

# ENGELS

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## Critique of the Erfurt Programme



*F. Engels*

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# INTRODUCTION

A prime example of the contempt for theory endemic in the British labour movement — spoken of by Marx and Engels (e.g. Preface to the Peasant War in Germany), must surely be The Critique of the Erfurt Programme of 1891; or to be more precise that Critique's near inaccessibility in English.

The Erfurt Programme of the German Social Democratic Party was adopted in October 1891 at the Erfurt Congress to replace the Gotha Programme of 1875. The errors in the Erfurt Programme were criticised by Engels in his work 'On the Critique of the Social-Democratic Draft Programme of 1891.' (Note 21 in Lenin's State and Revolution, Peking 1965.)

Anyone acquainted with Marxism must be aware of the attention paid to the German labour movement by Marx and Engels throughout their lifetimes, due to the fact that the German Social-Democratic Party was the best established, most powerful, most theoretical, and nearest to Marxism of any in the world at that time. Due to particularly acute contradictions then prevailing in Germany as a result of its concurrent unification and industrialisation within "the colossal remnants of feudalism...which give our whole political pigsty in Germany its specific reactionary stamp," Marx and Engels regarded the lessons of the German labour movement as of great value. However, subsequent British Marxists evidently do not agree with Marx and Engels. But doing so with that particular British hypocrisy and/or insularity often remarked on by the founders of scientific socialism, they do not openly come out with it. In the time-honoured British fashion, they simply turn a blind eye to their own contradictory behaviour — whereas they pay maximum lip-service to historical materialism, they give minimum serious attention to it and indeed to objective reality in general. "And when we recall what importance the Erfurt Programme acquired for the whole of international Social-Democracy, that it became the model for the whole of the 2nd International, we may state without exaggeration that Engels thereby criticised the opportunism of the whole 2nd International." (Lenin: State and Revolution.)

Consider the earlier "Programme of the Socialist Workers' Party adopted in 1875 at the Gotha Congress, where the two previously separate German Socialist parties, the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans united. This Programme was thoroughly opportunist since the Eisenachers had made concessions to the Lassalleans on all important questions and had accepted Lassalleian formulations. Marx and Engels subjected the Gotha Programme to withering criticism." (ibid., Note 7). Indeed this work of Marx and Engels is well known in Marxist circles, being contained in many editions of Selected Works, Basic Writings, pamphlets, etc. However, despite the fact that Engels regarded the Erfurt Programme and its Critique as of equal moment (as

the Gotha Programme) for the whole of European Social-Democracy, so much so that Lenin quotes extensively from it in his major work, *The State and Revolution*, and despite the fact that the complete article is of no greater length or difficulty than the Gotha Programme Critique, as far as I can discover, it has only been translated into English in *Marxism Today* in Feb 1970. This despite 50 years of the Communist Party of Great Britain to say nothing of its predecessors or indeed successors. However at least the C.P.G.B. until the 1950's, made some real attempt at the development of Marxist-Leninist theory in Britain - the "revolutionary, anti-revisionist" Communist Party of Britain (M-L) makes none: and is proud of it!

From this morass of blind empiricism and economism, obscured by a screen of revolutionary phrase-mongering, must the British anti-revisionist movement be saved. This can only come about by extensive analysis and synthesis of the historical experience of the British working class, and of the proletariat internationally, with especial regard to political economy and ideology. Nothing less will suffice - certainly not the undialectical 'pure politics' (a parody of the correct principle of 'putting politics in command'), espoused by the political manipulators with which the movement is so beset. As Engels pointedly expressed it in *The Peasant War* preface, "...constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, i.e., that it be studied." (emphasis added).

II Especially worthy of note in Engels' Critique, are his explicit references to the movement of capitalism from competition to monopoly, from laissez-faire to imperialism, and of the profound significance of this development for the working class movement. So much for the opportunists' excuse that Marxism has to be "revised" (or "adapted" as they prefer to call it now), for the present conditions of imperialism which (they say) Marx or Engels didn't foresee. This whole line rests on ignorance and distortion. Actually, the tendency of the concentration of capital to monopoly is expressed throughout *Capital* (all Volumes) as historically inevitable. So much so that, the law of concentration of capital is a fundamental tenet of scientific socialism. And if that is not clear enough (after all few British revisionists or indeed anti-revisionists have read *Capital* or much of anything by Marx and Engels), Lenin says in *State and Revolution*: "Here (in the Erfurt Critique) we have what is most essential in a theoretical appraisal of the latest phase of capitalism, i.e., imperialism, viz, that capitalism becomes monopoly capitalism. The latter must be emphasised because the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that monopoly capitalism is no longer capitalism, but can already be termed 'state Socialism,' or something of that sort, is most widespread." Does not the CPGB line on 'state Socialism', viz nationalisation not immediately spring to mind in this context (viz, creeping Socialism via Westminster)? No wonder the revisionists try to write-off Lenin's '*State and Revolution*' by gibbering that it was written in the 'exceptional circumstances' of 1917 when Lenin was 'preoccupied with violence.' This latter is quite true, since socialist revolution is about violence, and it was class struggle and not class peace that Lenin was concerned with; in complete contradistinction to the self-professed 'Leninists' of the CPGB. As for the exceptional circumstances they talk of, these were indeed brought about not by any historical fortuitous events as these obscurantists would have us believe, but because, by breaking with the rottenness of the 2nd International (to which the CPGB has returned), Lenin and the Bolshevik Party were leading the masses in genuine revolutionary struggles. What could be more fundamental than the fact that "The (written) history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles..."?

