taken by storm either. If, therefore, everything goes according to Bismarck's desires, more will be demanded of the nation than ever before and it is possible enough that partial defeats and the dragging out of the decisive war would produce an internal upheaval. But if the Germans were defeated from the first or forced into a prolonged defensive, then the thing would certainly start.

If the war was fought out to the end without internal disturbances a state of exhaustion would supervene such as Europe has not experienced for two hundred years. American industry would then conquer all along the line and would force us all up against the alternatives: either retrogression to nothing but agriculture for home consumption (American corn forbids anything else) or—social transformation. I imagine, therefore, that the plan is not to push things to extremities, to more than a sham war. But once the first shot is fired, control ceases, the horse can take the bit between its teeth.

Engels wrote on the coming war in his preface to Borkheim's 
Zur Erinnerung für die deutschen Mordspatrioten 1866-1867 [In Memory of the Supreme German Patriots 1866-1867]:

"And finally no war is any longer possible for Prussia-Germany except a world war and a world war indeed of an extension and violence hitherto undreamt of. Eight to ten millions of soldiers will mutually massacre one another and in doing so devour the whole of Europe until they have stripped it bare than any swarm of locusts has ever done. The devastations of the Thirty Years' War compressed into three or four years, and spread over the whole Continent; famine, pestilence, general demoralisation both of the armies and of the mass of the people produced by acute distress; hopeless confusion of our artificial machinery in trade, industry and credit, ending in general bankruptcy; collapse of the old states and their traditional state wisdom to such an extent that crowns will roll by dozens on the pavement and there will be nobody to pick them up; absolute impossibility of foreseeing how it will all end and who will come out of the struggle as victor; only one

result absolutely certain: general exhaustion and the establishment of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class. This is the prospect when the system of mutual outbidding in armaments, driven to extremities, at last bears its inevitable fruits. This, my lords, princes and statesmen, is where in your wisdom you have brought old Europe. And when nothing more remains to you but to open the last great war dance—that will suit us all right. The war may perhaps push us temporarily into the background, may wrench from us many a position already conquered. But when you have unfettered forces which you will then no longer be able again to control, things may go as they will: at the end of the tragedy you will be ruined and the victory of the proletariat will either be already achieved or at any rate inevitable."

206. ENGELS TO VICTOR ADLER
London, 4 December, 1889

I recommended you to revise Avenel's Cloots* for the following reasons:

In my opinion (and that of Marx) the book contains the first specific and correct account, based on a study of the archives, of the critical period of the French Revolution, namely from 10 August to 9 Thermidor.

Cloots and the Commune of Paris were for the propagandist war as the only means of salvation, whereas the Committee of Public Safety behaved like regular statesmen, were frightened of the European coalition, and tried to get peace by dividing the allied powers. Danton wanted peace with England, that is with Fox and the English opposition, who hoped to come into power at the elections; Robespierre intrigued with Austria and Prussia at Basle in the hope of coming to an understanding with them. Both united against the Commune in order above all to overthrow the people who wanted the propagandist war and the republicanisation of Europe. They succeeded, the Commune (Hébert, Cloots, etc.) was beheaded. But from that time onwards agreement became impossible between those

who wanted to conclude peace only with England and those who wanted to conclude it only with the German powers. The English elections turned in favour of Pitt, Fox was shut out of the government for years, this ruined Danton’s position, Robespierre was victorious and beheaded him. But—and Avenel has not sufficiently stressed this—while the reign of terror was now intensified to a pitch of insanity, because it was necessary in order to keep Robespierre in power under the existing internal conditions, it was rendered entirely superfluous by the victory of Fleurus on 24 June, 1794, which freed not only the frontiers but Belgium, and indirectly delivered over the left bank of the Rhine to France. Thus Robespierre also became superfluous and fell on July 24.

The whole French Revolution is dominated by the War of Coalition, all its pulsations depend upon it. If the allied army penetrates into France—predominant activity of the vagus nerves, violent heart-beat, revolutionary crisis. If it is driven back—predominance of the sympathetic nerves, the heart-beat becomes slower, the reactionary elements again push themselves into the foreground; the plebeians, the beginning of the later proletariat, whose energy alone has saved the revolution, are brought to reason and order.

The tragedy is that the party supporting war to the bitter end, war for the emancipation of the nations, is proved in the right, and that the Republic gets the better of all Europe, but only after that party itself has long been beheaded; while in place of the propagandist war comes the Peace of Basle and the bourgeois orgy of the Directory.

The book must be completely revised and shortened—the rhetoric cut out, the facts taken from the ordinary histories supplemented and clearly emphasised. Cloots, meanwhile, can be put quite into the background, the most important things from the Ludes révolution.* can be inserted and we may get a work on the revolution such as has never existed up till now.

* Georges Avenel: Ludes Révolutionnaires, 1871-74.

In the great French Revolution, the Jacobins were the representatives of the consistent carrying through of the democratic revolution, i.e., of the destruction of feudal fetters on the land and in the towns and the revolutionary defence of the country against the armies of intervention of the European counter-revolution. Marx wrote in 1848: “The proletariat and those fractions of citizens not belonging to the bourgeoisie either had [in the English and French revolutions] no interests apart from those of the bourgeoisie or else did not as yet form any independently developed classes or sections of classes. Hence when they clash with the bourgeoisie, as for instance between 1793 and 1794 in France, they are only fighting for the carrying out of the interests of the bourgeoisie, even though not after the fashion of the bourgeoisie. The whole French terror was nothing but a plebeian way of getting rid of the enemies of the bourgeoisie, of absolutism, feudalism and the petty bourgeoisie.” (Marx: Bilanz der preußischen Revolution [Balance of the Prussian Revolution], Literarischer Nachlass, Bd. III, S. 211.)

After their victory over the counter-revolution, the Jacobins were, however, unable to solve the problems set them by the economic crisis, unemployment and high prices. Hence their social basis was greatly narrowed. Oppositional movements arose, above all from the Commune, the plebeian strata; these were indeed crushed, but the successes of the revolutionary armies, which consolidated the Republic, made the terror more and more superfluous and the bourgeoisie succeeded in overthrowing the Jacobins.


“The bourgeois historians see in Jacobinism a downfall (to “sink”). The proletarian historians regard Jacobinism as the greatest expression of an oppressed class in its struggle for liberation. The Jacobins gave France the best models of a democratic revolution; they repelled in an exemplary fashion the coalition of monarchs formed against the republic. The Jacobins were not destined to win a complete victory, chiefly because eighteenth-century France was surrounded on the Continent by countries that were too backward, and also because France itself was not possessed of the material requisites
for socialism, since there were no banks, no capitalist syndicates, no machine industry, no railroads.

"Jacobinism" in Europe or on the boundary line between Europe and Asia in the twentieth century would be the rule of the revolutionary class, of the proletariat, which, supported by the poorest peasants and relying on the presence of the material requisites for an advance towards Socialism, could not only achieve the same, great, ineradicable, unforgettable things that were achieved by the Jacobins of the eighteenth century, but could also lead to a permanent triumph of the toilers on a universal scale.

It is natural for the bourgeoisie to hate Jacobinism. It is natural for the petty bourgeoisie to fear it. The class-conscious workers and toilers have faith in the transfer of power to the revolutionary oppressed class, for that is the essence of Jacobinism, and it is the only escape from the present crisis, the only way of stopping economic disintegration and the war."

Adler, Victor (1852-1918): Founder and leader of Austrian social-democracy, originally a bourgeoisie radical; one of the leaders of reformism in the Second International; during the war a social pacifist. Father of Austro-Marxism.

207. Engels to Sorge

London, 7 December, 1889.

Here in England one can see that it is impossible simply to drill a theory in an abstract dogmatic way into a great nation, even if one has the best of theories, developed out of their own conditions of life, and even if the tutors are relatively better than the S.L.P.* The movement has now got going at last and I believe for good. But it is not directly Socialist, and those English who have understood our theory best remain outside it: Hyndman because he is incurably jealous and intriguing, Bax because he is only a boorish worm. Formally the movement is at the moment a trade union movement, but utterly different.

* Socialist Labour Party of North America. This name was adopted in 1877 by the Social-Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America which had been founded in 1874, mainly by Germans. [Ed. Eng. ed.].

from that of the old trade unions, the skilled labourers, the aristocracy of labour.

The people are throwing themselves into the job in quite a different way, are leading far more colossal masses into the fight, are shaking society much more deeply, are putting forward much more far-reaching demands: eight-hour day, general federation of all organisations, complete solidarity. Thanks to Tussy* women's branches have been formed for the first time—in the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union. Moreover, the people only regard their immediate demands themselves as provisional, although they themselves do not know as yet what final aim they are working for. But this dim idea is strongly enough rooted to make them choose only openly declared Socialists as their leaders. Like everyone else they will have to learn by their own experiences and the consequences of their own mistakes. But as, unlike the old trade unions, they greet every suggestion of an identity of interest between capital and labour with scorn and ridicule this will not take very long: ....

... The most repulsive thing here is the bourgeoisie "respectability" which has grown deep into the bones of the workers. The division of society into a scale of innumerable degrees, each recognised without question, each with its own pride but also its native respect for its "beggars" and "superiors," is so old and firmly established that the bourgeoisie still find it pretty easy to get their bait accepted. I am not at all sure for instance, that John Burns is not secretly prouder of his popularity with Cardinal Manning, the Lord Mayor and the bourgeoisie in general than of his popularity with his own class. And Champion—an ex-Lieutenant—has intrigued for years with bourgeois and especially with conservative elements, preached Socialism at the parsons' Church Congress, etc. Even Tom Mann, whom I regard as the finest of them, is fond of mentioning that he will be lunching with the Lord Mayor. If one compares this with the French, one can see what a revolution is good for after all. However, it will not help the bourgeoisie much if they do succeed in enticing some of the

* Eleanor Marx Aveling (1856-98), youngest daughter of Marx. See Note.
leaders into their toils. The movement has been far enough strengthened for this sort of thing to be overcome.

Engels is referring in this letter to the great movement among the unskilled workers of London which took place in 1889 and which led to the rise of the “New Unionism” described in Letter 208, Note, etc. The outstanding events were the Dock strike (led by John Burns, Tom Mann and Ben Tillett) and the formation of the Gas Workers’ and General Labourers’ Union, which, like the Dockers’ strike, gained some immediate concessions from the employers. Eleanor Marx Aveling and Edward Aveling took a prominent and active part in the great developments in the East End (see also Note, pp. 468-69, agitating, under Engels’ guidance, in the Radical clubs frequented by the workers. [Ed. Eng. Ed.]

Burns, John (born 1856). One of the chief leaders of the movement of “unskilled” workers and of the dock strike of 1889. At this time a member of the S.D.F. Entered Parliament as M.P. for Battersea, 1892. Deserted the workers’ movement and took office in the Liberal Government (1906-14) as President of the Local Government Board, and finally as President of the Board of Trade. (See also Letter 208.) [Ed. Eng. Ed.]

Mann, Tom (born 1856). Engineering worker. First President of the Dockers’ Union formed after the strike of 1889. Secretary of the I.L.P., 1894-96. One of the leaders of the great transport strike of 1911 (Liverpool). Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union 1919-21. Chairman, from 1924, of the National Minority Movement affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions. Delegate to first R.I.L.U. Congress. Member of the Communist Party. Imprisoned 1912 for his leaflet appealing to soldiers not to shoot down members of the working class and 1932-33 for agitation on behalf of the unemployed; tried for sedition in 1934 but acquitted owing to mass agitation. [Ed. Eng. Ed.]

The stormy tide of the movement last summer has somewhat abated. And the best of it is that the unthinking sympathy of the bourgeois gang for the workers’ movement, which broke out in the dock strike, has also abated, and is beginning to make way for the far more natural feeling of suspicion and nervousness. In the South London gas strike, which was forcibly imposed on the workers by the gas company, the workers are once more standing entirely deserted by all the philistines. This is very good and I only hope Burns will some time go through this experience himself, in a strike led by himself—he cherishes all sorts of illusions in that respect.

Meanwhile there is all kinds of friction, as was only to be expected, between the gas workers and the dockers, for instance. But despite it all the masses are on the move and there is no holding them any more. The longer the stream is dammed up the more powerfully will it break through when the moment comes. And these unskilled are very different chaps from the fossilised brothers of the old trade unions; not a trace of the old formalist spirit, of the craft exclusiveness of the engineers, for instance; on the contrary, a general cry for the organisation of all trade unions in one fraternity and for a direct struggle against capital. In the dock strike, for instance, there were three engineers at the Commercial Dock who kept the steam-engine going. Burns and Mann, both engineers themselves and Burns a member of the Amalgamated Eng. Trade Union Executive, were summoned to persuade these men to go away, as then none of the cranes would have worked and the dock company would have had to climb down. The three engineers refused, the Engineers’ Executive did not intervene and hence the length of the strike! At the Silvertown Rubber Works, moreover, where there was a twelve-weeks’ strike, the strike was broken by the engineers, who did not join in and even did labourers’ work against their own union rules! And why? These fools, in order to keep the supply of workers low, have a rule that nobody who has not been through the correct period of appren-
ticeship may be admitted to their union. By this means they have created an army of rivals, so-called blacklegs, who are just as skilled as they are themselves and who would gladly come into the union, but who are forced to remain blacklegs because they are kept outside by this pedantry which has no sense at all nowadays. And because they knew that both in the Commercial Dock and in Silvertown these blacklegs would immediately have stepped into their place, they stayed in and so became blacklegs themselves against the strikers. There you see the difference: the new unions hold together; in the present gas strike, sailors (steamer) and firemen, lightermen and coal carters are all together, but of course not the engineers again, they are still working!

However, these arrogant old great trade unions will soon be made to look small; their chief support, the London Trades Council, is being more and more subjugated by the new ones, and in two or three years at most the Trade Union Congress will also be revolutionised. Even at the next Congress the Broadhursts will get the shock of their lives.

The fact that you have got rid of Rosenberg and Co. is the main point about the revolution in your American socialist tea-cup. The German party over there must be smashed up as such, it is the worst obstacle. The American workers are coming along already, but just like the English they go their own way. One cannot drum the theory into them beforehand, but their own experience and their own blunders and the evil consequences of them will soon bump their noses up against theory—and then all right. Independent nations go their own way, and of them all the English and their offspring are surely the most independent. Their insular stiff-necked obstinacy annoys one often enough, but it also guarantees that once a thing gets started what is begun will be carried out.

†In his preface to the English edition (1893) of The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, Engels (January 11, 1892) wrote among other things:

"Needless to say that to-day there is indeed 'Socialism again in England,' and plenty of it—Socialism of all shades: Socialism conscious and unconscious, Socialism prosaic and poetic, Socialism of the working class and of the middle class, for, verily, that abomination of abominations, Socialism, has not only become respectable, but has actually donned evening dress and lounges lazily on drawing-room causerie." That shows the incurable fickleness of that terrible despot of 'society,' middle-class public opinion, and once more justifies the contempt in which we Socialists of a past generation always held that public opinion. At the same time we have no reason to grumble at the symptom itself.

"What I consider far more important than this momentary fashion among bourgeois circles of affecting a mild dilution of Socialism, and even more than the actual progress Socialism has made in England generally, that is the revival of the East End of London. That immense haunt of misery is no longer the stagnant pool it was six years ago. It has shaken off its torpid despair, has returned to life, and has become the home of what is called the 'New Unionism,' that is to say, of the organisation of the great mass of 'unskilled' workers. This organisation may to a great extent adopt the form of the old Unions of 'skilled' workers, but it is essentially different in character. The old Unions preserve the traditions of the time when they were founded, and look upon the wages system as a once for all established, final fact, which they at best can modify in the interest of their members. The new Unions were founded at a time when the faith in the eternity of the wages system was severely shaken; their founders and promoters were Socialists either consciously or by feeling; the masses, whose adhesion gave them strength, were rough, neglected, looked down upon by the working-class aristocracy; but they had this immense advantage, that \textit{their minds were virgin soil}, entirely free from the inherited 'respectable' bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better-situated \textit{old} Unionists. And thus we see now these new Unions taking the lead of the working-class movement generally, and more and more taking in tow the rich and proud \textit{old} Unions.†

SCHLÜTER, HERMANN. German Social-Democrat who after his expulsion from Dresden in 1883 conducted the publishing
house of the Sozialdemokrat in Zürich; he was the first organiser of the German Social-Democratic Archive. In 1889, he emigrated to America where he worked in the German workers' movement. He wrote a history of Chartism and other studies of the English and American labour movement.

