

TOWARD A HISTORY OF “THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE” 1847-1852

The activity of the Communist League (Kommunisten-Bund), 1847-1852, and of its immediate predecessors – the League of the Just (Bund der Gerechten), 1838-1847, and the Communist Correspondence Committee (Kommunist. Korrespondenz Komitee), 1846-1847 – was undoubtedly one of the most interesting stages in the large process of the formation of the international labor movement in its initial period. The history of these organizations is important from many points of view: it is important for the understanding both of the true roots of this movement, and of its search for organizational forms; and particularly for the light it throws upon the history of its efforts to develop a program and tactics. This is why research has so often turned its attention to this subject. And yet, in terms of completeness and scientific documentation, there is as yet no study providing a satisfactory survey of the life and activities of these organizations.

The latest work on this question is the book by E. P. Kandel, *Marx and Engels – the Organizers of the Communist League*, Moscow, 1953, 302 pp. However, it ends with the publication of the Manifesto of the Communist Party (Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei) in 1848, and does not touch upon the subsequent periods of the Communist League's activity, while it is exactly these subsequent periods that are especially significant, both in the history of the League as a whole, and for the understanding of the role of Marx and Engels in particular. They provide a precise idea of the concrete political content which the authors of the Communist Manifesto invested in the formulations they offered in this document. These subsequent periods were, on the one hand, the stormy revolutionary years of 1848-1849, when Marx made use of the dictatorial powers he had been given by the League in the first days of the revolution, to dissolve the Cologne commune of the League after a number of clashes with its “ultra-left” leaders; and, on the other hand, the period of intense struggle inside and around the reconstituted League – a struggle which filled the first

years of post-revolutionary emigration and led, first, to Marx' break with his "left" opponents, and then to the liquidation of the League. Kandel not only totally ignores these two latter periods, but even for the period preceding 1848, on which he concentrates all his attention, he provides only an extremely incomplete, superficial, and often inexact picture.¹ And yet, he unquestionably had the necessary materials at his disposal, since he had at his command the rich collections of the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute.

The principal reason for this situation must, of course, be sought primarily in the special character of the materials that are available to the historian of the Communist League. These materials are not only meager in quantity, but are also extremely inadequate as to quality. There is a particular dearth of documents that might be useful for orientation in the internal life of the League, documents that would help toward a clearer understanding of the struggle of the various groups which developed inside the League, and toward clarification of the true nature of the disputes that had taken place within it.

Evidently, it must be accepted as a fact that the main body of materials relating to the history of the League has been lost. Thus, the archive of the Central Committee (*Zentralbehörde*) of the League, which, in addition to an extensive correspondence, contained the records of the meetings of the Central Committee for virtually the entire London period of its existence, has undoubtedly perished (the quantity of details furnished by these records may be judged from the minutes of the meeting of September 15, 1850, which we reprint below).² It is almost

¹ Of similar character are the other works by Soviet historians on this subject. See, for instance, the articles of the same E. P. Kandel and R. P. Konyushaya in the collective study: *The Revolution of 1848-1849*, edited by Prof. F. V. Potemkin and Prof. A. I. Molok (in the Library of World History series, published by the History Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Moscow, 1952, two vols.); the article by E. A. Stepanova and E. P. Kandel, *The Ideological Struggle in the German Democratic Movement of the Forties of the XIX Century*, in: *Problems of History*, August, 1955, and others.

² This archive, which remained after the split of September 15, 1850, in the hands of one of the followers of the Schapper-Willich faction, was soon afterwards brought to the United States, where all trace of it disappeared. According to the unwritten story which persisted among the old German emigres, this archive came into the hands of Doctor Abraham Jacoby (1832-1919), one of the defendants at the Cologne Communist trial of 1852, who was throughout his long life a collector of materials on the early stages of the workers' movement in Germany. (An indirect confirmation of this may be found in a letter from F. Engels to L. Kugelmann, dated April 18, 1895; see K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXIX, p. 410, Moscow, 1948). In the last years of his life, he said that he was writing a history of the Communist League and its predecessors, but in 1919, as a very old man, he perished in a fire which destroyed his home near New York. This fire also destroyed all his collected documents (the story has it that he did not try to save himself because he did not want to abandon his manuscripts). Whether this story is true, we have not been able to verify.

certain that the books containing the records of the German Workers' Educational Society (*Bildungs Gesellschaft für Arbeiter*), which was the principal vehicle for the League's open propaganda in London, have also perished. The members of the Central Committee of the League were the factual leaders of this Society, and brought up for discussion in it many of the vital ideological and political questions facing the Committee. The publications of M. Nettelau, who saw these books of minutes in 1907 and who copied long passages from them, show that they contained material of exceptional interest for the history of the movement.¹ Also lost is the major part of the documents relating to the trials of the Communists in Germany in the eighteen-forties and 'fifties, as well as documents and correspondence seized during searches.² If we add to this that none of the principal figures of the League left any memoirs of their activities³, and that even some of the printed publications of the League have not been found to this day⁴ (not to speak of the lithographed publications, circulars, etc., which played an important part in the internal life of the League), we shall realize with full clarity the dearth of materials at the disposal of the historian of the League. The work of recon-

¹ This organization of German workers in London was founded on February 7, 1840, under the name indicated in the text. It changed its name several times, but remained in existence until the end of 1917, when it was closed as a result of the policy of internment all German citizens. Parts of its library went to the International Institute of Social History, in Amsterdam, but the books of its minutes have not been found to this day. (A short history of the organization is provided by one of its active leaders during the final period of its existence, R. Weingartz: *Aus vergangenen Tagen. Erinnerung an den 7 Februar 1840*, Vorwärts, Berlin, Feb. 7, 1928). Excerpts from the records of the Society were published by M. Nettelau in vol. VIII and vol. X, of the *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und Arbeiterbewegung*, Leipzig, 1919 and 1921 (Speeches at the meetings of the organization by Marx and others in 1847, and discussion with W. Weitling in 1845-46). These documents are further supplemented by the report of A. L.[ehning], *Discussions à Londres sur le Communisme Icarien*, Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1952, No. 2.

