee instead of seeing.' With this unflinching confidence Karl Marx died.

His was a painful dying but an easy death. Both his elder daughters lived in France. Jenny was married to Charles Longuet, Laura to Paul Lafargue. Eleanor, known to everyone as Tussy, looked after her parents. Marx was ill and his wife was wasting away with an incurable cancer. In summer, 1881, they visited Jenny Longuet at Argenteuil. Frau Marx came back to London in a state of collapse, was confined to bed and died on December 2, 1881. For a long time Marx had known she was incurable, but her death was a heavy blow. 'The Moor has died too,' Engels said when he received the news of Frau Marx's death.

Marx was forbidden to attend the funeral, being bedridden after an attack of pleurisy. As soon as he was well enough to travel the doctors sent him to the south. At the end of February, 1882, he went to Algiers but succumbed to pleurisy again. An exceptionally cold winter and a wet spring aggravated his condition. He went to Monte Carlo in the hope of an improvement, but succumbed to pleurisy for the third time. Not until he reached Argenteuil and later the Lake Geneva did he recover sufficiently to be able to return to England. London fog drove him to the Isle of Wight. He caught cold again, had to keep to his room for a long time, tortured by a cough and barely sleeping four hours a night.

Jenny Longuet died unexpectedly in Paris on January 11, 1883. Marx hurried back to London. He scarcely spoke for days. He put up no more resistance to the advance of illness. Laryngitis made it almost impossible for him to swallow. He died on March 14, 1883, of a pulmonary abscess. 'For the past six weeks,' Engels wrote to the faithful Sorge, 'I

was in mortal terror as I turned the corner each morning lest I should find the blinds pulled down. Yesterday afternoon at half-past two, the best time of day for visiting him, I went there. The whole house was in tears, it seemed to be the end. I made inquiries, tried to find out what was happening, to console. There had been a slight hemorrhage, but then there had been a sudden collapse. Our excellent old Lenchen, who had nursed him better than a mother, came down. He was half asleep, and she said I could go up with her. When we entered the room he lay there asleep, never to reawaken. His pulse and breathing had stopped. In those two minutes he had peacefully and painlessly passed away.'

He was buried in the cemetery at Highgate on March 17. Liebknecht spoke for the German workers, Lafargue for the French workers, Engels for the workers of the world.

His name, and his work, will re-echo down the centuries.

## INDEX

- Abd-el-Kadr, leader of rising in Morocco against the French, 159
- Adam, French Blanquist, 209
- d'Agoult, Countess, French novelist (Daniel Stern), 72
- Alexander II, Tsar, 315, 374
- d'Allas Juin ('Michelet'), French revolutionary, 131
- d'Alton Eduard, professor at Bonn University, 17
- Anneke, Fritz, former Prussian officer, member of the Communist League in Cologne, 156, 157, 164, 171, 184, 193
- Annenkov, Paul, Russian writer, 104, 118
- Argyll, Earl Archibald, 22
- Aristotle, 33
- Arnim, Count von, student at Bonn, 20
- Arnim, Bettina von, German writer, 33, 96
- Arnim, Graf Adolf Heinrich von, Prussian minister, 82, 83
- Auerbach, Berthold, German writer, 48, 91
- Auerswald, Rudolf, Prussian minister in 1838, 173
- Babeuf, Gracchus, 79, 100
- Bacon, Francis, 33, 246
- Bangya, Colonel, Hungarian police spy, 222
- Bakunin, Michael, 67, 82, 113, 187, 279-97, 307-9, 313-14, 316, 321-4, 327-8, 342-5, 347-53, 363, 365
- Barbès, Armand, French revolutionary, 152
- Barry, Maltman, English writer, American delegate to First International, 360
- Barthélemy, Emmanuel, Blanquist, 219
- Bastelica, André, French Bakuninist, 295
- Bauer, Bruno, German philosopher and writer, 34-41, 47, 50, 54, 62, 65, 67, 90, 95, 101, 235
- Bauer, Edgar, German journalist, brother of Bruno, 40, 51, 95
- Bauer, Eghert, publisher, brother of Bruno, 95
- Bauer, Heinrich, shoemaker, leading member of the Communist League, 108, 111, 114, 138, 144, 151, 189, 206, 211, 217
- Bebel, August, 303-4, 319, 343-4, 360, 365, 371, 374-6
- Becker, Hermann, German journalist, member of the Communist League, 159, 175, 239, 254
- Becker, J. P., leader of the First International in Switzerland, 327, 363, 372
- Beckwith, General, 21
- Beesly, Professor Edward Spencer, 313, 339
- Beresovsky, Anton, Polish revolutionary, 315
- Bernays, Lazarus Ferdinand Cälestin, German journalist, 70, 81-4
- Bernhardi, German military historian, 21
- Bernstein, Eduard, German Social Democrat, 90, 119, 356, 377, 379
- Beust, Count, Austrian Chancellor, 335
- Bismarck, Count Otto von, 258-9, 299, 300, 302, 304-5, 307, 311, 314, 317, 320-1, 329, 334-6, 343, 354, 372
- Blanc, Louis, French Socialist, 68, 81, 86, 116, 286
- Blank, Emil, brother-in-law of Friedrich Engels, 152
- Blanqui, Auguste, 79, 160, 209, 210, 214, 218-19, 265, 309, 366
- Bloomfield, Lord, British Ambassador at Vienna, 335
- Boisguilbert, Pierre le Pesant de, French economist, 73