209. ENGELS TO SORGE

London, 8 February, 1890.

In my opinion we hardly lose anything worth counting by the going-over of the official Socialists there to the Nationalists.* If the whole German Socialist Labour Party went to pieces as a result it would be a gain, but we can hardly expect anything so good as that. The really serviceable elements will come together again in the end all the same, and the sooner the waste matter has separated itself the sooner this will happen; when the moment comes in which events themselves drive the American proletariat forward there will be enough fitted by their superior theoretical insight and experience to take the part of leaders, and then you will find that your years of work have not been wasted.

The movement there, just like the one here and in the mining districts of Germany now as well, cannot be made by preaching alone. Facts must hammer the thing into people's heads, but then it will go quickly too, quickest, of course, where there is already an organised and theoretically educated section of the proletariat at hand, as in Germany. The miners are ours to-day potentially and necessarily: in the Ruhr district the process is proceeding rapidly, Aix la Chapelle and the Saar basin will follow, then Saxony, then Lower Silesia, finally the Polish bargemen of Upper Silesia. With the position of our party in Germany all that was needed in order to call the irresistible movement into being was the impulse arising from the miners' own conditions of life.

Here it is going in a similar way. The movement, which I now consider irresistible, arose from the dockers' strike, purely out of the absolute necessity of defence. But here too the ground

*The followers of Edward Bellamy in the U.S.A.

had been so far prepared by various forms of agitation during the last eight years that the people without being Socialists themselves still only wanted to have Socialists as their leaders. Now, without noticing it themselves, they are coming on to the right theoretical track, they drift into it, and the movement is so strong that I think it will survive the inevitable blunders and their consequences and the friction between the various trade unions and leaders without serious damage. . . .

I think it will be the same with you in America too. The Schleswig-Holsteiners* and their descendants in England and America are not to be converted by lecturing, this pig-headed and conceited lot have got to experience it on their own bodies. And this they are doing more and more every year, but they are born conservatives—just because America is so purely bourgeois, so entirely without a feudal past and therefore proud of its purely bourgeois organisation—and so they will only get quit of the old traditional mental rubbish by practical experience. Hence the trade unions, etc., are the thing to begin with if there is to be a mass movement, and every further step must be forced upon them by a defeat. But once the first step beyond the bourgeois point of view has been taken things will move quickly, like everything in America, where, driven by natural necessity, the growing speed of the movement sets some requisite fire going under the backsides of the Schleswig-Holstein Anglo-Saxons, who are usually so slow; and then too the foreign elements in the nation will assert themselves by greater mobility. I consider the decay of the specifically German party, with its absurd theoretical confusion, its corresponding arrogance and its Lasalleanism, a real piece of good fortune. Not until these separatists are out of the way will the fruits of your work come to light again. The Socialist Laws were a misfortune, not for Germany, but for America to which they consigned the last Knoten. I often used to marvel at the many Knoten faces one met with over there; these have died out in Germany but are flourishing over yonder.

* Marx's name for Anglo-Saxons.
210. Engels to Sorge

London, 19 April, 1890.

In a country with such an old political and labour movement there is always a colossal heap of traditionally inherited rubbish which has to be got rid of by degrees. There are the prejudices of the skilled Unions—Engineers, Bricklayers, Carpenters and Joiners, Type Compositors, etc.—which have all to be broken down; the petty jealousies of the particular trades, which become intensified in the hands and heads of the leaders to direct hostility and secret struggle; there are the mutually obstructive ambitions and intrigues of the leaders: one wants to get into Parliament and so does somebody else, another wants to get on to the County Council or School Board, another wants to organise a general centralisation of all the workers, another to start a paper, another a club, etc., etc. In short, there is friction upon friction. And among them all the Socialist League, which looks down on everything which is not directly revolutionary (which means here in England, as with you, everything which does not limit itself to making phrases and otherwise doing nothing) and the Federation,* who still behave as if everyone except themselves were asses and bunglers, although it is only due to the new force of the movement that they have succeeded in getting some following again. In short, anyone who only looks at the surface would say it was all confusion and personal quarrels. But under the surface the movement is going on, it is seizing ever wider sections of the workers and mostly just among the hitherto stagnant lowest masses, and the day is no longer far off when this mass will suddenly find itself, when the fact that it is this colossal self-impelled mass will dawn upon it, and when that day comes short work will be made of all the rascality and wrangling.

*A fortnight after this letter was written, Engels was able to hail the first International May Day celebrations held in London (May 4, 1890). The fact that mass demonstrations (a procession to Hyde Park of over 100,000, etc.) were held in support of the eight-hour day, in accordance with the resolution passed by the Foundation Congress of the Second International (Paris 1889), constituted a triumph of the "new unionism" over the old craft unions (which supported an eight-hour day by "free agreement" and not by legislation). The London Trades Council, the representative of the "old" unions, and the S.D.F. (which had boycotted the Paris Congress and allied itself with the French Possibilists) tried both to prevent and to sabotage the demonstration but were eventually forced by the strength of the movement to take part in it—though with separate platforms. The story of this struggle, in which Eleanor Marx Aveling played a leading part, was told in full by Engels in his article "The Fourth of May in London" (Vienna Arbeiterzeitung, May 23, 1890). He there wrote:

"And I consider this the grandest and most important part of the whole May Day festival, that on May 4, 1890, the English proletariat, newly awakened from its forty years' winter sleep, again entered the movement of its class.

"The general impression...which the numerous bourgeois politicians who were present as spectators have taken home with them is the conviction that the English proletariat, which has now been providing the great Liberal Party with its tail and its herd of voting cattle for over forty years, has at last awakened to new and independent life and action. And of that there can be no doubt. On May 4, 1890, the English working class joined up in the great international army. And that is an epoch-making fact. The English proletariat is based on the most advanced industrial development and also possesses the greatest political freedom of movement. Its long winter sleep—resulting from the collapse of the Chartist movement of 1836 to 1850 on the one hand and the colossal growth of industry in 1848 to 1880 on the other—is broken at last. The grandchildren of the old Chartists are entering the line of battle."

[Ed. Eng. ed.]

211. Engels to an unknown correspondent*

19 April, 1890.

Anti-Semitism is the characteristic sign of a backward civilisation and is therefore only found in Prussia and Austria

* This fragment from a private letter was published with the consent of Engels and of the person to whom it was addressed, but without mentioning the name of the latter, in the Vienna Arbeiterzeitung of May 9, 1890.
or in Russia. If an attempt at anti-Semitism were made in England or America it would simply be ridiculed, and in Paris Herr Drumont after all only excites an ineffective little one-day sensation with his writings—which are incomparably superior in intelligence to those of the German anti-Semites. Added to which, now that he is coming out as a candidate to the City Council, he himself will have to declare that he is as much against Christian as Jewish capital! And even if he represented the opposite point of view people would still read Herr Drumont.

In Prussia it is the small nobility, the junkers—who with an income of 10,000 marks spend 20,000 and therefore fall into the hands of the usurers—who foment anti-Semitism, and both in Prussia and in Austria it is the petty bourgeoisie, the handicraftsmen, the small shopkeeper, sinking into ruin owing to the competition of large-scale capitalism, who form the chorus and scream in unison with them. But if capital destroys these classes of society, which are reactionary through and through, then it is doing what it is its function to do and whether it is Semitic or Aryan, circumcised or baptised, is doing a good work; it is helping forward the backward Prussians and Austrians until at last they reach the modern position in which all the old social differences are resolved into the one great contradiction between capital and wage-labour. Only where this is not yet the case, where there is as yet no strong capitalist class and therefore also no strong wage-earning class, where capital, being still too weak to control the whole national production, has the Stock Exchange as the main scene of its activity, and where production is therefore still in the hands of peasants, landowners, handicraft workers and similar classes surviving from the Middle Ages—only here is capital predominantly Jewish and only here is anti-Semitism to be found.

In the whole of North America, where there are millionaires whose riches can hardly be expressed in our miserable marks, gulden or francs, there is not a single Jew among these millionaires, and the Rothschilds are regular beggars compared with these Americans. And even here in England, Rothschild is a man of modest means compared, for instance, with the Duke of Westminster. Even with us on the Rhine where, with the help of the French, we hunted the nobility out of the country ninety-five years ago and created a modern industry for ourselves, where are the Jews?

Anti-Semitism, therefore, is nothing but the reaction of the medieval, decadent strata of society against modern society, which essentially consists of wage-earners and capitalists; under a mask of apparent socialism it therefore only serves reactionary ends; it is a variety of feudal socialism and with that we can have nothing to do. If it is possible in a country, that is a sign that there is not yet enough capital in that country. Capital and wage-labour are to-day inseparable. The stronger the capital the stronger also the wage-earning class and the nearer therefore the end of capitalist domination. To us Germans, therefore, among whom I include the Viennese, I wish a right merry development of capitalist economy and in no wise that it should sink into stagnation.

Added to this, anti-Semitism falsifies the whole position of affairs. It does not even know the Jews it howls down. Otherwise it would know that here in England, and in America, thanks to the Eastern European anti-Semites, and in Turkey, thanks to the Spanish Inquisition, there are thousands and thousands of Jewish proletarians, and that these Jewish workers are in fact the worst exploited and most wretched of all. Here in England we have had three strikes of Jewish workers within the last twelve months, and then we are expected to carry on anti-Semitism as a fight against capital?

And apart from this, we owe much too much to the Jews. To say nothing of Heine and Börne, Marx was of pure Jewish blood; Lassalle was a Jew. Many of our best people are Jews. My friend Victor Adler, who is at present paying in prison in Vienna for his devotion to the cause of the proletariat, Eduard Bernstein, editor of the London Sozial-Demokrat, Paul Singer, one of our best men in the Reichstag—people of whose friendship I am proud, are all Jews! Have I not been turned into a Jew myself by the Gartenlaube? And indeed if I had to choose, then rather a Jew than "Herr von..."!*

Drumont, Edouard (1844-1917). French journalist. In 1886 published an anti-Semitic book, La France juive (Jewish France) which had a certain passing success. His later publications of the same kind awoke no response.

212. Engels to Conrad Schmidt

London, 5 August, 1890

I saw a review of Paul Barth’s book* by that bird of ill-omen, Moritz Wirth, in the Vienna Deutsche Worte and this criticism left an unfavourable impression on my mind of the book itself as well. I will have a look at it, but I must say that if little Moritz is right when he quotes Barth as stating that the sole example of the dependence of philosophy, etc., on the material conditions of existence which he can find in all Marx’s works is that Descartes declares animals to be machines, then I am sorry for the man who can write such a thing. And if this man has not discovered yet that though the material form of existence is the primus agens (primary agent) this does not exclude spheres of ideas from reacting upon it in their turn, though with a secondary effect, he cannot possibly have understood the subject he is writing about. However, as I have said, all this is second-hand and little Moritz is a fatal friend. And the materialist conception of history also has a lot of friends nowadays to whom it serves as an excuse for not studying history. Just as Marx used to say about the French “Marxists” of the late ’seventies: “All I know is that I am not a Marxist.”

There has also been a discussion in the Volksblatt about the division of products in the future society, whether this will take place according to the amount of work done or otherwise. The question has been approached very “materialistically,” in opposition to certain idealistic forms of phraseology about justice. But strangely enough it has never struck anyone that, after all, the method of division essentially depends on how much there is to divide, and that this must surely change with the progress of production and social organisation, so that

*Paul Barth: The Philosophy of History of Hegel and of the Hegelians up to Marx and Hartmann (1896).
You, who have really done something, must have noticed yourself how few of the young literary men who fasten themselves on to the Party give themselves the trouble to study economics, the history of economics, the history of trade, of industry, of agriculture, of the forms of society. How many know anything of Maurer except his name? The shamelessness of the journalist has to accomplish everything, and the result corresponds. It often seems as if these gentlemen think anything is good enough for the workers. If these gentlemen only knew how Marx thought his best things were still not good enough for the workers and how he regarded it as a crime to offer the workers anything less than the very best!

After the test they have so brilliantly sustained since 1848 I have unqualified confidence in our workers, and only in them. Like every great Party they will commit mistakes in particular points of their development, perhaps great mistakes. Indeed the masses only learn by the consequences of their own mistakes, by experiments on their own bodies. But all that will be overcome, and much more easily with us than elsewhere because our lads really are so indestructibly healthy, and then too because Berlin, which will not easily shed its particular Berlinishness so soon, is only our formal centre, like London, and not what Paris is to France. I have often enough got vexed with the French and the English workers (despite a realisation of the causes for their blunders) but with the Germans since 1870 never—with individuals who spoke in their name, yes, but never with the masses who set everything on the right track again. And I would like to wager that it never will happen to me to get vexed with them.

*Schmidt, Conrad.* German economist, Social-Democrat, revisionist. During his stay in London in 1887 he got to know Engels. Schmidt was gifted theoretically and had come near to solving independently the problem of the average rate of profit and some of the other problems solved by Marx in the third volume of *Capital*. Engels touched on a series of important theoretical questions in his letters to Schmidt. On October 17, 1889, he wrote:

>“And yet in regard to theory there is still so much to be done, especially in the sphere of economic history and its connections with political history, with the history of law, of religion, of literature and of culture in general, where only a clear theoretical vision can guide the way through the labyrinth of facts.”

Schmidt did not justify the hopes at first placed in him and later attached himself to revisionism. (See also Letter 232.)

213. **Engels to J. Bloch**

London, 21 September, 1890.

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element* in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless *host* of accidents (*i.e.*, of things and events whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

We make our own history, but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these the

* Moment—element in the dialectical process of becoming. [Ed. Eng. ed.]
economic ones are finally decisive. But the political, etc., ones, and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds, also play a part, although not the decisive one. The Prussian State arose and developed from historical, ultimately from economic causes. But it could scarcely be maintained without pedantry that among the many small states of North Germany, Brandenburg was specifically determined by economic necessity to become the great power embodying the economic, linguistic and, after the Reformation, also the religious differences between north and south, and not by other elements as well (above all by its entanglement with Poland, owing to the possession of Prussia, and hence with international, political relations—which were indeed also decisive in the formation of the Austrian dynastic power). Without making oneself ridiculous it would be difficult to succeed in explaining in terms of economics the existence of every small state in Germany, past and present, or the origin of the High German consonant mutations, which the geographical wall of partition formed by the mountains from the Sudetic range to the Taunus extended to a regular division throughout Germany.

In the second place, however, history makes itself in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant—the historical event. This again may itself be viewed as the product of a power which, taken as a whole, works unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual will is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus past history proceeds in the manner of a natural process and is also essentially subject to the same laws of movement. But from the fact that individual wills—of which each desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general)—do not attain what they want, but are merged into a collective mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that their

value = 0. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to this degree involved in it.

I would ask you to study this theory further from its original sources and not at second-hand, it is really much easier. Marx hardly wrote anything in which it did not play a part. But especially The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte is a most excellent example of its application. There are also many allusions in Capital. Then I may also direct you to my writings: Herr E. Dühring's Revolution in Science and Ludwig Feuerbach and the Exit of Classical German Philosophy, in which I have given the most detailed account of historical materialism which, so far as I know, exists.

