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**MONTHLY      TWOPENCE**

# The "Plebs" League

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## Object

To further the interests of Independent working-class education as a partizan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present, and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage-slavery.

## Methods

The holding of an Annual Meet: the issuing of a monthly Magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of the various questions of Labour, theoretical and practical: the formation of local branches and classes for the study of social science, in connexion with the Central Labour College, and in every way to assist in the development of the latter institution, and its maintenance of a definite educational policy.

## Membership

Open to all who endorse the object of the League.

Each Member shall pay 1/- a year to the Central Fund towards meeting the expenses in connexion with the Annual Meet, &c.

## Management

An Executive of five members elected annually, and the Editor of Magazine, who shall be responsible as to publication and meets, &c.

The Magazine shall be 2d. per copy, 2½d. post free.

Subscriptions payable in advance: Quarterly 7½d., Half Yearly 1/3, Yearly 2/6

✉ The Seventh Annual Meet will be held in London (Bank Holiday), August, 1915

**G. SIMS, Secretary-Treasurer**

To whom all P.O.'s should be made payable

13 Pennywern Road, Earls Court,  
London, S.W.

# THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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## CONTENTS

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- 1.—EDITORIAL—J.F.H.
  - 2.—BARRY C.L.C. CLASS REPORT
  - 3.—THE EUROPEAN CRISIS—W.W.C.
  - 4.—THE ORIGINALITY OF AUSTIN HARRISON  
—H. WYNN CUTHBERT
  - 5.—WILL SOCIALISM SURVIVE THE WAR?  
—FRED SILVESTER, & W. H. M.
  - 6.—POETRY: EDUCATION AND HOPE  
—W. E. WALKER
  - 7.—PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNISM
  - 8.—INDEX FOR VOL. VI.
- 

## EDITORIAL

IN our last number we asked for criticisms—or complaints; and we have since received a liberal allowance of both. From North and

South the love-tokens have come, some declaring (in effect) "I will love you always," and others, "If you were but brighter, I should love you more." We had hoped to publish some of the letters in full, but space forbids. So that a brief resumé of their contents must suffice. *Plebs* readers will realize the delicate task that lies ahead of us—in trying to please everybody.

SEVERAL correspondents are particularly grateful for Dietzgen's *Letters on Logic*, and Engels' *Principles of Communism*. Others are not. One of the latter—a plain-spoken individual from Leeds—

declares that "there's too much Marx and Engels. Assuming that the readers are all good Marxian Socialists (and of course no other brand matters) they will be able to recite *Capital* by the mile, and it is therefore unnecessary to use up the very limited space in the Magazine." This critic wants a book-review in every number, more "Letters to the Editor" (readers, please note!) an Editorial dealing with events of the month, notices of good plays, and an increase in the size of the Magazine. All of which we have duly made a note of, and will endeavour by increased attention to business to merit a continuation of his esteemed, &c., &c. Another correspondent in the same frame of mind congratulates us on our fine old crusted, antiquarian spirit, and our zeal in digging up ancient manuscripts. "Is nobody alive to-day?" he inquires, "or did the world come to an end when Marx and Engels died? We want a little more of the spirit and a little less of the letter of their gospel. Apply that gospel to current problems. Put a bit more *ginger* in the Magazine. And if there really are people who can make anything out of Dietzgen's interminable letters, print 'em in small type and tuck 'em away in a corner." Editorial New Year resolution—to put more ginger in it.



"WHAT do the people to whom you try to sell it want altering?" you ask," writes a Scotsman. "That hardly touches the point. Knock out the 'what,' and then you'll be asking the right question."

Very nice of him! But, like Mahomet, *we* have **APPLAUSE** to go to the mountain, since the mountain declines to come to us. The same correspondent—along with many others—regrets that the *Plebs* is not larger. Well, it will be, just as soon as the circulation gets larger. At present it's a trifle bigger than we can afford. So will all readers follow the noble example of the Doncaster comrade who announces that he intends to make a New Year's effort, and orders three dozen of this number to begin with. Another Scotsman declares that there's "absolutely nothing wrong with the *Plebs* except the circulation." *Except*—!



IN the very brief space remaining we will do one or two hurried book notices to satisfy the discontented ones. All *Plebs* readers will know the very excellent Home University Series (1/- net) published by

Williams and Norgate. Two volumes of that series **Book** are particularly interesting just now—*Germany of* **Notices** *To-day*, by Charles Tower, and *A History of Our Time, 1885-1911*, by G. P. Gooch. The first is a simply admirable little book on the political, social, industrial, and

agricultural conditions of Germany. The second is an excellent summary of recent international politics, as well as of current affairs in every European country. Both *ought* to be read. International Socialism must be based in future on a real knowledge of the actual conditions in every country, and not merely on sentiment; and these books are a real help to the gaining of such knowledge.



THE Dietzgen letter is held over until next month, when we hope also to have an article by Mr. Craik dealing with Messrs

**N.B.** Bax and Hyndman's article in the *English Review* on "Socialism, Materialism, and the War." Mr. Cuthbert will also reply to his critics, and Shaw's "Commonsense about the War" will also be commented upon.

J. F. H.

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## GREETINGS !

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**We take this opportunity of wishing all our Readers a Happy New Year, and of thanking them for their past support; also at the same time reminding them that their Annual Subscriptions to the League and Magazine for 1915 are now due. All Agents for the Magazine are respectfully requested to note that the Moratorium does not apply to outstanding accounts. The requisite "scraps of paper" will be highly appreciated and duly honoured by the Treasurer.**

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## Barry C.L.C. Class Report

The Class during the past Session has proved exceedingly successful, the War making the study of Industrial History particularly interesting and valuable. Economics is the subject down for study during the second Session, commencing immediately after the Christmas holidays. The very best thanks of the students are due to the Lecturer, Mr. A. J. Cook, for the thoroughness and enthusiasm with which he does his work.