² In this manner were lost the documents of the Cologne Communist Trial of 1852, the large Berlin trial of Josef Ohm, of 1849, and others (attached to the latter were documents found in the possession of Karl Hätzel, representative of the Communist League in Berlin), the Dresden case of Peter Notjung (emissary of the Cologne Central Committee of the League, arrested in Saxony), and many others.

³ Fr. Lessner and St. Born seem to have been the only members of the League to have written memoirs, but they cannot be considered as belonging to the group of principal leaders of the latter.

⁴ Thus, no copy of the German edition of the Catechism of the Proletarian has been found to this day. It was the work of V. Tedesco (1821-97), a Belgian member of the Communist League. (The pamphlet was translated into German by Ferdinand Freiligrath. This fact remained unknown to the latter's biographers; it is revealed in the testimony of P. G. Röser. See O. München und B. Nicolaevsky: *Karl und Jenny Marx*. Berlin, 1933, s. 157). It was published secretly in 1849 by Karl Schapper, in one of the clandestine printing plants in Wiesbaden.

structing the picture of the internal life of the League is, indeed, a tremendously difficult one.

Of course, it would be a mistake to place the entire blame for the inadequate study of the history of the Communist League merely upon the incompleteness of the available documentary materials. The study of this history has been hindered by other factors as well. The Communist historians who devote more attention to this subject than anyone else are decisively influenced in their conduct of the work by party and political considerations. They are fully aware, for example, of the existence of documents which prove that, in the spring of 1848, in Cologne, Marx proclaimed that the League was dissolved¹, but none of them has ever mentioned this decision of Marx, since it does not fit into the official Communist conception of the development of the League. Similar party-political considerations determine the manner in which these historians deal with events inside the reconstituted League in 1849-1850, and particularly their characterization of the debates between the Marx faction, on the one hand, and that of Willich-Schapper, on the other.

This endeavor to fit the historical facts of the actual history of the League into the scheme that has been set up in the interest of the party-political propaganda of our day plays a determining role in the conduct of the Communist historians and is a factor which hinders the proper study of this history. Nevertheless, the basic factor that hampers research in the history of the League is still the incompleteness

¹ It is not mentioned even by so serious a historian as E. Zobel, in his comprehensive work, *Karl Marx: His Life and Activity (1818-83)*, published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute under the editorship of V. Adoratsky, Moscow, 1934, 442 p. (There is also a German edition). Its date of publication is given as July 4, 1934, while P. G. Röser's testimony, which describes the meeting at which Marx proclaimed the dissolution of the League, was printed in the appendix to the book by B. Nikolajewsky and O. Mänchen, *Karl und Jenny Marx, Ein Lebensweg*, Berlin, which appeared in January 1933; moreover, as may be seen in his book, Zobel was familiar with P. G. Röser's testimony in the original as well (there are references to it on pp. 51 and 66). Zobel himself is not to blame for this: a close collaborator of D. Riasanov, he was regarded as a politically unreliable personage in 1933-34, as a result of his historical writings; soon after that he disappeared entirely (he was evidently shot). However, this fact is generally characteristic as an indication of the conditions in which historical work is being done in the USSR.

Typical also is the fact that a German Communist historian, Karl Obermann, who in his recently published book *Zur Geschichte des Bundes der Kommunisten 1849-52* (Dietz, Berlin 1955), stated that "zum erstenmal das Aktenmaterial des preussischen Polizeipraesidiums aus den Jahren 1849 bis 1852 benutzt worden" (p. 8) did not dare to mention that the bulk of Röser's deposition which he used in his book extensively, had been published in the book by B. Nicolaevsky and O. Maenchen-Helfen, referred to in this study, twenty-two years ago. Many historians benefited from the data preserved at the Berlin Polizeipraesidium (a preussisches Polizeipraesidium had never existed): Gustav Mayer, A. Fehling, Hans Stein and others.

of the documentary material available, and therefore the task of seeking out new documents, which may cast a light on controversial passages in the history of the League, becomes especially important.

The documents we reprint below belong precisely to this category. Their origin is as follows.

As we know, for many years Marx and Engels carefully collected materials on the history of the international workers' movement, especially materials relating to those periods of the movement with which their own lives were connected. In 1885, in the preface to the Zürich edition of the pamphlet by Marx, *Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne* (*Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln*), Engels mentioned "the rich store of materials on the history of that glorious period – the early years of the international movement" which he and Marx had succeeded in collecting, and expressed hope that he would be able to organize it for publication.¹ Later, his plans were somewhat altered, and in his letter to K. Kautsky, dated March 25, 1895, Engels, who had just completed the publication of the third volume of *Das Kapital*, wrote about his decision to start work on a biography of Marx. He proposed to begin with the epoch of the First International, as the most complex and difficult, and one in which others would be unable to find their way without his help. As for the period of the Communist League, Engels hoped that he would be able to write about it later, or, "if need be", that this work could be done by someone else. "I am seventy-four years old, he explained, "and I must hurry".²

Fate decided otherwise. Engels never began his work on the biography of Marx: he died less than five months after he had written the above lines... The "rich store of materials" on the history of the movement, which was so carefully assembled and preserved by Marx and Engels, was to undergo serious ordeals. The appendix to the last edition of the correspondence between K. Kautsky and Engels contains the beginning of Kautsky's review of the history of the "literary legacy" left by Marx and Engels.³ But this review speaks only of the major struggle which raged in connection with the publication of this literary legacy. The review might well be supplemented by the history of the minor struggle around this legacy, which was a history of the dispersion of the archive and library of Marx and Engels. Some of the materials were deliberately destroyed by their heirs and execu-

¹ K. Marx, *Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln*, 4. Ausg., Berlin 1914, 30 pp.

