THE IMPACT OF THE PARIS COMMUNE
IN THE UNITED STATES

Samuel Bernstein

The Paris correspondent of the New York World reported in April 1871 that the Commune had been plotted by the International Workingmen's Association. His source was Le Gaulois, a monarchist tinged sheet, which charged that the rise of the Paris Commune on March 18th had been the denouement of a well-laid conspiracy of which the principal ringleaders were Karl Marx and the General Council of the International. The charge was correct insofar as the Commune was the intellectual offspring of the International. But this sprawling body, centered in London, had done absolutely nothing to bring it about, as Frederick Engels later wrote to F. A. Sorge in America. Everything about the Association refuted the charge of the French paper—its loose make-up, the weakness of its branches, and its incurable impecuniousness. It had never been a secret body, organized for conspiratorial purposes; its French branch was completely disordered on the eve of the Commune, as the General Council's emissary in Paris reported on February 28, 1871; and its treasury was so empty that the Council in London was often embarrassed by rent-arrears for its modest meeting place. Actually the International had already been the object of calumny. A short time before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Marx told his colleagues of the Council, "the International was made the general scapegoat of all untoward events." But the charge against it respecting the Commune was of another character, for it had rallied to the defense of the revolution in Paris after its outbreak. To be sure, The Second Address of the General Council on the Franco-Prussian War, dated September 9, 1870, had forewarned the Parisians against any attempt to upset the French Republic. However, the Council was powerless before the events. As its minutes show it accepted the inevitable and stood loyally by the Commune. Ten days after it became the revolutionary government of the French capital the Council unanimously accepted Marx's proposal "that an address be issued to the people of Paris." I

The Paris Commune had international significance, and therein lay its historical importance. In all countries of the western world it had numerous vilifiers as well as defenders. In the United States the chorus of abuse grew crescendo-like. Calumny of the Parisians became a pattern of thought. Press and pulpit, platform and pamphlet alike drew heavily on the dictionary of defamation to paint the Kommunards as the vilest specimens of the race of bipeds. American newspapers and periodicals in general, like the British, aligned themselves with Versailles and systematically presented Paris as the hotbed of savages and bandits. They were at once
foes of family and religion, antagonists of private property and govern-
ment. Consequently no quarter was to be given them.

No one, as far as we know, has yet found a way of measuring the extent
to which the American press and pulpit shaped public opinion on the
Paris Commune. But it is safe to assume that the volume of abuse caused
Americans, irrespective of social status, to look upon it with repugnance.
Its defenders formed but a small fraction of the population. Their brief
in its behalf will find space later in the article. For the present we shall
concentrate on the case presented by its revilers.

No political or economic issue in the United States, save governmental
corruption, received more headlines in the American press of the 1870's
than did the Paris Commune and the International Workingmen's Asso-
ciation. Every big newspaper gave readers the impression that the founda-
tions of organized society had crumbled. Anarchy, assassination, slaughter,
incendiarism, streets covered with human gore—such blood curdling
scenes were monotonously reported in the news. There were predictions
that other Marats and Robespierres would arise and the screaming mobs,
too, to demand the heads of the rich. An example of the irresponsible
reporting was the case of Auguste Blanqui, the dreaded revolutionary of
the nineteenth century. Though he had been arrested the day before the
rise of the Commune and was a well-guarded prisoner,7 the American
press advertised him as the mastermind of its Central Committee.8 One
correspondent wrote, as if under Thiers' direction, that he had inherited
Marat's mantle. "His presence signifies constant turmoil and insurrection."
If he ever achieved power, the Guillotine would be set up again.9

Newspapers, outside of New York City, by and large followed its
press. Thus, according to the Cincinnati Daily Gazette, Paris was still the
"den of wild beasts" it had been during the first French Revolution,10 a
view shared by the Chicago Tribune.11 Less original was the Wisconsin
State Journal with such commonplace epithets as "mob rule" and "reign
of terror."12 Both the Morning Bulletin and Evening Bulletin of San Fran-
cisco were persuaded that the "violent reds" were "destroying genuine
republicanism and individual liberty, and reviving the worst events of the
First Revolution."13 The warning by Versailles that the Commune was
but the initial stage of a worldwide conflagration, directed by the First
International, was echoed by the Washington Star.14 Frederick Douglass'
weekly charged the Communards with mobocracy, vandalism and terrorism
like that of 1792.15 The Philadelphia Ledger and the Pittsburgh Daily
Gazette reiterated the fabrications of the better known newspapers.16

Since the press in American cities leaned by and large on the major
newspapers of New York our purpose would be better served if we cen-
tered attention on them. From their lead articles and editorials on the
Commune several theses emerge which can be stated as follows: The peo-
ple in France, and by implication the people in the United States, were
unfit to have a hand in government; given the socialist character of the
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Commune, violence was inevitable; the Communards were communists, commanded by the International, awaiting the order to overrun other countries; finally, the Commune might also come to America. Let us consider the theses in their order.