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights. But when it was a case of presenting a section of history, that is, of a practical application, the thing was different and there no error was possible. Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have mastered its main principles, and those even not always correctly. And I cannot exempt many of the more recent "Marxists" from this reproach, for the most wonderful rubbish has been produced from this quarter too.

214. ENGELS TO CONRAD SCHMIDT

London, 27 October, 1890

I think you would do very well to take the post in Zürich.* You could always learn a good deal about economics there, especially if you bear in mind that Zürich is still only a third-rate money and speculation market, so that the impressions which make themselves felt there are weakened or deliberately

* The position of editor of the Zürich Post.
distorted by twofold or threefold reflection. But you will get a practical knowledge of the mechanism and be obliged to follow the stock exchange reports from London, New York, Paris, Berlin and Vienna at first hand, and in this way the world market, in its reflex as money and stock market, will reveal itself to you. Economic, political and other reflections are just like those in the human eye, they pass through a condensing lens and therefore appear upside down, standing on their heads. Only the nervous system which would put them on their feet again for representation is lacking. The money market man only sees the movement of industry and of the world market in the inverted reflection of the money and stock market and so effect becomes cause to him. I noticed that in the 'forties already in Manchester: the London Stock Exchange reports were utterly useless for the course of industry and its periodical maxima and minima because these gentry tried to explain everything from crises on the money market, which were generally only symptoms. At that time the object was to explain away the origin of industrial crises as temporary overproduction, so that the thing had in addition its tendentious side, provocative of distortion. This point has now gone (for us, at any rate, for good and all), added to which it is indeed a fact that the money market can also have its own crises, in which direct disturbances of industry only play a subordinate part or no part at all—here there is still much, especially in the history of the last twenty years, to be examined and established.

Where there is division of labour on a social scale there is also mutual independence among the different sections of work. In the last instance production is the decisive factor. But when the trade in products becomes independent of production itself, it follows a movement of its own, which, while it is governed as a whole by production, still in particular cases and within this general dependence follows particular laws contained in the nature of this new factor; this movement has phases of its own and in its turn reacts on the movement of production. The discovery of America was due to the thirst for gold which had previously driven the Portuguese to Africa (compare Sootbeer's Production of Precious Metals), because the enormously extended European industry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the trade corresponding to it demanded more means of exchange than Germany, the great silver country from 1450 to 1550, could provide. The conquest of India by the Portuguese, Dutch and English between 1500 and 1800 had imports from India as its object—nobody dreamt of exporting anything there. And yet what a colossal reaction these discoveries and conquests, solely conditioned by the interests of trade, had upon industry: they first created the need for exports to these countries and developed large-scale industry.

So it is too with the money market. As soon as trading in money becomes separate from trade in commodities it has (under certain conditions imposed by production and commodity trade and within these limits) a development of its own, special laws and separate phases determined by its own nature. If, in this further development, trade in money extends in addition to trade in securities and these securities are not only government securities but also industrial and transport stocks and shares, so that money trade conquers the direct control over a portion of the production by which, taken as a whole, it is itself controlled, then the reaction of money trading on production becomes still stronger and more complicated. The money traders have become the owners of railways, mines, iron works, etc. These means of production take on a double aspect: their working has to be directed sometimes in the immediate interests of production but sometimes also according to the requirements of the shareholders, in so far as they are money traders. The most striking example of this is the American railways, whose working is entirely dependent on the stock exchange operations of a Jay Gould or a Vanderbilt, etc., these having nothing whatever to do with the particular railway concerned and its interests as a means of communication. And even here in England we have seen struggles lasting for tens of years between different railway companies over the boundaries of their respective territories—struggles in which an enormous amount of money was thrown away, not in the interests of production and communications but simply because of a rivalry
which usually only had the object of facilitating the stock exchange dealings of the shareholding money traders.

With these few indications of my conception of the relation of production to commodity trade and of both to money trading, I have already also answered, in essence, your questions about “historical materialism” generally. The thing is easiest to grasp from the point of view of the division of labour. Society gives rise to certain common functions which it cannot dispense with. The persons selected for these functions form a new branch of the division of labour within society. This gives them particular interests, distinct too from the interests of those who gave them their office; they make themselves independent of the latter and—the state is in being. And now the development is the same as it was with commodity trade and later with money trade; the new independent power, while having in the main to follow the movement of production, also, owing to its inward independence (the relative independence originally transferred to it and gradually further developed) reacts in its turn upon the conditions and course of production. It is the interaction of two unequal forces: on one hand the economic movement, on the other the new political power, which strives for as much independence as possible, and which, having once been established, is also endowed with a movement of its own. On the whole, the economic movement gets its way, but it has also to suffer reactions from the political movement which it established and endowed with relative independence itself, from the movement of the state power on the one hand and of the opposition simultaneously engendered on the other. Just as the movement of the industrial market is, in the main and with the reservations already indicated, reflected in the money market and, of course, in inverted form, so the struggle between the classes already existing and already in conflict with one another is reflected in the struggle between government and opposition, but also in inverted form, no longer directly but indirectly, not as a class struggle but as a fight for political principles, and so distorted that it has taken us thousands of years to get behind it again.

The reaction of the state power upon economic development
the course of the "development of law" only consists: first in
the attempt to do away with the contradictions arising from the
direct translation of economic relations into legal principles,
and to establish a harmonious system of law, and then in the
repeated breaches made in this system by the influence and
pressure of further economic development, which involves it in
further contradictions (I am only speaking here of civil law for
the moment).

The reflection of economic relations as legal principles is
necessarily also a topsy turvy one: it happens without the
person who is acting being conscious of it; the jurist imagines he
is operating with a priori principles, whereas they are really only
economic reflexes; so everything is upside down. And it seems
to me obvious that this inversion, which, so long as it remains
unrecognised, forms what we call ideological conception, reacts
in its turn upon the economic basis and may, within certain
limits, modify it. The basis of the law of inheritance—
assuming that the stages reached in the development of the
family are equal—is an economic one. But it would be difficult
to prove, for instance, that the absolute liberty of the testator in
England and the severe restrictions imposed upon him in
France are only due in every detail to economic causes. Both
react back, however, on the economic sphere to a very con-
siderable extent, because they influence the division of property.

As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air,
religion, philosophy, etc., these have a prehistoric stock, found
already in existence and taken over in the historic period, of
what we should to-day call bunk. These various false con-
ceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic forces,
etc., have for the most part only a negative economic basis;
but the low economic development of the prehistoric period is
supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by
the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic
necessity was the main driving force of the progressive know-
ledge of nature and becomes ever more so, it would surely be
pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive
nonsense. The history of science is the history of the gradual
clearing away of this nonsense or of its replacement by fresh
but already less absurd nonsense. The people who deal
with this belong in their turn to special spheres in the division
of labour and appear to themselves to be working in an
independent field. And in so far as they form an independent
group within the social division of labour, in so far do their pro-
ductions, including their errors, react back as an influence upon
the whole development of society, even on its economic develop-
ment. But all the same they themselves remain under the
dominating influence of economic development. In philosophy,
for instance, this can be most readily proved in the bourgeois
period. Hobbes was the first modern materialist (in the
eighteenth century sense) but he was an absolutist in a period
when absolute monopoly was at its height throughout the
whole of Europe and when the fight of absolute monarchy
versus the people was beginning in England. Locke, both in
religion and politics, was the child of the class compromise of
1688. The English deists and their more consistent successors,
the French materialists, were the true philosophers of the bour-
geoisie, the French even of the bourgeois revolution. The
German petty bourgeoisie runs through German philosophy from
Kant to Hegel, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.
But the philosophy of every epoch, since it is a definite sphere
in the division of labour, has as its presupposition certain
definite intellectual material handed down to it by its predeces-
sors, from which it takes its start. And that is why economically
backward countries can still play first fiddle in philosophy:
France in the eighteenth century compared with England, on
whose philosophy the French based themselves, and later
Germany in comparison with both. But the philosophy both of
France and Germany and the general blossoming of literature
at that time were also the result of a rising economic develop-
ment. I consider the ultimate supremacy of economic develop-
ment established in these spheres too, but it comes to pass
within conditions imposed by the particular sphere itself:
in philosophy, for instance, through the operation of economic
influences (which again generally only act under political,
etc., disguises) upon the existing philosophic material handed
down by predecessors. Here economy creates nothing abso-
Lately new (a novo), but it determines the way in which the existing material of thought is altered and further developed, and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal and moral reflexes which exercise the greatest direct influence upon philosophy.

About religion I have said the most necessary things in the last section on Feuerbach.

If therefore Barth supposes that we deny any and every reaction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself, he is simply tilting at windmills. He has only got to look at Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, which deals almost exclusively with the particular part played by political struggles and events; of course, within their general dependence upon economic conditions. Or *Capital*, the section on the working day, for instance, where legislation, which is surely a political act, has such a trenchant effect. Or the section on the history of the bourgeoisie. (Chapter XXIV.) Or why do we fight for the political dictatorship of the proletariat if political power is economically impotent? Force (that is state power) is also an economic power.

But I have no time to criticise the book now. I must first get Vol. III out and besides I think too that Bernstein, for instance, could deal with it quite effectively.

What these gentlemen all lack is dialectic. They never see anything but here cause and there effect. That this is a hollow abstraction, that such metaphysical polar opposites only exist in the real world during crises, while the whole vast process proceeds in the form of interaction (though of very unequal forces, the economic movement being by far the strongest, most elemental and most decisive) and that here everything is relative and nothing is absolute—this they never begin to see. Hegel has never existed for them.

215. **Engels to Kautsky**

*Ryde, 29 June, 1891.*

I have escaped here for a few days, the work storming in upon me was getting too much. Happy and content, I was just in the middle of group-marriage when I had the Party programme upon me and that had to be taken up. I wanted first to try and formulate rather more strictly the unity considerations, but from lack of time never got to this; also it seemed to me more important to analyse the partly avoidable and partly unavoidable deficiencies of the political part, as in so doing I found an opportunity to let fly at the conciliatory opportunism of Verwalt and at the cheerful, pious, merry and free “growth” of the filthy old mess “into socialist society.” Meanwhile I hear that you have proposed a new introduction to them; so much the better.

This letter accompanied Engels’ criticism of the draft of the new Party programme which was accepted at the Erfurt Party Congress of 1891 and which, under the name of the “Erfurt Programme,” served as a model for nearly all the programmes of the parties in the Second International. Engels’ criticism, however, was not published until ten years later. It was directed above all against the political demands of the draft. “The political demands of the draft have one great fault: what actually ought to be said is not there [namely the attitude towards the state]. . . . To touch on that is dangerous, however. And yet somehow or other the thing has got to be attacked. . . . How necessary this is is shown precisely at the present time by the inroads which opportunism is making in a great section of the Social-Democratic press. For fear of a revival of the Socialist Law and from recollection of all manner of premature utterances which were let fall during the reign of that Law, the present legal position of the Party in Germany is now all of a sudden to be treated as sufficient for the carrying out of all the demands of the Party by peaceful means. People talk themselves and the Party into the belief that ‘the present society will grow into socialism’ without asking themselves if for this it is not equally necessary that society should grow out of its old social constitution and burst its old shell just as violently as the crab bursts its old shell—as if in Germany society had not in addition to smash the fetters of the still semi-absolutist and moreover indescribably confused political order. . . . General abstract questions have been put into the foreground, concealing thus.
the immediate concrete questions, the questions which at the first great events, the first political crisis, put themselves upon the agenda. What can result from this except that at the decisive moment the Party is suddenly without guidance, that unclarity and disunity reign on the most decisive points because these points have never been discussed . . . This forgetfulness of the great main standpoints in the momentary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment without consideration for the later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all. . . . If one thing is certain it is that our Party and the working class can only come to power under the form of the democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French revolution has already shown . . . .

"Of all these things not many can be put into the programme. I am also mentioning them chiefly in order to characterise both the conditions in Germany, where it does not do to say such things, and the self-deception which wants to effect the transition from these conditions to Communist society by legal means. And further, in order to remind the Party Executive that there are still other political questions of importance besides 'direct legislation by the people' and 'gratuitous administration of justice'—without these we shall move on in the end all the same. Amid the general insecurity these questions may become burning ones any day, and what is to happen if we have not discussed them and come to an understanding about them?"

On these statements of Engels Lenin comments in State and Revolution:

"Engels repeats here in a particularly emphatic form the fundamental idea which runs like a red thread throughout all Marx's work, namely, that the democratic republic is the nearest approach to the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such a republic—without in the least setting aside the domination of capital, and, therefore the oppression of the masses and the class struggle—inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unmasking and sharpening of that struggle that, as soon as the possibility arises of satisfying the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realised inevitably and solely in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the guidance of these masses by the proletariat. These words have also been, for the whole of the Second International, 'forgotten' words of Marxism."

In the final programme only a small degree of consideration was paid to Engels' criticism; above all it was not attended to on the main question. The question of the state was not formulated; so too the Second International, with the exception of the Bolsheviks, evaded it throughout the whole period of its existence.

216. ENGELS TO CONRAD SCHMIDT

Rydde, 1 July, 1891.

I am very much disappointed with Barth's book. I had expected something rather less shallow and slapdash. A man who judges every philosopher not by the enduring and progressive part of his activity but by what is necessarily transitory and reactionary—by the system—would have done better to remain silent. According to him, in fact, the whole history of philosophy is nothing but a pile of the "ruins" of broken-down systems. How high old Hegel stands above this alleged critic of his! And then to imagine he is criticising Hegel because here and there he gets on the track of one of the false connections by means of which Hegel, like every other systematiser, has to get his system neatly constructed! The colossal discovery that Hegel sometimes lapses contrary and contradictory oppositions together! I could show him some more tricks very different from that if it was worth the trouble. The man is what we call on the Rhine a Korinthenschneider—he turns everything into petty trash—and until he has got rid of this habit, he will, to use Hegel's language, "come from nothing through nothing to nothing."

His criticism of Marx is really funny. First he makes up a materialist theory of history for himself, which Marx is supposed, in his opinion, to have held, and then he finds something quite different in Marx's works. But from this he does not conclude
that he, Barth, has foisted something distorted on to Marx: no, on the contrary, Marx contradicts himself and cannot apply his own theory! "Yes, if people could only read!" as Marx used to exclaim at criticisms of this kind.

I have not got the book here; if I had time I would show you hundreds more absurdities one by one. It is a pity: one sees that the man could accomplish something if he were not so hasty in passing his judgments. It is to be hoped that he will soon write something which will be attacked more; a regular dose of knocking about would do him a lot of good.

217. ENGELS TO SORGE

Helensburgh, Scotland, 14 September, 1891.

The Newcastle Trade Union Congress is also a victory. The old unions, with the textile workers at their head, and the whole of the reactionary party among the workers, had exerted all their strength towards overthrowing the eight-hour decision of 1890.* They came to grief and have only achieved a very small temporary concession. This is decisive. The confusion is still great, but the thing is in irresistible motion and the bourgeois papers recognise the defeat of the bourgeoisie labour party completely and with terror, howling and gnashing of teeth. The Scottish Liberals especially, the most intelligent and the most classic bourgeois in the kingdom, are unanimous in their outcry at the great misfortune and hopeless wrongheadedness of the workers.

218. ENGELS TO BEBEL

London, 29 September, 1891.

You are right, if it comes to war we must demand the general arming of the people. But in conjunction with the already existing organisation or that specially prepared in case of war. Enlistment, therefore, of the hitherto untrained in supplementary reserves and Landsturm and above all immediate emergency training besides arming and organisation into fixed cadres.

* Resolution in favour of the legal eight-hour day passed by the Liverpool Trade Union Congress. See Note pages 468-69. [Ed. Eng. ed.]