² Friedrich Engels' Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky. Hrsg. von Benedikt Kautsky, Wien, 1955, p. 427.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 445-457.

tors. Thus, it is known that A. Bebel and Ed. Bernstein, Engels' executors, destroyed a sheaf of materials relating to the plan, drawn up by Engels in the winter of 1870-1871, for military operations by the French republicans against Bismarck, who was besieging Paris at the time. They were trying to destroy documents which proved Engels' "treason" in helping the enemy in wartime by military advice against the "homeland".¹ On the other hand, Laura Lafargue-Marx deemed it necessary to burn all of Marx' correspondence with his wife, since this correspondence contained sharp comments on their closest friends, with whom both maintained amicable relations, but whom they occasionally did not refrain from criticizing in private.² Still more damage was inflicted upon the archive by the carelessness of its guardians and of persons who had been permitted to work with it: pages from manuscripts by Marx and Engels, autographs from letters to them, and other documents were given away as "souvenirs" to autograph collectors, or simply to souvenir hunters. Some materials also found their way to antiquarians.

At any rate, the papers of Marx and Engels preserved in the archive of the German Social Democratic Party during the years of the

¹ The history of this episode in Engels' biography is told by his biographer, Prof. Gust. Mayer: Friedrich Engels, Berlin, pub. by Ullstein, vol. 2, p. 197, etc. The destruction of the document by A. Bebel and Ed. Bernstein is related in the footnotes, *ibid.* pp. 544-45. The conversation between Prof. G. Mayer and Ed. Bernstein concerning this question took place in 1920. The author of the present lines had occasion to discuss this subject with Ed. Bernstein much later – in 1929 or even in 1930 – and Bernstein told him that he read all the documents in the packet that was destroyed, which included not only the rough draft of the memorandum he had prepared, but also the correspondence regarding this matter with P. Lafargue, as well as letters of a later date, when the question was brought out in the press (1891).

² Shortly before her death, Laura Lafargue-Marx consented, on the advice and request of K. Kautsky, to turn over all of Marx' materials in her possession to the archive of the German Social-Democratic Party. The organization of the materials was undertaken by D. B. Riazanov, who found among them the large package of correspondence between K. Marx and his wife. Riazanov glanced through it: the larger portion of this correspondence was filled with accounts of public affairs and, in its frankness, was of exceptional interest (Riazanov compared it to the well-known letters from Marx to his daughters, adding that his letters to his wife were more detailed and frank). However, it often contained caustic references to various persons, including people whom Marx treated with sincere respect, but whose weaknesses he did not refrain from ridiculing in speaking to his wife. Such references were occasionally aimed even at Engels, especially in the letters of Marx' wife. D. Riazanov, of course, told Laura Lafargue about his discovery, and the latter immediately began to read these letters. When Riazanov came to continue his work on the following day, Laura Lafargue told him that, having read the correspondence, she decided to destroy it, since her "father would never have consented to permit the publication of these letters, and that she had already carried out her decision... D. B. Riazanov adds, half-jestingly, half-seriously, that he cannot forgive himself for speaking to Laura Lafargue of his find. "To save these documents, I should simply have stolen them."

Weimar Republic no longer contained any "rich store of materials" on the history of the epoch of the Communist League. A large part of these materials, given at one time by Laura Lafargue to D. B. Riazanov, who was engaged on the eve of the First World War in writing a history of the International and its predecessors, is now in Moscow, in the files of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute; some documents have evidently been lost, and the archive owns only some scattered materials.

The documents reprinted below have been preserved and never published until this time largely thanks to chance circumstances: in a package with other materials relating to the epoch of the Communist League, they were sent by Laura Lafargue-Marx to Karl Kautsky, for use in some work on which he was engaged (this was evidently the foreword to the new edition of the Communist Manifesto which appeared in Berlin in 1906, as the seventh authorized German edition). Kautsky made no use of them at the time, and the bundle remained among the piles of manuscripts and editorial correspondence. It was only many years later, already in Vienna in the middle nineteen-thirties, that Kautsky came across it again, as he was organizing his archives and preparing for publication his correspondence with Engels. The documents are now preserved together with the other Kautsky archives in the International Institute of Social History.

- This package of documents contains altogether twenty-two items, which may be divided into two groups: on the one hand, there are the eleven letters to Marx from Johann Bangya (a Hungarian emigre who was in the service of the Prussian and Austrian police), and one letter each from W. Wolf (Lupus) and Bartholomeus Szemere, in connection with the Bangya case; on the other hand, there are nine different documents relating to the activity of the Communist League in 1848-1851. There is no doubt that this sheaf of documents was selected by Marx at the time of the Cologne Communist trial, in connection with his work on the well-known Revelations (*Enthüllungen*). One of these documents (the minutes of the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist League, of October 15, 1850) is quoted by Marx in the Revelations; the others (the letters from Aug. Willich to Hermann Becker) are mentioned by Marx in his pamphlet against Willich, Knight of the Noble Conscience, which also belongs to this period. Of all these documents, only one has been published in full, namely The Address of the Cologne Central Committee of the Communist League, of December 1, 1850; it was read in court and was later reprinted in the so-called Black Book (*Schwarzes Buch*) of

Wermuth and Stieber.¹ The rest have never been mentioned in print, although they include documents of great significance to the historian.

Below we reprint two of these documents, which are of greatest interest. They are: a report by the leading circle (*Leitender Kreis*) of the London District organization of the Communist League concerning the activity of the League in London during the first three months of the revolution of 1848; and the minutes of the September 15, 1850, meeting of the Central Committee of the League.

The first of these documents was undoubtedly prepared by Georg Eccarius (1818-1889); this can be seen from the handwriting in which the report is written.² A tailor from Thüringen, who had come to London in 1847, Eccarius rapidly came to the fore in the League and in the Workers' Association (*Arbeiter-Verein*); after the departure to Germany of the principal group of the London leaders of the League (Karl Schapper, Josef Moll and Heinrich Bauer), he became the recognized leader of this organization in London. His report is especially important in that it provides for the first time exact information about the size and structure of the London organization of the League. It may be added that, while the membership of the League in London in the summer of 1848 was 84, the membership of the Workers' Association at approximately the same time was 179.³

The interruption in the meetings of the Association, which is mentioned by Eccarius in his report, was caused by an order of the police, forbidding the owner of the restaurant at 42 Drury Lane, where the members of the Association had met for a number of years, to

¹ Wermuth u. Stieber, *Die Kommunisten Verschwörungen des XIX Jahrhunderts*. Berlin, 1853, appendix XVII. — Several years ago, *Problems of History* (Moscow, pub. by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Institute of History, No. 11, 1948) offered a Russian translation of this document, accompanied by an extensive commentary by V. Rados-Zenkovich, in an article entitled, *From the History of the Communist League* (September 1850-August 1851). This document was printed as a new discovery, although it is well known to everyone who has written about the period in question. The only new element is found in the notes made by K. Marx on the margins of the new Statute of the League, prepared by the Cologne Central Committee. Rados-Zenkovich includes these notes in the text of the document, although his corrections were not only never adopted by any organ of the League, but, generally, there are not even any indications that Marx had ever brought them up for discussion in any organ of the League. We may note also that no other new documents bearing on the history of the Communist League have been published in the USSR during the past 15-20 years.