- Born, Stephan, writer, member of Communist League, later professor at Bâle, 133, 141, 155
- Borne, Ludwig, German writer, 75, 87-8, 308
- Börnstedt, Adolf von, German writer, publisher of *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*, police spy, 126-7, 131, 149, 151
- Bornstein, Heinrich, founder of Paris *Vorwärts*, 81, 82, 84, 101
- Brandenburg, Count Friedrich Wilhelm, 179
- Bricourt, Belgian deputy, 146
- Brisbane, Albert, American newspaper correspondent, Fourierist, 172, 233
- Bourbaki, General, 319
- Buonarotti, Franco-Italian revolutionary, 79, 100
- Buret, Anton-Eugène, French economist, 102
- Bürgers, Heinrich, German writer, member of Communist League in Cologne, 82, 84, 99, 165, 175, 241
- Burns, Mary, wife of Friedrich Engels, 239
- Cabet, Etienne, French Utopian Communist, 52, 67
- Camphausen, Ludolf von, Liberal politician, 1848, Prime Minister of Prussia, 48, 50
- Campbell of Orchard, Anne, Jenny Marx's grandmother, 22
- Garrière, Professor Moritz, Left Hegelian, 18
- Cavour, Count, Italian statesman, 299
- Channing, 233
- Charles I, of England, 52, 83
- Chenu, Adolf, 214
- Cluseret, General Gustave Paul, 322, 323
- Cluss, Adolf, member of Communist League, 241
- Cobbett, William, 102
- Coenen, Philippe, Belgian Socialist, member of First International, 334
- Conradi, Johann Jacob, brother-in-law of Karl Marx, 7
- Considérant, Victor, French Utopian Socialist, 52, 67, 142
- Coullery, Dr. P., member of First International in Switzerland, 278-9
- Cowen, Joseph, English radical politician, 378
- D'Alton, Eduard, Professor at Bonn University, 17
- Dana, Charles Anderson, editor of the *New York Tribune*, 233-5
- Daniels, Dr. Roland, member of Communist League in Cologne, 20, 116, 224, 239, 241
- Danielson, Nicolaus, Russian economist, 374
- Dante, 31
- Darboy, Georges, Archbishop of Paris, 330
- Davoust, Marshal, 23
- Delbruck, H., German historian, 21
- Demuth, Helene, Karl Marx's housekeeper, 236, 240
- D'Ester, Dr. Karl, German Democratic leader in Cologne, 1848-9, 97, 193
- Destutt de Tracy, French economist, 73
- Dezamy, Theodor, French Utopian Communist, 52
- Diefenbach, 110, 112
- Dolleschall, Laurenz, censors the *Rheinische Zeitung*, 55
- Drigalski, Prussian General, 190
- Dronke, Ernst, member of Communist League, contributor to *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 82, 155, 166, 175
- Duchâtel, Charles, 1845, French Minister of the Interior, 144
- Duhring, Eugen, German economist, 371
- Dupont, Eugène, worker, member of General Council of the First International, 312
- Eccarius, J. Georg, tailor, General Secretary of First International, 189, 206, 217, 264, 275, 355, 368
- Eichhorn, Johann Albrecht Heinrich, Prussian minister, 45