The proclamation to the French will have to come out rather differently in form. The Russian diplomats are not so stupid as to provoke a war in face of the whole of Europe. On the contrary, things will be so operated that either France appears as the provoking party or—one of the Triple Alliance countries. Russia always has dozens of casus belli [occasions for war] of this kind to hand; the special answer to be given depends on the pretext for war put forward. In any case we must declare that since 1871 we have always been ready for a peaceful understanding with France, that as soon as our Party comes to power it will be unable to exercise that power unless Alsace-Lorraine freely determines its own future, but that if war is forced upon us, and moreover a war in alliance with Russia, we must regard this as an attack on our existence and defend ourselves by every method, utilising all positions at our disposal and therefore Metz and Strasbourg also.

As to the conduct of the war itself, two aspects are immediately decisive: Russia is weak in attack but strong in defensive man-power. A stab in the heart is impossible. France is strong in attack but rendered incapable of attack, innocuous, after a few defeats. I do not give much either for Austrians as generals or for Italians as soldiers, so our army will have to lead and sustain the main push. The war will have to begin with the holding back of the Russians but the defeat of the French. When the French offensive has been rendered innocuous things may get as far as the conquest of Poland up to the Dvina and Dnieper, but hardly before. This must be carried out by revolutionary methods and if necessary by giving up a piece of Prussian Poland and the whole of Galicia to the Poland to be established. If this goes well revolution will doubtless follow in France. At the same time we must press for at least Metz and Lorraine to be offered as a peace offering to France.

Probably, however, it will not go so well. The French will not allow themselves to be so easily defeated, their army is very good and better armed than ours, and what we achieve in the way of generalship does not look as if very much would come of it either. That the French have learnt how to mobilise has been shown this summer. And also that they have enough officers for
their first field army—which is stronger than ours. Our superiority in officers will only be proved with the troops brought up later into the line. Moreover the direct line between Berlin and Paris is strongly defended by fortifications on both sides. In short, in the most favourable case it will probably turn out a fluctuating war which will be carried on with constant drawing in of fresh reinforcements by both sides until one party is exhausted, or until the active intervention of England, who, by simply blockading corn imports can, under the then existing conditions, starve out whichever party she decides against, Germany or France, and force it to make peace. In the meantime what happens on the Russian frontier mainly depends on the way the Austrians conduct the war and is therefore incalculable.

So much seems certain to me: if we are beaten, every barrier to chauvinism and a war of revenge in Europe will be thrown down for years hence. If we are victorious our Party will come into power. The victory of Germany is therefore the victory of the revolution, and if it comes to war we must not only desire victory but further it by every means...

What should have been categorically stated [by Bernstein] was that if France formally represents the revolution in relation to Germany, Germany, through its workers' Party, stands materially at the head of the revolution, and this is bound to come to light in the war—in which we, and with us the revolution, will either be crushed or else come to power.

In 1891 began the Franco-Russian rapprochement, and in conjunction with it the war danger, which Marx had already foreseen in 1870, began to draw nearer. ... In a series of letters and in an article published in the Calendar of the French Workers' Party for 1892 Engels dwelt on the question of this future war, its results and the attitude of the workers' parties, especially in Germany and France, to the war. (See also Letters 217, 218.)
such methods; also at a given moment to take the lead ourselves. We have not yet forgotten the glorious example of the French in 1793 and, if we are driven to it, it may come about that we celebrate the centenary of 1793 by showing that the German workers of 1893 are not unworthy of the Sansculottes* of those days and that if French soldiers cross our frontiers then they will be greeted with the cry:

Quoi ces cohortes étrangères

eraient le loi dans nos foyers? (Marseillaise)†

This is the general sequence of thought. As soon as the text is finally settled (I am of course expecting proposals for small alterations of detail) and the printing in hand I will translate the article into German and then we will see what can be done with it. I am not sure if your press conditions will allow of its being printed in Germany; perhaps if you make some reservations it can be all the same—this will be seen. My articles do not in any case tie the Party—very fortunate for us both, although Liebknecht imagines I regard it as unfortunate for myself, which never occurs to me.

According to the reports, you said that I had prophesied the collapse of bourgeois society in 1898. There is a slight error there somewhere. All I said was that we might possibly come to power by 1898. If this does not happen, the old bourgeois society might still vegetate on for a while, so long as a shove from outside does not bring the whole ramshackle old building crashing down. A rotten old casing like this can survive its inner essential death for a few decades, if the atmosphere is undisturbed. So I should be very cautious about prophesying such a thing. Our arrival at the possibility of power, on the other hand, is a pure calculation of probability according to mathematical laws.

For all that, I hope peace remains unbroken. In our present position we do not need to risk everything—but war would force us to do so. And then in another ten years we shall be quite differently prepared. And for the following reason.

* Sansculottes—literally: without breeches; name given to the revolutionary populace in the French Revolution of 1789. The French in 1793—see Letter 206.
† "What, shall these alien cohorts make the laws within our homes?"
break out. Bebel and I have been in correspondence on this point and we are of the opinion that if the Russians start war against us, German Socialists must go for the Russians and their allies, whoever they may be, a Fürsorge [in a fight to the death]. If Germany is crushed, then we shall be too, while in the most favourable case the struggle will be such a violent one that Germany will only be able to maintain herself by revolutionary means, so that very possibly we shall be forced to come into power and play the part of 1793. Bebel has made a speech about this in Berlin which has aroused a lot of attention in the French press. I shall try to make this clear to the French in their own language, which is not easy. But although I think it would be a great misfortune if it came to war and if this brought us prematurely into power, still one has got to be armed for this eventuality and I am glad that here I have Bebel, who is by far the most capable of our people, on my side.

221. ENGELS TO CONRAD SCHMIDT

London, 1 November, 1891.

It is impossible, of course, to dispense with Hegel and the man also takes some time to digest. The shorter Logic in the Encyclopedia makes quite a good beginning. But you must take the edition in the sixth volume of the Works, not the separate edition by Rosenkranz (1845), because there are far more explanatory additions from the lectures in the former, even if that ass Henning has often not understood them himself.

In the Introduction you have the criticism, first (Par. 26, etc.) of Wolf’s version of Leibnitz (metaphysics in the historical sense), then of English-French empiricism (par. 37, etc.) then Kant (par. 40, seq.) and finally (par. 61) of Jacoby’s mysticism. In the first section (Being) do not spend too long over Being and Nothing; the last paragraphs on Quality and then Quantity and Measure are much finer, but the theory of Essence is the main thing: the resolution of the abstract contradictions into their own instability, where one no sooner tries to hold on to one side alone than it is transformed unnoticed into the other, etc. At the same time you can always make the thing clear to yourself by concrete examples; for instance, you, as a bridegroom, have a striking example of the inseparability of identity and difference in yourself and your bride. It is absolutely impossible to decide whether sexual love is pleasure in the identity in difference or in the difference in identity. Take away the difference (in this case of sex) or the identity (the human nature of both) and what have you got left? I remember how much this very inseparability of identity and difference worried me at first, although we can never take a step without stumbling upon it.

But you ought on no account to read Hegel as Herr Barth has done, namely in order to discover the bad syllogisms and rotten dodges which served him as levers in construction. That is pure schoolboy’s work. It is much more important to discover the truth and the genius which lie beneath the false form and within the artificial connections. Thus the transitions from one category or from one contradiction to the next are nearly always arbitrary—often made through a pun, as when Positive and Negative (Par. 120) “zugrunde gehen” [perish] in order that Hegel may arrive at the category of “Grund” [reason, ground]. To ponder over this much is waste of time.

Since with Hegel every category represents a stage in the history of philosophy (as he generally indicates), you would do well to compare the lectures on the history of philosophy (one of his most brilliant works). As relaxation, I can recommend the Ästhetic. When you have worked yourself into that a bit you will be amazed.

Hegel’s dialectic is upside down because it is supposed to be the “self-development of thought,” of which the dialectic of facts therefore is only a reflection, whereas really the dialectic in our heads is only the reflection of the actual development which is fulfilled in the world of nature and of human history in obedience to dialectical forms.

If you just compare the development of the commodity into capital in Marx with the development from Being to Essence in Hegel, you will get quite a good parallel for the concrete development which results from facts; there you have the
abstract construction, in which the most brilliant ideas and
often very important transmutations, like that of quality into
quantity and vice versa, are reduced to the apparent self-
development of one concept from another—one could have
manufactured a dozen more of the same kind.

Engels returns to the subject of Hegel in his letter of Febru-
ary 4, 1892 to Conrad Schmidt:

“If you come to a ‘bog’ with Hegel do not let it stop you;
six months later in the same bog you will find firm stepp-
stones and get across quite smoothly.”

Engels further shows that the closed sequence of stages which
is found in Hegel’s development of the concept “belongs to the
system, to what is transitory.” As an example he again quotes
from the Encyclopedia the transition of “Positive and Negative
to the category of Ground,” and says that these transitions
would have to be made differently in every different language.
“If you translate the sequence in the Theory of Essence into
another language most of the transitions become impossible.
This is not where Essence lies; it lies in the method, the
principle, of universal movement and universal interaction,
in a corresponding approach to the study of the object which
leaves thought no peace, but forces it to express reality in its
movement and its complexity in the most accurate way.”

222. ENGELS TO SCHLÜTER
London, 30 March, 1892.

Your great obstacle in America, it seems to me, lies in the
exceptional position of the native workers. Up to 1848 one could
only speak of the permanent native working class as an excep-
tion: the small beginnings of it in the cities in the East always
had still the hope of becoming farmers or bourgeois. Now a
working class has developed and has also to a great extent
organised itself on trade union lines. But it still takes up an
aristocratic attitude and wherever possible leaves the ordinary
badly paid occupations to the immigrants, of whom only a

223. ENGELS TO DANIELSON (NICOLAI—ON)*
London, 22 September, 1892.

So far, then, we agree upon this one point, that Russia, in
1892, could not exist as a purely agricultural country, that her
agricultural population must be complemented by industrial
production.

* This letter was written in English.
Now I maintain, that industrial production nowadays means grande industrie,* steam, electricity, self-acting mules, power-loom, finally machines that produce machinery. From the day Russia introduced railways, the introduction of these modern means of production was a foregone conclusion. You must be able to repair your own locomotives, wagons, railways, and that can only be done cheaply if you are able to construct those things at home, that you intend to repair. From the moment warfare became a branch of the grande industrie (ironclad ships, rifled artillery, quick-firing and repeating cannons, repeating rifles, steel covered bullets, smokeless powder, etc.), la grande industrie, without which all these things cannot be made, became a political necessity. All these things cannot be had without a highly developed metal manufacture. And that manufacture cannot be had without a corresponding development in all other branches of manufacture, especially textile.

I quite agree with you in fixing the beginning of the new industrial era of your country about 1861. It was the hopeless struggle of a nation, with primitive forms of production, against nations with modern production, which characterised the American War. The Russian people understood this perfectly; hence their transition to modern forms, a transition rendered irrevocable by the emancipation act of 1861.

This necessity of the transition from the primitive methods of production that prevailed in 1854, to the modern methods that are now beginning to prevail—this necessity once conceded, it becomes a secondary question whether the hothouse process of fostering the industrial revolution by protective and prohibitive duties was advantageous or even necessary, or otherwise.

This industrial hothouse atmosphere renders the process acute, which otherwise might have retained a more chronic form. It crams into twenty years a development which otherwise might have taken sixty or more years. But it does not affect the nature of the process itself, which, as you say, dates from 1861.

One thing is certain: if Russia really required, and was determined to have, a grande industrie of her own, she could not have it at all except under some degree of protection, and this you admit. From this point of view, too, then, the question of protection is one of degree only, not of principle; the principle was unavoidable.

Another thing is certain: if Russia required after the Crimean War a grande industrie of her own, she could have it in one form only: the capitalistic form. And along with that form, she was obliged to take over all the consequences which accompany capitalistic grande industrie in all other countries.

Now I cannot see that the results of the industrial revolution which is taking place in Russia under our eyes, are in any way different from what they are, or have been, in England, Germany, America. In America the conditions of agriculture and landed property are different, and this does make some difference.

You complain of the slow increase of hands employed in textile industry, when compared with the increase of quantity of product. The same is taking place everywhere else. Otherwise, whence our redundant "industrial reserve"? (Capital, C. 23, Sect. 3 and 4.) [Kerr edition, Vol. 1, Chap. 25.]

You prove the gradual replacing of men’s work by that of women and children—Capital, C. 13 (Sect. 33). [Ibid, Chap. 15.]

You complain that the machine-made goods supersede the products of domestic industry and thus destroy a supplementary production, without which the peasant cannot live. But we have here an absolutely necessary consequence of capitalistic grande industrie: the creation of the home market (Capital, C. 24, Sect. 5),* and which has taken place in Germany during my lifetime and under my eyes. Even what you say, that the introduction of cotton goods destroys not only the domestic spinning and weaving of the peasants, but also their flax culture, has been seen in Germany between 1820 and now. And as far as this side of the question: the destruction of home industry and the branches of agriculture subservient to it—as far as this is concerned, the real question for you seems to me this: that the Russians had to decide whether their own grande industrie

* Large-scale industry based on machinery.

was to destroy their domestic manufacture, or whether the import of English goods was to accomplish this. With protection, the Russians effected it, without protection, the English. That seems to me perfectly evident.

Your calculation that the sum of the textile products of grande industrie and of domestic industry does not increase, but remains the same and even diminishes, is not only quite correct, but would not be correct if it came to another result. So long as Russian manufacture is confined to the home market, its product can only cover home consumption. And that can only slowly increase, and, as it seems to me, ought even to decrease under present Russian conditions.

For it is one of the necessary corollaries of grande industrie that it destroys its own home market by the very process by which it creates it. It creates it by destroying the basis of the domestic industry of the peasantry. But without domestic industry the peasantry cannot live. They are ruined as peasants; their purchasing power is reduced to a minimum; and until they, as proletarians, have settled down into new conditions of existence, they will furnish a very poor market for the newly-arsen factories.

Capitalist production being a transitory economical phase, is full of internal contradictions which develop and become evident in proportion as it develops. This tendency to destroy its own market at the same time it creates it, is one of them. Another one is the insoluble situation* to which it leads, and which is developed sooner in a country without a foreign market, like Russia, than in countries which are more or less capable of competing on the open world market. This situation without an apparent issue finds its issue, for the latter countries, in commercial revulsions, in the forcible opening of new markets. But even then the cul-de-sac stares one in the face. Look at England. The last new market which could bring on a temporary revival of prosperity by its being thrown open to English commerce is China. Therefore English capital insists upon constructing Chinese railways. But Chinese railways mean the destruction of the whole basis of Chinese small agriculture and

* These two words in Russian.

domestic industry, and as there will not even be the counterpoise of a Chinese grande industrie, hundreds of millions of people will be placed in the impossibility of living. The consequence will be a wholesale emigration such as the world has not yet seen, a flooding of America, Asia and Europe by the hated Chinaman, a competition for work with the American, Australian and European workman on the basis of the Chinese standard of life, the lowest of all—and if the system of production has not been changed in Europe before that time, it will have to be changed then.

Capitalistic production works its own ruin, and you may be sure it will do so in Russia too. It may, and if it lasts long enough, it will surely produce a fundamental agrarian revolution—I mean a revolution in the condition of landed property, which will ruin both the pomeshchik and the muzhik [the landlord and the peasant], and replace them by a new class of large landed proprietors drawn from the kulak [kulaks] of the villages and the bourgeois speculators of the towns. At all events, I am sure the conservative people who have introduced capitalism into Russia, will be one day terribly astonished at the consequences of their own doings.

224. ENGELS TO SORGE

London, 31 December, 1892.