The common people exhibited their political incapacity by their reliance on terror and theft, contended the Commune's denigrators. From the viewpoint of the New York Tribune, Paris was a "burlesque Republic," backed by recruits from the gutters and drinking shops, and supported by the seizures of property. The New York Times confessed a nostalgia for the dictatorial system of Louis Napoleon. Bad as his Empire was, "it at least kept off a worse thing—The Universal Republic." The New York Herald was more blunt. The Bonapartes, it said on April 1, 1871, "were the proper doctors for those virulent revolutionary disorders of Paris." Americans should revise their opinion of Bonapartism, urged the New York Journal of Commerce. Louis Napoleon's coup d'état of 1851 had been "a good investment in human life." The shortest way to end the Parisian madness was to free the Emperor and allow him to march on the capital at the head of an army. Failing that, the Germans should intervene.

It may be noted parenthetically that there were dailies and weeklies that rejected the Napoleonic straightjacket. For the Commune, they claimed, had at least demonstrated the failure of arbitrary rule and centralization. It had shattered the machinery of both and raised the banner of federalism. The Commune was socialistic, declared its foes, and they were correct in estimating it so. Not that its program spelled out socialism. Such as it was, it reflected Proudhonist aspirations and revealed an abiding respect for private property. But the Commune showed its ultimate, socialist, intentions both in its social legislation and in its policies. Its socialistic character, however, did not have violence as its sequence, save in the imaginations of reporters. They equated the Commune's socialism with anarchy, which they in turn gave a forbidding definition; they described it as Fourierist or Saint-Simonist, or even as Marxist. Whatever label they pinned on socialism, they saw it attended by violence. Yet, correspondents visiting Paris, we shall show, were surprised by the courtesy and orderliness of the people, and by their respect for property and churches.

People were led to believe that Commune was synonymous with communism. The Parisians were therefore ipso facto partitioners or destroyers of property. The equation was widely accepted in America and was used to overawe striking workers. A coal miners' strike in Pennsylvania was called "The Commune of Pennsylvania," and the strikers were likened to Communards. The Internationalists in the Commune, the indictment continued, were communistically inclined and were in league with other Internationalists to bring about a worldwide communist revolution. The accusations were inventions. In the first place, the Internationalists in the Commune were a small minority, opposed and outvoted by the Blanquists.
and neo-Jacobins; in the second place, they were Proudhonists, far removed from communism in its social and economic outlook;\textsuperscript{24} in the third place, as we have said, the International was badly equipped to organize a general revolution. Whatever plots were laid to it with that end in view were but police tales that became the themes of a large, spurious literature both in Europe and in the United States. The organization was credited with countless forces and limitless resources. No country was safe from it. It was "a constant source of anxiety and trouble."\textsuperscript{25} Rumor had it that its affiliates in Italy were plotting the assassination of the Pope.\textsuperscript{26} Strikes, it was maintained, were skirmishes to test the resistance of established systems; and demonstrations were but reviews of its forces before entering upon the final struggle. The French police metamorphosed Marx into Bismarck's secret agent, for how else, asked they, could one explain his comfortable style of living?\textsuperscript{27} The North American Federation of the International, that had about 5,000 members at its height, early in 1872, was believed by French police observers in the United States to have around 1,400,000 in April 1876, just as its end was nearing.\textsuperscript{28}

The press sounded the alarm that the Commune might rise up in America. The "roughs of New York," wrote the \textit{Evening Telegram}, were the sort of element that could become communist.\textsuperscript{29} To be sure, the threat was not imminent, the \textit{Times} assured the public, but the horizons looked somber. Labor was organizing in the United States; the workers of all lands were steadily uniting and asserting that capital had all the advantage in the production of wealth, while those who worked were left empty-handed. Through their trade unions they were counting on "a wider and more nearly universal Republic" that could claim the obedience of every laborer . . . from Archangel to San Francisco.\textsuperscript{30} Thanks to the absence of feudal traditions in America, thanks to her boundless resources and her republican system, the \textit{Times} felt confident about the future. Still the materials which caused the Commune in Paris were in every large metropolis. New York had beneath its busy surface "a volcano of deep passions and explosive social forces." Fortunately the pressure on American workers was not as heavy; and they had dreams of becoming capitalists.\textsuperscript{31}

The dangerous elements were present nonetheless, the warning re-echoed. The more informed among them had heard of the division of property and socialism. Others belonged to trades unions that had sworn bitter war against capital. In other words America was not immune to Communes, wrote the \textit{Times}. "Let some such opportunity occur as was presented in Paris . . . ; let this mighty throng hear that there was a chance to grasp the luxuries of wealth, or to divide the property of the rich, or to escape labor and suffering for a time, and live on the superfluities of others, and we should see a sudden storm of communistic revolution even in New York such as would astonish all who do not know these classes." A mine was "beneath every large city—not so easily exploded in America as in Europe—but existing with all its terrible ele-
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ments even here." The spectre that rose above the flames of Paris haunted the United States. It was the spectre "of a toiling, ignorant and impoverished multitude, demanding an equal share in the wealth of the rich."