"The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing

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social conditions." (Communist manifesto). Further, "That force, however (which for Herr Duhring is the absolute evil) plays another role in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new". (Engels, 'anti-Duhring').

And as Marx quotes so approvingly in conclusion to the 'Poverty of Philosophy' (Karl Marx's principle work directed against P.J. Proudhon, an ideologist of the petty bourgeoisie, Note 6 to International Publishers edn.) "Le combat ou la mort; la lutte sanguinaire ou le neant. C'est ainsi que la question est invinciblement posee." (combat or death; bloody struggle of extinction. It is thus that the question is inexorably put.)

Of particular interest is what Engels here has to say about the wretched notions that, the present legal status of the Party in Germany is supposed to be enough to get through all its demands by peaceful means. People are telling themselves and the Party that 'the present society is growing into socialism', without asking themselves whether it mustn't also necessarily grow out of its old social constitution, and burst that old shell just as violently as the crab does when it moults.."

But, gibber the revisionists, doesn't Engels go on to say: "One can imagine that the old society could grow peacefully into the new in countries where the peoples's representatives have all the power concentrated in their own hands, where according to the constitution one can do what one will, as soon as one has the majority of the people won over: in democratic republics like France and America, in monarchies like in England, where the impending buying off of the dynasty is talked of daily in the press, and where that dynasty is powerless against the will of the people."

And doesn't Engels also say in the 1886 preface to Volume 1 of Capital that: "...at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means." However in their usual lying fashion they omit to mention that in the very next (and final) sentence Engels goes on to say: "He (Marx) never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a 'pro-slavery rebellion', to this peaceful and legal revolution." (p. XIV Glaisher, London, 1912). This it will be noted was written over three decades before Lenin wrote in State and Revolution: "...in 1871, when England was still the model of a purely capitalist country, but without a militarist clique and, to a considerable degree, without a bureaucracy... Marx excluded England, where a revolution, even a peoples' revolution, then seemed possible, and indeed was possible, without the preliminary condition of destroying the 'ready-made state machinery'.

Today, in 1917, in the epoch of the first great imperialist war, this qualification made by Marx is no longer valid. Both England and America, the biggest and last representatives - in the whole world - of Anglo-Saxon 'liberty', in the sense that they have no militarist cliques and bureaucracy, have today completely sunk into the all European filthy, bloody morass of bureaucratic-military institutions which subordinate everything to themselves and trample everything underfoot. Today, in England and America, too, 'the preliminary condition for every real peoples's revolution, is the smashing, the destruction of the 'ready-made state machineries (perfected in these countries, between 1914 and 1917, up to the 'European', general imperialist standard)."

Has this machinery since been dismantled, or has it rather been extended and con-



solidated, particularly in the subsequent World War (not to mention the Korean)? Has therefore Lenin's teaching to be dismantled; or on the contrary its attempted refutation - 'The British Road to Socialism'? This programme of the C.P.G.B. (properly called the 'British Road to Class Collaboration') is typical of modern revisionism round the world, at present centred in the Soviet Union.

The petty-bourgeois democrats, those sham Socialists who have replaced class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion - not as the overthrow of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become conscious of its aims. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparably connected with the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the toiling classes, as was shown, for example, by the history of the French revolutions of 1848 and 1871, and by the experience of "Socialist participation in bourgeois cabinets in England, France, Italy and other countries at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

"Marx fought all his life against this petty bourgeois socialism..." (ibid,p.29).