² This document has unfortunately survived in incomplete form: its ending is lost.

³ This figure is offered by von Minutoli (1805-61), former police president of Berlin, who was sent to London after his retirement from this post to investigate the activities of the German Communist organizations there. His report, of August 3, 1848, was preserved in the archive of the Prussian Ministry of Internal Affairs (Preuss. Geheim. Staats-Archiv, R 77, 509, Ausl., 43, pp. 67-77).

provide space for the Association's meetings.¹ The exact reason for this ban is not known. The compiler of a survey of revolutionary movements in Central Europe during the period of 1814-1852, who had at his command all the materials collected by the Vienna police, wrote that, during the very first days after the revolution in Paris, Karl Schapper made an attempt to "rouse a revolt in London as well", but did not succeed, as the Chartists did not support him.² We have not been able to find any confirmation of this statement. The Paris events evoked an enthusiastic response among London working class circles, where Chartist agitation was at its highest point at the time. There was a constant succession of meetings and demonstrations, culminating in the large demonstration of April 10, which raised the slogan demanding the dissolution of the parliament. Members of the League took a most active part in this movement, and we know from a report by Fr. Lessner that the same Eccarius went to this demonstration with a pair of tailor's scissors, especially sharpened for the occasion, to be used in fighting the police when the latter would try to disperse the demonstrators.³

The leaders of the League, who maintained close contacts with kindred elements among the leaders of the Chartist movement (from the Eccarius report we now know that they were also formally a part of the League, constituting a special commune within it), undoubtedly exercised a marked influence upon them. The organization of the Fraternal Democrats, which was at that time fulfilling the functions of an International and was formally headed by the leaders of the Communist wing of the Chartists, was in fact working under the leadership of the League. The meetings of the Fraternal Democrats, beginning with the winter of 1847-1848, were held in the same quarters as the meetings of the Association, and it was precisely here, and most likely at the initiative of K. Schapper, that the decision was made to send a special delegation to Paris to deliver greetings to the Provisional Government. Incidentally, K. Schapper and J. Moll were members of this delegation.⁴ It may well be that these meetings, in connection with the sending of a delegation to Paris, were the last drop that filled the cup of police patience.

A new meeting place was found quite near the old, at No. 72 of the same Drury Lane (this address is given by Minutoli in the above-mentioned report concerning the German Communists in London).

¹ Ibid.

² Die politischen revolutionären Verbindungen in den Jahren 1814-52 und deren Revolutionen, p. 289 (Staatsarchiv Wien, Varia der Kabinettkanzlei, Fasc. 32).

³ Fr. Lessner, Vor 1848 und nachher, Deutsche Worte, Wien, 1898, No. 3, p. 110.

⁴ A. Fehling, Karl Schapper und die Anfänge der Arbeiterbewegung bis zur Revolution von 1848 (Diss. Maschinenschrift, p. 77).

The "well-known Heilberg", whose "empty phrases" are criticized by G. Eccarius, is Louis Heilberg of Breslau (1818-1852), a doctor of philosophy and journalist who wrote for the *Deutsch-Brüsseler Zeitung* in 1847-1848. In March, 1848, Heilberg, who was connected with Georg Herwegh and Ad. von Bornstedt, was undoubtedly a supporter of their plans for the organization of a "German legion" in Paris and an armed campaign from there, toward the end of revolutionizing Germany. G. Eccarius, along with the rest of the leaders of the League, headed by Marx, opposed these plans and urged the German emigres to return home individually, in order to participate in political work at home. After his return to Germany, L. Heilberg worked as a journalist in Berlin and Breslau, edited the *Schlesische Volkszeitung* (which police reports characterized as "blood-red" – blutrot), and served as secretary of the Workers' Brotherhood (*Arbeiter-Verbrüderung*) in Silesia. He suffered severe persecution at the hands of the police, and died as an emigre.¹

Of still greater importance is the second of the documents we reprint below – the official minutes of the September 15, 1850, meeting of the Central Committee (*Zentralbehörde*) of the Communist League in London, which witnessed the final split between the Marx faction (the majority) and the Schapper-Willich faction (the minority). Until now, the only information concerning the debates at this meeting was derived from the brief quotations from his own speeches and from those of K. Schapper, which Marx cited in the *Revelations Concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne* (*Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln*).² As we see now, these quotations did not convey the entire contents of the debate – especially since Marx did not cite them altogether verbatim: as we may easily determine by comparison, Marx introduced certain corrections into the text of his speech; of course, this did not change its substance, but it brought some interesting nuances into the formulations. It is sufficient to say that at the meeting Marx spoke of "fifteen, twenty, fifty years", which the proletariat was to spend in a state of "civil war" in order to make itself ready for political power; in the quotations, however, Marx added the words "Völkerkämpfe" next to "civil war". It is impossible here to deal in its entirety with the important question of the differences at that period between Marx and Schapper-Willich, particularly since the other documents in the sheaf selected by Marx, which will be published in the near future, are quite essential for the correct under-

¹ *Mitteilungen des Königl. Polizei-Präsidii zu Berlin*, Beilage zum Stuck 3428; also correspondence in *Mannheimer Abend Zeitung* of Feb. 28, 1849; *Norddeutsche Freie Presse* (Hamburg), of June 7 and 21, 1850, and others.

² K. Marx: *Enthüllungen*, 1914 ed., pp. 52-53.

standing of the position of the Schapper-Willich faction.¹ And without knowing this position, it is impossible to understand fully the position of Marx, who fought this faction.

