

THE PROGRAMME OF GERMAN SOCIALISM.

FOR many years, and at present perhaps more than ever, so much silly or malicious nonsense has been written and is being written about our Social Democratic movement, that I consider it my duty to accept the invitation of the editor of *THE FORUM*, and to state briefly what we are and what we want. Social Democracy has become such an important factor in our whole political life that the course and essence of German and European politics cannot be understood without a knowledge of the Social Democratic movement. Caprivi, the late Chancellor, said once in the Reichstag, that all legislative measures of the Government were framed from the point of view of the effects they were likely to have on Social Democracy; and thus it was confessed, by the head of the Imperial Government, that Social Democracy is the axis around which the political world of Germany is revolving.

I am asked to write on our "working" programme. If this should imply that we have two programmes—a working or practical programme and a theoretical programme—then I should have to disappoint the readers of *THE FORUM*; for we have but one programme, the one containing our principles and their application. We do not admit any distinction in principle between theory and practice—if the theory is right, practice cannot be opposed to it, practice being nothing else but applied theory.

After the last congress of our party—at Frankfort-on-the-Main—our adversaries reproached us with having two programmes, one pronouncing the last consequences and aims, and the other discreetly hiding them and exhibiting a brilliant set of fascinating delusions: the former for ourselves, for the initiated, the latter for the common herd. What fools we are taken for! In our principles lies our strength, and twenty-four years ago, in a treatise on the "Land Question," I plainly and unreservedly said, and proved, that hiding our ultimate aims would be suicidal stupidity, and that the truth and logic contained in our programme constitute the irresistible strength of our party.

Of course, when we have a village-meeting we do not give a lecture on Marx's "Capital," but we speak about the villagers' economic and social situation, about the debts of the small peasants, the wages of the agricultural laborers, the misery in which they both have to live, and the reason why. We show the working and action of capitalism, how capital destroys property,—the property of all those who have to live on their handiwork; how property is in a state of constant warfare, how small properties are devoured by big properties,—the small farms by the big farms; how of the five and one-half millions of *soi-disant* landed proprietors in Germany according to the later published statistics, half a million at the utmost have still real property of their own, and how the others are proprietors only in name, who will soon disappear, swept away by the crushing power of capitalism. And if we succeed in getting the ears of our hearers, we win them.

It is stuff and nonsense to talk of the "anti-collectivist peasant": the big land-owners are anti-collectivists, like the big manufacturers and merchants; but the small peasants are quite as open to our doctrine as the small tradesmen of the towns,—and the agricultural laborers quite as much so as the industrial laborers. What renders the propaganda more difficult in the agricultural, than in the industrial, districts, is principally a question of space and time. The agricultural population is more dispersed, so that we cannot reach the masses so easily as in the town: people must be taken *en detail*, which of course takes longer and requires more patience and pains than spreading the propaganda in the towns where the masses are concentrated.

No, we have no double programme, as we have no double truth and no double moral. What we *will* we say, and our deeds correspond to our words. Our adversaries cannot say this of themselves; their actions belie their professions. Theory and practice—one for us—are for them separated by a wide gulf, in which honesty is drowned and out of which rises the basest hypocrisy. They talk sanctimoniously of religion, order and morality, and in the same breath they call for measures of oppression, by which the greatest party, comprising one quarter of the whole German nation, is outlawed, civil war virtually proclaimed, and the laboring classes helplessly delivered over to the clutches of capital. Instead of practising charity, they ask for charity—that is to say, for alms out of the pockets of the laboring people, alms for the rich taken from the

poor! Here you have the political secret of our *Junkers*, who, united to the industrial magnates have, under the glorious government of Bismarck, in the shape of duties on corn and industrial produce, of "benefices" on spirits, sugar, etc., robbed the German people not of millions, but of milliards; who conspired against Caprivi, because as an honest man he tried to diminish their "profits"; and who, after the overthrow of Caprivi, are now moving heaven and hell to bring back the golden times of Bismarck.

Our programme has always been a "working" programme. We never lived and dreamed in cloud-land. We always traded and worked on the solid earth. We applied our principles to all forms of life; and by this we won the masses.