Here in old Europe things are rather more lively than in your “youthful” country, which still refuses to get quite out of its hobbledehoy stage. It is remarkable, but quite natural, that in such a young country, which has never known feudalism and has grown up on a bourgeois basis from the first, bourgeois prejudices should also be so strongly rooted in the working class. Out of his very opposition to the mother-country—which is still clothed in its feudal disguise—the American worker also imagines that the bourgeois regime as traditionally inherited is something progressive and superior by nature and for all time, a non plus ultra [not to be surpassed]. Just as in New England, Puritanism, the reason for the whole colony’s existence, has
become precisely on this account a traditional inheritance, almost inseparable from local patriotism. The Americans can strain and struggle as much as they like, but they cannot realise their future—colossally great as it is—all at once like a bill of exchange; they must wait for the date on which it becomes due; and just because their future is so great their present must mainly occupy itself with preparatory work for the future, and this work, as in every young country, is of a predominantly material nature and determines a certain backwardness of thought, a clinging to traditions connected with the foundation of the new nationality. The Anglo-Saxon race—those damned Schleswigs-Holsteiners, as Marx always called them—is slow-witted anyhow and their history both in Europe and America (economic success and predominantly peaceful political development) has encouraged this still more. Only great events can be of use here and if, added to the more or less completed transition of the national property in land into private ownership, there comes the expansion of industry under a less crazy tariff policy and the conquest of foreign markets, then it may go well with you too. The class-struggles here in England too were more violent during the period in which large-scale industry was developing and were enfeebled just in the period of England’s unquestioned industrial domination of the world. In Germany, too, the development of large-scale industry since 1850 coincides with the rise of the Socialist movement, and it will be no different, probably, with America. It is the revolutionising of all traditional relations through industry as it develops which also revolutionises people’s minds.

For the rest, Americans have for some time been providing the European world with the proof that a bourgeois republic is a republic of capitalist business men in which politics are only a business deal, like any other; and the French, whose ruling bourgeois politicians have long known this and practised it in secret, are now at last also learning this truth on a national scale through the Panama scandal. In order, however, that the constitutional monarchies should not be able to give themselves virtuous airs, every one of them has his little Panama: England the scandal of the building-societies, one of which, the

Liberator, has thoroughly “liberated” a mass of small depositors from some £8,000,000 of their savings; Germany the Baare scandals and Löwe Jüdenflintein (which have proved that the Prussian officer steals as he always did, but very, very little—the one thing he is modest about), Italy the Banca Romana, which already approaches the Panama scale, about 150 deputies and senators having been bought up; I am informed that documents about this will shortly be published in Switzerland—Schrütler should look out for everything which appears in the papers about the Banca Romana. And in holy Russia the old-Russian Prince Meshchersky is indignant at the indifference with which the Panama revelations are received in Russia and can only explain it to himself by the fact that Russian virtue has been corrupted by French examples, and “we ourselves have more than one Panama at home.”

But all the same the Panama business is the beginning of the end of the bourgeois republic and may soon bring us into very responsible positions. The whole of the opportunist and the majority of the radical gang are shamefully compromised, the government is trying to hush it up but that is no longer possible; the documents containing the evidence are in the hands of people who want to overthrow the present rulers: (1) the Orlanists; (2) the fallen minister Constans, whose career has been ended by revelations about his scandalous past; (3) Rochefort and the Boulangists; (4) Cornelius Herz who, himself deeply involved in every sort of fraud, has obviously only fled to London in order to buy himself out by getting the others into a hole. All these have more than enough evidence against the gang of thieves, but are holding back, first in order not to use up all their ammunition at once, and secondly in order to give both the government and the courts time to compromise themselves beyond any hope of salvation. This can only suit us well; enough stuff is coming to light by degrees to keep up the excitement and compromise the dirigants* more and more while it also gives time for the scandal and the revelations to make their effect felt in the most remote

* The leaders, the wirepullers.
corner of the country before the inevitable dissolution of the chamber and new elections, which however ought not to come too soon. It is clear that this business brings the moment considerably nearer when our people will become the only possible leaders of the state in France. Only things ought not to move too quickly, our people in France are not ripe for power by a long way. But as things are at present it is absolutely impossible to say what intermediate stages will fill this gap. The old Republican parties are compromised to the last man, the Royalists and Clericals dealt in the Panama lottery bonds on a mass scale and identified themselves with them—if that ass Boulanger had not shot himself he would now be master of the situation. I am eager to know if the old unconscious logic of French history will assert itself again this time too. There will be plenty of surprises. If only some general or other does not swing himself to the top during the interval of clarification and start war—that is the one danger.

In Germany the steady irresistible progress of the Party goes quietly on. Small successes in every hole and corner, which prove the advance. If the essential part of the military Bill is accepted, new masses of the discontented will stream to us; if it is rejected there will be dissolution and new elections in which we shall get at least fifty seats in the Reichstag, which in cases of conflict may often give us the decisive vote. In any case the struggle, even if, as is possible, it also breaks out in France, can only be fought out in Germany. But it is good that the third volume [of Capital] will now at last be finished—when? Indeed I cannot yet say; the times are becoming disturbed and the waves are beginning to rise high.

In 1888 the French company which was financing the building of the Panama Canal went bankrupt. This event, known as the "Panama scandal," was utilised by the Nationalists in France to overthrow the Republican majority. In the course of the investigation a gigantic bribery scandal was discovered in which 150 deputies and the bourgeois press, etc., were involved. From this arose an intensification of the inner contradictions in France, and there was an imminent danger of the Nationalists, who demanded a war of revenge, coming into power and thus increasing the war danger. The trial was quashed in 1894 by the President of the Republic.

Letter 225. 18 January, 1893

London, 18 January, 1893.

Here there has been a Conference in Bradford of the Independent Labour Party, which you know from the Workman's Times. The S.D.F. on the one hand and the Fabians on the other have not been able, with their sectarian attitude, to absorb the mass pressure for socialism in the provinces, so the foundation of a third Party was quite good. But the pressure has now become so great, especially in the industrial districts of the north, that the new Party came out already at this first Congress stronger than the S.D.F. or the Fabians, if not stronger than both put together. And as the mass of the membership is certainly very good, as the centre of gravity lies in the provinces and not in London, the home of cliques, and as the main point of the programme is ours, Avelling was right to join and to accept a seat on the Executive. If the petty private ambitions and intrigues of the London would-be-greats are slightly held in check here and the tactics do not turn out too wrong-headed, the Independent Labour Party may succeed in detaching the masses from the Social-Democratic Federation and in the provinces from the Fabians too, and thus forcing unity.

The Fabians are an ambitious group here in London who have understanding enough to realise the inevitability of the social revolution, but who could not possibly entrust this gigantic task to the rough proletariat alone and are therefore kind enough to set themselves at the head. Fear of the revolution is their fundamental principle. They are the "educated" par excellence. Their socialism is municipal socialism; not the nation but the municipality is to become the owner of the means of production, at any rate for the time being. This socialism of theirs is then represented as an extreme but inevitable consequence of bourgeois Liberalism, and hence follow their tactics
of not decisively opposing the Liberals as adversaries but of pushing them on towards socialist conclusions and therefore of intriguing with them, of permeating Liberalism with Socialism, of not putting up Socialist candidates against the Liberals but of fastening them on to the Liberals, forcing them upon them, or deceiving them into taking them. That in the course of this process they are either lied to and deceived themselves or else betray socialism, they do not of course realise.

With great industry they have produced amid all sorts of rubbish some good propagandist writings as well, in fact the best of the kind which the English have produced. But as soon as they get on to their specific tactics of hustling up the class struggle it all turns putrid. Hence too their fanatical hatred of Marx and all of us—because of the class struggle.

These people have of course many bourgeois followers and therefore money, and have many active workers in the provinces who will have nothing to do with the S.D.F. But five-sixths of the provincial members agree more or less with our point of view and at the critical moment will certainly fall away. In Bradford, where they were represented, they several times decisively declared themselves against the London Executive of the Fabians.

You see that it is a critical moment for the movement here and something may come of this new organisation. There was a moment when it nearly fell into the clutches of Champion—who consciously or unconsciously works just as much for the Tories as the Fabians do for the Liberals—and of his ally Maltman Barry, whom you knew at the Hague (Barry is now an acknowledged and permanent paid Tory agent and manager of the Socialist wing of the Conservatives!)—see the Workman's Times for November and December. But in the end Champion preferred to start publishing his Labour Elector again and has thus placed himself in opposition to the Workman's Times and the new Party.

Hardie brought off a clever stroke by putting himself at the head of this new Party, while John Burns, whose complete inactivity outside his constituency has already done him a lot of harm, committed a fresh piece of stupidity by holding back here too. I am afraid he is heading straight for an impossible position.

The fact that here too people like Keir Hardie, Shaw-Maxwell and others are pursuing all sorts of secondary aims of personal ambition is of course obvious. But the danger arising from this becomes less according to the degree in which the party itself becomes stronger and gets more of a mass character, and it is already diminished by the necessity for exposing the weakness of the competing sects. Socialism has penetrated the masses in the industrial districts enormously in the last years and I am counting on these masses to keep the leaders in order. Of course, there will be stupidities enough, and cliques of every kind too, but so long as it is possible to keep them within decent limits—.

At the worst, the foundation of the new organisation has this advantage that unity will be more easily brought about between these competing sects than between two which are diametrically opposed.


The Fabian Society was founded in 1884. The name "Fabian" is taken from Fabius Cunctator (Fabius the Delayer) who was made dictator in Rome at the time of the Second Punic War and obtained successes against the Carthaginians and Hannibal by his slow, delaying tactics.

The Fabians became the theoreticians of the Labour Party, which in Engels' days did not as yet exist. They were among the most extreme Right leaders of British social-democracy and supported the line of British imperialism in the camp of the working class. [Ed. Eng. ed.]
We seem to be agreed upon all points except one, which you tackle in both your letters of 3rd October and 27 January, though in each from a different point of view.

In the first you ask: was the economic change which after 1854 had become unavoidable, of such a nature that it must, instead of developing the historical institutions of Russia, on the contrary attack them in their root? In other words, could not the rural commune be taken for the basis of the new economic development?

And, Jan. 27th, you express the same idea in this form: the grande industrie† had become a necessity for Russia, but was it unavoidable that it was developed in a capitalistic form?

Well, in, or about, 1854 Russia started with the commune on the one hand, and the necessity of the grande industrie on the other. Now, if you take the whole state of your country into account, as it was at that date, do you see any possibility of the grande industrie being grafted on the peasants’ commune in a form which would, on the one hand, make the development of that grande industrie possible, and on the other hand raise the primitive commune to the rank of a social institution superior to anything the world has yet seen? And that while the whole Occident was still living under the capitalistic regime? It strikes me that such an evolution, which would have surpassed anything known in history, required other economical, political and intellectual conditions than were present at that time in Russia.

No doubt the commune and to a certain extent the artel, contained germs which under certain conditions might have developed and saved Russia the necessity of passing through the torments of the capitalistic regime. I fully subscribe to our author’s letter about Shukovsky.‡ But in his, as well as in my opinion, the first condition required to bring this about, was the impulse from without, the change of economic system in the Occident of Europe, the destruction of the capitalist system in the countries where it had originated. Our author said in a certain preface to a certain old manifesto, in January 1882, replying to the question whether the Russian commune might not be the starting point of a higher social development: if the change of economic system in Russia coincides with a change of economic system in the West, so that both supplement each other, then contemporary Russian landownership may become as the starting point of a new social development.*

If we in the West had been quicker in our own economic development, if we had been able to upset the capitalistic regime some ten or twenty years ago, there might have been time yet for Russia to cut short the tendency of her own evolution towards capitalism. Unfortunately we are too slow, and those economic consequences of the capitalistic system which must bring it up to the critical point, are only just now developing in the various countries about us: while England is fast losing her industrial monopoly, France and Germany are approaching the industrial level of England, and America bids fair to drive them all out of the world’s market both for industrial and for agricultural produce. The introduction of an, at least relative, free trade policy in America, is sure to complete the ruin of England’s industrial monopoly, and to destroy, at the same time, the industrial export trade of Germany and France; then the crisis must come, tout ce qui'il a de plus fin de siècle. But in the meantime, with you, the commune fades away, and we can only hope that the change to a better system, with us, may come soon enough to save, at least in some of the remoter portions of your country, institutions which may, under those circumstances, be called upon to fulfil a great future. But facts are facts, and we must not forget that these chances are getting less and less every year.

For the rest I grant you that the circumstance of Russia being the last country seized upon by the capitalist grande industrie, and at the same time the country with by far the largest peasant

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* This letter was written in English.
† Large-scale industry based on machinery.
‡ Marx’s Letter about Shukovsky. See Letter 167.
* Engels writes this passage in Russian. For the quotation from the preface to the Russian edition of The Communist Manifesto see Note to Letter 167. [Ed. Eng. ed.]
LETTER 227. 14 July, 1893

population, are such as must render the boulevards* caused by this economic change, more acute than it has been anywhere else. The process of replacing some 500,000 pomeshchiki (landowners) and some eighty million peasants by a new class of bourgeois landed proprietors cannot be carried out but under fearful sufferings and convulsions. But history is about the most cruel of all goddesses, and she leads her triumphal car over heaps of corpses, not only in war, but also in “peaceful” economic development. And we men and women are unfortunately so stupid that we never can pluck up courage to a real progress unless urged to it by sufferings that seem almost out of proportion.

227. ENGELS TO MEHRING

London, 14 July, 1893.

You have described the main things excellently and for any unprejudiced person convincingly. If I find anything to object to it is that you attribute more credit to me than I deserve, even if I count in everything which I might possibly have found out for myself—in time—but which Marx with his more rapid coup d’œil (grasp) and wider vision discovered much more quickly. When one has the good fortune to work for forty years with a man like Marx, one does not usually get the recognition one thinks one deserves during his lifetime. Then if the greater man dies, the lesser easily gets overrated, and this seems to me to be just my case at present; history will set all this right in the end and by that time one will be safely round the corner and know nothing more about anything.

Otherwise there is only one other point lacking, which, however, Marx and I always failed to stress enough in our writings and in regard to which we are all equally guilty. We all, that is to say, laid and were bound to lay the main emphasis at first on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of the actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected

* Upheaval.

the formal side—the way in which these notions come about—for the sake of the content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstandings, of which Paul Barth is a striking example.

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought he derives both its form and its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors. He works with mere thought material which he accepts without examination as the product of thought, he does not investigate further for a more remote process independent of thought; indeed its origin seems obvious to him, because as all action is produced through the medium of thought it also appears to him to be ultimately based upon thought. The ideologist who deals with history (history is here simply meant to comprise all the spheres—political, juridical, philosophical, theological—belonging to society and not only to nature), the ideologist dealing with history then, possesses in every sphere of science material which has formed itself independently out of the thought of previous generations and has gone through an independent series of developments in the brains of these successive generations. True, external facts belonging to its own or other spheres may have exercised a co-determining influence on this development, but the tacit pre-supposition is that these facts themselves are also only the fruits of a process of thought, and so we still remain within that realm of pure thought which has successfully digested the hardest facts.

It is above all this appearance of an independent history of state constitutions, of systems of law, of ideological conceptions in every separate domain, which dazzles most people. If Luther and Calvin “overcome” the official Catholic religion, or Hegel “overcomes” Fichte and Kant, or if the constitutional Montesquieu is indirectly “overcome” by Rousseau with his “Social Contract,” each of these events remains within the sphere of theology, philosophy or political science,
represents a stage in the history of these particular spheres of thought and never passes outside the sphere of thought. And since the bourgeoisie illusion of the eternity and the finality of capitalist production has been added as well, even the victory of the physiocrats and Adam Smith over the mercantilists is accounted as a sheer victory of thought; not as the reflection in thought of changed economic facts but as the finally achieved correct understanding of actual conditions subsisting always and everywhere — in fact if Richard Coeur-de-Lion and Philip Augustus had introduced free trade instead of getting mixed up in the crusades we should have been spared five hundred years of misery and stupidity.