However, one point in the statements made by Marx at this meeting should be stressed at this time, since it is important for the understanding of the basic pattern of the development of internal relations inside the League.

In explaining his second proposal, Marx pointed out that the statutes of the League, adopted by the congress of 1847, were changed by the London Central Committee (von der Londoner Zentralbehörde) in 1848. These words provide a full confirmation of the story told by P. G. Röser, who was first the chairman of the Cologne leading Circle (Leitender Kreis) of the Communist League, and later, from October, 1850, chairman of the Central Committee of the League in Cologne. He related that, after the dissolution of the League by Marx in the spring of 1848, K. Schapper and Jos. Moll, who opposed Marx' decision in this matter, decided to reconstitute the organization of the League without Marx. Accordingly, Josef Moll, who went to London in the autumn of 1848, organized there a new Central Committee of the League, composed of Heinrich Bauer, Georg Eccarius, and himself, Josef Moll; this new Central Committee drafted a new set of statutes for the League, which was found by the police in 1849, when it searched the home of the shoemaker Karl Hutzel (even this latter detail coincides with Marx' statement). From P. Röser, we learn that already in February, 1849, Moll, who had come to Cologne as the emissary of the new London Central Committee (Zentralbehörde) of the League, had tried to draw Marx into the latter, but received a negative reply. Marx returned to the League only considerably later, already in London – evidently at the very end of 1849 or even in the beginning of 1850, since his first letter concerning the affairs of the League was received by Röser “immediately after the New Year”.

From the words of Marx at the meeting of September 15, it is clear that both sets of statutes – those of 1847 and 1848 – had been considered effective in the League throughout this entire period. In other words, Marx had joined the Central Committee of the League at that time without insisting on the revocation of the organizational measures adopted by his opponents; he evidently agreed to recognize – though, of course, temporarily – the statutes of 1848, against which he entertained serious objections as a matter of principle.

Thus, these statements by Marx, which confirm fully the corresponding parts of P. G. Röser's story, make it possible to establish

¹ Especially the letters from Aug. Willich to Hermann Becker in Cologne, of December 6 and 24, 1851.

the exact chronological canvas of the most important events inside the League in 1848-1849. The 1848 statutes of the London Central Committee are the very document which was reprinted in Wermuth and Stieber's Black Book (Schwarzes Buch) as the Statutes of the Revolutionary Party (Statuten der revolutionären Partei). (See Appendix IX).

In the sheaf of documents collected by Marx, the minutes of the meeting of September 15, 1850, were preserved in two copies. Analysis of the text shows that one of them, in the handwriting of F. Engels, represents the minutes recorded during the meeting, at which Engels served as secretary. The second, copied in an unknown hand is a slightly revised version of the minutes. It is likely that the copy was made to be sent to Cologne. At the trial, it was established that this copy had been duly received by P. Röser, read by all the members of the Cologne Leading Circle (Leitender Kreis) of the League, and discussed in detail. The police and the prosecuting authorities were very eager to find this document, but they never succeeded. Later, already in prison, P. Röser admitted that he had given it for safekeeping to Hermann Bürgers, who evidently sent it back to London, to Marx, together with other papers (the letters from A. Willich to Herm. Becker, etc.).

We reprint this document in the corrected final version, but we indicate in the footnotes all the variations that distinguish it from Engels' rough draft.

DOCUMENTS

I. REPORT OF THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE IN LONDON, 1848

London, den 18ten Juni 1848.

Vierteljähriger Bericht des Kreises London an die Centralbehörde.

Brüder!

Seitdem die Centralbehörde London verlassen hat, sind drei volle Monate verflossen. Wir suchen deshalb unsern Pflichten insofern nachzukommen, unsern vierteljährigen Bericht einzusenden.

1. Allgemeine Uebersicht

Als die Centralbehörde in den letzten Tagen des Monat Febr[uar] von London verlegt wurde und den Ausschuss einsetzte war vorauszusehen, dass die Lage des Kreises eine kritische war. Der Kreis

L[ondon] war abgeschnitten vom Herde der Bewegung. Alles war gespannt auf die nächsten Ereignisse. Viele glaubten[,] was in Frankreich möglich gewesen[,] müsse und könne sogleich auch in Deutschland pp[usw.] ausgeführt werden. Von anderer Seite suchte man die Begeisterung durch leere Phrasen zu tödten. (In letzterer Beziehung zeichnete sich der bek[annte] Heilberg in den Diskuss[ionen] der Bildungsgesellschaft aus). Es galt das Feuer der Begeisterung so zu bewachen, dass die Schritte der Centralbeh[örde] in Paris auch zugleich ein Wunsch des Kreises L[ondon] war[en]. In L[ondon] selbst war man ausserordentlich gespannt und diskutierte über nichts anderes als über franz[ösische] und deutsche Revolution; über die franz[ösische] Republik und die Tagespolitik überhaupt. Die Versammlungen der Bildungsgesellschaft wurden unterbrochen dadurch, dass das Lokal geschlossen wurde. Der B[und] gab sich alle Mühe, diese Versammlungen herzustellen, so dass auch nur einige Abende theilweise verloren gingen. Auf einmal liefen die damals unrichtigen Nachrichten ein: „Der König Fritz ist davon gejagt“, – „in Berlin die Republik proklamirt“, – „alle Deutschen marschieren von Paris als bewaffnetes Corps nach Deutschland“. Es wurde gegen diese Nachrichten gesprochen, und zwar vom B[unde] aus so geleitet, dass eine Comission aus fünf Mitgliedern in der *Gesellschaft* ernannt wurden, welche Gelder eintreiben sollten, um im Falle, – die BM [Bundes Mitglieder] nach Deutschland zu schaffen. In allen diesen Punkten sollten jedoch zuerst unsere Freunde in Paris um das Nähere der Bewegung pp gefragt werden.