What was the remedy? The Times proposed free schooling and better facilities for acquiring land. It also saw merit in the Rochdale cooperative plan and in some form of profit sharing. The New York Herald put its trust in the teaching of religion. The Tribune relied on the untrammeled laws of economics to remove social friction. The New York Standard was partial to the correctives of the Times and the World to those of the Tribune, provided the government held on to the national domain. At bottom the remedies were all alike in that they in no way impinged on the foundations of the status quo.

Something needs to be said, however briefly, on the role of clergymen in shaping public opinion on the Commune and the International. Among the more prominent and influential were Archbishop Manning of New York, and the Reverends Frothingham and Henry Ward Beecher, both of the same city. The first charged that the principal threat of the Commune was its atheism and materialism. The answer to them, he said, lay in authority and obedience. According to the Reverend Frothingham the danger to America stemmed from the alliance of the trade unions with the Communist International, even though it was common knowledge that American unions, in the great majority, were either indifferent or hostile to it. The third clergyman, the eloquent Henry Ward Beecher, told a large attendance in his church that the scenes of the Paris Commune were but enactments of those of the French Revolution. And since there was a certain likeness in human nature, Americans could not ignore the awful possibilities of the future. It could also happen here, unless the dangerous elements were inoculated with faith in God. He proposed, in addition to the free distribution of land, free schools and indoctrination in the belief in the next life.

II

Any consideration of American opinion on the Paris Commune must take into account publications and public figures who endeavored to contain the tide of denunciation. They were of course a minority, but a sturdy one, including liberals and American Internationalists. The Weekly New York Democrat not only blamed the Thiers government for having provoked the Parisians into revolt; it also considered the political program of the Commune worthy of incorporation into the American Constitution. Another weekly, the Golden Age, attributed the Revolution in Paris to the misrule of the Second Empire. It then proceeded to clear the Commune of the stigma of communism. The Commune, said the Golden Age, was nothing but republicanism. "If the Republic of America is right, the Commune of Paris was right." Had the Commune been victorious as had
been the Republic in America, it would have been acclaimed rather than execrated by the same people who lashed it.42

Such dissent from the run of opinion must have been welcome to American friends of the Commune, even though the dissenters did not understand its real essence. In this respect The Nation, edited by E. L. Godkin, came closest, even before the publication in the United States of the General Council's Address on the Civil War in France. However much the periodical marked the Commune as "one of the greatest pieces of folly and wickedness . . . ever witnessed," it nevertheless saw its true meaning: "Veritable workingmen sit in council in the gilded saloons of the Hotel de Ville," doing everything "that can be done to put out of sight or abolish all the machinery, whether moral or material, which the rich and educated classes have invented and declared to be necessary for the proper conduct of human affairs." The Nation thus agreed with Marx that, by destroying the old machinery of government, the Commune had taken the requisite steps to what he termed a proletarian dictatorship. The journal went on to say that the workers' government "has shown itself capable of maintaining an army, and carrying on war for two months," so that it not only gave "an air of practicalness to what all the rest of the world sneered at as impractical"; it also showed "that it is not impossible for a great crowd of persons, whom society denounces as lunatics and loafers to seize on the government of a great capital, and administer it for a time, at all events."43

No contemporaneous American publication, as far as we know, assessed the Commune as well as did The Nation. It saw the Revolution in historical perspective and foretold its future impact. Those who hoped that its fall would spell the end of its ideas were mistaken, it declared. "These ideas . . . will live and grow." They will "not cease to spread until they have made one great attempt for the conquest of modern society, and have in that attempt shaken our present civilization to its foundation."44

Amidst the general hysteria new ideas on the Commune were invading the public mind. Even the New York World, that had printed so many fantastic tales and excerpted Mazzini's indictment of the Commune,45 gave ample space to interviews with high ranking Communards and Internationalists.46 It did still more. On June 29 it published almost the entire text of the Address on the Civil War in France. Thereafter it was printed in full by The Workingman's Advocate in Chicago and Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly in New York. Special editions of the Address were issued to meet increasing demands, so that the above-named Weekly could say candidly: "No public document has ever been more sought after."47

The press could not avoid noticing the International's statement on the Commune. The Golden Age and The Nation each found in it confirmation of its own forecast; the one regarded the Address as "a pungent, angry and manly defence of the Paris Commune"; it attested to the fact that the Commune was a praiseworthy example of self-government; the other
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weekly, in keeping with its prediction, believed that the Address would make the International more audacious. Metropolitan dailies, too, looked upon the piece as a validation of their earlier views. For the Star it dispelled all doubts about the Commune's aim of controlling all economic life. The Times discovered in it evidence to justify its premonition that the Commune was but the first of further conflicts for the achievement of a new social order. The World, though full of praise for the vigor and literary merit of the Address, saw in it a warning to statesmen and men of property. No people was exempt from the plague of popular movements.