## The European Crisis

(Continued from last Month)

The lack of an international policy was bound to become more vividly marked in the degree that Europe presented on an increasing scale the character of an armed camp. In the recent years of the history of the Second International, the menace of war was raising its head ever higher. I discussed last month the general causes of this development. Capitalist production as it grows demands commercial and industrial expansion. This need for expansion forces the development of the policy of Imperialism upon the Governments. Each nation strives to make itself the centre of a world-empire. To this end there is piled up huge military and naval armaments. In this way the antagonism between the rival states increases and warfare is rendered more and more imminent. These developments, therefore, placed before the International a general problem which transcended in urgency and importance the questions of internal and national policy. To be sure, the International recognized the growing menace of European war and the necessity of preserving peace for the European proletariat. At its Congresses it expressed its abhorrence of war, and uttered its protests to the Governments. At Basel, two years ago, the International Congress raised the question to the highest eminence in its discussions. From all parties came declarations against war. Haase for Germany, Adler for Austria, and Jaures for France, each made passionate speeches declaring that everything in the power of the proletariat of each country should be done to prevent it. But just there, the activity of the International ended. It propounded the problem. It could not solve it. No practical measures setting forth a common *how* to prevent war were adopted. Discussion on the subject of practical tactics for the combatting of war was omitted in order to avoid dissension within the International and to preserve what was only the *appearance* of unanimity. How little the semblance, the outward show, is to be relied upon has now been demonstrated in the fall of the International itself. It fell because it allowed particularism to override the need of the generality.

Especially among the German Social Democrats was this tendency to avoid discussion of ways and means most marked. The majority of the German delegates refused to consider any practical tactic against war. Little wonder, then, that when the German Government kindled the dry grass there was a total lack of capacity and determination among the German workmen to come out boldly against the war, little wonder that at the critical moment the national spirit should triumph over the principles of the International.

We are the more disappointed with the action of the German Social Democracy in that we had expected most from it. We had looked with admiration upon its recent victories and rapid growth,

and had confidence in it to distinguish itself on the side of progress when the world-war threatened. But here again, as with the International, appearance was greater than reality, outward form was not identical with inward essence. Certainly, German Social Democracy had built up a wonderful organization. If fighting is to be done, organization is indispensable. But the German organization has in recent times manifested less inclination to use its organization for a fight, and that in order to safeguard the organization. That which should serve as means has become an end in itself. Naturally, in such a case, the initiative of the masses was kept low, and the bureaucracy at the top correspondingly made more powerful. Behind the old phrases and traditions there had developed among the functionaries and leaders of the party a spirit adverse to conflict and more inclined to attach itself to the party of Liberalism. It cannot have escaped notice that the leading representatives in support of the German Government's war policy belong to the Revisionist School, e.g., Suedekum, Scheidemann, Bernstein, and Fischer. It is not surprising that the Kaiser and his Government have also "revised" their views of the German Social Democracy, and admitted it on equal footing with the other Parties within the charmed circle of "Me and God." Under such internal conditions of the party, the cry of "the war against the blood-czar" found listening ears among the mass of German workers. And when it was shown that this war against Russian barbarism was a sacred legacy from Marx, and the Old International, the Social Democracy was secured for German Imperialism.

"In vain did a few newspapers of the Left lift their voice against it. Here is shown how heavily the non-comprehension of Imperialism revenged itself. Had there been everywhere a clear insight into the fact that to-day Russia, equally with Germany, is a capitalist country, pursuing a policy of commercial imperialism, and that the war was to be waged merely about the expansion of Germany in Asia, and had this truth been hammered into the masses by our press day in and day out, then the workers would not so easily have become the victims of bourgeois patriotic phrases. Now, however, it appeared to the workers who had always learned to hate most of all the gruesome Russian Czarism, that the German Government, which formerly cultivated an intimate friendship with the Czar's regime, had really been converted to the views of the proletariat in order to wipe out that disgrace of Europe, the bloody rule of the Cossack lash. Hence it could not occur to the undeveloped mass of the German workers to hold back the German Government from the war against Russia. Hence the little band who feared the war as a great evil could do nothing."\*

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\*Anton Pannekoek (of the Left Wing of German Social Democracy) in the *International Socialist Review*, October, 1914.

The action of the German Social Democrats in voting in favour of the appropriation grant to the German Government precipitated the collapse of the second International. I am not going to say that had they taken the opposite course and opposed the war, that the German Government would have desisted from its course. It is, however, certain that the task of the latter in pursuing its aggressive policy would have been made tremendously difficult. On the other hand it would have also given a splendid and inspiring lead to the Socialist and Labour movements in the other countries, had the German Social Democracy set its face against the war. But it chose to do otherwise, and, in so doing, forced the Socialists in the other countries involved to join hands with their respective Governments in the conduct of resistance to German aggression.

In the co-operation of the several working-class movements with their Governments in carrying on the war against Germany, all the weaknesses and defects of these movements were bound to show themselves, all the national prejudices and jingoistic passions which belong to the still undeveloped international consciousness of the workers in any particular country, were bound to be loosed. Hence when one justifies the co-operation of the national proletariat with the Government, he is apt to be identified with the national and jingoistic reasons which are generally given in defence of this co-operation. No worker can with truth, and still less a Socialist consistent with Socialism, support the war against Germany on the grounds of nationality or country. If it be true, as some have deduced from the present situation, that race must always triumph over class, then Socialism is but an empty dream and barbarism an eternal reality. However such a deduction is false. The present situation simply indicates the unripeness of class consciousness. Some of our representatives have taken their stand on the ground that they are Britishers first, and yet they most illogically proceed to condemn the action of the Social Democrats of Germany in supporting the war policy of the Kaiser. For surely a Bernstein has the same good right to be a German first as a Blatchford has to be a Britisher first. And if we are always to be Germans first and Britishers first, then by no means can we talk of this war being "the last war."