Der B[und] suchte sich als B[und] auf diese Weise in jeder Hinsicht der Centbh. [Centralbehörde] anzuschliessen und zugleich die Nichtbm. [Nichtbundesmitgliedern] der Gesellsch[aft] in Schach zu halten. Am nächsten Tage kam der Del[egirte] der Centralbehörde Sch[apper] hier an mit Vollmacht und Nachricht pp. Die erwähnte Commission trieb Gelder ein und schickte die einzelnen BM [Bundes Mitglieder] mit Unterstützung ab und zwar nach solchen Theilen Deutschl[ands] wo sie nöthig od[er] auch in ihrem Elemente waren.

Schon vor der Ankunft des Br[uders] Sch. wurden Generalvers[ammlungen] gehalten, dieselben dienten nur dem Br. Sch., wie später Bauer, um seine Berichte abzustatten, Uebersicht über die Vorgänge in Paris zu geben. Der Eifer der BMgl. war gross, beinahe zu gross. Bei manchen ist seit jener Zeit eine scheinbare Schlawheit eingetreten, die Mehrzahl hat im Gegentheil einen besseren Ueberblick über die ganze Bewegung und grössere Hoffnungen im Interesse des Prinzips gewonnen.

Im Hinblick auf die engl[ischen] Chartisten Beweg[ung] ist nur noch folgendes zu bemerken:

Die einzelnen BM. der Kreis überhaupt, hat die Chartisten und besonders unsere engl. BB[Brüder] in öffentlichen Meetings zu unterstützen gesucht. Durch die reaktionären Beschlüsse des Parlaments ist die Öffentlichkeit unpraktisch geworden. Durch die Resultate des zehnten April pp (deren Folgen von machen BM vorausgesehen wurden) haben unsere BB[Brüder] der GM [Gemeinde] L[ondon] eingesehen[,] woran es fehlt. Eine durchgreifende geheime Propaganda kann dem Chartismus wieder auf die Beine helfen und die Massen fester ketten. Solange die Chart[isten] die äussere Bewegung durch inneren Zusammenhang nicht zu unterstützen suchen, ist kein durchgreifendes Resultat zu erwarten. Die geh[eime] Propaganda muss und wird hergestellt werden in kurtzer Zeit. – Der Kreis L[ondon] war am 10ten April versammelt, um im Falle, die Chartisten zu unterstützen.

So weit im Allgemeinen. Gehen wir nun auf die besonderen Verhältnisse des Kreises ein. Der B[und] in L[ondon] umfasste Ende Febr. zehn Gmden [Gemeinden]. Davon waren neun Gm. welche aus Deutschen, Dänen, Schweden, Ungarn pp bestanden; die zehnte Gem[einde] aus Engländern gebildet. Von den neun D[eutschen] G[emeinden] hatte eine im Ostende der Stadt ihren Sitz und leitete die dortige Bildungsgesellschaft. Die Mitgl[ieder] der Ostender Gem[einde] machten mehrmals den Antrag, die dortige Gm[Gemeinde] u[nd] Bildungsges[ellschaft] aufzuheben. Der Antrag wurde immer zurückgewiesen. Jedoch als man sah dass die Ostender Bdes [Bildungsgesellschaft] trotz allen Anstrengungen Einzelner nicht gedieh, wurde die Bildungsgesellschaft aufgehoben und die Gm[Gemeinde] in die versch[iedenen] Gmdn[Gemeinden] des Westendes vertheilt. Da es unmöglich war im Ostende der Stadt einen festen Punkt zu erlangen, so betheiligen sich die ehemals dortigen Mitglieder jetzt in der Bildungsges[ellschaft] des Westendes.

Zu jener früher erwähnten Zeit umfasste der Kreis L[ondon] 84 BM. Obgleich viele BM abgegangen sind[,] so ist doch die Anzahl der BM im jetzigen Augenbli[c]k [...]

Aus dem Protok[oll] sind folgende disciplinarische Beschlüsse ausgezogen:

1. Kuck 1, Kuck 11, Hart 1, Hart 11 und Blau wurden vom Bd [Bunde] entfernt (nachlässige Subjekte).
2. Th. Mayer aus dem Elsass, welcher den Bd[Bund] durch sein gemeines Durchbrennen compromitirte, wurde ausgeschlossen und der Kreis trägt bei dem nächsten Congress auf Ausstossung an.

Als leitender Kreis wie früher angenommen wurde, haben wir folgende Berichte einzuliefern.

1. Briefe von *Amerika* von unseren Emissären aus New York zeigen an, dass dieselben nicht müßig gewesen, ohne aber bis heute bedeutende Resultate geliefert zu haben. Die Elemente im Bdlsver [Bildungsverein] zu New York sind weit hinter der Bewegung zurü[c]k geblieben. Die franz. Revolution hat auch dort neues Leben hervorgerufen. W. W. [Weitling] scheint sich viele Mühe zu geben sein System den Leuten einzupfropfen ist jedoch von jüngeren besseren Leuten bedeutend überflügelt worden.

II. LAST MEETING OF THE CENTRAL-BEHÖRDE

Sitzung der Central Behörde vom 15 Septbr 1850.

Gegenwärtig Marx, Engels, Schramm, Pfaender, Bauer, Eccarius, Schapper, Willich, Lehmann.

Fraenkel ist entschuldigt.

Das Protokoll der letzten Sitzung ist nicht gegenwärtig, da dies eine ausserordentliche Sitzung ist und wird daher nicht verlesen.

Marx: Die Freitagssitzung konnte wegen Collision mit der Commissionssitzung der Gesellschaft nicht stattfinden. Da Willich¹ eine Kreisversammlung, deren Rechtmässigkeit ich nicht untersuche, berufen, muss die Sitzung heute stattfinden.

Ich stelle folgenden, in drei Artikel zerfallenden Antrag:

1. Die Centralbehörde ist von London nach Köln verlegt und geht auf die dortige Kreisbehörde über, sobald die heutige Sitzung der Centralbehörde geschlossen ist. Dieser Beschluss wird den Bundesmitgliedern in Paris, Belgien und der Schweiz mitgetheilt. Nach Deutschland wird die neue Centralbehörde ihn selbst anzeigen.