III Nor can Engels' remarks about federalism in Britain give (much needed) succour to petit-bourgeois nationalists like the Workers Party of Scotland. Engels is discussing what form of state organisation is most advantageous to the proletariat prior to socialist revolution. Marx and Engels clearly spelled out that the greatest advances of bourgeois democracy served as the best springboard for proletarian revolution - and this federalism Engels describes, is just such an advance - that of bourgeois democracy! It is an advance Marxists would support if their were a broad popular demand for it; to pull the teeth of nationalist diversion and lay bare the basic contradiction, that of capital and labour. What Engels' suggestion absolutely is not, is a basis for the fostering of a nationalist movement (no matter how heavily cloaked in pseudo-Marxist phrases), amongst the working class of Britain. It was not such a basis when Engels wrote in the period of flourishing capitalism and still less was it the case when Lenin wrote: "In the western countries the national movement is a thing of the distant past. In England France, Germany, etc., the 'fatherland' is a dead letter, it has played its historical role, i.e. the national movement cannot yield here anything progressive, anything that will elevate new masses to a new economic and political life. History's next step here is not transition from feudalism or from patriarchal savagery to national progress, but transition from a 'fatherland' that has outlived its day, that is capitalistically over-ripe, to socialism. (A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism, Moscow, 1969).

Such 'Marxists' as 'develop' and 'apply' Marxism by abrogating its basic principles, are in fact renegades from, and perverters of marxism. The communist movement will treat them accordingly.

C. K. Maisels, Glasgow, July 1971.



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# Critique of the Erfurt Programme

Translated from the German by John Grinder.

Marx-Engels werke, Vol. 22, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1963.

(Written by Engels between 15th and 19th June, 1891; from the manuscript.)

The present draft differs in a very advantageous way from the programme as it has been hitherto since the Gotha Programme of 1875. The clinging vestiges of outdated tradition - to be specific, the Lasselleian and the vulgar socialist ones - have been essentially removed; the draft, from the theoretical aspect, lies wholly on the basis of contemporary science, and can also be argued on that basis.

It can be divided into three sections: 1. Basic theses, 11. political demands, 111. demands for protection of the workers.

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## 1. Basic theses, in ten clauses.

In general these suffer from the attempt to reconcile two irreconcilable things: being a programme and at the same time a commentary on that programme. It's as if someone was afraid of not being clear enough by going straight to the point, and therefore put in explanations which only make the thing vague and slipshod. In my opinion the programme has to be as brief and as precise as possible. Even if the odd foreign word or a sentence which can't be grasped in all its implications crops up, that doesn't matter. Oral discussion in the meetings, and written explanations in the press, will do the necessary there, and the brief, pregnant sentence will then, once understood, become fixed in the memory, become a slogan, and that will never happen to the fuller discussions. One shouldn't sacrifice too much to the concern for popularity, nor should one underestimate the mental gifts and degree of education of our workers. They have understood much more difficult things than the shortest, snappiest programme could offer them; and even if the period of the Anti-socialist Law has made more difficult and in some cases held up the thorough education of the newly risen young additional masses, that will soon be overcome under the leadership of the older ones, now that our propaganda material can be read and kept without fear of interference any more.

I will try to make this whole passage somewhat shorter, and if I can, set it aside or send it on later, and proceed now to the individual clauses numbered from 1 to 10. You will find my proposals written onto the draft in my first enclosure. (Note: now lost)

Clause 1. "The separation, etc. "Mines, pits, collieries" - three words for one thing: two should be missed out. I would leave "Mines", since even in Low German they're still called that; and denote everything with its most widely used name. On the other hand, I would insert: "Railways and other means of transport."

Clause 2. Here I would put: "In the hands of their possessors (or their owners) are the social means of production", and likewise, further on, "Independence... from the owners (or possessors) of the means of production", etc.

That the 'gentry' have acquired these things as "sole owners", has already been dealt with as under clause 1, and can be repeated here only if one absolutely insists on bringing in the word "monopolists". Neither the one word or the other adds the slightest little bit to the meaning. But anything in a programme which is superfluous only weakens it:

"The necessary means of production for the "existence" of the society."

- those are just the ones that there are there already. Before the steam engine, we got by without it, now we could no longer do so. Since today all the means of production - either through their construction or by virtue of the social division of labour - are social means of production, it follows that these four words fully adequately express what is available at any moment, correctly and without hidden nuances.

If the ending to the basic theses is to be linked up with the international Statues, then I would prefer all this to happen: to "the social misery" (that's No. 1.), "to the mental apathy and the political dependence". The mental apathy is included in the social misery and the political dependence is a fact, where as lack of political rights IS A RHETORICAL PHRASE OF ONLY RELATIVE validity, and that sort of thing does not belong in a programme.

Clause 3. The first sentence must in my opinion be altered.

"Under the control of the sole owners".