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 233
- Engels, Friedrich, 11, 51, 53, 66, 82, 86-98, 101-13, 105, 107, 111, 115, 118, 121-6, 131, 133-6, 139, 147, 151-2, 155, 161-2, 166-7, 169, 174-5, 189-90, 192, 197-8, 200-3, 205-7, 209, 212, 219, 223, 225-6, 228-9, 231-2, 235-6, 238-41, 244-9, 251-4, 256-7, 261, 266, 270, 288, 296-7, 301-6, 310, 313, 314, 318-19, 325, 337, 338, 353-4, 356, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 370-1, 374-81
- Esser, Prussian official in Trier, later in Berlin, friend of Karl Marx's father, 65
- Ewerbeck, Dr. Hermann, member of Communist League, 79, 80, 82, 114, 189, 192
- Favre, Jules, French Foreign Minister, 335
- Fenner von Fennberg, Ferdinand, student at Bonn, later Austrian revolutionary, 18
- Ferdinand of Brunswick, Duke, 20
- Ferdinand of Naples, King ('Bomba'), 139
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, German philosopher, 29, 63, 65, 67-8, 104, 107
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, German philosopher, 25
- Flocon, Ferdinand, editor of the *Paris Réforme*, member of Provisional Government, 1848, 143, 152
- Fourier, Charles, French Utopian Socialist, 25, 78, 102, 233, 301
- Fränkel, Leo, Hungarian *émigré*, member of Paris Commune, 327-9
- Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, 39
- Frederick William III, King of Prussia, 4, 10, 24
- Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia, 41, 43, 44, 54, 56, 61, 82, 83, 96, 99, 152, 220
- Freiligrath, Ferdinand, German poet, contributor to *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 87, 99, 100, 126, 176, 178, 196, 235, 241, 248, 303
- Fribourg, S. C., work r, Proud-  
honist, one of the founders of  
First International in Paris, 269,  
270, 272, 273
- Fuller, Margaret, 37
- Frobel, Julius, German radical,  
publisher, Democratic Party  
leader in 1848, 53, 66, 67, 70
- Funck-Brentan, Professor, 368
- Gall, Ludwig, German economist  
and Utopian Socialist, 8
- Gambetta, Léon, French statesman,  
318-19
- Gans, Eduard, Professor, Hegelian,  
29-31, 38, 40, 41
- Garibaldi, Giuseppe, Italian  
national hero, 284-5, 317
- Garnier-Pagès, Louis Antoine,  
French statesman, 151
- Geibel, Emanuel, German poet, 18
- Gerlach, Karl Friedrich von,  
Cologne administrative official, 49
- Gigot, Philippe, Belgian Com-  
munist, 115, 118, 131, 145
- Gladstone, William Ewart, English  
statesman, 360
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, 1
- Goltz, von der, Count, student at  
Bonn, 19
- Gottschalk, Dr. Andreas, member  
of Communist League at Cologne,  
155-61, 163-4, 169-71, 176, 183-  
5, 187-9, 192, 201, 206, 210, 293
- Greeley, Horace, editor of *New  
York Tribune*, 233, 235
- Grun, Karl, German writer, 'True'  
Socialist, 18
- Guesde, Jules, French Socialist,  
377-8
- Guillaume, James, Swiss Bakunin-  
ist, 278, 290-2, 347, 359, 361-3
- Guizot, Francois-Pierre-Guillaume,  
French statesman, 66, 83
- Hales, John, Secretary of General  
Council of First International,  
368
- Handel, representative of Trier  
nobility in Rhineland Diet, 9
- Hansemann, David Ludwig, Rhine-  
land Liberal, 1848, Prussian  
Minister, 173