Do you think that the nearly two millions of men who voted for the Socialist programme on the 15th of June, 1893, and to whom must be added nearly a million of voteless young men between 20 and 25 years—do you think they are a mob of "discontented" people who do not know what they want and, like silly children, only know what they do not want? Think what these numbers mean! They represent one-fourth of the entire body of active, that is of voting, electors, and consequently one-fourth of the entire population of Germany,—an Empire of twelve-and-a-half millions in the Empire of fifty millions. And not the worst fourth! The best, the cleverest workingmen of Germany are Socialists. The towns and provinces in which we have most adherents are the intellectual centres of Germany, and yield the smallest number of criminals; while on the contrary all those parts in which the *Junkers* and other saviors of religion, order and morals predominate—the East Elbian provinces, including the "German *Vendee*," Pomerania—have, according to the official statistics, the highest criminality and the lowest intellectual scale. And he must be very superficial who thinks this to be a mere accident.

Our programme, therefore, consists of a declaration of principles and of the practical and concrete demands founded on these principles. We do not want to abolish private property; it is only private property in the instruments of production that we want to abolish, because it gives the possessor power over his fellow-men and renders them economically and politically dependent on him. Labor is to be organized nationally and internationally, to the benefit and in the interest of all, with equal rights and duties for all. Instead of private production and speculation we want to have all the eco-

onomic functions of society performed by, through, and for the commonwealth. The commonwealth is to be substituted for the private speculator, who has only his own private interests at heart. Thus, our Democratic Socialism is not to be confounded with the "state-socialism," of which we hear so much in recent years. No word has ever been more misused than the word "socialism." The Bismarckian police laws for insuring the workmen against sickness, accidents and invalidity have nothing whatever to do with Socialism; they are in reality nothing but a reform (and not a good one) of our poor laws. And as to the state-socialism, favored by Bismarck and by many reactionaries in the highest position, it ought in truth to be called state capitalism—the state, governed by our *Junkers*, is to abolish all private property in the instruments of production (railways and mines included), and is to be put in the place of all private proprietors—the state is to become the sole proprietor, the sole capitalist, the sole master who makes the people work and slave for the governing classes. The essential criterion of Socialism is the abolition of wages-work, for which is to be substituted the system of associated work, of fraternal cooperation.

Socialism has been accused of aiming at the oppression of personal liberty. Now I beg you to look at our programme, and you will see that every point of it is a striking refutation of this childish reproach. What do we ask for? Absolute liberty of the press; absolute liberty of meeting; absolute liberty of religion; universal suffrage for all representative bodies and public offices in the state and the commune; national education; all schools open to all; the same opportunities of learning and education for all; abolition of the standing armies and creation of national militia, so that every citizen is soldier and every soldier citizen; an international court of arbitration between the different states; equal rights for men and women—measures for the protection of the working classes (limitation of the hours of work, sanitary regulations, etc.) Can personal liberty, can the right of the individual be better guaranteed than by this programme? And can any honest democrat find fault with this programme? Far from intending to suppress personal liberty we have the full right to say that we are the sole party in Germany that fights for the principles of democracy.

And something else is demonstrated by this programme: that we want the legal, constitutional transformation of society. We are revolutionists—no doubt—because our programme means a total and

fundamental change of our social and economic system; but we are also evolutionists and reformers, which is no contradiction. The measures and institutions we demand are to a great extent realized already, or on the point of being realized, in advanced countries, and all are in harmony with the principles of democracy, and, being thoroughly "practical," they constitute the best proof that we are not as we are depicted—brainless fellows, who disregard the hard facts of reality and who are going to break our heads on the granite bulwarks of state and society.

The founders of your great commonwealth were quite as much—and very similarly as we are at present—misrepresented and calumniated by the tyrants of their time, and persecuted too. From the beginning of our movement we had to encounter the hostility of the Government and the ruling classes. Without intermission we have been persecuted. Hundreds and hundreds of times we have been condemned for crimes which in free countries are unknown or are even regarded as duties of free men; for example, for pronouncing our opinion, for demanding our rights, for making use of our rights.

Under the rules of the infamous *Socialistengesetz* years of prison—the millennium of Bismarck!—were imposed on us, and thousands of us were driven from our homes and families, outlawed and ruined. And what for? For taking part in the elections. For distributing voting tickets. For meeting without the permission of the police, who did not permit any meeting. These are all artificial crimes—crimes created expressly to destroy our party.

But all persecutions were in vain. Our party continued to grow. When Lassalle died thirty years ago his followers in the whole of Germany did not count 7,000. Now we have nearly 2,000,000 socialist electors—that is, men above 25 years of age. The growing and grown-up population below this age, not having the right to vote, is not included in that number, and the young generation, our future citizens, in all towns and in a large part of the country are socialists to the marrow.