Motive: Ich war gegen Schappers Antrag für eine allgemeine deutsche Kreisbehörde in Köln, um die Einheit der Centralgewalt nicht zu stören. Dies fällt in unserm Antrag weg. Dazu kommt eine Reihe neuer Gründe. Die Minorität der Centralbehörde ist in offener Rebellion gegen die Majorität, sowohl bei dem Tadelsvotum letzter Sitzung, wie bei der jetzt vom Kreis berufenen General Versammlung, wie im Verein und bei den Flüchtlingen. Daher ist die Central Behörde hier unmöglich. Die Einheit der C.B. kann nicht mehr beibehalten werden, sie müsste sich spalten und zwei Bünde würden gemacht. Da aber das Interesse der Parthei vorgeht, so schlage ich diesen Ausweg vor.

2. Die bisherigen Statuten des Bundes sind aufgehoben. Es wird der neuen Central Behörde aufgegeben, neue Statuten zu machen.

Motive: Die 1847er Congressstatuten sind 1848 von der Londoner C.B. verändert. Die Zeitverhältnisse sind jetzt wieder verändert. Die letzten Londoner Statuten haben die prinzipiellen Artikel der Sta-

¹ am Montag.

tuten geschwächt. Beide Statuten gelten hier oder da, an einigen Orten gelten gar keine oder ganz eigenmächtig¹ gemachte, also vollständige Anarchie im Bunde. Dazu sind die letzten Statuten veröffentlicht und können also nicht mehr dienen. Mein Antrag geht also der Sache nach dahin, dass an die Stelle der Statutenlosigkeit wirkliche Statuten gesetzt werden.

3. Es werden in London zwei Kreise gebildet, die in absolut keiner Beziehung zueinander stehen und nur das Band haben, dass sie im Bund sind und mit derselben² Central Behörde correspondiren.

Motive: Grade wegen der Einheit des Bundes ist es nöthig, dass hier zwei Kreise gegründet werden. Ausser den persönlichen Gegensätzen sind auch prinzipielle Gegensätze sogar in der Gesellschaft hervorgetreten. Grade in der letzten Debatte über die Frage „die Stellung des deutschen Proletariats in der nächsten Revolution“ sind von Mitgliedern der Minorität der C.B. Ansichten ausgesprochen, die direkt dem vorletzten Rundschreiben³, sogar dem Manifest, widersprechen. An die Stelle der universellen Anschauung des Manifestes ist die deutsche nationale⁴ getreten und dem Nationalgefühl der deutschen Handwerker geschmeichelt. Statt der materialistischen Anschauung des Manifestes ist die idealistische hervorgehoben worden. Statt der wirklichen Verhältnisse, der *Wille* als Hauptsache in der Revolution⁵ hervorgehoben worden. Während wir den Arbeitern sagen: Ihr habt 15, 20, 50 Jahre Bürgerkrieg durchzumachen, um die Verhältnisse zu ändern, um euch selbst zur Herrschaft zu befähigen, ist statt dessen gesagt worden: Wir müssen *gleich* zur Herrschaft kommen oder wir können uns schlafen legen. Wie von den Demokraten das Wort „Volk“ ist jetzt das Wort „Proletariat“ als blosse Phrase gebraucht worden. Um diese Phrase durchzuführen müsste man alle Kleinbürger als Proletarier erklären, also⁶ de facto die Kleinbürger und nicht die Proletarier vertreten. An die Stelle der wirklichen revolutionären Entwicklung müsste man die Phrase der Revolution setzen. Diese Debatte hat endlich bewiesen, welche principiellen Differenzen den Hintergrund der persönlichen Streitigkeiten bildeten, und jetzt ist es Zeit einzuschreiten. Grade diese Gegensätze sind als Kampfparole der zwei Fractionen genommen worden und von verschiedenen Bundesmitgliedern sind die Vertheidiger des Manifestes als Reactionäre bezeichnet worden, und man hat sie hierdurch unpopulär zu machen gesucht, was ihnen aber völlig gleichgültig ist, da sie keine

¹ selbst.

² einer.

³ Centralschreiben der Centralbehörde.

⁴ deutsch nationale.

⁵ als Hauptsache der Revolution dargestellt.

⁶ zu Proletariern.

Popularität suchen. Die Majorität hätte hiernach das Recht den Kreis London aufzulösen, und die Mitglieder der Minorität¹ als mit den Principien des Bundes im Widerspruch auszustossen. Ich stelle diesen Antrag nicht, weil es nutzlosen Krakeel herbeiführen würde und weil diese Leute ihrer Ueberzeugung nach doch Kommunisten sind, obwohl die jetzt von ihnen ausgesprochenen Ansichten anticommunistisch sind und höchstens social demokratische genannt werden können. Es versteht sich aber, dass es reiner schädlicher Zeitverlust wäre, wenn wir beisammen blieben. Schapper hat oft von Trennung gesprochen, gut[,] ich mache Ernst mit der Trennung. Ich glaube den Weg gefunden zu haben, auf dem wir uns trennen², ohne die Parthei zu sprengen.

Ich erkläre, dass ich nach meiner³ Ansicht höchstens 12 Leute bei unserem Kreis wünsche, möglichst wenige und lasse der Minorität gerne den ganzen Schwarm. Ist dieser Vorschlag angenommen, so können wir offenbar nicht in der⁴ Gesellschaft bleiben; ich und die Majorität werden aus der Gt Windmill Strt Gesellschaft austreten. Endlich handelt es sich nicht um eine feindliche⁵ Beziehung der beiden⁶ Fractionen, sondern im Gegentheil um die Aufhebung der Spannung und daher aller Beziehungen. Im Bund und in der Parthei bleiben wir zusammen, aber in einer nur schädlichen Beziehung bleiben wir nicht.

Schapper: Wie in Frankreich das Proletariat⁷ sich von der Montagne und der Presse trennt⁸, so hier, die Leute, die die Parthei prinzipiell vertreten sich von denen, die im Proletariat organisiren trennen. Für die Verlegung der Central Behörde⁹ bin ich, auch für Aenderung der Statuten. Die Kölner kennen die Verhältnisse in Deutschland. Auch glaube ich, dass die neue Revolution Leute hervorbringen wird, die sich¹⁰ selbst leiten werden, besser als alle Leute, die 1848 einen Namen hatten. Was die prinzipiellen Spaltungen¹¹ anbetrifft, so hat Eccarius die Frage vorgeschlagen, die Anlass zu dieser Debatte gab. Ich habe die hier angefochtene Ansicht ausgesprochen weil ich überhaupt in dieser Sache enthusiastisch bin. Es handelt sich darum, ob wir im Anfang selbst köpfen oder geköpft

¹ der Centralbehörde.