The controversy over the Commune was becoming less one-sided as its defenders were entering the debate. The weeklies cited above were aided by the press of the American sections of the International that were increasing in number and uniting under a central committee. True, this press was limited in circulation. Le Socialiste, founded in New York on October 7, 1871, which soon became an official organ of the International, reached only French-speaking people. It was in this small sheet that appeared serially, from January to March 1872, the first French translation of The Communist Manifesto. Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly, another official organ, represented the English-speaking Section 12, which in time developed into a dissident group. Despite the Weekly's lapse in discipline and its criticism of the Commune's policies, it stood by the Parisian government and, as we said above, published the full Address. On December 30, 1871, it reprinted the first English translation of The Communist Manifesto that had appeared in England in 1850 in the Red Republican. The most important labor paper of the time, The Workingman's Advocate, did not endorse all the principles of the Commune. Still it reprinted the Address and rejected the villainous charges of the newspapers. It furthermore declared that the Commune had arisen out of conditions that were also present in the United States. The coal miners' strike in Pennsylvania, it owned, was not unrelated to the Revolution in Paris. Both aimed "to establish and define strictly the rights of producers."

The limited press, it is safe to say, had less effect in dispelling the misrepresentations of the Commune than had a small number of American journalists in Paris. Notable were Frank M. Pixley, writing in the San Francisco Chronicle, William Huntington in the Cincinnati Commercial, George Wilkes in the New York Herald and finally Alfred Russell Young in the New York Standard. The accounts of the last two were the best considered and the most convincing. Wilkes' reports to the Herald disputed everything printed on the Commune. Moderation, decency and justice were virtues discovered in the government of Paris. It had guarded public morals, religion and property, he wrote; the stories of plunder and incendiaryism merely testified to their authors' wild imaginations.

The most authoritative report by an American and the one which provoked chroniclers of the Commune was that of Alfred Russell Young. His paper, the New York Standard, had vied with others in heaping abuse
on the Communards. It happened that in May 1871, the State Department sent him on a secret mission to Europe. Curiosity led him to every part of Paris. He examined barricades, attended club meetings, entered churches and roamed the streets of Montmartre, reputed to be the center of “ruffians.” He soon learned that the Communards had been libeled. A study of the facts showed him that not they but the Versaillese had begun the shooting of prisoners “and unarmed men in cold blood.” What about the pillaging? In making the rounds of the clubs, he wrote, he had not heard a single proposal for partitioning, not an appeal for plunder. Never had he seen “a more orderly city.” Montmartre was quiet, although it had no police. In his walks through its narrow streets he had never been troubled or questioned. “I saw no drunkenness, no ruffianism, no pillage. I saw one crowd of at least thirty thousand men and women, and it was orderly and good-humored as though it were a gathering at a New York county fair.” Were the Communards infidels, ransackers of churches? Young had expected to find the Church of the Madeleine converted into “a stable or wine cellar.” Instead it was a quiet place of worship, guarded by a sentry. “The Madeleine,” he said, “received more harm from the shots of the Versailles soldiers in combat than from the Commune during the siege.”

To newspaper editors who reproved him for his exposé of their mendacious stories, he replied:

It would have been so much easier, so much more popular, so much more acceptable, to home people, to have united in the chorus of anger that seemed to come from the English written press; to have shared the agitations of correspondents, who looked at Paris from the terrace of St. Germain and telegraphed their emotions to New York; to have written a wild article or two, freshened up with the rhetoric of the Reign of Terror. But what we saw and what we heard and what impressions they made upon us—a stranger in a strange and deeply interesting land, among people whose history we had read with affection and deep emotion—we felt called upon to write and print. In that shape truth came to us, and we spoke it.

Young’s report was one of the most valuable aids to the sobering of American opinion on the Commune. Wendell Phillips, the former Abolitionist, appraised it as “the ablest, most brilliant and searching of all essays on the Commune.”

The same paper that carried Phillips’ estimate of Young’s story also carried articles by W. J. Linton, the renowned engraver and former British Chartist. Their purpose was to clear the Commune of the slander that had been flung at it. Linton did not share all its principles, but he was at one with it “as far as wanting some better social ordering than that of the Bonapartes and the Fisks.” Perhaps his association with Chartists and European socialists had equipped him to get at the underlying objective of the Commune. He could see from his vantage point that it had brought to the surface “the question of the abolition of misery.”
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The bulk of American intellectuals and men of letters, like the European, either gave little thought to the Commune or were downright hostile. Only a small minority sided with the Commune and even with the International. Of that number were Wilkes and Young, Linton and Phillips. One could also find among them American Positivists, champions of moral persuasion, who, though critical of the Communards' political and repressive acts, praised them for having abolished the standing army and repealed the capital penalty. Like their British confrere, Frederick Harrison, they rebuked the Commune's defamers and the falsifiers of its record.

Prominent in the tiny category of intellectuals who stood by the Commune was Wendell Phillips, of one of the first families of Massachusetts. His name had been a symbol of Abolitionism. Once its cause had triumphed, he declared: "We sheathe no sword. We turn only the front of the army upon a new foe." The foe was corporate wealth and the wage system. Unlike other Abolitionists, he had the faculty of seeing the cadenced flow of change and continuity. Slavery once gone, the problem of wage labor absorbed him thereafter. It came upon him slowly that the slave question was but part of the labor question.