- Harney, George Julian, Chartist leader, 13, 116, 130, 151, 209, 229, 257
- Harrison, Frederic, English Positivist, 339
- Hartman, Leo, Russian revolutionary, 374
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 233
- Hecker, attorney general in Cologne, 190
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, German philosopher, 25, 30, 32-3, 35, 40, 46, 48, 53, 65, 67, 68
- Heilberg, Louis, member of Communist League, *émigré* in Brussels, 118, 130
- Heine, Heinrich, German poet, 48, 67, 70, 72-3, 82, 86-7, 108, 126, 141
- Heinzen, Karl, German Democratic writer, 133, 192
- Herwegh, Georg, German poet, 54-6, 62, 67, 71-2, 82, 86, 99, 127-8, 149-52, 160, 192, 280, 327
- Herwegh, Emma, wife of Georg Herwegh, 71
- Herzen, Alexander, Russian Radical, 199, 289, 346
- Hess, Moses, German writer, a 'True' Socialist, 48, 50-1, 62, 91, 97, 107, 118, 134, 157, 293-4
- Heyden, Count von, student at Bonn, 19
- Hildebrand, Hugo, Professor in Vienna, 110-12
- Hodde, Lucien de la, 214
- Hofken, Dr. Gustav, German writer, 49-50
- Holbach, Baron, French philosopher, 48
- Hugo, Victor, French poet, 99, 284
- Humboldt, Alexander von, Prussian statesman and professor, 83, 99
- Hyndman, Henry Myers, English Socialist, 378-80
- Imbert, Jacques, French Revolutionary Blanquist, 132, 147
- Ivanov, Ivan, student in Moscow, 348, 349, 353
- James II, King of England, 22
- John, King of Saxony, 31
- Jones, Ernest Charles, Chartist leader, 130, 151, 229-30
- Jottrand, Lucien Leopold, Belgian Democrat, 132, 145
- Julius, Gustav, German writer, Left Hegelian, 61
- Jung, Georg Gottlieb, lawyer in Cologne, Left Hegelian, 48, 50, 74
- Jung, Hermann, watchmaker, member of General Council of First International, 368
- Juta, Jan Karl, brother-in-law of Marx, 7
- Kaiser, J., Deputy to the Rhineland Diet, 9
- Kamptz, Prussian Minister of Justice, 10
- Kant, Immanuel, German philosopher, 25
- Katzenellenbogen, Rabbi Meir, ancestor of Karl Marx, 4
- Kautsky, Karl, German Social Democrat, 301, 378
- Koppen, Karl Friedrich, Left Hegelian, 34, 35, 39
- Koscielski, Vladislav, Polish Democrat, 173
- Kossuth, Ludwig, Hungarian statesman, 222, 227, 229
- Kottgen, Gustav Adolph, German painter, member of the Communist League, 116
- Kriege, Hermann, German writer, member of the Communist League, 121
- Kugelman, Ludwig, Doctor in Hanover, member of First International, 269, 273, 302-3, 314, 326, 329, 330, 333
- Kyll, Cologne Democrat, 1848, Deputy of the Berlin National Assembly, 185
- Lachâtre, Morice, French Socialist and publisher, 369
- Lafargue, Laura, *see* Marx (Lafargue), Laura
- Lafargue, Paul, French Socialist, Marx's son-in-law, 14, 245, 255, 318, 363, 371, 377-8, 382