So far as Belgium and France are concerned, the instinct of self-preservation was all-powerful enough to secure the co-operation of the Socialist parties in those countries with their Governments in resisting the invader. Who can blame men for defending themselves under the circumstances that have prevailed in those countries? It mattered not that the German Social Democracy acted under misinformation. And that was their own fault. If a man threatens me with a bludgeon under the erroneous impression that I am the man next door, surely that does not deny me the right to defend myself against him.



This country, of course, was not attacked. The violation of the neutrality of Belgium was the occasion of her entering the battlefield against Germany. Whatever were the pretexts made by the British Government concerning the German invasion of Belgium, they in no way discount some good reasons why Socialists should support Belgium against this violation. And these reasons are quite consistent with international Socialism. If world-peace be an essential need of the proletariat, then the latter is certainly concerned with preserving the integrity of a state like Belgium. Otherwise the door is left wide open to invasion, to the opposite of world-peace.

Neither is it to the interest of the international proletariat to stand by and allow such conditions to be established as would make its progress increasingly difficult. As a working class movement, battling for greater freedom to expand, we have every reason to resist all attempts made by any one Power to make itself a World-Power. The immediate danger of that possibility is Germany. But our attitude would have to be precisely the same were the aggressor France, Russia, or Britain. Germany has already proved itself a menace to International Socialism. The Social Democrats she has succeeded in harnessing to her car. In the interests of International Socialism and not for any "King or Country" must she be defeated. From that point of view alone can we as workers support the war. But also from that standpoint must we also oppose ourselves to any attempt made by all or by any one of the Allied Powers, to assume the role of aggressor. We should be as much opposed to the dismemberment of Germany as to the dismemberment of France. In that event, the strange alliances which the peculiar circumstances of this crisis have dictated would break down, and the reasons manifesting themselves for that breakdown would make less likely the possibility of restoration.

For the rest, this "mad year" of 1914 will not only leave behind it the ruins of cities and villages, but also the ruins of many a hoary illusion. A greater social insight and a greater mass initiative will be brought to bear upon the solution of that problem which the Second International failed to solve. By no accident did it fall to pieces. By no accident either will there rise up its successor to take up the task with that insight, strength and determination, which its predecessor lacked. The First International collapsed because its general form could not provide for the particular national needs. The Second International collapsed because it provided only for the particulars, and neglected a practical policy for the general. The Third International will with the ever advancing capitalist development solve the problem which its predecessor failed to solve by a reconciliation of the general and the particular.

W.W.C.

## The Originality of Austin Harrison

Marx-critics are a peculiar race. There is nothing they cannot do or say. Not only does each of them follow his own, or what he at least thinks is his own, line of argument, and draw his own conclusions, but these arguments and conclusions are very irreconcilable with one another and often have a tendency to refute one another.

Among the critics of Marxism the rule seems to obtain that every man constructs his own Marxism. A Marxism is constructed which, while easy of refutation, is so different from the doctrine of Karl Marx and his disciples that nobody cares a whit what happens to it.  
—Louis B. Boudin.

**H**ITHERTO the *English Review* has been looked upon as the literary expression of all phases of advanced thought. But the war has affected the *English Review* as it has affected everything else, and from the standpoint of enlightenment the change is not for the better.

Much of the success which the *Review* has quite deservedly achieved is due to the originality of the Editor, Mr. Austin Harrison. Now originality is an essential factor of success in modern journalism, but like every other virtue it becomes a vice when carried to excess. And in trying to maintain his high standard of originality when dealing with a topical and somewhat hackneyed subject, Mr. Harrison, on a recent occasion, has permitted his characteristic virtue to become the cause of his undoing. In the November issue of his *Review* he tries to find a new answer to the old question, "Who caused the War?"

The Devil, the Kaiser, Atheism, Roman Catholicism, the German philosophers with unpronounceable names, Prussian Militarism—all these have been severally tried by a number of English writers, who have found them all guilty of the crime of breaking the peace of Europe. It was therefore up to Mr. Harrison to find a fresh culprit. And he found one. But journalistic originality surely never conceived a more astonishing theory than his—namely, that the European War is the outcome of the acceptance of the teaching of Karl Marx by the entire German nation, and that Marx therefore "caused the war!"

But the most extraordinary feature of this amazing product of originality has yet to be stated. There are two articles in the November issue of the *English Review* dealing with Marxism and the War. They are both written by Mr. Harrison. In the first one he claims that the war is directly due to Marx's theories; in the second article he makes exactly the opposite assertion. The reason why the German Socialist Party were unable to avert the war was, he declares,

because they had abandoned the revolutionary doctrines of Marx; had permitted "the whole gospel of Marx to become diluted with Opportunist makeshifts"; in short, "German Socialism had drifted away from Marx into the slough of German Imperialism," and "before the drum, the whole edifice of Marx and Lassalle, of Engels and Liebknecht, has crumbled down with inglorious precipitancy—there is not a stone of it remaining!" It seems fair to conclude from these statements that, in the opinion of the writer, if the German Socialists had remained true to the uncompromising tactics of Marx, Engels, and "the veteran Liebknecht," the war would not have taken place. Now, with all due deference to Mr. Harrison's literary ability and journalistic originality, one must insist that there are limits of common sense and logic beyond which the most original of writers cannot be permitted to roam. In short, Mr. Harrison cannot have it both ways at once. If the theories of Marx are the underlying causes of the war, it is obviously impossible that the war could have been prevented had there been some two or three million "rigid anti-national" Marxists in Germany in August, 1914. On the contrary, these Marxists would (according to argument No. 1) have been a powerful factor in hastening the outbreak of hostilities. And yet (according to argument No. 2) if only the German Socialists had been Marxists instead of Reformists there would have been no war at all. The main conclusion that emerges from this extraordinary confusion of ideas is that originality is by no means synonymous with logic! As Boudin truly says, the arguments and conclusions of Marx-critics have a tendency to refute one another. They certainly have in the present case. These are Mr. Harrison's main arguments, and in developing them he appears to be quite unconscious of the fact that they destroy one another.