His objective was workers' welfare, and his understanding of it was akin to what Jacksonian democrats had advanced. Capital, by his definition, was "but frozen, crystallized labor"; and labor, "but capital, dissolved and become active." Their antagonism was injurious to both, for neither one could exist without the other. "Laws to protect labor from capital, and employer from his workmen," he said in January 1871, "will be needless when each man is both capitalist and workman, equally interested as employer and employed." His ideal society was one of small, independent producers, bound together in a community. It was the sort of ideal once exemplified by a New England town, where, to cite him, were neither rich nor poor, "all mingling in the same society, every child at the same school, no poorhouse, no beggar, opportunities equal, nobody too proud to stand aloof, nobody too humble to be shut out."

Phillips never squared his economic theory with advancing capitalism. He never penetrated its inside to study its workings. The best he could do was to place his trust in labor and in its international solidarity.

Consistent with this trust, he stood firmly by the Paris Commune. It was fallacious to present it as communist, he declared, for it had no such program. Nor had it been concocted by a cabal of cutthroats, as slander had it. The evidence showed that "the movement was the unanimous wish of all Paris." The city was so peaceful that the Stock Exchange refused to close. To the charge of pillage he replied: "The leaders arrested are poor. Those who fled are poorer still." But the indictment accused them of wilful bloodshed. Thiers "set the example," he answered. He refused all exchange of prisoners and shot every Communard, "men, women and children, especially every leader." The Communards,
he continued, were genuine patriots who had refused to make peace with Napoleon and who made a desperate effort to lift France from her degradation. Phillips chided American journalists for having catered to prejudice. Had they appreciated the merits of the Communards they might have likened them to the American revolutionaries of 1776.

Phillips held his convictions to the end. He told a reporter in 1878, when the issue of socialism was warmly debated, that America had nothing to fear from it. The press had misrepresented it as it had the Paris Commune. The Commune "was not socialistic primarily," he said, "but grew more and more that way." Was America suited to the spread of socialism? asked the reporter. Phillips did not think so, but he saw no harm in publicizing its principles. If America ever became socialist, it would be through the ballot-box, provided, he added, "force is not used by the other side."

Did Phillips join the First International? We cannot say with certainty. Our only evidence is the news from New York to the General Council in London that he entered the ranks of the International. But news from that source sometimes conveyed anticipation rather than fact.

III

During the hard times of the seventies, the hysteria over the Paris Commune and International took on new life. Meetings of unemployed and peaceful demonstrations to present demands to municipal officials were, in the opinion of the World, for example, "The Commune in City Hall" and "The Red Flag in New York." The hand of the International was seen in every strike and every petition. They were the doings of foreign subversives, the Times charged, of a "dangerous class" that looked for an opportunity "to spread abroad the anarchy and ruin of the French Commune." The explosive rhetoric might have caused city dwellers to lock their doors, but they were not an answer to the bread and butter question raised by the Long Depression begun in 1873. Perhaps on account of that the terrifying headlines were persistently spread throughout the nation.

It is not the intention here to enter into the many solutions of the social problems that cropped up during the seventies. Suffice it to say that many isms were laid before the public, from Social Darwinism and Positivism to Christian Socialism and Socialism. Of all these solutions the last one alone caused deep apprehension, for in July 1876, four parties and societies, totalling nearly 3,000 organized socialists, united to form The Workingmen's Party of the United States. Press and pulpit again sounded the dreadful warning that it could happen here. Socialism, they said, had been the aim in Paris; its emergence as a nation-wide movement in the United States was the best evidence that the hydra-headed monster had crossed the Atlantic. At the time of the railroad strike of 1877, captions
THE CURTAIN
RAISED

Interview with Karl Marx, the Head of L'Internationale

REVOLT OF LABOR
AGAINST CAPITAL

The Two Faces of L'Internationale—
Transformation of Society—
Its Progress in the United States

What the Association Had to Do with the Commune, &c.

LONDON, July 3.—You have asked me to find out something about the International Association, and I have tried to do so. The enterprise is a difficult one just now. London is indisputably the headquarters of the association, but the English people have got a scare, and small international in everything as King James smelt gunpowder after the famous plot. The consciousness of the society has naturally increased with the suspiciousness of the public; and if those who guide it have a secret to keep, they are of the stamp of men who keep a secret well. I have called on two of their leading members, have talked with one freely, and here give you the substance of my conversation.

I have satisfied myself of one thing, that it is a society of genuine working-men, but that these workmen are directed by social and political theorists of another class. One man whom I saw, a leading member of the council, was sitting at his workman's bench during our interview, and left off talking to me from time to time to receive a complaint, delivered in no courteous tone, from one of the many little masters in the neighborhood who enjoyed him. I have heard this same man make eloquent speeches in public inspired in every passage with the energy of hate towards the classes that call themselves his rulers. I have felt that he had brains enough to have organized a working-government of his own, and was obliged to devote his life to the interests of the working men alone. But the presence of the statecraft that sets him in motion. I know some of your members, and I believe that they are not of the stuff of which conspirators are made. Besides, a secret shared by a million men would be no secret at all. But what if these were the only instruments in the hands of a bold, and I hope you will forgive me for adding, not over scrupulous conclude.