In the first place, the above, which follows, is an economic fact, and it should be explained economically. The expression "Control of the sole owners", however, brings in a false slant, as if the political rule of those gangs of robbers had brought it about. In the second place, these sole owners include not only "capitalists and big landowners". (what was the point of putting "bourgeois" at the front of that? Are they yet a third class of sole owners? Are the big landowners "bourgeois" too? If you are going to start talking about big landowners, can we ignore the colossal remnants of feudalism; for it is those which give our whole political pigsty in Germany its specific reactionary stamp?) Peasants and petit-bourgeois are also "sole owners," at least up to the present time; but they are not mentioned in the whole programme, and therefore expressions must be used which definitely do not include them in the type of sole owner being talked about.

"The accumulation of the means of production and of the wealth extorted from the exploited."

The "wealth" consists of 1. means of production, 2. means of consumption. It is therefore ungrammatical and illogical to speak first of a part of the wealth and then not of the other part, but from the total wealth, and then to connect the two by and.

"...increases...in the hands of the capitalists at a growing rate."

What about the "big landowners" and the "bourgeois" from above there, then? If it's enough to say "capitalists" here, ~~it~~ should have been enough for above too. But if you are going to go into details, then it will not suffice at all.

"The number and the misery of the proletarians becomes ever greater."

That is not correct, put so bluntly as that. The workers' organisation, their constantly increasing resistance, will possibly put a certain barrier in the way of the growth of the misery. What, however, certainly will grow is the uncertainty of existence. I would put that in.

#### Clause 4.

"The planlessness which is inherent in the nature of capitalist private production."

...deserves very much improvement. I know of capitalist production as a social form, as an economic stage: and of capitalist private production as a phenomenon occurring one way or another within that stage. What does capitalist private production mean, then? Production by a single entrepreneur, and that is of course becoming more and more an exception. Capitalist production through limited companies is already no longer private production, but production for the combined account of many people. And when we move on to the trusts, which control and monopolize whole branches of industry, then that means an end not only to the private production, but also to the planlessness. Let "private" be deleted, and the sentence can do as it is.

"The ruin of broad layers of the people."

Instead of this declamatory phrase, which looks as if we were still sorry for the ruin of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois, I would state the simple fact: "which, by the ruin of the urban and rural middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie and the small peasants, widens (or deepens) the gap between the haves and the have-nots."

The two final sentences say the same thing twice. I will give you a suggestion for a modification in Annexe 1. (see below).

Clause 5. "of the causes" should be "of its causes", which is probably just a slip of the pen.

"mines, pits, collieries." - the same as in 1 above.

Clause 6. Private production - as above. I would say: "transformation of contemporary capitalist production on behalf of individuals or companies into socialist production on behalf of the whole society and in accordance with a previously agreed plan, a transformation,...creates, etc..., through which alone the liberation of the working class and thereby the liberation of all member sof the society, without exception, can be realised."

Clause 7. I would say it as in Annexe 1.

Clause 8. Instead of "class conscious", which is of course a readily understandable short way of saying it in our circles, I would say in the interests of general comprehensibility and for ease of translation into foreign languages: "with the workers who won their way through to a consciousness of their class position," or something like that.

Clause 9. Closing sentence: "...puts..." and thereby unites the power of economic exploitation and political repression in one hand.

Clause 10. Before "class rule", "and of the classes themselves" is missing. The abolition of classes is our basic demand, without which the economic abolition of class rule is a nonsense. Instead of "for the equal rights of all", I suggest "for equal rights and equal obligations of all", etc. The equal obligations are for us a very specially necessary extension of the bourgeois-democratic equal rights, and their insertion takes away the specifically bourgeois tone of the former words.

The closing sentence: "...are united...in their struggle...", I would rather see deleted. In its indefiniteness: "which are inclined...to improve...the position of the people in general (just who is that?)" it can embrace everything, protective tariffs and free trade, guilds and liberty to exercise a trade, land credit, exchange banks, compulsory vaccination and prohibition of vaccination, alcoholism and temperance, etc., etc. What the sentence should say is already there in the preceding sentence, and when you want the whole thing, and also bring in all the individual pieces, you don't have to say it again, I mean it weakens the impression. However, if you want the sentence as a transition to the individual demands, then you could say something like: "the Social Democracy fights for all demands which bring that goal closer" ("Measures and arrangements" should be deleted as a repetition). Or else, and still better; just say straight out what you mean, that you have to overcome the tasks the bourgeoisie failed to accomplish: I have put a closing sentence to that effect in Annexe 1. I consider the latter important, because of my remarks in the following section and for the motivation of the suggestions I made there.