I now pass on to his criticism of Marx, his account of Revisionism, and his most consoling prophecy of a proletarian revolution in Germany as the outcome of the war. It must be clearly understood at the outset that the Marxism of Mr. Harrison is as original as his logic. Whilst devoting a large portion of the space at his disposal to a grotesque misrepresentation of the Materialist Conception of History, Mr. Harrison does not neglect Marx's general philosophy, and even the class struggle comes in for some notice. His conclusions must rank among some of the most comic statements that have ever appeared in the pages of Anti-Marxian writers. Gratitude is certainly due to him for enlivening the somewhat heavy and tedious literature of Marx-criticism with a variety of views which will be a source of gaiety to Marxists for some time to come.

It may, I suppose, be safely assumed that all *Plebs* readers are familiar with that remarkably lucid and valuable summary of Marx's teaching which is contained in the Preface of the *Critique of Political Economy*. And it surely may also be assumed that Mr. Harrison is acquainted with that simple little *credo* of Marxism. And yet it is

difficult to believe that he has even the most superficial knowledge of Marx's doctrines in view of his summary of the Materialist Conception of History, which is as follows :—

It was Karl Marx who first used the term, the "Materialistic Conception" of History, in his great economic work *Capital*, which ever since has been the gospel of Social Democracy. He meant by materialistic that the ethical powers of consciousness and will were losing their influence in the modern world of industry and capitalism, and that the more intensive the concentration of capital became, the more widespread would be the misery, degradation, and slavery of the wage-earning classes, leading thus inexorably to [his theory of] class warfare, culminating in the bursting of the capitalist integument through the pressure of the revolutionary socialization from below. . . . All moral agency was eliminated, for Marx saw in the modern world only the power of capital—materialism. Purely cynical as regards all ethical forces, whether religion or idealism, he recognised merely matter, and thought that, in consequence, matter alone could destroy matter. The conditions governing the world being economic, so necessarily the solution of their problems would be economic—materialistic. Hence the inevitability of revolution—the law of force.

It is not my intention to criticize all this nonsense in detail. My reason for reproducing it thus at length is to justify my claim that Mr. Harrison has grossly misrepresented Marx's teaching. The fact is he proves too much. If Marx really was "purely cynical as regards all ethical forces," recognized only matter, and believed that "matter alone could destroy matter (!)" how comes it that he ranks as one of the greatest figures in history, numbers his adherents in millions the world over, and includes among the propagandists of his teachings those who have suffered imprisonment, torture and death in order to carry his glorious message of emancipation to an enslaved proletariat?

It is almost unnecessary to point out that Marx fully recognized the important part played by ethics, ideals and ideas, in social development. One quotation, from among the large number that could be quoted, will be sufficient to prove this. In describing the method of social evolution he writes :—

With the change of the economic basis [of society] the whole vast superstructure undergoes, sooner or later, a revolution. In considering such revolutions we must always distinguish clearly between the change in the industrial methods of social production on the one hand; this change takes place unconsciously, strictly according to the laws of natural science, and might properly be called an evolution. And, on the other hand, *the change in the legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophical, in short, ideological institutions; with reference to these, men fight out this conflict as a revolution, conscious of their opposing interests.* (Marx's *Critique of Political Economy.*)

The italics are mine. After this we need not linger over the elimination of moral agencies, the cynical materialism, the astonishing spectacle of matter destroying matter, or any of those other very original conclusions contained in the summary of the Harrisonian interpretation of Marxism quoted above.

But how did Marx cause the war? Well, it seems that in addition to being the arch-villain of the European tragedy, Marx was also an arch-deceiver. Hitherto he has been regarded as being of no account at all. "We imagined him to be a mere literary agitator!" exclaims the astonished Mr. Harrison as he unmasks the real Marx. Far from being a mere literary agitator it seems that he is really a profound philosopher who "invented" (!) a materialistic conception of history. The influence of this theory upon German thought has indeed been truly wonderful according to our original writer. "It fitted in very sympathetically with the physical teaching of history, in that both the materialistic and the 'revealed' gospels of Germanic culture were based upon fatalistic notions of historical inevitability. It enabled Treitschke to reconstruct German history . . . . To the Kaiser this attestation of history was bread and wine, investing him with the aureole of the Godhead, and the young Emperor was able to come forward and speak to his people intoxicated with the materialistic fatalism of Marx and Treitschke." Speculation has already been busy as to the probable fate of the Kaiser after the war. Mr. Harrison has already invested him "with the aureole of the Godhead" and "intoxicated him with the materialistic fatalism of Marx;" it only remains for some good comrade to supply him with a soap box, and his Majesty's transformation into a street corner propagandist will be complete. One pauses for breath amid "this curious amalgam of metaphysical indefiniteness and fatalistic positiveness." There are pages of it, a torrent of words, phrases, metaphors, analogies and contradictory statements and arguments. To give one example out of the many. "'We must be if we will to be'—such became the German national philosophy based upon the fatalism of the materialistic conception." How a philosophy can be termed fatalistic that depends entirely upon the free will of the individual, must be left to Mr. Harrison to explain.

