

THE TRUE REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

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At a moment when the proponents of war — for the sake of war — are skillfully seeking to divert attention from the SOCIAL question through the clamor of drums and the attraction of arms upon every noble French heart, we deem it USEFUL, in order to clearly articulate our position and to lend greater weight to our protest against any HAZARDOUS undertaking on the part of a country which, like France, bears within its very bosom the idea of equality, progress and the emancipation of the world, — we believe it USEFUL to reproduce an article from our specimen issue of October 15, 1847, in which we expressed the very same reservations we hold today.¹

Men of egalitarian ideas regarding social organization, let us be practical, if we wish to survive.

Financial feudalism is actively at work while we stand idly by, lost in dreams.

Let us dwell a little less — for the moment — upon external questions, and a little more upon those of the interior; for if you are feared most on this front, it is precisely because therein lies the enemy's weak point.

The proletariat is the Achilles' heel of the society of monopolies.

External questions — however grand, however vital they may appear to us — remain, at this present hour, the concern of dynasties or politicians rather than that of the peoples themselves.

And who knows? Perhaps — and this is our deep and reasoned conviction — this approach constitutes an even more effective means of steering foreign policy toward progress and more swiftly attaining the egalitarian goal throughout Europe!...

For therein lies the truly sympathetic, truly democratic and truly constructive role of revolutionary France!

One cannot offer as a model anything other than that which is good.

— Are we organized?

— No.

Europe awaits, before becoming our eternal friend, the resolution of the questions regarding the organization of our great principles of equality here at home.

Let us unite individuals first; then nations will unite of their own accord, and oppressed nationalities will be liberated by all of humanity!

Let us, therefore — insofar as events permit, without culpable weakness and without truly compromising our dignity — allow external political issues to follow their constitutional course.

The most irresistible form of propaganda is imitation.

— Let us establish a harmonious organization of human activity within our own borders and realize true equality;

¹ Originally published under the title "Associions-nous, la charte à la main." — TRANSLATOR

– Let us use economic and industrial institutions to combat the encroaching monopoly of money;

– Let us truly emancipate ourselves from the odious tyranny of capital; then Europe, too, will soon be emancipated, for it naturally and inevitably imitates every step of France's progress.

But while we are thus occupied, will not these nationalities suffer their own martyrs?

Alas! And has not human industry had its own martyrs since the world began?

Yes, we affirm it: one day, the honor of France will shine forth, pure and unsullied, in the midst of a humanity reborn; and her name shall be blessed in its glory, for France OWES to humanity the SOLUTION to the social problem that she, before any other, posed so vigorously. – And France will have found it!

Proletarians, let us exercise our rights as human beings; let us, therefore, associate – here and now, amongst ourselves – while maintaining, at least insofar as the safety and preservation of our hard-won liberties permit, the strictest neutrality toward the powers that be.

We ask for nothing but what is just, nothing but what is honorable; we, men of duty, demand the fullness of our rights. Let us, then, boldly, openly and beneath the gaze of the heavens, spread our egalitarian principles!

Let us, as soon as possible, form an association of workers united in solidarity; and then – when we number one hundred, two hundred, five hundred thousand or a million men – united by conviction, by a consciousness of the truth, and by a knowledge of our rights and of the means to achieve equality in exchange – then, should the powers that be be mad enough to oppose the advent of social justice in France and throughout the world, no cannon or machine gun could possibly grant them victory.

– Faced with our lawful resistance – they would fall!

Workers, let us therefore leave the kings of Europe for a moment to fend for themselves amidst the governmental difficulties that beset them; let us leave their constitutional ideas weighing upon their hands – for we, too, have already passed through the era of constitutional ideas!

Let us, however, keep one eye open to observe their movements; yet let us meddle somewhat less – at least for the time being – in those political affairs which, in truth, merely serve to avenge you, and let us turn our thoughts a little more toward our own affairs – for keeping one eye fixed upon our own concerns will be none too much if we are to manage them well!

We repeat: once the question of organization – the mother of all secondary questions – is resolved among us, it will soon be resolved everywhere.