- Lamartine Alphonse de, French poet and politician, 66, 148, 150, 153
- Lamennais, Félicité Robert de, 66
- Lassalle, Ferdinand, 19, 255-60, 276-7, 279, 302-4, 333, 375
- Lavrov, Pierre, Russian Socialist and philosopher, 324-5
- Leach, James, Chartist in Manchester, 93
- Lecomte, Claude-Martin, French General, 330
- Ledru-Rollin, Alexandre-Auguste, leader of French Democrats, 151-3, 199
- Lefort, Henri, French Republican, member of First International, 270
- Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm, philosopher, 33
- Lelevel, Joachim, Polish historian and Democrat, 132, 140
- Le Lubez, French Republican, one of the founders of First International, 264, 266, 270
- Leroux, Pierre, French Utopian Socialist, 52, 67
- Leske, Carl, Darmstadt publisher, 101
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, German poet, 48
- Lessner, Friedrich, member of Communist League and of General Council of First International, 245, 275, 355
- Lewald, Fanny, German writer, 147
- Liebermann, Prussian ambassador in St. Petersburg, 56
- Liebknacht, Wilhelm, one of the founders of German Social Democratic Party, 40, 154, 215, 216, 218, 230, 243, 245, 303-5, 326, 342-4, 354, 360, 372-3, 375-7, 382
- Liebknacht, Ernestine, *née* Landolt, first wife of Wilhelm Liebknacht, 64, 132, 244
- Liebknacht, Natalie, *née* Reh, second wife of Wilhelm Liebknacht, 37
- List, Friedrich, German economist, 49
- Liubavin, Russian Liberal, 350-363
- Loers, Vitus, Trier's schoolmaster, 14
- Longuet, Charles, French Proletarianist, member of General Council of First International
- Karl Marx's son-in-law, 65, 309, 319,
- Longuet, Jenny, *see* Marx (Longuet), Jenny
- Lopatin, Hermann, Russian revolutionary, 353
- Louis Philippe, King of France, 83, 141, 154
- Lucas, Alphonse, French author, 151
- Lucraft, Benjamin, member of General Council of First International, 355
- Lvov, Josua Heschel, Karl Marx's great-grandfather, 4
- Lvov, Eva, Karl Marx's grandmother, 4
- M'Culloch, John Ramsay, British economist, 73
- M'Grath, Philip, Chartist, 151
- MacMahon, French General, 314
- Malon, Benoît, French Socialist, member of First International, 323, 357, 377, 379
- Marx Levy, Karl Marx's grandfather, 4
- Marx, Heinrich (Hirschel), Karl Marx's father, 4-5, 7-10, 14-17-20, 24-5, 27, 41
- Marx, Henriette, *née* Pressburg, Karl Marx's mother, 6
- Marx, Karl Heinrich, born, 6; goes to school, 11; leaves school, 13; at Bonn University, 16; secret engagement, 26; at Berlin University, 29; enters the 'Doktor-klub' and meets Hegelians, 32; graduates at Jena, 42; his first article for *Rheinische Zeitung*, 50 becomes editor of *Rheinische Zeitung*, 51; breaks with Berlin 'Freien,' 54; resigns editorship following trouble with censor 59; *Rheinische Zeitung* banned, 59 marries Jenny von Westphalen

Marx, Karl Heinrich—*contd.*

65; moves to Paris, 66; *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, 69; first child born, 73; expelled from Paris, 72; in Brussels, 85; Communist correspondence committees, 115; breaks with Wilhelm Weitling, 107; joins Communist League, 114; takes part in Second Congress of Communist League and, speaks at meeting of Fraternal Democrats, 135; writes Communist Manifesto, 136; expelled from Belgium, 144; arrives in Paris, 147; Cologne, 155; dissolution of the Communist League, 163; the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 166; becomes president of the Workers' Union, 176; twice acquitted by a Cologne jury, 192; resigns from Democratic Union, 194; expelled from Prussia, 196; last number of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 196; goes to Paris, 199; expelled from Paris and moves to London, 203; revival of Communist League, 205; works at British Museum, 211; split in Communist League, 218; Communist League formally dissolved, 223; death of Edgar Marx, Karl's son, 245; *Critique of Political Economy* completed, 248; foundation of First International, 264; *Das Kapital* completed, 254; first International manifesto on Franco-Prussian War, 304; second International manifesto on Franco-Prussian War, 310; *The Civil War in France*, 330; General Council of International transferred to America at Hague Congress, 361; death of Jenny Marx, 381; Karl Marx dies, 381.