But Marx is the real culprit. The writer cannot leave Marx in peace for more than a couple of paragraphs. If there is one clear connected idea that can be traced through the article it is this desperate attempt to prove Marx's baleful influence on German thought. History, religion, statecraft and militarism—all have been impregnated with "the doctrine of matter" which Marx "invented." "It is vulgarly assumed—(*vulgarly*—poor Lord Northcliffe)—that Nietzsche is responsible for the German war spirit, but this is an error." No, the responsibility for having aroused the German war spirit rests upon Marx. Let it be observed in passing that wars, according to Mr. Harrison, are the outcome of conflicting *ideas*.

Here we must take leave of this most original of Marx critics. The exigencies of space will not permit of a detailed examination of the second article, in which, as has been stated, the writer clearly shows that far from Marx's theories having been the cause of the war, it was owing to the fact that they had abandoned the revolutionary teaching of Marx that the German Socialists were powerless to avert the war. Whilst this fundamental thesis is certainly correct—however much it conflicts with his previous utterances—there are many statements in this later article which are entirely inaccurate, although his final prediction, that the German people will revolt against their Government, seems to be very probable. To conclude with a paraphrase of Cowper's immortal *John Gilpin*, when next Mr. Harrison "doth ride abroad" in the guise of Marx critic, "may I be there to see!"

H. WYNN-CUTHBERT.

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## Will Socialism Survive the War ?

Two Replies to Mr. H. Wynn-Cuthbert's Article in the December "Plebs."

### I.

COMRADE CUTHBERT'S trenchant article is psychological evidence that Socialism will be very much alive after the present tragic war has ended, and bequeathed to the nations concerned a legacy of heavier national debts to bear, of economic crises to face, of more intense misery and exploitation for the working-class to endure. The question he propounds, "Will the War destroy Socialism?" the Marxist will have no hesitation in answering. Indeed, he would hardly think it necessary to put the question. He knows that war is as inevitable an outcome of the Capitalist system of production as is the development of the class struggle, or the progress of the Socialist movement. He knows quite well that just as the Capitalists of a nation will fight their wage-slaves when occasion serves, in order to reduce the price of labour-power and increase their profits, so will they, through the medium of that instrument of Capitalist oppression and aggression, the State, fight the Capitalists of other nations in order to protect or promote their trade interests. Just as in the former case the Capitalists make some pretext to break agreements entered into between themselves and their work-people, so in the latter case they make pretexts in order to violate treaties entered into between their State and the State or States they desire to subjugate.

The gigantic conflict now ravaging Europe was anticipated by Marx and Engels many years before its imminence attracted the

attention of the ultra-patriotic Editor of the *Clarion*. In our International Congresses the menace of this calamity was discussed, and resolutions were passed confirming the International's desire for peace, its determination to combat militarism in the respective countries, and to prevent war, if possible, through the medium of the International Socialist Bureau. That these resolutions were not mere pious opinions was particularly demonstrated by the efforts of Jaures and Bebel to prevent war between Germany and France over the Agadir incident, and also by the imposing anti-militarist demonstrations which have been held from time to time by our Continental comrades. Gustave Hervé's anti-militarist propaganda with its inspiring shibboleth "War against War," although mistrusted by the Parliamentarians, has nevertheless gained so many adherents that its ultimate adoption by the International is assured. Just before the war broke out great Socialist demonstrations were held in Berlin and other German towns with the object of showing the Government that the Social Democrats were resolved to oppose the war. On July 29th at the specially summoned meeting of the International Socialist Bureau it was unanimously resolved to urge "the workers of all nations not only to continue, but even to strengthen, their demonstrations in favour of peace, and of the settlement of the Austro-Servian conflict by arbitration."

Two days afterwards Jean Jaurés, the most powerful personality in the Bureau, was foully murdered by a political re-actionary, and thus a potent influence for peace was removed on the very eve of the war. Whether this dastardly deed had a paralysing effect on the International cannot now be determined. We must wait until after the war to decide that question. I think, however, that the motive of the murder, as a psychological factor, should not be overlooked in estimating the causes which led to the remarkable breakdown of the efforts of the International to preserve peace. Apart from this, it is not surprising that when Germany declared war on France, and violated Belgian neutrality, the majority of Socialists in those countries decided to assist their respective Governments to repel the invader. They were justified in so doing by resolutions passed at International Socialist Congress.

As an anti-patriotic Social-Democrat I hold this position to be as unsound as, in the light of Socialist theory, it is untenable. Marx and Engels laid it down in the *Communist Manifesto*—and Gustave Hervé has brilliantly emphasized it in his anti-militarist polemics—that the proletariat has no country. So far as England is concerned, I hold that the Socialists here who are supporting the war are not justified by the International on the grounds above stated, inasmuch

as England declared war on Germany, presumably on behalf of Belgium, but really to avail herself of the fine opportunity afforded her to strike a damaging blow at her most formidable commercial rival. While, as regards Germany, despite the fact that the majority of the Parliamentary Social-Democrats voted the war credits for reasons which have yet to be fully explained, Karl Leibknecht assures us that their action was strongly opposed by an anti-war minority including himself.

Comrade Wynn-Cuthbert ascribes the breakdown of the International to Revisionism, and assumes that British Revisionism, *i.e.*, the product of the sentimental Socialism of Robert Blatchford, of the dilettanté Collectivism of Sidney Webb and J. R. Macdonald, and of the so-called practical politics of the "pure and simple trade unionist" leaders—is identical with continental Revisionism. This, however, is not so. There is an essential difference between the two schools. British Revisionist leaders have little or no knowledge of Marxism; they ignore or belittle the Marxist theory of the Materialist conception of history and of the class struggle; they despise Marxist propagandists, and they discourage their followers from partaking of the stimulating fruit of the Marxian tree of knowledge. On the other hand, Continental Revisionists base their revised theories of Socialism on a critical examination of Marxist philosophy and economics. On the 15th of March this year, Edward Bernstein, the founder of the Revisionist movement, publicly recanted his Revisionist theories, and confessed that they had been based on insufficient data. On the continent, at any rate, Revisionism is doomed.