The following figures will show the growth of Social Democracy. At the general elections since the foundation of the German Empire we had votes:

Year.	Number of Socialist votes.	Mandates gained.
1871.....	124,655.....	2
1874.....	351,952.....	9
1877.....	493,288.....	12
1878.....	437,158.....	9

Year.	Number of Socialist votes.	Mandates gained.
1881.....	311,961.....	12
1884.....	549,990.....	24
1887.....	763,128.....	11
1890.....	1,427,298.....	35 ¹
1893.....	1,786,738.....	44 ²

These figures speak for themselves. With the exception of the elections of 1878 and 1881, when the Bismarckian reign of terror was at its climax, and when our members were not yet accustomed to the new tactics made necessary by the lawless brutality of our oppressors, we see a constant rise; and the next election—of 1884—shows again a great increase, and the last election under the Socialist law—that of 1890—brought us at the head of all other parties, and broke the power of Bismarck, the *major domus* of the Hohenzollerns, whom the new Emperor would never have been able to shake off without this tremendous judgment of the German people. In the number of mandates the progress is not so steady, because, owing to our imperial law of election, there is much room for accidents in the distribution of the mandates.

The following figures will give you a comprehensive picture of our two last elections:

On the 20th of February, 1890, there were cast the following votes:

The Social Democrats.....	1,427,298
The Centrum (Catholics).....	1,309,565
The National Liberals.....	1,169,112
The Progressists.....	1,147,863
The Conservatives.....	919,646
Free Conservatives.....	457,936
The Poles, Danes, etc., together about.....	750,000

On June 15, 1893, there were cast the following votes:

The Social Democrats.....	1,786,738
The Centrum (Catholics).....	1,468,457
The Conservatives.....	1,038,555
The Free-Conservatives.....	438,435
The National Liberals.....	996,980
The two broken branches of Progressists together.....	924,920
The Anti-Semites.....	263,861
The Poles, Danes, etc., together about.....	750,000

If the election of 1890 overthrew Bismarck and his majority, the election of 1893 dealt a stunning blow to militarism. The Reichstag of 1890 had been dissolved for refusing to sanction the

¹ By a supplementary election we gained one mandate more: 36.

² By supplementary elections we gained two mandates more, so that we now have 46.

new military bill. The questions before the German electors were, Is our immense standing army again to be increased and the people crushed by fresh taxation? Or shall we break altogether the yokes of standing armies, and prepare for a general disarming by an international congress? And the answer was that out of a total of 7,674,000 voters, in round numbers, 4,350,000 voted against militarism and 3,330,000 for it,—a majority of more than 1,000,000 against militarism in the home of militarism. That is indeed a great fact—a great victory won by civilization, and won under the guidance of Social Democracy, which is the representative of all popular demands, the champion of Liberty, Peace and Humanity.

This constant growth of our party, this growth under persecutions of every kind, in times of peace and in times of war, under common law and under exceptional law, is without parallel in history. You have had many “booms” in your gigantic commonwealth, but booms do not last long: they are like a hurricane swiftly increasing in strength and swiftly dying out. Our Social Democratic movement is now—as far as we can fix for it a beginning, a birthday, so to say,—more than thirty years old, and it is continually growing. The Chartist movement in England, which in some respects had most resemblance to it, did not last half that time, and had already, after the lapse of ten years, passed its zenith. Such wonderful growth is the proof of wonderful vitality; it would have been impossible, if Social Democracy were not the natural result of circumstances, the natural fruit of our social and economic development.

Nobody can swim against the tide of time, nobody can make it turn. And the tide of time is the working of the elementary laws governing the social and economic world. The tide is with us, to be sure. We owe much to the faults and the shortsightedness of our enemies; and Bismarck, by his remarkable talent for disorganizing everything and making everybody uneasy and discontented, has certainly done much to promote our cause (as part of that power, which always strives for the bad, and always does the good, like Mephistopheles). But we should never have had any lasting success if the “logic of facts” had been against us. Persons have nothing to do with it. Hero-worship is the pastime of political children. If we rob history of all its “heroes,” we only clear it of so many myths. Before the sharp eye of critical science the heroes disappear, and we find that our civilization is the collective work of mankind,—work done by myriads of generations,—and that mankind would be just as far ad-

