
May Day in Europe

by Eugene V. Debs

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Weeks before May Day, i.e., May 1st, 1892, the wires under the ocean were freighted with forebodings of evil which it was predicted would happen in many of the large cities of Europe, not excepting London.

It was easy to see that a sense of insecurity prevailed throughout the continent, indefinitely intensified by disastrous explosions of dynamite in the city of Paris and elsewhere.

The men suspected of murderous intention are called "anarchists," and an anarchist is one whose hand is supposed to be lifted against all governments and all laws. An anarchist, whether in Chicago, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, London, or St. Petersburg, imagines he can change affairs by exploding dynamite bombs, killing a few people, and wrecking a few buildings. An anarchist is a madman. He may be a student, but he studies in the wrong direction and arrives at conclusions which involve him in ruin. He becomes a monomaniac. However rational, or apparently rational, upon other subjects, as soon as the question of labor, the wrongs and degradation of labor, is suggested, he becomes a maniac — he wants to kill somebody, he desires wreck and ruin, but is often so intensely in earnest that he accepts the penalties which the law inflicts upon him, and turns upon his judges with calm defiance and accepts death with the composure of a martyr.

The scare that for several months has prevailed in Europe, and which, apparently, has come to stay, includes crowned heads and the nobility generally. Anarchists esteem all such people as creatures who exist upon the earnings of working men, money of which they are ruthlessly robbed and for the want of which they are deprived of proper food, shelter, and clothing. They assume that the government is their enemy, and they become, therefore, the enemies of the government. They behold royal families, and a titled aristocracy, living in pomp and splendor, while they are doomed to poverty which defies exaggeration; they behold vast standing armies, machines designed to

suppress any movement designed as a protest against the order of things as it exists, and as a consequence, they plot revenge in darkness. As we have said, they are madmen, who do not reason. Few in numbers, they may be, but they keep Europe, from center to circumference, in perpetual unrest. Crowns, flashing with precious stones, no longer rest easily nor gracefully upon the heads of kings and emperors, since it is the avowed purpose of anarchists to kill them when opportunity offers.

Such is the condition of Europe as we write, and the situation demands the most serious consideration by thoughtful men in the United States.

The question arises, what is the cause of the trouble in Europe? Starvation wages in the first place, for those who work, or, for the great majority of workers — and in the second place, vast bodies of men who cannot secure work at any wages. Such replies ought to suffice, but another cause of discontent, as has been remarked, is the burdens imposed upon labor to support hordes of aristocrats, who toil not, and yet live in regal splendor.

Such a condition of things will produce anarchists as certainly as swamps produce malaria. True, a few anarchists will be killed or imprisoned, but others will take their places, and extermination, while the cause exists, is an impossibility — and if the signs of the times were ever indicative of coming events they now betoken an upheaval in Europe which will change things, whether for the better or the worse, no one knows.

It was the wise saying of Abraham Lincoln that the Republic could not exist “half slave and half free,” and a government cannot exist where the many are crushed and pauperized by the few. It may require centuries to solve the problem, but its solution is inevitable.

It is a truth worth heeding that pernicious ideas spread more rapidly and grow ranker than those which inculcate virtue, and why, it may be asked, should anarchists be denounced when the press teems with declarations that the government is honeycombed with fraud and corruption, and that the avowed policy is one of stupendous robbery?

View the subject as we may, the outlook is anything but assuring to those who cry “peace.”

Edited by Tim Davenport

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