Dr. M.—There is nothing to prove it.

R.—The last Paris insurrection?

Dr. M.—I demand firstly the proof that there was any plot at all—that anything happened that was not the legitimate effect of the circumstances of the moment; or the plot granted, I demand the proofs of the participation in it of the International Association.

R.—The presence in the communal body of so many members of the association.

Dr. M.—Then it was a plot of the Freemasons, too, for their share in the work as individuals was by no means a slight one. I should not be surprised, indeed, to find the Pope setting down the whole insurrection to their account. But try another explanation. The insurrection in Paris was made by the workmen of Paris. The ablest of the workmen must necessarily have been its leaders and administrators; but the ablest of the workmen happen also to be members of the International Association. Yet the association as such may in no way be responsible for their action.

R.—It will still seem otherwise to the world. People talk of secret instructions from London, and even grants of money. Can it be affirmed that the alleged openness of the association's proceedings precludes all secrecy of communication?

Dr. M.—What association ever formed carried on its work without private as well as public agencies? But to talk of secret instruction from London, as of decrees in the matter of faith and morals from some centre of Papal domination and enthrone is wholly to misconceive the nature of the International. This would imply a centralized form of government, whereas the real form is designedly that which gives the greatest play to local energy and independence. In fact the International is not properly a government for the working class at all. It is a bond of union rather than a controlling force.

R.—And of union to what end?

Dr. M.—The economical emancipation of the working class by the conquest of political power. The use of that political power to the attainment of social ends. It is necessary that our aims should be thus comprehensive to include every form of working class activity. To have made them of a special character would have been fatal to the existence of the society.

R.—Europe can scarcely have had any dealings with the Commune.

Dr. M.—Every French newspaper speaks of it.

R.—And of union to what end?

Dr. M.—The economical emancipation of the working class by the conquest of political power. The use of that political power to the attainment of social ends. It is necessary that our aims should be thus comprehensive to include every form of working class activity. To have made them of a special character would have been fatal to the existence of the society.

R.—Have you attempted to prove it?
CURTAIN RAISED

A View with Karl Marx, Author of L'Internationale

THE RESULT OF LABOR AGAINST CAPITAL

Two Faces of the Internationale—Formation of Society—Association Had to be Secret

Association Had to be Secret in the United States

NEW YORK: TUESDAY, JULY 18, 1871. PRICE FOUR CENTS.
Dr. M.—What association ever formed itself on work without private as well as public support? It would have to take its support from London, as of decrees in the matter of faith and morals from some centre of Papal domination and enfranchisement is wholly to misconceive the nature of the International. This would imply a centralized form of government of the International, whereas the real form is designedly that which gives the greatest play to local energy and independence. In fact the International is not properly a government for the working class at all. It is a bond of union rather than a controlling force.

R.—End of union to what end?

M.—The anticipation of the working class by the conquest of political power. The use of that political power to the attainment of social ends. It is necessary that our aims should be thus comprehensive to include every form of working class activity. To have made them of a special character would have been to adapt them to the needs of one section—one nation of workmen alone. But how could all men be asked to unite to further the objects of a few. To have done that the association must have forfeited its title of International. The association does not dictate the same level in the scale of civility with a huntsman's call to his dog. This man helped me to a glimpse of one side of the nature of the International, the result of labor against capital, of the worker who produces against the middleman who enjoys. Here was the hand that would smile hard when the time came, and as to the head that plans, I think I saw that, too, in my interview with Dr. Karl Marx.

Dr. Marx is a German doctor of philosophy with a German breadth of knowledge derived from observation of the living world and from books. I should conclude that he is the commonest possible sort of a middle class. The drawing-room into which I was ushered on the sight of my interview would have formed very comfortable quarters with nothing in it peculiarly characteristic of its owner. A fine album of Rhine views on the table, however, gave a clue to his nationality. A picture of a hosepipe on the side-table for a bomb. I sniffed for philosophy, but the smell was the smell of roses. I crept back stealthily to my seat, and moodyly awaited.

He has entered and greeted me cordially, and we are sitting face to face. Yes, I am a tete-a-tete with the revolution incarnate, with the real founder and guiding spirit of the International Society, with the author of the address in which capital was told that it was a wage laborer in the middle class for a middleman as well. Do you remember the bust of Socrates, the man whom I saw, a leading member of the anarchic party? I saw that same level in the scale of civility with a huntsman's call to his dog. This man helped me to a glimpse of one side of the nature of the International, the result of labor against capital, of the worker who produces against the middleman who enjoys. Here was the hand that would smile hard when the time came, and as to the head that plans, I think I saw that, too, in my interview with Dr. Karl Marx.

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who gave it a set of new clothes, and they have called on two of their friends, have talked with one freely, you the substance of my course satisfied myself of one thing, a society of genuine working-men, workmen are directed by social theorists of another class. One day, a leading member of the circle at his workman's bench, I found, and left off talking to the time to receive a complaint, a courteous tone, from one of the townspeople in the neighborhood. I have given up in the neighborhood of the bust of Socrates, the other side of the nature of the bisected pothook that formed the bomb. I sniffed for petroleum, the drawing-room into which I was brought to a victorious issue the other day.