vanced as it is had all the great conquerors, kings and other heroes, of whom history tells us, not lived at all. If a political, social and economic system is doomed, that is to say, if it has become opposed to the vital conditions and interests of society, no man and no power can prop it up. The old Roman Empire died under the best Emperor not quite as fast as under the worst. No heroes could have averted the final catastrophe. We agitators of to-day do not pretend and cannot pretend to be greater agitators than Ferdinand Lassalle. We know that we are not his equals. And yet our successes are far greater than his. Why? Because in Lassalle's time capitalism, quite new then in Germany, was in its infancy, and had not yet shown its capacity for destroying property. The immense majority of workingmen and all small trades-people (the agricultural population was then still slumbering) believed stanchly in the gospel preached by Schulze-Delitzsch: that the interests of capital and labor were in full harmony, and that by dint of diligence and economy anybody could become a well to-do and independent proprietor. Now, thirty years later, capitalism has made such a revolution, and its effects are so evident, that there is no workman and nearly no tradesman in Germany who still believes in that beautiful but untrue children's tale; and honest Schulze-Delitzsch, once "the king in the social empire," is to-day forgotten.

Facts are not only stubborn things, but also great agitators and stern, convincing teachers. And if the facts speak such a powerful language as to show that in Germany, millions of ruined "existences"—the destruction of our small trades-people and peasants, not your middle classes—demonstrate so forcibly the nature and working of capitalism, then you cannot wonder at the wonderful successes of Socialism in Germany.

Being the youngest power on the immense battlefield of the *Weltmarkt* (world's market), Germany has in the last thirty years made giant strides in industrial development; she has got ahead of all other countries, with the exception alone of England and the United States; and having entered the fight as the weakest power, she has had to suffer most, and the number of victims is with us the greatest. And all the victims come to us, the "party of the discontented," as Social Democracy is denominated by thoughtless scoffers.

Yes, we are "the party of the discontented." All the discontented come to us for help—all who have been wrecked in this our "best of all possible worlds," all whose hopes have been blighted, and who

have discovered that their misery is caused by our irrational, inhuman and unjust social and political institutions. Jeer at the "discontented"! Have all beneficial reforms of which history tells us, has all human progress, been brought about by contented people? No; the discontented were at all times the pioneers of progress. Discontent has always been the whip that drives mankind forward.

And those that come to us, come with open eyes and by their own free will. It is an act of *courage* to enter our ranks, for it is an act of opposition, of rebellion even, against the powers that be. So we have only tried people, people of character and resolution. The millions of Socialist electors have been represented by hostile papers as confused, weak-brained fellows, who do not know what Socialism is. That is a scandalous injustice. The fact is, our electors are on the average more conscious of what they aim at, and more consistent in their doings, than the electors of any other party. Every one of our electors and adherents in general has an idea of the fundamental principles of Socialism, while the members of the other parties, none of them excepted, in their immense majority do not belong to their party from conviction, but are at the command of some authority—the priest, clergyman, *landrath*, *burgermeister*, landlord, mill-owner, or whatever name the authority may have. Our electors never swerve; they stick to the red flag, and neither threats nor promises will bring them into any other camp. The Conservative, the National Liberal, etc., electors are most of them ready to change their party if their authority changes. We had a most ludicrous example when last year at the bidding of anti-Semitic officials many thousand conservative electors voted for anti-Semites and against the Conservatives, who had found out that the anti-Semitic movement, Bismarck's pet, had become rather troublesome. Well, the "boom" of anti-Semitism is a thing of the past—it has only prepared the way for Socialism in districts which we could not reach at once. Anti-Semitism, the "Socialism of the stupid," has been sowing, and Socialism reaps. If you want to see "voting cattle," in the *literal* sense of the word, visit Germany at our next election, and walk about in one of the rural districts on the day of polling. You will see human beings put in cars like calves sent to the slaughterhouse, and driven to the place where the next voting-box is, where the human beings are taken from the car and marshalled to the voting-box into which they have to deposit the tickets given them by their "chiefs." These voting cattle may be Conservative, National Liberal,

Catholic, even Progressist—of this one thing only you may be sure: they are not Social Democrats.

Social Democracy goes its own way, and it bows to no "*sic volo sic jubeo*" but that of duty. We have our firmly established tactics, which have led us from success to success, from victory to victory. We fight our battles on our own ground and with arms that render us invincible. We do not and shall not allow ourselves to be enticed into mad adventures, where defeat would be sure. If we accept a challenge, as we did that of the Berlin Brewery Ring, then we fight it out, and our adversaries will learn to their detriment that we have well calculated our strength and theirs. The late beer boycott was the greatest struggle of this kind of class-warfare ever waged in any country. It was a real "trial of strength," and we brought to its knees one of the most powerful organizations of employers.