Doubtless, Revisionism had much to do with the collapse of the International when the dogs of war were let loose. The German Social-Democrat, Anton Pannekoek, admits as much in an article recently published in the central organ of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party. Alluding to the development of Parliamentarism in the Socialist movement, he says:—

The growth of parliamentary strength creates a desire to compromise with a part of the bourgeoisie which throws out petty reforms as bait. The conquest of power in the State is replaced by the middle class idea that Capitalism can be made enduring by means of reforms. In nearly all the western European countries Reformist tactics throw the class struggle overboard.

Hence when war came the International collapsed.

"The International," says Pannekoek, "has refused to act, but this is no accident. After the war, leaders may come back and in congress try to bridge over the gulf, but that will have no significance.



This catastrophe, like the downfall of the Old International, is the collapse of a tactic, of a system—the tactics of Parliamentaryism. Not in the sense that parliamentary struggle was superfluous or harmful; it was necessary for preparation, and will retain its value. But it is not sufficient for effecting the revolution; new methods of struggle are required for that, and they are already being evolved by the movement."

He concludes by predicting that, after the war, a new International will arise, "more powerful, more Socialistic, than the one now fallen to pieces." This new International will "adopt new forms of action against the Capitalists such as mass demonstrations and mass strikes."

With all this I am in hearty agreement, but I hardly agree with Comrade Wynn-Cuthbert that political action should be *subordinated* to industrial action. The latter should be *supplementary* to the former. It is, however, one thing to advocate a certain line of action, and quite another to decide on the best method to adopt in order to ensure the efficacy of such action. Here I must confess that I am among those who are crying for the light. As a trade unionist, I clearly perceive a grave tactical weakness in the multiplicity of the unions.

Fortunately, the workers are beginning to see how foolish as well as futile sectional strikes are, and many of them are agitating for the amalgamation of sectional trades unions into one union for one industry. Just as the employers, in order to maintain or raise prices, federate or amalgamate, so these workers believe that by amalgamation they too will better be able to maintain or increase the price of their labour power. Just as the employers who federate regard as backsliders the firms which remain outside the ring in order to cut prices and secure trade at the expense of the federation, so those workers who believe in Industrial Unionism regard as blacklegging unions the organizations which do not call their men off a job where a strike of a section of the men is in progress.

Potent as all this is, there is still a large conservative element in the unions opposed to amalgamation. Many trade union officials fearing that amalgamation would deprive them of their comfortable positions, exert their powerful influence against a policy which, while it would undoubtedly benefit and strengthen the trade union movement as a whole, would operate against the interests of individuals whose occupation would be gone. Another reason why the trade unionist bureaucrat opposes amalgamation is because it is likely to undermine his status as a political Mr. Facing-both-ways. Craft trade unionism is based on the principle of identity of interest between master and worker; and the trade unionist official would sooner settle a strike by compromise than have the trouble and

worry of conducting a fight to a finish. The advocates of amalgamation, however, believe in the principle of a class struggle and the abolition of the wages system, and therefore they aim at building up an industrial organization which, like the German army, would be a first-class fighting machine, led by men like Von Kluck and Von Hindenburg, men with plenty of fight in them and adroit, not in leading their army into strategical traps, but in getting it out of them.

The average Labour leader belongs to quite a different category ; as one of them recently declared, he is "a citizen first and a Socialist afterwards," a statement which explains the Labour leader's facility for standing shoulder to shoulder with employers as well as with wage-slaves. Unfortunately for him, militancy is growing, and the question of the hour is: How can the trade unions attain solidarity in the industrial field? As there is a great amount of inchoate opinion on this question as well as a good deal of conservative prejudice to combat, I consider that organized effort to educate the former and defeat the latter should be substituted for the sporadic methods now in operation.

I therefore suggest to enthusiastic industrialists that they should organize forthwith an Industrial Education League, or an Industrial Council. Its members should comprise trade unionists who are in favour of the amalgamation of the unions, who believe in the theory of the class struggle, and who are aiming at the overthrow of the Capitalist Class politically and industrially organized. The League or Council could organize classes affiliated to the Central Labour College for the purpose of educating trade unionists in the principles of revolutionary Marxism, such education being primarily essential in order to make rebels on the industrial as well as on the political field.

I further suggest that the Council should be a kind of common meeting ground for all sections of Industrialists, I.W.W., Syndicalists, &c., &c. Just as the Trades Council is the common meeting ground for craft union delegates, irrespective of their political opinions. I put forward this suggestion because I firmly believe that in view of the collapse of the International on the outbreak of the war and the causes that led thereto, a new International cannot arise unless the revolutionary forces, industrial and political (which are now in conflict with Revisionism, Parliamentarism, and "pure and simple" trade unionism, in all the advanced Capitalist countries) are co-ordinated or combined into an effective fighting army capable of forcing the Revisionists to surrender all along the line. What do *Plebs* readers think of this suggestion? FRED SILVESTER.

## II.

I SHOULD like, in the first place, to congratulate both the editor and the writer of the article under the above title which appeared in the last issue. Such articles, with a full and free discussion of the questions raised, will undoubtedly tend to an increased interest being taken in the Magazine.