The International does not presume to dictate means a strike of the cigar-makers of Barcelona to the working classes of that country. The International does not presume to dictate means a strike of the cigar-makers of Barcelona to the working classes of that country. The masters are thus left alone to reckon with the working class at all. It is a bond of union rather than a controlling force. The association could hardly have found room for such a wild man. He was once pronounced to be too wild to be considered in their own way. Combinations among workmen cannot be absolutely identical in detail in Newcastle and in Barcelona, in London and in Berlin. In France a hundred laws of repression were passed, one of them I saw Felix Pyat set down as a member of the International.

And he is not so? The association could hardly have found room for such a wild man. He was once pronounced to be too wild to be considered in their own way. Combinations among workmen cannot be absolutely identical in detail in Newcastle and in Barcelona, in London and in Berlin. In France a hundred laws of repression were passed, one of them I saw Felix Pyat set down as a member of the International.

You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views. You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views.
made on a portly body of the middle height, and we are sitting face to face. Yes, I am tete-a-tete with the revolution incarnate, with the real founder and guiding spirit of the International Society, with the author of the address in which capital was told that if it warred on labor it must expect to have its house burned down about its ears—in a word, with the apostol for the Commune of Paris. Do you remember the bust of Socrates, the apologist for the Commune of Paris. Who professed to have peered further into the gloom than their neighbors, declared that they had made out a sort of Jesus figure with a fair, able to say clearly what thing it hated. Some, above all things suspicious of its agents. Here, their material privation dwarfs their moral classes remain poor amid the increase of wealth. Their own subscriptions, and landlords, and that means they must transgress one kind in case of a head thus clap the head they must means transform society. This is the general end of every known workmen’s organization; land and labor leagues, trade and friendly societies, cooperative stores and co-operative production are but means towards it. To establish a perfect solidarity between these organizations is the business of the International Society. Its influence is beginning to be felt everywhere. Two papers spread its views in Spain, three in Germany, the same number in Australia and in Holland, six in Belgium, and six in Switzerland. And now that I have told you what the International is you may, perhaps, be in a position to form your own opinion as to its pretended plots.

Dr. M.—Do you not see that the old society, wanting strength to meet it with its own weapons of discussion and combination, is obliged to resort to the fraud of fixing upon it the imputation of conspiracy? But the French police declare that they are in a position to prove its complicity in the late affair, to say nothing of preceding attempts.

Dr. M.—But we will say something of those attempts, if you please, because they best serve to test the gravity of all the charges of conspiracy brought against the International. You remember the last “plot” but one. A plebiscite had been announced. Many of the electors were known to be wavering. They had no longer a keen sense of the value of the imperial rule, having come to disbelieve in those threatened dangers of society from which it was supposed to have saved them. Some, in a whisper in either German or English, attempted to prevent the labor people from voting. The proceedings, it was supposed to have saved them. A new society was formed. This is the general end of every known workmen’s organization; land and labor leagues, trade and friendly societies, cooperative stores and co-operative production are but means towards it. To establish a perfect solidarity between these organizations is the business of the International Society. Its influence is beginning to be felt everywhere. Two papers spread its views in Spain, three in Germany, the same number in Australia and in Holland, six in Belgium, and six in Switzerland. And now that I have told you what the International is you may, perhaps, be in a position to form your own opinion as to its pretended plots.

Dr. M.—I do not quite understand you.

Dr. M.—You have only to look at the individuals of which it is composed—workmen. Yes, but the soldier need be no exception by the importation of workmen from another. The International has nearly stopped all that. It receives information of the intended strike, it spreads that information among its members, who at once see that for them the seat of the struggle must be forbidden ground. The masters are thus left alone to reckon with their men. In most cases the men require no other aid than that. Their own subscriptions or those of the societies to which they are more immediately affiliated supply them with funds, but should the pressure upon them become too heavy and the strike be one of which the association approves, their necessities are supplied out of the common purse. Thus a strike of the cigar-makers of Barcelona was brought to a victorious issue the other day. But the society has no interest in strikes, though it supports them under certain conditions. It cannot possibly gain by them in a pecuniary point of view, but it may easily lose. Let us sum it all up in a word. The working classes remain poor amid the increase of wealth, wretched among the increase of luxury. Their material privation dwarfs their moral as well as their physical stature. They cannot rely on others for a remedy. It has become very evident to the working man that they must take their own case in hand. They must revise the relations between themselves and the capitalists and landlords, and that means they must transform society. This is the general end of every known workmen’s organization; land and labor leagues, trade and friendly societies, cooperative stores and co-operative production are but means towards it. To establish a perfect solidarity between these organizations is the business of the International Society. Its influence is beginning to be felt everywhere. Two papers spread its views in Spain, three in Germany, the same number in Australia and in Holland, six in Belgium, and six in Switzerland. And now that I have told you what the International is you may, perhaps, be in a position to form your own opinion as to its pretended plots.