This side of the matter, which I can only indicate here, we have all, I think, neglected more than it deserves. It is the old story: form is always neglected at first for content. As I say, I have done that too, and the mistake has always only struck me later. So I am not only far from reproaching you with this in any way, but as the older of the guilty parties I have no right to do so, on the contrary; but I would like all the same to draw your attention to this point for the future. Hanging together with this too is the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any effect upon history. The basis of this is the common undialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregard of interaction; these gentlemen often almost deliberately forget that once an historic element has been brought into the world by other elements, ultimately by economic facts, it also reacts in its turn and may react on its environment and even on its own causes. E.g., Barth on the priesthood and religion on your page 475.

Letter 228. 17 October, 1893

privileged order of priesthood, freed from physical labour by the obligation of paying tribute laid on other orders, and detached for intellectual activity; thus the utilisation of a portion of the economic product was determined by religion. Whilst in Greco-Roman culture priestly activity seldom devolved upon particular organs, Christianity led the way back to the Oriental differentiation, created a special order of priests which it richly endowed, and thus separated off a portion of economic goods as the material substratum of religious activity, which soon became general intellectual activity.

228. Engels to Danielson (Nicolaï-on)*

London, October 17, 1893.

When I received your letter of July 28, announcing your return home, I was on the point myself of going abroad for two months and am only just returned. This is the reason of my long silence.

Many thanks for the copies of the Ocherki† three of which I have forwarded to appreciative friends. The book, I am glad to see, has caused considerable stir and indeed sensation, as it well merited. Among the Russians I have met, it was the chief subject of conversation. Only yesterday one of them writes: "With us in Russia a controversy is going on about the 'fate of capitalism in Russia.'"‡

In the Berlin Sozial-Politische Zentralblatt a Mr. B. V. Struve has a long article on your book; I must agree with him in this one point, that for me, too, the present capitalistic phase of development in Russia appears an unavoidable consequence of the historical conditions as created by the Crimean War, the way in which the change of 1861 in agrarian conditions was accomplished, and the political stagnation in Europe generally. Where he is decidedly wrong is in comparing the present state of Russia with that of the United States in order to refute what he calls your pessimistic views of the future. He says the evil consequences of modern capitalism in Russia will be as easily

* This letter was written in English.
† Ocherki: Sketches of our Political Economy after the Reform (1893).
‡ Italized sentence written by Engels in Russian.
overcome as they are in the United States. There he quite forgets, that the U.S. are modern, bourgeois from the very origin; that they were founded by petits bourgeois and peasants who ran away from European feudalism to establish a purely bourgeois society. Whereas in Russia we have a groundwork of a primitive communistic character, a pre-civilisation Gemeinschaft,* crumbling to ruins, it is true, but still serving as the groundwork, the material upon which the capitalistic revolution (for it is a real social revolution) acts and operates. In America, Geldwirtschaft† has been fully established for more than a century, in Russia Naturwirtschaft‡ was all but exclusively the rule. Therefore it stands to reason that the change, in Russia, must be far more violent, far more incisive, and accompanied by immensely greater sufferings than it can be in America.

But for all that it still seems to me that you take a gloomier view of the case than the facts justify. No doubt the passage from primitive agrarian communism to capitalistic industrialism cannot take place without terrible dislocation of society, without the disappearance of whole classes and their transformation into other classes; and what enormous suffering, and waste of human lives and productive forces that necessarily implies, we have seen—on a smaller scale—in Western Europe. But from that to the complete ruin of a great and highly gifted nation there is still a long way. The rapid increase of population to which you have been accustomed, may be checked; the reckless deforestation combined with the expropriation of the old landlords as well as the peasants may cause a colossal waste of productive forces; but after all, a population of more than a hundred millions will finally furnish a very considerable home market for a very respectable grande industrie,§ and with you as elsewhere, things will end by finding their own level—if capitalism lasts long enough in Western Europe.

You yourself admit that "the social conditions in Russia after the Crimean War were not favourable to the development of the form of production inherited by us from our past history." I would go further, and say, that no more in Russia than anywhere else would it have been possible to develop a higher social form out of primitive agrarian communism unless—that higher form was already in existence in another country, so as to serve as a model. That higher form being, wherever it is historically possible, the necessary consequence of the capitalistic form of production and of the social dualistic antagonism created by it, it could not be developed directly out of the agrarian commune, unless in imitation of an example already in existence somewhere else. Had the West of Europe been ripe, 1860-70, for such a transformation, had that transformation then been taken in hand in England, France, etc., then the Russians would have been called upon to show what could have been made out of their commune, which was then more or less intact. But the West remained stagnant, no such transformation was attempted, and capitalism was more and more rapidly developed. And as Russia had no choice but this: either to develop the commune into a form of production from which it was separated by a number of historical stages, and for which not even in the West the conditions were then ripe—evidently an impossible task—or else to develop into capitalism; what remained to her but the latter chance?

As to the commune, it is only possible so long as the differences of wealth among its members are but trifling. As soon as these differences become great, as soon as some of its members become the debt-slaves of the richer members, it can no longer live. The kulaks and miryedy (kulaks and parasites) of Athens, before Solon, have destroyed the Athenian gens with the same implacability with which those of your country destroy the commune. I am afraid that institution is doomed. But on the other hand, capitalism opens out new views and new hopes. Look at what it has done and is doing in the West. A great nation like yours outlives every crisis. There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress. Only the modus operandi is changed. Que les destinées s'accomplissent! [Only the mode of operation is changed. Let fate be accomplished.]
The letters of Engels to Danielson on the question of the development of capitalism in Russia are particularly interesting because they contain the same refutation of the theories of the Narodniki which Lenin was providing independently almost at the same time in the writings he directed against the Narodniki, where he “further developed the principles of Marxism in harmony with the changing conditions and local peculiarities of different countries and further completed Marx’s theory of dialectical materialism and of political economy.” (Lenin.)

* * *

In his principal economic work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1896), Lenin proved, from extensive material consisting of actual facts, the disintegration of Russian agriculture and the creation of an internal market for capitalism by means of this process. A comparison of the letters of Engels to Danielson with the writings of Lenin shows how Engels comes to the same conclusions as those which Lenin reached on the basis of his deep study of the development of capitalism in Russia, and by means of his masterly application of the method of Marx, which he enriched and concretised.

229. **Engels to H. Starkenburg**


Here is the answer to your questions!

(1) What we understand by the economic conditions which we regard as the determining basis of the history of society are the methods by which human beings in a given society produce their means of subsistence and exchange the products among themselves (so far as division of labour exists). Thus the *entire technique* of production and transport is here included. According to our conception this technique also determines the method of exchange and, further, the division of products, and with it, after the dissolution of tribal society, the division into classes also and hence the relations of lordship and servitude and with them the state, politics, law, etc. Under economic conditions are further included the geographical basis on which they operate and those remnants of earlier stages of economic development which have actually been transmitted and have survived—often only through tradition or the force of inertia; also of course the external milieu which surrounds this form of society.

If, as you say, technique largely depends on the state of science, science depends far more still on the state and the *requirements* of technique. If society has a technical need, that helps science forward more than ten universities. The whole of hydrostatics (Torricelli, etc.) was called forth by the necessity for regulating the mountain streams of Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We have only known anything reasonable about electricity since its technical applicability was discovered. But unfortunately it has become the custom in Germany to write the history of the sciences as if they had fallen from the skies.

(2) We regard economic conditions as the factor which ultimately determines historical development. But race is itself an economic factor. Here, however, two points must not be overlooked:

(a) Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the *cause and alone active*, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which *ultimately always asserts itself*. The state, for instance, exercises an influence by tariffs, free trade, good or bad fiscal system; and even the deadly inanition and impotence of the German petty bourgeoisie, arising from the miserable economic position of Germany from 1640 to 1830 and expressing itself at first in Pietism, then in sentimentality and cringing servility to princes and nobles, was not without economic effect. It was one of the greatest hindrances to recovery and was not shaken until the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars made the chronic misery an acute one. So it is not, as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic position produces an automatic effect. Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic
relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through them and alone leads to understanding.

(8) Men make their history themselves, but not as yet with a collective will or according to a collective plan or even in a definitely defined, given society. Their efforts clash, and for that very reason all such societies are governed by necessity, which is supplemented by and appears under the forms of accident. The necessity which here asserts itself amidst all accident is again ultimately economic necessity. This is where the so-called great men come in for treatment. That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at that particular time in that given country is of course pure accident. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute, and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found. That Napoleon, just that particular Corsican, should have been the military dictator whom the French Republic, exhausted by its own war, had rendered necessary, was an accident; but that, if a Napoleon had been lacking, another would have filled the place, is proved by the fact that the man has always been found as soon as he became necessary: Caesar, Augustus, Cromwell, etc. While Marx discovered the materialist conception of history, Thierry, Mignet, Guizot, and all the English historians up to 1850 are the proof that it was being striven for, and the discovery of the same conception by Morgan proves that the time was ripe for it and that indeed it had to be discovered.

So with all the other accidents, and apparent accidents, of history. The further the particular sphere which we are investigating is removed from the economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more shall we find it exhibiting accidents in its development, the more will its curve run in a zig-zag. So also you will find that the axis of this curve will approach more and more nearly parallel to the axis of the curve of economic development the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with.

In Germany the greatest hindrance to correct understanding is the irresponsible neglect by literature of economic history. It is so hard, not only to disaccustom oneself of the ideas of history drilled into one at school, but still more to raze up the necessary material for doing so. Who, for instance, has read old G. von Güllich,* whose dry collection of material nevertheless contains so much stuff for the clarification of innumerable political facts!

For the rest, the fine example which Marx has given in the Eighteenth Brumaire should already, I think, provide you fairly well with information on your questions, just because it is a practical example. I have also, I believe, already touched on most of the points in Anti-Dühring I, Chapters 9–11, and II, 2–4, as well as in III, 1, or Introduction, and then in the last section of Feuerbach.

Please do not weigh each word in the above too carefully, but keep the connection in mind; I regret that I have not the time to work out what I am writing to you so exactly as I should be obliged to do for publication.

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* Starkenburg had put the following questions to Engels:
(1) How far do economic conditions act causally? (Are they an adequate ground, motive, permanent condition, etc., of development?) (2) What part is played by the racial element and by historic personality in Marx and Engels' conception of history?

230. ENGELS TO TURATI†
London, 26 January, 1894.

In my opinion the position in Italy is the following.

The bourgeoisie, which came to power during and after the national independence movement, would not and could not complete its victory. It neither destroyed the remains of feudal-

* G. van Güllich: Historical Account of the Trade, Industry and Agriculture of the Most Important Commercial States of Our Time (1850).
† This Letter was written in French but is here translated from a German translation. [Ed. Eng. ed.]
ism nor transformed national production according to the modern capitalist pattern. Incapable of ensuring the relative and temporary advantages of the capitalist system to the country, they burdened it on the other hand with all the damage and the disadvantages of the system. And as if that were not enough, they forfeited the last remnant of respect and confidence by involving themselves in the dirtiest bank scandals.

The labouring population—peasants, handicraft workers, agricultural and industrial workers—finds itself in consequence in an oppressive position, on the one hand owing to old abuses inherited not only from feudal times but from an even earlier period (take, for instance, the mezzadria [share farming], or the latifundia* of the south, where cattle are supplanting men); on the other hand owing to the most rapacious fiscal system ever invented by bourgeois policy. Here too one can say with Marx: "Like all the rest of continental Western Europe we are tortured not only by the development of capitalist production, but by the lack of its development. Side by side with modern distress we are oppressed by a whole sequence of inherited distress arising from the fact that ancient and antiquated methods of production, resulting in social and political conditions unsuited to the time, continue to vegetate among us. We suffer not only from the living but from the dead. Le mort saisit le viv. [The living are in the grip of the dead.]

This situation is pressing towards a crisis. Everywhere the producing masses are in a ferment: here and there they are rising. Where will this crisis lead?

The Socialist Party of Italy is obviously too young and, considering the whole economic position, too weak, to be able to hope for an immediate victory of Socialism. In this country the rural population far outweighs the urban; in the towns industry is only slightly developed and hence the real typical proletariat is small in number: here the majority is composed of handicraft workers, small masters and small merchants, a mass which fluctuates to and fro between the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. These are the petty and middle bourgeoisie of medieval times in their decay and dissolution—certain to be

* Latifundia; landed estates of exceptionally large extent. [Ed. Eng. ed.]
of them should be victorious, to guard the interests of the proletariat. These tactics, which never lose sight of the last great final aim, preserve us Socialists from the disappointments to which the other less clear-sighted parties, be they republicans or sentimental socialists, who confuse what is only a mere stage with the final aim of the advance, must inevitably succumb.

Let us apply what has been said to Italy.

The victory of the petty bourgeoisie, who are in process of disintegration, and of the peasantry, may perhaps bring a ministry of "converted" Republicans into power. This will give us universal suffrage and greater freedom of movement (freedom of the press, of organisation, and of assembly)—new weapons not to be despised.

Or it will bring us the bourgeois republic, with the same people and some Mazzinist or other among them. This would extend liberty and our field of action still further, at any rate for the moment. And Marx has said that the bourgeois republic is the only political form in which the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie can be resolved. To say nothing of the reaction which would make itself felt in Europe.

Thus the victory of the revolutionary movement which is being prepared cannot but strengthen us and place us under more favourable conditions. We should commit the greatest mistake if we refrained from sympathy with it or if in our attitude to the "related" parties we confined ourselves merely to negative criticism. There may come a moment when it would be our duty to co-operate in a positive way. What moment could that be?

Undoubtedly it is no business of ours directly to prepare a movement ourselves which is not strictly a movement of the class we represent. If the Republicans and Radicals believe the hour has come let them give free play to their desire to attack. As for ourselves we have been far too often disappointed by the large promises of these gentlemen to allow ourselves to be misused yet another time. Neither their proclamations nor their conspiracies will mislead us. If it is our duty to support every real movement of the people, it is not less our duty to protect the scarcely formed core of our proletarian Party, not to sacrifice it uselessly and not to allow the proletariat to be decimated in fruitless local risings.

But if, on the contrary, the movement is a really national one, our people will not keep themselves hidden and will need no password. . . .

But if it comes to this, we must be conscious of the fact, and openly proclaim it, that we are only taking part as an "independent Party," which is allied for the moment with Radicals and Republicans but is inwardly essentially different from them: that we indulge in absolutely no illusions as to the result of the struggle in case of victory; that this result not only cannot satisfy us but will only be a newly attained stage to us, a new basis of operations for further conquests; that from the very moment of victory our paths will separate; that from that same day forwards we shall form a new opposition to the new government, not a reactionary but a progressive opposition, an opposition of the most extreme Left, which will press on to new conquests beyond the ground already won.

After the common victory we might perhaps be offered some seats in the new Government—but always in a minority. Here lies the greatest danger. After the February Revolution in 1848 the French socialist Democrats (the Réforme people, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, Flocon, etc.) were incautious enough to accept such positions. As a minority in the Government they involuntarily bore the responsibility for all the infamy and treachery which the majority, composed of pure Republicans, committed against the working class, while at the same time their participation in the government completely paralysed the revolutionary action of the working class they were supposed to represent.

Here I am only expressing my personal opinion, which you asked me for, and I am doing this only with a certain amount of caution. As for the general tactics here communicated, I have convinced myself of their correctness throughout the whole of my life. They have never let me down. But with regard to their application in Italy under present conditions, the decision must be made on the spot and by those who are in the midst of the movement.
Letter 230. 26 January, 1894

[In the Note to Chapter 10 of his pamphlet The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution (1905) (Collected Works, Volume VIII) Lenin writes of the “correctness of the Marxist theory of the difference between the three main forces in the revolutions of the nineteenth century. According to this theory the forces which come out against the old social order, against absolutism, feudalism and serfdom are: (1) the liberal big bourgeoisie; (2) the radical petty bourgeoisie; (3) the proletariat. The first fights for the constitutional monarchy, the second for the democratic republic, the third for the social revolution.