That this question as to the future of the movement is of great importance just now cannot be questioned; and upon the answer given to it depends to a large extent our future policy. The Socialism which finds favour with the professional classes generally, and which receives the kind patronage and support of the leading newspapers is, as Mr. Cuthbert says, sure to be destroyed. This Socialism, as he further states, is nothing more than a sentimental appeal; a belief in universal brotherhood—much on the same lines as that taught by religious bodies with regard to the "heathen" (but which does not prevent them *preying* upon them).

With Mr. Cuthbert's remarks on the Reformism of the leaders, both in this country and abroad, I am in full agreement, and one can but hope that with the stupendous efforts they are making at present those leaders will succeed in digging their own graves! It is with his remarks about the attitude of the workers in this crisis that I disagree. That we had not the necessary national and international machinery to prevent it is unquestionable, but the statement "that the workers by their action proved they had no wish to stop the war" requires some qualification. Had the necessary means for doing so existed, the workers of the country would, in my opinion, have expressed themselves just as the South Wales miners did.

It is true that a meeting of the International Bureau was held in Paris, and that Mr. Keir Hardie amongst others was there, but they represented just that type whose policy we are agreed must be destroyed in the interest of the movement. With all due respect to Hardie for his courageous stand on behalf of labour, we must recognize that he no more represented the real labour movement than do the fraternal delegates and missionaries who are sent abroad from time to time.

One of the worst features of the labour movement as at present organised is that the leaders think and act upon the assumption that they have received once and for all the right to express the opinions of labour upon all questions, at all times and places, and without consulting the rank and file. So that at present the movement has

become merely a channel by means of which the world receives the opinion of what is termed "official" labour. When the present war broke out, these officials vied with each other and their friends (our enemies) the employers, in their efforts to rouse the country. All the machinery of the party, the trades unions and their journals were, and are, still being used to this end. By using their own personal influence and appeals they succeeded in preventing an expression of opinion that was opposed to the campaign. To do this they did not hesitate to quote the most unfounded charges of vandalism and cruelty, &c., from the Capitalist press, and made every effort to rouse the workers to a feeling of indignation and a spirit of revenge against Germany.

Under such circumstances I fail to see what else the workers could have done. As far as they could see, the "Movement" had declared war, since their own officials were foremost in urging them on to the fight. It is obvious to anyone who has some knowledge of the Labour Movement how very little the rank and file has to do with it; the whole control is vested in officialdom, which is thereby enabled to do pretty well as it likes. I am fully convinced that not until this control is wrested from the officials and placed in the hands of the rank and file, can we hope to be in a position to prevent a repetition of what is now going on in Europe.

The problem we are up against is how this is to be achieved. I would suggest a propaganda to be undertaken throughout the country in every trade union branch that is prepared to listen to our point of view; that we endeavour by every means in our power to make the workers realize what is required. First, the control of the unions by the members; when that is accomplished we shall also secure that the policy and programme are also decided by the the members, and thus provide a means whereby can be obtained an expression of *real* working-class opinion and not a manufactured one. From this we can proceed to bring about the necessary relations between the unions of this and other countries. It is a task that all alike are faced with, and it must be accomplished before we can obtain an International with power behind it. The present organization is an organization of *citizens*. The future organization must be based upon *industry*, in which alone can the workers at once be controlled and themselves control their own organizations.

If, as Mr. Cuthbert states, "To abolish war is to abolish Capitalism," these, in my opinion, are the necessary and immediate steps which must be taken to that end.

W. H. M.

## Education and Hope

(A New Year's Message to Readers of  
"The Plebs" Magazine)

WHEN Nature took an upward turn,  
Outbranching into potent man,  
She furnished his developed brain,  
With endless wit her ways to learn.

From ether-space to civic art  
Is but a road man ought to know  
His nerves a-tingling and aglow  
To fill his own true cosmic part.

Through ages of the riven past  
Has Man new social effort made ;  
Now, halting—selfish or afraid—  
He fails the present to recast.

'Tis knowledge only can ensure  
The uplift of partitioned States  
And rasure of class-venomed hates—  
'Tis knowledge only can endure :

For what is knowledge but the soul  
Of Man's mature anatomy ;  
A clear, informing harmony,  
With Man in unitary rôle?

To all who love the proletaire  
And hold him heir of things to be  
(When he shall cease, with Man made free) ;  
To these is borne a sacred care :

The lines of knowledge must be writ  
Wherever Man employs his gaze,  
Engraven on the passing days—  
This work well done, Hope sure may sit.

W. E. WALKER.

Leeds,

7th December, 1914.

# Principles of Communism

by FREDERICK ENGELS

*Question 22.—How will Communism affect existing nationalities?*

*Answer.\**—"National differences and antagonisms between peoples," says the *Communist Manifesto*, "already tend to disappear owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, the freedom of commerce, the world-market, and uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to disappear still more quickly. United action, on the part of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the primary conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."

*Question 23.—How will Communism affect existing religions?*

*Answer.*—"Does it require deep intuition," asks the *Communist Manifesto*, "to comprehend the fact that man's ideas, views, conceptions, in a word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life? . . . . When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death-battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely proclaimed the sway of free competition in the realm of knowledge. . . . . The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property-relations; no wonder, then, that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."†

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\*This, and the answer to the following question, were filled in by Bernstein from the *Communist Manifesto*, as they were left blank in Engel's manuscript. See Bernstein's preface, published in the July *Plebs*.

†This does not mean, of course, that religion will be "abolished," or freedom of conscience denied. It implies rather that in proportion as the Communist revolution frees man from physical dependence on uncontrolled forces, in proportion as he becomes, consciously and systematically, a co-operator with society—becomes in truth the architect of his own happiness—so all fantastic ideas of supernatural forces and transcendental forces will be forgotten. And with the individual need to invoke supernatural forces will cease also the social need for such religions, since "supernatural" authority is no longer necessary to "reveal" to man the social nature of his existence, and the obligations to his fellows which result therefrom.—[Bernstein.]