Socialism is in every respect the opposite, the antipode, of Anarchism. Anarchism in its two practical significations means first idolization of *I* and the unbounded right of the Individual: and secondly, resulting thereof, the right of each Individual to enforce his will by any means—the religion of brutal force, the propaganda of the deed. In each of these forms we combat Anarchism on principle. I have no time now to enlarge on this theme. Suffice it to say that we Socialists know and teach that no Individual has either the right or the power to impose his will on Society. Neither a Bismarck nor a Ravachol, neither Czar nor Emperor, can alter the laws that govern human society. And we know and teach that we have to organize the working classes for class-war against the capitalist classes; and we know and teach that "individual fight" in the shape of killing and maiming individual adversaries is criminal folly and can never lead to any revolutionary result. We have from the beginning warned against the anarchistic tactics, which in fact are only in the interest of our enemies and directed by them. If we except the lunatics and the blustering spouters, nearly all "practical" Anarchists (of the "theoretical" ones, being most harmless and in-offensive people, I do not speak here) have been and are still police-agents. Mr. Puttkamer, Bismarck's police-minister, told us frankly in the Reichstag that he preferred the Anarchists to the Socialists; and indeed he had succeeded in raising a crop of anarchistic "*lockspitzel*" or *agents provocateurs*. But we spoiled his game and Germany has neither Anarchists nor "*attentats*." To recompense us,

we are to have a new gagging bill, which, if it became law and had the effect intended by its authors, might produce Anarchism. But it will not. I do not know whether the Reichstag will accept the bill in some form—in the present, certainly not. What I know is that no gagging bill will have the intended effect; and the importance of the present bill is principally a symptomatic one, as showing the utter absence of statesmanlike thought in our so-called statesmen. Our reactionists—they call themselves “Conservatives”—are indeed the twin brothers of the Anarchists. Instead of believing in the “blessed bomb” or the “saint dagger,” they believe in the holy trinity of Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, aided by a subsidiary army of policemen, public prosecutors and Star Chamber Judges. That is the whole difference, and it is a difference only in quantity, not in quality. The gagging bill, as proposed by the Government, is simply a law of proscription. Every man in Germany can be put in prison for years if his opinion is not to the taste of his judge—that is the long and the short of this monstrosity.

Add to this the attempt to drag me before a Court of Law because I did in the Reichstag that which was my right and my duty—and you have the temper, the mind, and the sense of our Imperial Government. The prosecution against me is judicially an impossibility, and politically an outrageous blunder. And you know the words of Talleyrand: “Worse than a crime, a blunder.” Many Governments have survived a series of crimes, none a series of blunders. And this prosecution is perhaps the biggest blunder that could be committed; for it puts the Government on the horns of the dilemma—ignominious retreat, or a disastrous conflict with no chance of victory.

Germany is not in a social crisis alone; we are also in the midst of a decisive political crisis. The German Constitution is the most ridiculous anomaly in the world. The pyramid of the Empire has universal suffrage for its base, and is crowned by the “*Pickelhaube*.” Democracy at the bottom, Absolutism at the top—how can that agree? The two hostile principles cannot exist peaceably together; they must fight, and they will fight it out to the end. The English fought it out two hundred and fifty years ago, the Frenchmen a hundred years ago, and we slow Germans are now at it. And we Socialists have to bear the brunt of the battle. Our middle class has not had the courage or the opportunity to conquer civil liberty. So we Social Democrats have the double mission which

is already expressed by our name: to fight for democratic institutions as well as for social emancipation.

• The struggle between Socialism and our Government reminds me of the fable of the Goblin and the Peasant. A Peasant had in his hut a Goblin, who did him no harm, and did him even much good; but he hated him and wanted to drive him out or destroy him. He chased him, he hit at him, but instead of breaking the Goblin's skull, he broke his own furniture. At last, in his blind fury, the Peasant set fire to his house, in the hope to burn and so surely to kill his enemy. The hut became a heap of ashes, and when he left it in his cart, chuckling at the thought of having at last got rid of his enemy, he discovered the Goblin sitting behind him and laughing in his sleeves, quite happy and quite comfortable.

Our rulers can break the furniture and burn the house—Socialism is beyond their reach, Socialism is a necessity. And necessity knows no law but *its own*.

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