² können.

³ unserer.

⁴ derselben.

⁵ feindselige.

⁶ dieser 2.

⁷ die Proletarier.

⁸ trennen.

⁹ nach Köln.

¹⁰ sie.

¹¹ prinzipielle Spaltung.

werden. In Frankreich werden die Arbeiter drankommen und damit *wir* in Deutschland. Wäre das nicht der Fall, so würde ich mich allerdings schlafen legen, und dann könnte ich eine andere materielle Stellung haben. Kommen wir dran, so können wir solche Massregeln ergreifen, welche dem Proletariat die Herrschaft sichern. Ich bin fanatisch für diese Ansicht. Die Central Behörde aber hat das Gegentheil gewollt. Wollt Ihr aber nichts mehr mit uns zu thun haben, gut[,] so trennen wir uns jetzt. Ich werde in der nächsten Revolution gewiss guillotiniert, aber ich werde nach Deutschland gehen. Wollt ihr aber 2 Kreise bilden, gut[,] dann hört aber der Bund auf und dann treffen wir uns in Deutschland wieder und vielleicht können wir dann wieder zusammengehen. Ich bin ein persönlicher Freund von Marx, aber wollt Ihr die Trennung, gut, so gehen wir allein und wir gehen allein.¹ Dann sollen aber 2 Bünde gegründet werden. Der Eine für die, welche mit der Feder wirken, der andere für die, welche anders wirken. Ich bin nicht der Ansicht, dass die Bourg[e]ois in Deutschland zur Herrschaft kommen und ² ich bin fanatischer Enthusiast in dieser Hinsicht ³, wäre ich das nicht, so gäbe ich keinen Deut für die ganze Geschichte. Aber 2 Kreise hier in London, 2 Gesellschaften, 2 Flüchtlings Comites, dann wollen wir lieber 2 Bünde und vollständige Trennung.

Marx: Schapper hat meinen Antrag missverstanden. Sobald der Antrag angenommen, trennen wir uns, die 2 Kreise trennen sich, und die ⁴ Personen stehen in keiner Beziehungen zueinander. Sie sind aber in demselben Bund und unter derselben Behörde.⁵ Ihr sollt sogar die grosse Masse der Bundes Mitglieder behalten. Was persönliche Opfer angeht, habe ich so viele gebracht, wie Jemand, aber für die Klasse, nicht für die Personen. Was den Enthusiasmus angeht, gehört wenig Enthusiasmus dazu, zu einer Parthei zu gehören, von der man glaubt sie käme an die Regierung. Ich habe stets der momentanen Meinung des Proletariats getrotzt. Wir devouiren uns einer Parthei, die zu ihrem Besten grade noch nicht zur Herrschaft kommen kann. Das Proletariat[,] käme es zur Herrschaft[,] würde nicht direkt proletarisch, sondern kleinbürgerliche Massregeln ergreifen. Unsere Parthei kann erst zur Regierung kommen, wenn die Verhältnisse es erlauben *ihre* Ansicht durchzuführen. Louis Blanc liefert das beste Exempel, was man ausrichtet, wenn man zu früh zur Herrschaft kommt. In Frankreich kommen übrigens nicht die Proletarier allein, sondern mit

¹ und Ihr geht allein.

² aber.

³ Beziehung.

⁴ diese.

⁵ Centralbehörde.

ihnen die Bauern und Kleinbürger zur Herrschaft und werden nicht ihre, sondern *deren* Massregeln durchführen müssen. Die Commune von Paris beweist, dass man nicht in der Regierung zu sein braucht, um etwas durchzuführen. Uebrigens warum spricht sich keiner der übrigen Mitglieder der Minorität, namentlich der Bürger Willich, aus, die damals alle einstimmig das Rundschreiben gebilligt haben. Den Bund *können* wir nicht trennen und wollen wir nicht trennen, sondern bloß den Kreis London in 2 Kreise trennen.

Eccarius: Ich habe die Frage gestellt und habe die Absicht allerdings gehabt, die Sache zur Sprache zu bringen. Was die Schappersche Auffassung angeht, so habe ich in der Gesellschaft entwickelt, warum ich sie für eine Illusion halte und warum ich nicht glaube, dass unsere Parthei sogleich bei der nächsten Revol[ution] zur Herrschaft kommen kann. Unsere Parthei ist dann in den Clubbs wichtiger als in der Regierung.

Der Bürger Lehmann entfernt sich, ohne ein Wort zu sagen. Desgleichen der Bürger Willich.

Art. 1 angenommen von allen. Schapper stimmt nicht.

Art. 2 angenommen von allen. Schapper desgleich.

Art. 3 angenommen desgl. Schapper desgleich.

Schapper erklärt seinen Protest gegen uns alle. Wir sind jetzt vollkommen getrennt. Ich habe meine Bekannte und Freunde in Köln, die mir mehr folgen wie Euch”.

Marx: Wir haben unsere Sache statutengemäss abgemacht und die Beschlüsse der C.B. haben Gültigkeit.

Nach Verlesung des Protokolls erklären Marx und Schapper, dass sie nicht nach Köln in dieser Angelegenheit geschrieben haben.

Schapper wird gefragt, ob er etwas gegen das Protokoll einzuwenden habe. Er erklärt, dass er nichts einzuwenden habe, da er jeden Einwand für unnöthig hält.

Eccarius trägt an, dass das Protokoll von Allen unterzeichnet werde. Angenommen. Schapper erklärt, dass er es nicht unterschreiben werde.

So geschehen London den 15. September 1850.

Vorgelesen, genehmigt, und unterschrieben.

Gez. K. Marx, Präsident der Central Behörde. Gez. C. Schramm.

„ F. Engels, Secretair.

„ F. G. Eccarius.

„ Henry Bauer.

„ C. Pfaender.