*Question 24.—How do Communists differ from Socialists?\**

*Answer.*—The so-called Socialists are divided into three classes.

The first class consists of hangers-on of that feudal and patriarchal society which has already been largely abolished by the development of the great industry, and the consequent creation of bourgeois society. This class, pointing to the evils of existing society, declared that the feudal, patriarchal form of society must be re-established, since it was free from these particular evils. All their proposals are aimed, directly or indirectly, at this object. And these re-actionary "Socialists," in spite of the hot tears they shed over the misery of the proletariat, will always be energetically opposed by the Communists, because (1) they strive for something absolutely impossible; (2) they seek to establish the sovereignty of the aristocracy and the guild-masters, with all their retinue of absolute or feudal kings, officials, soldiers and priests—a form of society which was certainly free from the evils of present-day society, but had just as many evils of its own, and held out, moreover, much less hope for the proletariat; and (3) because they reveal themselves in their true colours every time the proletariat revolts, by immediately uniting themselves with the bourgeoisie against the forces of revolution.

The second class of so-called Socialists consists of hangers-on of present-day society, who, being fully alive to the evils of that society, are full of fears for its stability. Accordingly they try to strengthen and maintain the existing form of society by getting rid of its more obvious evils. Their watchword is Reform. And these bourgeois Socialists will also be constantly opposed by the Communists, since they seek to defend the society which the Communists aim at overthrowing.

The third class consists of "democratic" Socialists, who, along with the Communists, are in favour of certain of the reforms outlined in the answer to Question 18; but regard these, not as means of transition to Communism, but as measures adequate in themselves to abolish poverty and misery, and all the other evils of present-day society. These democratic Socialists are either proletarians who have not yet realized the conditions necessary to the emancipation of their class, or they are members of the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, *up to a certain point*, has the same interests as the proletariat. The Communists will therefore avail themselves of the assistance of this class for the moment, but will not lose sight of the difference of interests which will prevent that assistance being depended upon when the time for action comes.

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\*As is plain from the answer to this question, those Social Reformers are here described as "Socialists" who either opposed themselves to, or disregarded, the specifically *working-class* movement.—[Bernstein.]

*Question 25.—How do the Communists stand in relation to the other Political Parties of our times?\**

*Answer.*—The relationship varies in different countries. In England, France and Belgium, where the bourgeoisie is in power, the Communists have many interests in common with the various democratic parties—with the Chartists in England, for instance, who stand much nearer to the Communists than do the democratic petty bourgeoisie, the so-called Radicals.

In America, where democratic conditions already exist, the Communists will work with the party which applies these conditions *against* the bourgeoisie—*i.e.*, with the Land Reformers.

In Switzerland there are various Radical parties, some of which have progressed further than others, and with which, although they are still somewhat confused in their aims and interests, the Communists can temporarily ally themselves.

Finally, in Germany, a determined struggle between the bourgeoisie and the absolute monarchies is imminent; and since the Communists cannot make *their* reckoning with the bourgeoisie until the latter has attained to power, it is thus to their interest to assist the bourgeoisie in the struggle in order to attack them again as soon as possible on their own account. The Communists will therefore side with the Liberals in opposition to the Government, remembering, however, that the only advantages which the victory of the bourgeoisie would win for the proletariat are (1) greater freedom of discussion and propaganda, thus facilitating the organization of the proletariat, and (2) the fact that on the day when absolutism fails, the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat takes front place. From that day onwards the policy of the Communists will be the same as in the countries where the bourgeoisie already rules.

THE END.

Translated for the *Plebs Magazine* by A. J. HACKING, M.A.

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\*That is to say, on the eve of the Revolution of 1848. The great social and political changes which have taken place since necessitate, of course, some *revision* of the fundamental ideas expressed in the answer to this question.—[Bernstein.]



## INDEX—Vol. VI.

	Page
Bernstein and Revisionism (Translation from <i>The Volkstimme</i> ) ...	131
Canadian History (G. Myers) ... ..	116
CARTOONS :—	
The Labour "Giant" ... (Harold Batho) ...	24
Blessed are the Meek ... ( " " ) ...	35
When the Rank and File Gets Restive ( " " ) ...	59
Yours for the Resolution ... ( " " ) ...	85
A Fool's Paradise ... ( " " ) ...	126
The Miner and the Railwayman ( " " ) ...	161
Central Labour College, Annual Report ... ..	169
Central Labour College, Its Policy and Work ... ..	179
Class War and Class Friendship (Ernest Jones) ... ..	209
Dietzgen, Letter from, to Marx ... ..	46
EDITORIALS :—	
The W.E.A and the Leeds Strike (W.W.C.) ... ..	1
An Appeal (G.S.) ... ..	25
The W.E.A. and the C.L.C. (W.W.C.) ... ..	74
Fact and Theory (G.S.) ... ..	98
The S.W.M.F. and the C.L.C. (E.G.) ... ..	146
Things that Matter (J.F.H.) ... ..	217
What's Wrong with the <i>Plebs</i> (J.F.H.) ... ..	241
Criticisms and Suggestions (J.F.H.) ... ..	265
European Crisis, The (W. W. Craik) ... ..	221, 244, 268
Fable, A (from H. M. Tomlinson's "The Sea and the Jungle") ...	240
His Glorious Inheritance ... ..	65
Jewish Question, The (Marx) ... ..	60, 138, 187
Kautsky, letter to <i>Plebs Magazine</i> ... ..	115
"Labour in Irish History"—Review (G.S.) ... ..	50
Legend of Pygmalion, The (from Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> ) ...	95
Letters on logic : Economics (Dietzgen) ... ..	90, 127, 165, 182, 200, 235, 254
Logic of Socialism ... ..	67



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