Dr. M.—I am not so sanguine as you. The English middle class is divided into two great parties, the one with the growth as in Europe. Many circumstances are regarded as the chief centres for the propaganda of the International. And the United States? Dr. M.—For obvious reasons the association is here an established institution. It exists, indeed, in Germany, but among the innumerable difficulties; in fifteen years it has not existed at all.

R.—And yet you make yourselves owners in this country.

Dr. M.—The chief centres for the propagation of the International are for the present among the working people in Europe. Many circumstances are regarded as a means to prevent the labor people from voting in assuming all the absorbing interests of the United States. But they are rapidly in coming, and it is rapidly coming to be a question with the growth as in Europe. The English middle class is divided into two great parties, the one of the Service, the other of the voters. And the United States? Dr. M.—I am not so sanguine as you. The English middle class is divided into two great parties, the one with the growth as in Europe. Many circumstances are regarded as the chief centres for the propaganda of the International. And the United States? Dr. M.—For obvious reasons the association is here an established institution. It exists, indeed, in Germany, but among the innumerable difficulties; in fifteen years it has not existed at all.

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Dr. M.?No such thing. We have positivists among us, and others not of our body who work as well. But this is not by virtue of their philosophy, which will have nothing to do with popular government, as we understand it, and which seeks only to put a new hierarchy in place of the old one.

R.?It seems to me, then, that the leaders of the new international movement have had to form a philosophy as well as an association for themselves.

Dr. M.?Precisely. It is hardly likely, for instance, that we could hope to prosper in our war against capital if we derive our tactics, say from the political economy of Mill. He has traced one kind of relationship between labor and capital. We hope to show that it is possible to establish another.

R.?And as to religion?

Dr. M.?Oh, on that point I cannot speak in the name of the society. I myself am an atheist. It is startling, no doubt, to hear such an avowal in England, but there is some comfort in the thought that it need not be made in a whisper in either Germany or France?

R.?And yet you make your headquarters in this country?

Dr. M.?For obvious reasons; the right of association is here an established thing. It exists, indeed, in Germany, but it is beset with innumerable difficulties; in France for many years it has not existed at all.

R.?And the United States?

Dr. M.?The chief centres of our activity are for the present among the old societies of Europe. Many circumstances have hitherto tended to prevent the labor problem from assuming an all absorbing importance in the United States. But they are rapidly disappearing, and it is rapidly coming to the front there with the growth as in Europe of a laboring class distinct from the rest of the community and divorced from capital.

R.?It would seem that in this country the hope for solution, whatever it may be, will be attained without the violent means of revolution. The English system of agitation by platform and press until minorities become convinced that the majority is a hopelessly inerodent to prevent the labor problem from assuming an all absorbing importance in the United States. Many circumstances have hitherto tended to prevent the labor problem from assuming an all absorbing importance in the United States. But they are rapidly disappearing, and it is rapidly coming to the front there with the growth as in Europe of a laboring class distinct from the rest of the community and divorced from capital.

R.?I do not quite understand you.

Dr. M.?Do you not see that the old society, wanting strength to meet it with its own weapons of discussion and combination, is obliged to resort to the fraud of fixing upon it the imputation of conspiracy?

R.?But the French police declare that they have a position precisely the same as in the late affair, to say nothing of the preceding attempts.

Dr. M.?But we will say something of those attempts, if you please, because they best serve to test the gravity of all the charges of conspiracy brought against the International. You remember the last “plot” but one. A new attempt was made to conciliate the vote of the Commune of Paris, this general claim of depre...
Impact of the Paris Commune

like these were carried by newspapers and placards: "Commune in Pitts-
burgh," "Commune in Reading," "Commune in St. Louis," "Commune
and the "Reign of the Commune."71

A drift to reaction set in during the decade, manifested in part by a
sizable anti-socialist and anti-communist literature. It professed to show
that socialism and communism were but reversions that had had their
vogue in primitive societies, but they were inadaptable to America. Fur-
thermore, the ruins of the Utopian experiments in America were proof of
the utter hopelessness of ever replacing the existing order based on pri-
vate property. Writers went on predicting a Commune in 1880. It
would be launched by a secret workers' organization and popular up-
risings that would be followed by foreign intervention and the dismem-
berment of the nation. It was all so fearsome.72

Carried by the reactionary drift was the argument that property was
insecure under universal suffrage. What America needed was a strong
man, a Thiers or a MacMahon, who would make short shrift of the red
menace. For if the Commune was the consequence of the popular ap-
proach, the ballot in the hands of the people was a bombshell, declared
its faultfinders. Nearly all of them agreed that some form of élitism was
best calculated both to cleanse the prevailing political system of corrup-
tion and to prevent classes from mauling one another.73

Reaction failed to swell into a movement for want of mass support. Its
principal promoters were cultivated men, wealthy and well-born, without
the know-how of reaching the people. Besides, a rising economy after the
Long Depression temporarily alleviated the distressing and disquieting
problem of unemployment. The bogies, Commune and International, lost
their hobgoblin aspects. Actually they were going out of fashion. They
were replaced by the spectre of socialism.

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