– And if the kings balk, well then! That will be the time to resort to the bellicose ideas of *Le National* – but not before! – And to reward its editors, we shall appoint them Generalissimos of the great egalitarian campaign!

And we would fight, at the very least, to teach the world something truly worth the effort – not against the peoples and workers, our brothers abroad, but against the kings

who oppress their own peoples and our brothers; kings against whom those brothers will fight, right there alongside us!

But above all, Proletarians, let us be clear in the future – regarding what, for whom, and against whom we must fight – both at home and abroad, if we must fight.

Let us no longer squander our blood for the sake of lies; let us reserve it, should the need arise, for realities.

Let the day of a serious and necessary struggle arrive, and egalitarian France will give birth to millions of soldiers!

Let both the friends and the enemies of equality in labor take heed of our words!

This is what we wrote – less than eight months ago – when, through the progressive association of workers, achieved by means of the equivalence of products and of the Bank of Exchange of products operating without intermediaries, we envisioned the possibility of bringing down, almost immediately – without striking a single blow and through purely industrial means – all the monarchies and aristocracies of Europe!

Today, the social question – thanks to the revolutionary insight that distinguishes a power that is selfish, corrupt or blind – today, that question remains precisely the same.

There are those who seek to divert attention from the true ideas of this revolution!

They seek to gamble the future of France and the world on a single roll of the dice!

Workers! Workers! Do not listen to the politicians; they will be your undoing! They have starved you; they seek to decimate you through war – either because they find no use for you or because they wish to rid themselves of the most advanced, the purest and the most generous among you!

Perhaps just two or three more months of apparent indifference from Europe! – Gather your strength, gather your ideas; then shall begin the great, the sublime, the eternal propaganda! We shall have our own happiness to bestow upon – to impose upon – the world!

Then – by the sword, by the spoken word, but above all by example – we shall truly be a *prophetic people, armed!*

But to triumphantly carry our own moral and material disorder to the peoples of the world, to offer them this shameful shambles which fools adorn with the noble name of Republic, brothers, that would be a crime against humanity.

We, we egalitarians, are the only ones who, at this moment, have the right to ask of you the sacrifices of war for the sake of human happiness!

In this moment of lethargy and stagnation, when our compatriots grope blindly for the idea of the future; when they stand as soldiers without enthusiasm, without principles, without beliefs; as discouraged, withered, feeble, exhausted and dying skeptics – we might well be defeated!

And were we to be defeated, what would become of the world?

Oh, believe us! We who have never deserted the sacred cause of your interests — we who bring you equality in labor, equivalence in exchange, justice, and happiness, with no ulterior motive of political ambition, for we seek the very death of politics — we ask of you but a moment's patience regarding the injustices of foreign powers.

Save your strength to conquer your true liberty here, within your own borders!

There lies your enemy and there, everywhere, lies the enemy of your brothers abroad. — Let us fight it! Let us muzzle it!

Let us kill it, if need be!

As for the aristocracies of foreign lands, they shall soon and cruelly expiate their crimes!

The producers of the globe will then be able to cast off their tyrants everywhere!

Such is the true revolutionary politics for this moment!

France! France first! Let us save her!

And France shall save the world.

She must do so! She will do so — and soon!

But she must not — if she truly loves the world, if she is truly fraternal — play at war without being certain of success.

Kings are all too eager to slander us, and to find a pretext, in the eyes of their subjects, to league them all together against Republican France.

Let France, then, hasten to carry out her own revolution! To perfect it, to realize its dogmas AT HOME, to put them into practice; and then — oh, peoples of the world! — you shall be strong, irresistible; and you shall rise up as one man, for you will understand what France truly is. The French idea shall become incarnate in every free, emancipated worker, and, should the need arise, in every volunteer soldier!

And, by the living God, we shall triumph together! Yes, we shall triumph!

In the name of a regenerated France, we — all of us, socialists of equality — hereby swear this oath in the face of the world!

Yes, oppressed nations: you shall then rise again forever! And — we swear it — your dead shall be AVENGED! Nobly AVENGED!