Marx, Samuel, Karl's uncle, 4

Marx, Sophie, Karl's sister, 5, 24, 26, 27

Marx, Hermann, Karl's brother, 6, 15

Marx, Henriette, Karl's sister, 6-7

Marx, Louise, Karl's sister, 6-7

Marx, Emilie, Karl's sister, 6-7

Marx, Moritz-David, Karl's brother, 6

Marx, Karoline, Karl's sister, 6-7

Marx, Edward, Karl's brother, 6

Marx, Jenny, *née* von Westphalen, Karl's wife, 21-8, 33, 41, 64-5, 132-3, 197, 201, 203, 222, 236, 240-4, 246, 251, 252

Marx (Longuet), Jenny, Karl's daughter, 11, 73, 244, 252-3, 374, 381

Marx (Lafargue), Laura, Karl's daughter, 25, 65, 134, 244-5

Marx, Edgar, Karl's son, 134, 244

Marx, Franziska, Karl's daughter, 239

Marx, Eleanor, Karl's daughter, 11, 72, 244, 371, 381

Mazzini, Giuseppe, Italian revolutionary, 130, 229, 265-6, 271, 299

Mellinet, Antoine-Francois, General, Belgian Democrat, 132

Metternich, Prince von, Austrian statesman, 16, 70, 153

Meuron, Constant, worker, Swiss Bakuninist, 291-2

Mevissen, Gustav von, Rhineland Liberal, 48, 51

Meyer, Siegfried, German Socialist, *émigré* in America, 254

Meyerbeer, composer, 81

Michelet, *see* d'Allas, Juin

Mill, James, English philosopher and economist, 73

Mill, John Stuart, English economist, 284

Miquel, Johannes, member of Communist League, later Prussian Minister, 318

Mohr, L., Deputy to Rhineland Provincial Diet, 9

Moll, Joseph, watchmaker, Communist League leader, 108, 111, 114, 123-4, 136, 151, 171, 175-7, 189-90, 192, 201, 205

Morosov, Nicolai, Russian revolutionary, 374

Moscow, Prince of, son of Marshal Ney, 153

Mottershead, Thomas, British trade union leader, member of General Council of First International, 368

- Napoleon I, 3, 7, 11  
 Napoleon III, 199, 218, 227, 240-51, 263, 296, 299, 301-2, 304-12, 314-5, 317  
 Napoleon, Prince ('Plon-Plon'), 262-3  
 Nechaiev, Sergei, Russian revolutionary, 345-53, 363, 373  
 Negrescul, Michael, Russian revolutionary, 351  
 Nesselrode, Count Carl Robert, Russian diplomat, 58  
 Nicholas I, Tsar, 56, 139, 169, 227  
 Nieuwenhuis, Ferdinand Domela, Dutch Socialist, later anarchist, 327, 379  
 Nohl, police spy in Trier, 12, 19  
 Nothjung, Peter, tailor, member of Communist League, 220  
  
 O'Connor, Feargus Edward, Chartist leader, 131  
 Odger, George, English trade union leader, member of General Council of First International, 317, 355  
 Ogarev, Nicol, Russian poet and revolutionary, 316, 346, 349  
 Oppenheim, Dagobert, founder of *Rheinische Zeitung*, 48, 50, 51, 53  
 Oswald, F., see Friedrich Engels  
 Owen, Robert, English economist and Utopian Socialist, 25, 78, 93, 102, 265  
 Oxenbein, Colonel, Swiss revolutionary, 138  
 Ozerov, Vladimir, Russian Bakuninist, 327  
  
 de Paepe, César, Belgian Socialist, 274, 300  
 Palmerston, Lord, 231-2, 263  
 Pecchio, Giuseppe, Italian economist, 102  
 Petty, William, English economist, 102  
 Pfander, Karl, artist, member of the Communist League and later of General Council of First International, 206, 217  
 Pfuel, Ernst, Prussian general, 174, 179  
  
