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EDITORIAL

## THE RAT TOWER OF TO-DAY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**E**VERY tourist down the Rhine is told, and every German school child knows, the story of Bishop Hatto, whose “Rat Tower” still stands on a little island in the river, off the town of Bingen.

Hatto, the seignorial lord of the bishopric of Bingen, forced his serfs to pile high his granaries with corn and wheat, while they themselves were able to retain barely enough to keep them alive at their toil, and nothing at all for the future. A famine overtaking the country, the serfs were perishing, while Bishop Hatto, fat and surfeited, felt not the rumblings of want in his own belly. The serfs petitioned him for succor. He laughed. Their distress becoming more acute, the pleadings rose louder. They offended the episcopal ears. Announcing that on a certain day all who applied would receive corn, Hatto gathered every hungry soul for miles around into his granaries. The doors were locked upon them, the barns were fired. “Hear the rats squeal!” laughed Bishop Hatto as the cries and groans of the dying reached him.

To-day America is blessed not with one, but several score Bishop Hattos. The Rockefellers, the Goulds, the Ryans, the Morses, the Heinzes, the Vanderbilts, the Garys, the Carnegies, the Havemeyers, have all forced their serfs to pile high the treasure in their private vaults, while the serfs subsisted on a wage of \$500-odd a year. Now, in the time of panic, the social conflagration lighted by themselves, these Bishop Hattos are playing golf, cruising in private yachts, or desecrating with their steps the villas of Italian patriots, all oblivious to the destruction, misery, starvation and suicide they have left in their wake. And does it take an over-acute ear to catch on the breeze the identical grisley gibe of the Bishop of Bingen, now proceeding from their lips—“Hear the rats squeal”?

Poetic justice overtook Hatto. The prophecy of one of his victims was fulfilled.

An army of rats—great rats, small rats, short rats, tall rats—besieged him in his episcopal villa. He fled to his Rat Tower in the Rhine, which he had prepared in readiness. The rats swam the river after him, swarmed into the Tower, and ended his execrable existence.

Poetic also the justice which awaits the present-day Bishop Hattos. The “rats”—skilled “rats,” unskilled “rats,” white “rats,” backwards race “rats”—will soon step into control of the industries, and give the Bishop Hattos the free choice of going to work at honest toil, or starving. The Social Revolution will be the “Rat Tower” of to-day.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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