“The Socialist who confuses the petty-bourgeois struggle for a complete democratic revolution with the proletarian struggle for a socialist revolution, is in danger of political bankruptcy. Marx’s warning in this respect is quite justified.

“While absolutely recognising the bourgeois character of the revolution, which cannot immediately go beyond the bounds of a merely democratic revolution, our slogan, ‘the revolutionary, democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, pushes forward’ this particular revolution and strives to mould it in forms most advantageous to the proletariat — consequently, it strives for the utmost utilisation of the democratic revolution for a most successful further struggle of the proletariat for socialism.”

The strict and sharp distinction between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian-socialist revolution, the latter lying before the working class as its immediate task after the more or less complete victory of the former, is one of the main pillars of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the proletarian revolution. But these revolutions are not separated from each other by a Chinese wall. Lenin in his article on The Relation of Social-Democracy to the Peasant Movement (1905) wrote: “With all our strength we will help the whole of the peasantry to carry through the democratic revolution in order that it may be so much the easier for us, the Party of the proletariat, to proceed as quickly as possible to the new and higher task, the socialist revolution.” (Collected Works, Vol. VIII). In 1921 Lenin wrote in his article For the Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution (Collected Works, Vol. VIII) that the socialist revolution “is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese wall ... that only the struggle will decide how far we shall succeed in moving forward.”

Letter 231. 10 November, 1894

TURATI, FILIPPO (1857-1931). Leader of Italian Social-Democracy. After the formation of the Communist Party of Italy he remained in the Party for a time in order “to put obstacles in its way when things really came to revolution there.” (Lenin.) Lenin carried on an energetic struggle against Turati and demanded his expulsion from the party. Towards Fascism Turati adopted the cowardly and treacherous policy of capitulation and the disarming of the workers’ movement. He died as an emigre abroad.

MEZZADRIA, mietage system, share farming. “A transitional form between the original form of rent and capitalist rent.” Specially common in Italy. The landowner gives the farmer a portion of the working capital and receives in return a corresponding, but usually far larger portion of the farmers’ produce. Hence the mietage system is a particularly intensive form of the exploitation of the poor peasant by the landowner. [See Letters 14, 15.]

231. ENGELS TO SORGE

London, 10 November, 1894.

On the Continent success is developing the appetite for more success, and catching the peasant, in the literal sense of the word, is becoming the fashion. First the French in Nantes declare through Lafargue not only (what I had written to them) that it is not our business to hasten by direct interference of our own the ruin of the small peasant which capitalism is seeing to for us, but they also add that we must directly protect the small peasant against taxation, usurers and landlords. But we cannot co-operate in this, first because it is stupid and second because it is impossible. Next, however, Vollmar comes along in Frankfort and wants to bribe the peasantry as a whole, though the peasant he has to do with in Upper Bavaria is not the debladen poor peasant of the Rhineland but the middle and even the big peasant, who exploits his men and women farm servants and sells cattle and grain in masses. And that cannot be done without giving up the whole principle. We can only win the mountain peasants and the big peasants of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, if we sacrifice their ploughmen and day
labourers to them, and if we do that we lose more than we gain politically. The Frankfort Party Congress did not take a decision on this question and that is to the good in so far as the matter will now be thoroughly studied; the people who were there knew far too little about the peasantry and the conditions on the land, which vary so fundamentally in different provinces, to have been able to do anything but take decisions in the air. But there has got to be a resolution on the question some time all the same.

"At the Frankfort Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party Vollmar had come out in favour of an alliance with the big peasants.

In his article, The Peasant Question in France and Germany (1894), Engels writes:

"It is not to our interest to win the peasant to-day or to-morrow in order that if we are not able to keep our promise he should fall away from us again to-morrow or the next day. ... Neither nor at any future time can we promise the small peasants that individual property and individual working will be preserved in face of the supremacy of capitalist production. All we can promise them is that we will not forcibly intervene in the conditions of their ownership against their will.... And indeed we stand decidedly on the side of the small peasant; we will do everything in any way admissible to make his lot more bearable, to facilitate his transition to the co-operative, if he decides to take this step, and even, if he cannot as yet bring himself to this decision, to make a longer period of consideration possible for him on his holding. We do this, not only because we regard the small peasant who does his own work as virtually belonging to us, but also in the direct interests of the Party. The greater the number of peasants whom we can save from actual downfall into the proletariat and win for ourselves while they are still peasants, the more rapidly and easily will the social revolution take place. It can be of no service to us if we are obliged to wait for this transformation until capitalist production has developed itself everywhere up to its final consequences.... It is the duty of our Party to make clear to the peasants over and over again the absolute hopeless-

ness of their position while capitalism rules, the absolute impossibility of preserving for them their small holdings as such, the absolute certainty that large-scale capitalist production will sweep over their impotent antiquated small-scale production as a railway train would sweep over a push-cart."

232. Engels to Schmidt

London, 12 March, 1895.

Your letter gives me some light, I think, on how you have come to be side-tracked with the rate of profit. There I find the same way of going off into details, for which I put the blame on the eclectic method of philosophising which has made such inroads in the German universities since '48, and which loses all general perspective and only too often ends in rather aimless and fruitless argumentation about particular points.

Now of the classical philosophers it was precisely Kant with whom you had formerly chiefly occupied yourself, and Kant, owing to the position of German philosophising in his time and to his opposition to Wolff’s pedantic form of Leibnitzism, was more or less obliged to make some apparent concessions in form to this Wolffian argumentation. This is how I explain your tendency, which also shows itself in the excursus on the law of value in your letter, to absorb yourself to such a degree in details, without always, as it seems to me, paying attention to the connection as a whole, that you degrade the law of value to a fiction, a necessary fiction, rather as Kant makes the existence of God a postulate of the practical reason.

The reproaches you make against the law of value apply to all concepts, regarded from the standpoint of reality. The identity of thought and being, to express myself in Hegelian fashion, everywhere coincides with your example of the circle and the polygon. Or the two of them, the concept of a thing and its reality, run side by side like two asymptotes, always approaching each other yet never meeting. This difference between the two is the very difference which prevents the concept from being directly and immediately reality and reality from being immediately its own concept. But although a con-
cept has the essential nature of a concept and cannot therefore *prima facie* directly coincide with reality, from which it must first be abstracted, it is still something more than a fiction, unless you are going to declare all the results of thought fictions because reality has to go a long way round before it corresponds to them, and even then only corresponds to them with asymptotic approximation.

Is it any different with the general rate of profit? At each moment it only exists approximately. If it were for once realised in two undertakings down to the last dot on the i, if both resulted in *exactly the same rate of profit* in a given year, that would be pure accident; in reality the rates of profit vary from business to business and from year to year according to different circumstances, and the general rate only exists as an average of many businesses and a series of years. But if we were to demand that the rate of profit—say 14.876934...—should be exactly similar in every business and every year down to the 100th decimal place, on pain of degradation to fiction, we should be grossly misunderstanding the nature of the rate of profit and of economic laws in general—none of them has any reality except as approximation, tendency, average, and not as *immediate* reality. This is due partly to the fact that their action clashes with the simultaneous action of other laws, but partly to their own nature as concepts.

Or take the law of wages, the realisation of the value of labour power, which is only realised as an average, and even that not always, and which varies in every locality, even in every branch, according to the customary standard of life. Or ground rent, representing a superprofit above the general rate, derived from monopoly over a force of nature. There too there is by no means a direct coincidence between real superprofit and real rent, but only an average approximation.

It is exactly the same with the law of value and the distribution of the surplus value by means of the rate of profit.

(1) Both only attain their most complete approximate realisation on the presupposition that capitalist production has been everywhere completely established, society reduced to the modern classes of landowners, capitalists (industrialists and merchants) and workers—all intermediate stages, however, having been got rid of. This does not exist even in England and never will exist—we shall not let it get so far as that.

(2) Profit, including rent, consists of various component parts:

(a) Profit from cheating—which is cancelled out in the algebraic sum.

(b) Profit from increased value of stocks (e.g., the remainder of the last harvest when the next one has failed). Theoretically this *ought* also to equalise itself out (as far as it has not been already cancelled by the fall in the value of other commodities) either because the capitalist buyers have to contribute what the capitalist sellers gain, or, in the case of the workers’ means of subsistence, because wages must also eventually increase. The most essential of these increases in value, however, are not *permanent*, and therefore the equalisation only takes place in an average of years, and extremely incompletely, notoriously at the expense of the workers; they produce more surplus value because their labour power is not fully paid.

(c) The total sum of surplus value, from which again, however, that portion is deducted which is *presented as a gift to the buyer*, especially in crises, when overproduction is reduced to its real value of socially necessary labour.

From this indeed it follows from the very first that the total profit and the total surplus value can only approximately coincide. But when you further take into consideration the fact that neither the total surplus value nor the total capital are constant magnitudes, but variable ones which alter from day to day, then any coincidence between rate of profit and the sum of surplus value* other than that of an approximating series, and any coincidence between total price and total value other than one which is constantly striving towards unity and perpetually moving away from it again, appears a sheer impossibility. In other words, the unity of concept and appearance manifests itself as essentially an infinite process, and that is what it is, in this case as in all others.

*Engels uses the formula $\frac{s}{v}$.*
Did feudalism ever correspond to its concept? Founded in the kingdom of the West Franks, further developed in Normandy by the Norwegian conquerors, its formation continued by the French Norsemen in England and Southern Italy, it came nearest to its concept—in Jerusalem, in the kingdom of a day, which in the Assises de Jerusalem* left behind it the most classic expression of the feudal order. Was this order therefore a fiction because it only achieved a short-lived existence in full classical form in Palestine, and even that mostly only—on paper?

Or are the concepts which prevail in the natural sciences fictions because they by no means always coincide with reality? From the moment we accept the theory of evolution all our concepts of organic life correspond only approximately to reality. Otherwise there would be no change: on the day when concepts and reality completely coincide in the organic world development comes to an end. The concept fish includes a life in water and breathing through gills: how are you going to get from fish to amphibian without breaking through this concept? And it has been broken through and we know a whole series of fish which have developed their air bladders further into lungs and can breathe air. How, without bringing one or both concepts into conflict with reality are you going to get from the egg-laying reptile to the mammal, which gives birth to living young? And in reality we have in the mono-tremata a whole sub-class of egg-laying mammals—in 1843, I saw the eggs of the duck-bill in Manchester and with arrogant-narrow-mindedness mocked at such stupidity—as if a mammal could lay eggs—and now it has been proved! So do not behave to the conceptions of value in the way I had later to beg the duck-bill’s pardon for!

In Sombart’s otherwise very good article on Volume III I also find this tendency to dilute the theory of value: he had also obviously expected a somewhat different solution?

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* Assises de Jerusalem: The statute book of Godefroi de Bouillon for the kingdom Jerusalem in the eleventh century.

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KANT, IMMANUEL (1724-1804). German idealist philosopher. Professor in Königsberg. In the Deutsche Ideologie (1845-46) Marx writes:

“The condition of Germany at the end of last century is completely reflected in Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason. Whilst the French bourgeoisie raised themselves to supremacy and conquered the European continent by the most colossal revolution known to history, whilst the English bourgeoisie, already politically emancipated, revolutionised industry and subjugated India politically and all the rest of the world commercially, the impotent German bourgeoisie could get no further than “the good will.” Kant contented himself with the mere “good will” even when it remained without any result, and placed the realisation of this good will, the harmony between it and the needs and impulses of the individual, in the Hereafter. . . . Neither he nor the German bourgeoisie, whose euphemistic spokesman he was, noticed that the basis of these theoretical ideas of the bourgeoisie lay in material interests and in a will conditioned and determined by the material conditions of production: he therefore separated this theoretical expression from the interests it expresses…” “By his theory of the unknowable ‘thing-in-itself’ Kant contests the possibility of a knowledge of the world, or at least of an exhaustive knowledge.” (Engels.)

In his chief philosophical work, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism (Collected Works, Vol. XIII, English Edition, p. 163), Lenin writes of Kant:

“The principal feature of the philosophy of Kant is an attempted reconciliation of materialist and idealism, a compromise between the claims of both, a fusion of heterogeneous and contrary philosophic tendencies into one system. When Kant admits that something outside of us—a thing-in-itself—corresponds to our perceptions, he seems to be a materialist. When he, however, declares this thing-in-itself to be unknowable, transcendent, ‘trans-intelligible’—he appears to be an idealist.”

This half and half character of Kant’s philosophy makes it specially suitable and acceptable to the bourgeoisie and their agents in the camp of the working class, the Social Fascists.

SOMBART, WERNER (born 1863). German bourgeois economist. Professor. One of the sharpest opponents of Marxism. He attempted to get the Social-Democratic movement on to bourgeois lines. (See Rosa Luxemburg, Against Reformism.)
233. Engels to Victor Adler

London, 16 March, 1895.

...As you want to have a grind in prison at Capital [Volumes] II and III, I will give you a few hints to make it easier.

Volume II, Section I. Read Chapter I thoroughly, then you can take Chapters 2 and 3 more lightly; Chapter 4 more exactly again as it is a summary; 5 and 6 are easy and 6, especially, deals with secondary matters.

Section II. Chapters 7-9 important. Specially important 10 and 11. Equally so 12, 13, 14. On the other hand 15, 16, 17 need only be skimmed through at first.

Section III is a most excellent account of the entire circuit of commodities and money in capitalist society—the first since the days of the Physiocrats. Excellent in content but fearfully heavy in form because (1) it is put together from two versions which proceed according to two different methods and (2) because version No. 2 was carried to its conclusion by main force during a state of illness in which the brain was suffering from chronic sleeplessness. I should keep this right to the end, after working through Volume III for the first time. For your work too, it is not immediately indispensable.

Then the third Volume. Important here are: In Section I, Chapters 1 to 4; less important for the general connection, on the other hand, are Chapters 5, 6, 7, on which much time need not be spent at first.

Section II. Very important. Chaps. 8, 9, 10. Skim through 11 and 12.

Section III. Very important: the whole of 13-15.

Section IV. Likewise very important, but also easy to read: 16-20.

Section V. Very important, Chapters 21-27. Less so Chapter 28. Chapter 29 important. As a whole Chapters 30-32 are not important for your purposes; 33 and 34 are important as soon as paper-money is dealt with; 35 on international rates of exchange important, 36 very interesting for you and easy to read.

Section VI. Ground rent. 37 and 38 important. Less so, but still to be taken with them, 39 and 40. 41-43 can be more neglected (Differential rent II. Particular cases). 44-47 important again and mostly easy to read too.

Section VII. Very fine, but unfortunately a fragment and with very marked traces of sleeplessness as well.

Thus, if you go through the main things thoroughly and the less important ones superficially to begin with, following these indications (best first to re-read the main things in Volume I,) you will get an idea of the whole and can later also work through the neglected portions more easily.

In his letter to Kugelmann of November 30, 1867 Marx gave the following guidance for facilitating the understanding of Capital, Volume I.

"As those which can be read to begin with please point out to your wife the sections on the 'Working Day,' 'Co-operation,' 'Division of Labour and Machinery,' and finally on 'Primitive Accumulation.' You must give the explanation of incomprehensible terminology. In the case of any other doubts I am at your service."

Compare also Letter 67, in which Marx gives a short account of the reproduction process of the total social capital.

234. Engels to Kautsky

London, 21 May, 1895.