 Philips, August, cousin of Karl Marx, lawyer in Amsterdam, 369  
 Philips, Lion, merchant in Holland, uncle of Karl Marx, 252  
 Pindy, French Bakuninist, 297, 309  
 Polykarp, Russian bishop, 203  
 Propertius, 17  
 Proudhon, Jean Baptist, 52, 67, 81, 104-5, 115, 16, 128, 239, 265, 267, 272-6, 299, 301, 365  
 Pyat, Felix, French poet and revolutionary, 315, 316, 320, 325, 328  
  
 Ravvier, French Blanquist, member of General Council of First International, 354  
 Raveaux, Franz, Cologne Democrat, 163-4, 184  
 Reclus, Jean Jacques Elisée, French geographer, anarchist, 369  
 Reclus, Elie, brother of Elisée, French author, 369  
 Riazanov, David, Russian historian, 103  
 Ricardo, David, English economist, 73  
 Richard, Albert, French Bakuninist in Lyons, 295, 349  
 Ripley, George, Publisher of the *New York Tribune*, 233  
 Robespierre, Maximilian, 315  
 Rochefort, Comte Henry de, French writer, 295  
 Rogier, Charles Latons, Belgian Foreign Minister, 142  
 Roser, Peter Gerhard, member of Communist League, 216  
 Rossi, Pellegrino, Italian economist, 102  
 Rothacker, Wilhelm, Baden Democrat, *émigré*, 239  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, French philosopher, 13, 48  
 Roy, J., French translator of *Das Kapital*, 369  
 Ruge, Arnold, German Left Hegelian, radical, politician, and writer, 46-7, 50-1, 53, 61-7, 69-72, 80, 82, 84, 101, 235  
 Rumigny, General, French ambassador in Belgium, 142

Rüstow, Prussian officer and revolutionary, 327

Rutenberg, Adolph, German writer, Young Hegelian, 34-5, 37-40, 50, 51

Saint-Paul, Wilhelm, censors the *Rheinische Zeitung*, 7

Saint-Simon, Comte Henri Claude, French Utopian Socialist, 8, 25, 79

Savigny, Friedrich Karl, Professor in Berlin, Prussian Minister, 29, 35, 44

Say, Jean Baptist, French economist, 73

Schapper, Karl, Communist League leader, 77, 108-14, 116-17, 122-3, 130-1, 134, 136, 144, 151, 155, 163, 171, 175-6, 180, 185, 189-90, 193, 206, 217, 222

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm, German philosopher, 44

Schiller, Ernst von, lawyer in Trier, son of Friedrich Schiller, 7

Schlegel, August Wilhelm von, Professor in Bonn, 17

Schleiermacher, Friedrich-Daniel-Ernst, theologian, 89

Schlink, J. Heinrich, Saarbrücken official, 64

Schnabel, Trier police spy, 12

Schneider, Karl, Cologne lawyer, Democrat, 171, 180, 184-85

Schramm, Rudolph, Cologne Democrat, 49

Schramm, Konrad, member of Communist League, 237

von der Schulenberg, Bonn student, 19

Schurz, Karl, Bonn Democrat, later American statesman, 172, 211

Scott, Winfield, American Federal General, 235

Seiler, Sebastian, member of Communist League, 118, 150

Senior, Nassau William, English economist, 102

Serrailier, August, French Socialist member of General Council of First International, 316, 328

Shakespeare, 244

Simon, Jules, French statesman, 358

Sismondi, Jean Charles Simon de, French economist, 102

Skarbeck, Frédéric, Polish-French economist, 73

Smith, Adam, English economist, 73

Sorge, Friedrich Albert, German *émigré*, member of General Council of First International in America, 325, 357, 361, 363, 368, 381

Spinoza, Benedictus, 33

Stahl, Julius, Berlin Professor, 41

Steffens, Hendric, Berlin Professor, 29, 31

Steiniger, Johann, Trier schoolmaster, 13

Stieldorf, Major, pro-Belgian agitator, 18

Stirner, Max (Kaspar Schmidt), Left Hegelian, 62, 103

Strauss, David Friedrich, Theologian, 36

Taylor, Bayard, American writer, 248

Thiers, Louis Adolf, French statesman, 330

Thomas, Clément, French General, 330

Thompson, Thomas Perronet, English politician and economist, 102

Tolain, Henri Louis, engraver, Proudhonist, one of the founders of First International, 269, 270

Tooke, Thomas, English economist, 102

Tucker, E., London publisher, 232

Turgenev, Ivan, Russian author, 54

Tussy, *see* Marx, Eleanor

Ure, Andrew, British economist, 102

Urquhart, David, British politician and writer, 231-2

Utin, Nicolai, Russian *émigré*, member of First International, 353

Vaillant, Eduard, French Blanquist, 354, 361

- Valdenaire, Victor, Landed proprietor in Trier, Deputy of the Rhineland Provincial Diet, 9
- Varlin, Eugène, French Internationalist, member of the Paris Commune, 273, 295, 322-5, 328
- Varnhagen von Ense, Karl August, Prussian statesman and writer, 41
- Veltheim, Elisabeth von—see Westphalen Elisabeth von
- Vermersch, French writer, emigrant 1871, 354
- Vésinier, Pierre, French journalist, member of First International, 315, 328
- Victoria, Queen, 221, 289
- Vidil, Jules, French Blanquist, *émigré* in London, 209
- Villetard, E., French Reactionary, historian of First International, 276
- Vogt, Gustav, Berne Professor, one of the founders of 'League of Peace and Freedom,' 289
- Vogt, Karl, Geneva Professor, Democrat, 250, 251
- Voltaire, Francois Marie de, 48
- Wagner, Richard, German composer, 1848-9, revolutionary, 195, 291
- Wallau, Karl, German worker, member of Communist League, 151, 155
- Weber, Dr. Georg, of Kiel, member of Communist League, 82, 116
- Weerth, Georg, German poet, member of Communist League, 78, 82, 157, 165-6, 175, 223, 241, 293
- Weitling, Wilhelm, Communist, 76-7, 80-1, 107-9, 113-14, 117-21, 128, 130, 133, 171, 187-8, 201, 206, 281
- Welcker, Friedrich Gottlieb, Bonn Professor, 17
- Welcker, Karl Theodor, leader of Baden Liberals, 45
- Westphalen, Jenny von see Marx, Jenny
- Westphalen, Ludwig von, Frau Marx's father, 22, 47-7, 65
- Westphalen, Philipp Frau Marx's grandfather, 21
- Westphalen, Elisabeth, *née* von Veltheim, first wife of Ludwig von Westphalen, 24
- Westphalen, Caroline, *née* Heubel, second wife of Ludwig von Westphalen, mother of Frau Marx, 24
- Westphalen, Edgar von, brother of Frau Marx, 5, 24, 118, 132, 133
- Westphalen, Ferdinand von, half-brother of Frau Marx, Prussian Minister, 23, 28, 65, 125
- Weydemeyer, Joseph, member of Communist League, 118, 132, 202, 224-5, 236, 238-9, 241, 247, 261
- William I, Emperor of Germany, 256
- Willich, Lieutenant August von, Prussian revolutionary, member of Communist League, 155-8, 164, 187, 201, 205-6, 209, 213-22, 229, 247, 281, 293, 332
- Wishart of Pitarrow, Jeanie, grandmother of Frau Marx, 21, 22
- Wishart, William, great-grandfather of Frau Marx, 22
- Wolff, Ferdinand, member of Communist League, on editorial board of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 166, 175
- Wolff, Luigi, Mazzini's secretary, member of First International, 265
- Wolff, Wilhelm, ('Lupus'), member of Communist League, 124, 129, 140, 143, 151, 155, 166, 175, 190, 193, 241, 253
- Wrangel, Baron, 336
- Wytttenbach, Johann Hugo, Trier headmaster, 12, 13, 14
- Zweiffel, high official in Cologne, 190

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