I have learnt a great deal from the book,* it is an indispensable preliminary study for my new revision of the Peasant War. The main faults seem to be only two: (1) A very inadequate examination of the development and role of the declassed elements, almost like pariahs, who stood right outside the feudal organisation and were inevitably bound to come to the fore whenever a town was formed; who constitute the lowest stratum of the population of every mediaeval town, having no rights at all, detached from the Markgenossenschaft,† from

* Forerunners of Modern Socialism by K. Kautsky (1894).
† Group of villages sharing common land.
feudal dependence and from the craft guild. This is difficult, but it is the chief basis, for by degrees as the feudal ties are loosened, these elements become the pre-proletariat which in 1789 made the revolution in the suburbs of Paris, and which absorbs all the outcasts of feudal and guild society. You speak of proletarians—the expression is ambiguous—and bring in the weavers, whose importance you describe quite correctly—but only after declassed journeymen weavers existed outside the guilds, and only in so far as these existed, can you make them into your proletariat. Here there is still a lot to make good.

(2) You have not fully grasped Germany’s position in the world market, her international economic position, in so far as it is possible to speak of this, at the end of the 15th century. This position alone explains why the bourgeois plebeian movement in religious form which was defeated in England, the Netherlands and Bohemia could have a certain success in Germany in the 16th century: the success of its religious disguise, whilst the success of the bourgeois content, . . . * of the new direction of the world market which had arisen in the meantime—was reserved for: Holland and England.

This is a lengthy subject, which I hope to deal with in extenso [in full] in the Peasant War.—If only I were already at it!†

* The margin is cut off in the original here.
† A few months later, on August 6th, 1855, Engels died, of cancer in the throat.

By his own wish his ashes were scattered in the sea at Eastbourne. [Ed. Eng. ed.]

INDEX

Numbers refer to pages except where otherwise stated. Italic figures refer to Biographical Notes.

Absolute and relative, 484, 527–30
Absolution, 12, 495–96; historic nature of, 166–68. See Categories Accident and necessity in history, 309–11, 475–76, 518
Accumulation, 154; hoarding, 109; primitive, 321, 333
Adler, Victor (Letters to Nos. 206, 233), 457, 460, 535
Agrarian, revolutionary, 319; and crises, 101; in illegal conditions, 423
Agricultural workers, 183; Irish, 281; line of agitation, 424–5
Agriculture, 154, 237, 410–12 and domestic industry, 428; and industry, 30, 33, 199; and science (law of diminishing returns), 30, 33, 199, 204, 237–47
in America, 287, 279, 274, 499
in China, 118
in Italy, 40, 520
in Russia, 89, 407, 514
organic composition of capital in, 132
small peasant-transition to Socialism, 505
Alsace-Lorraine, 296, 299, 502, 489

* Letters mainly devoted to America are those numbered 53, 57, 58, 199, 201, 202, 203, 301, 302, 509, 212, 214; there are of course many references in other letters.

class struggle in, 356, 449, 451, 497, 499
American Indians, 495
Anarchist Theory, 214, 319–21, 339–40, 414–17, 439, 455
Anarchists, 306, 520, 599, 417–18; see Bakunin, Mut
Annalen, Paul (Letter to No. 2), 2, 18
Annexations, 296, 359, 489, 491
See Alfred Lorraine, Colonies
Antagonism, 71, 273; Proudhon’s system of, 12–14
Anti-Dalirou, by Engels, 343–45, 359, 477, 519; see also Dalirou
Anti-Semitism, 39, 459–71
Appearance, 226, 241–43, 246–47, 559
Apollon, 158
Applecart, 168, 276, 277–78
Arabs, 63–65, 66–68
Artocracy
and anti-Semitism, 470
English, 56, 88–89, 116, 264, 279, 288–89, 423
Prussian, 177, 185, 186, 189
Russian, 37, 124–25, 348
Arany, illustrates materialist conception, 35, 209, 499
English, 61
French, 490

535 2N
### CAPITAL, chief content—continued

23, 234; how to read it, 532-33; noticed in England, 397

### CAPITAL

105 advanced, 424

23 circulating, 107-09, 132, 240-41

and commodities, 421, 495

concentration of, 591

constant, 139, 154-56, 239-40

fixed, 132, 240

industrial, 192-93

interest-bearing, 175, 245

loan, 358

merchants, 244

organic composition of, 192-93, 244

productive, 244

reproduction of, 133-36

rise of, 72, 199

turnover, 242

variable, 159, 154-56, 239-40, 241

and wage labour, 245

### CAPITALISM

354-55, 359-56, 498-501, 500-11

and anti-Semitism, 470-71

and Communism, 105, 292-354, 386-92

development of, see AMERICA, ENGLAND

in LAND, GERMANY, RUSIA, etc., etc.

and home market, 499-500, 514

and peasant economy, 359-362, 499-501, 500-01, 596-97

as progressive force, 58, 70, 90-91, 135-36, 210, 510-15, 510-15

AND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, MEANS OF PRODUCTION, PRODUCIVE FORCES, etc., etc.

Cardoso, H., 142, 143

Cary, H. Charter, 57, 68-69, 77, 231-34, 264-65, 266-74

Carlyle, Thomas, 994

Cassirer, E.

### CATEGORIES

12; historically transitory, 11-12, 15-17

Catholics, "socialist," 250, 254-55

CAUSE AND EFFECT, 476-77, 494, 519, 517-18

Central European Great Power (Germany as), 131

Chamberlain, Joseph, 115-16

Chambers, H., 44, 461, 516

UNCHANCE, Castilian, 142, 143

Chaytor, E. C., 50

### CHAOS

and CAPITALISM, 55, 58-59

end of, 100-09, 115-16

See Hersey, Jonas

### CHAUVINISM

455 in America, 497

### Colonial, right of, in Prussia, 189, 189

Commodity

and capital, 241, 405

do its characteristic, 232
Pompeii, Greeks, 236-27
Pope, Pius II, 136
Pogroms, 492, 494, 495
Ponter, George, 168, 227
Poonchal, Francois, 317, 323
Poonch, 329, 330
Pournac, Tariq, 270
Powers, 491, 492
Proudhon, Pierre Joseph, 5-20, 44, 169-76
Proud, and Bismarck, 165, 317-18
Prussia anti-Semitism in, 479-70
aristocracy in, 177, 186, 187, 189
and Austria (war of 1866), 207, 210-13
and Germany, 145, 211
history of, 98-96, 497
and Poland, 145-46, 150, 346, 475
and Russia, 145-46, 150, 346-48, 390, 429
and State Socialism (Lassalle and Bismarck), 180-91, 194
See Bismarck, Germany
QUALITY and quantity, 273
Quarq, 426
Queens, Francois, 153, 156
RACE and economic conditions, 63-64, 277, 317
Ras, 397
Railways and capitalist development, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 479-80, 494, 500-01
Ras, Hermann, 339, 429
Reaction, after 1848, 40, 53, 62, 286, 287
after Paris Commune, 455
and progressy, 85
and prosperity, 85
against revolution, 246, 263, 485-87
in domestic politics, 488, 491
"Robert the Bruce," 488
Russia, aristocratic bulwark of, 120-21, 368, 369, 370, 371
and utopianism, 539, 561
"Reaktionary Marx," 333, 401-03
Reality and Concept, 14-15, 16-17, 210, 248, 370
Red Bogey, 372
Red Republic, 40, 53, 62
RELATIVE and absolute, 494, 527-30
RELIGION, 46-66, 176, 175, 406, 407, 434
REVOLUTION, 433, 434
Reproduction process of capital, 153-58
Republic, bourgeois democratic, 435-48
See Nationalism, Nationalism, Nationalism, Nationalism
REVOLUTION, bourgeois and petty bourgeoisie in, 23, 45-46, 53, 375, 376, 433-34
colonial, 117-18, 399
and crises, 15-16, 85-86
and legality, 426-28, 485
and productive forces, 16, 333-34, 526
and "reactionary mass," 333, 401-03
in Russia, 26, 27, 26, 26, 34-49, 395, 396, 447-48
and technicians, 493
and war, 304, 446-50, 451, 492, 493-94
REVOLUTION, agrarian, 352-37
in Ireland, 93-94, 220, 228
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 504, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, bourgeois-democratic, 486-87, 522-23, 524
in England, 8
in Germany, 123, 207, 310-11, 346, 477-31
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 505, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, proletarian and petty bourgeoisie in, 23, 45-50, 53, 374, 375, 433-34
and crises, 15-16, 85-86
and democracy, 524
and destruction, 359
in Europe, 128, 129, 355, 477, 434-490, 492
idealistic conception of, 92
in India, 395
and legality, 426-28, 485
and progressive forces, 16, 333-34, 526
and "reactionary mass," 333, 401-03
in Russia, 26, 27, 26, 26, 34-49, 395, 396, 447-48
and technicians, 493
and war, 304, 446-50, 451, 492, 493-94
REVOLUTION, agrarian, 352-37
in Ireland, 93-94, 220, 228
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 505, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, bourgeois-democratic, 486-87, 522-23, 524
in England, 8
in Germany, 123, 207, 310-11, 346, 477-31
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 505, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, proletarian and petty bourgeoisie in, 23, 45-50, 53, 374, 375, 433-34
and crises, 15-16, 85-86
and democracy, 524
and destruction, 359
in Europe, 128, 129, 355, 477, 434-490, 492
idealistic conception of, 92
in India, 395
and legality, 426-28, 485
and progressive forces, 16, 333-34, 526
and "reactionary mass," 333, 401-03
in Russia, 26, 27, 26, 26, 34-49, 395, 396, 447-48
and technicians, 493
and war, 304, 446-50, 451, 492, 493-94
REVOLUTION, agrarian, 352-37
in Ireland, 93-94, 220, 228
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 505, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, bourgeois-democratic, 486-87, 522-23, 524
in England, 8
in Germany, 123, 207, 310-11, 346, 477-31
in Italy, 45, 47, 520
in Poland, 38
in Russia, 37, 38, 38, 355, 479, 505, 505, 510, 514, 552
REVOLUTION, proletarian and petty bourgeoisie in, 23, 45-50, 53, 374, 375, 433-34
and crises, 15-16, 85-86
and democracy, 524
and destruction, 359
in Europe, 128, 129, 355, 477, 434-490, 492
idealistic conception of, 92
in India, 395
and legality, 426-28, 485
and progressive forces, 16, 333-34, 526
and "reactionary mass," 333, 401-03
in Russia, 26, 27, 26, 26, 34-49, 395, 396, 447-48
and technicians, 493
and war, 304, 446-50, 451, 492, 493-94
REVOLUTION, agrarian, 352-37
in Ireland, 93-94, 220, 228
Index

Stock Exchange, 218, 478

See Money Market

Strike, 265, 318-19; in England, 202, 420, 425, 483-84, 471

Straw, B. H., 373, 386

Streus, Peter von, 513

Superstructure on economic basis, 8, 16, 17-18, 475-84, 510-12, 517-18, 531

Surplus Value

fragments of, 155, 207, 232

and ground rent, 274

and interest, 155, 227, 232, 274

production of, 129-30, 154

and profit, 227, 234, 241, 394, 527-29

rate of, 129-30, 238-41, 242-45, 527-29

total sum of, 242

Tatius, Publius Cornelius, 236, 238, 405

Tariffs, protective

in America, 60, 497, 502

in England, 34, 88, 446

and industrial revolution in Russia, 439

and Social Democratic Party, 363

Technicians, 493

Techniques, 199, 316-17

See Machinery, Productive Forces

Tennyson, 255-57

Terror

in French revolution, 303, 457-60

in proletarian dictatorship, 493

terrorism in Ireland, 231, 274; in Russia, 284, 285, 286, 290-91, 437

Theory, not dogma but guide to action, 249, 329-34, 453, 454-55, 480, 484, 497

Hegel's use of, 473

of history, materialist, 473

history of, 427

scientist, 6, 105, 246, 247, 249

Theory of Value, see Value

Thierry, Augustin, 56, 71-75

Thierry, Louis Adolphe, 49, 54-56, 174, 257, 293, 307, 312

Thiem, J. H., 233, 235

Tolstoy, W., 353, 399, 398

Tools, 141-44

Torrance, R., 57

Town and Country, division between, 10, 431; overcome by Socialism, 190

Towns, Oriental, 66

Trade Unions, 189, 251, 336

in America, 189, 434, 467, 496


Trade Union Congress, 441, 488

Trade Council, see London Trades Council

Transport, technique of, 516

See Railways

Trotch, L., 302

Tunis, Filibere (Letter to, No. 293), 263

Turkey, Russian war with (1877-78), 348-49, 355-57

Turk, Maria Avril, 116

See English Workers' Movement (franchise agitation), France

Union, see Workers' Movement

Union League, 105, 266, 232

Utopianism, see Socialism

Value, 246

and cost price, 30, 131, 153, 244

and exchange value, 245

and profit, 107, 129-30, 203, 238, 240-41, 341-45, 529

theory of, 106, 231, 232, 246-47, 527-39

"Value, Price and Profit," by Marx, 202-03

Varouhin, Louis Eugène (Letter to, No. 154), 312

Vasconcellos, Hipolito, 143, 144

Vauvenargues, 363, 364, 388, 379

Vicente, G., 145

Vogt, August (Letter to, No. 141), 255, 288

Voigt, Karl, 309

Voltaire, François Marie de, 196, 175, 177

Vulgar Economy, see Economics

Wages—continued

of English and Irish workers, 289

in form of profit, 245

money value of, 238-39

and rate of profit, 238-39

value of commodities not determined by, 202-03

Waldeck, 42, 44

War

and American relation to Europe, 456

and chauvinism, 295, 455, 490

Chaussewitz on, 100

colonial, 399

credit, 299, 300

defensive, 296, 299

and dialectic, 299

European future, 455-57

Franco-Prussian (1870), see German-French-Russian, danger of, 488-94

in Near East, danger of, 308

and revolution, 204, 430-49, 437, 498, 494, 499, 499-94, 499-94, 499-95

revolutionary, 437-35, 491-92

Russo-Turkish (1877), 349-49, 355-57

tactics in, study of, 100

Thirty Years'—and serfdom, 409

world war of future, 459-57

Weil, Adagio, 347

Weerth, Georg, 144, 145

Welling, Wilhelm, 4, 351

Wentworth, Duke of, 60-61

Weston, John, 161, 202-03, 276

Workers' Movement

aims immediate and ultimate, 165, 235, 236, 241, 486-91

dialectic in, 327, 328, 402-03

and politics, 98, 105, 316, 320, 591

practical experience, 98, 319, 490, 493, 494, 495, 474

sectarianism, 250-51, 315-16, 326, 455

trade unions, 189, 251, 336

ultimate aim, 451, 521-22

and unity, 163, 315, 325-27, 329, 392, 402-03, 455

and workers' party, 450

See under names of countries

Workers' Party, the first step, 450

Working Day, 248, 484

Women under primitive communism, 406

and social progress, 255

Zanich, Vera (Letter to, No. 194), 438

Weidenmeyer (Letters to, Nos. 14, 18, 43), 46

Wieland, French, 346, 47

Wilhelm I, German Emperor, 213, 294, 286, 297

Willich, August, 24, 96, 97

Wickham Kethley, Florence (Letters to, No. 196, 201, 203, 204), 444

Wolff, Louis, 160, 161, 162

Wolff, Wilibald ("Lupus"), 81, 110, 116, 127, 136

Workers' Movement

aims immediate and ultimate, 165, 235, 236, 241, 486-91

dialectic in, 327, 328, 402-03

and politics, 98, 105, 316, 320, 591

practical experience, 98, 319, 490, 493, 494, 495, 474

sectarianism, 250-51, 315-16, 326, 455

trade unions, 189, 251, 336

ultimate aim, 451, 521-22

and unity, 163, 315, 325-27, 329, 392, 402-03, 455

and workers' party, 450

See under names of countries

Workers' Party, the first step, 450

Working Day, 248, 484

Women under primitive communism, 406

and social progress, 255

Zanich, Vera (Letter to, No. 194), 438