## II. Political Demands

The political demands in the draft have one big error. What really should have been said isn't there. If all these 10 demands were granted, we would certainly have several more means to get the main political thing achieved, but certainly not the main thing itself. The imperial constitution is, as far as the rights of the people and their representatives are concerned, just a rehash of the Prussian constitution of 1850, a constitution in which the extreme reaction is set down paragraph by paragraph, in which the government possesses all the real power, and the chambers do not even have the right to refuse taxes; a constitution which, as was proved in the period of conflict, the government could do what it liked with. The rights of the Reichstag are exactly the same as those of the Prussian chamber, and that is why Liebknecht called that Reichstag the fig-leaf of absolutism. On the basis of this constitution and the petty states allowed to exist by it, of a "federation" between Prussia and Reus-Greiz-Schleiz-Lobenstein, of which the one has as many square miles as the other has square inches, on such a basis, to want to carry through the "conversion of all means of production into common property" is obviously senseless.

But touching on that is risky. Accordingly, one way or another, the point must be got in somewhere. How necessary that is being proved right now by the opportunism prevailing in a large part of the Social Democratic press. Out of fear of a renewal of the Anti-Socialist law, out of the memory of all the over-hasty utterances which slipped out under the rule of that law, the present legal status of the Party in Germany is supposed to be enough to get through all its demands by peaceful means. People are telling themselves and the Party that "the present society is growing into socialism", without asking themselves whether it mustn't also necessarily grow out of its old social constitution, and burst that old shell just as violently as the crab does when it moults, as if German society still didn't have to burst the fetters of a political system which is still half absolutist, and hopelessly confused into the bargain. One can imagine that the old society could grow peacefully into the new in countries where the people's representatives have all the power concentrated in their own hands, where according to the constitution one can do what one will, as soon as one has the majority of the people won over: in democratic republics like France and America, in monarchies like in England, where the impending buying off of the dynasty is talked of daily in the press, and where that dynasty is powerless against the will of the people. But in Germany, where the government is all-powerful and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies are without real power, in such a Germany, to proclaim something like that, and what's more when there's no need to, amounts to taking the figleaf from absolutism and covering your own nakedness with it.

Such a policy in the long run  
 you can only lead your own party **permanently astray**. For  
 put general, abstract political questions forward into the forefront, and thereby conceal the primary concrete questions, the questions which put themselves on the agenda at the first big events, at the first political crisis. What can come from this except that the party suddenly, at the decisive moment, is unready, that unclarity prevails concerning the most decisive points, because these points have never been discussed. If something should rise again like the case of the protective tariffs, which was then made out to be a question which concerned only the bourgeoisie and did not involve the workers in the slightest, where therefore everybody could vote according to his own desires, whereas now more than one person is falling into the opposite extreme, and as a contrast to the bourgeoisie which has become protectionist, they preach the economic distortions of Cobden and Bright, newly started up and presented as the purest socialism - the purest Manchesterism? This forgetting of the overall viewpoint for the momentary interest of the day, this searching and hunting for a momentary success without taking heed of the subsequent consequence, this sacrificing of the future of the movement for its present, may well be "honestly" meant, but is and remains opportunism, and "honest" opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all.

What now are these ticklish, but very essential points?

Firstly. If one thing is certain, it is that our party and the working class can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the great French Revolution already showed. It is unthinkable that our best people should become ministers under a Kaiser, the way Miquel did. From the legal point of view it seems now to be not possible for the demand for a republic to be put directly into the programme, although that was just as permissible under Louis-Philippe in France as it is now in Italy. But the fact that one cannot even set out an openly republican programme in Germany proves how colossal the illusion is that it could be possible here to achieve the republic by gentle, peaceful means, and not just the republic but the communist society.

However, in any case the republic bit can be got round. But what in my opinion should and can be in is the demand for the concentration of all political power in the hands of the people's representatives. And that would be enough for now, while we can't go any further.

Secondly. The reconstitution of Germany. On the one hand, the petty states must be removed - just try and revolutionise society, as long as there still are the special reserved rights of Bavaria and Wurttemberg, and the map of for instance Thuringia presents its present sorry picture! On the other hand, Prussia must cease to exist, must be split up into autonomous provinces, so that the specific Prussianism ceases to be a burden on Germany. Petty states and specific Prussianism are the two sides of the contradiction in which Germany is now caught, and the one side must always serve the other as an excuse and a *raison d'etre*.

What is to replace this? In my opinion, the proletariat can use only the form of the single and indivisible republic. The federal republic is still just barely necessary on the immense territory of the United States, although it is already becoming a hinderance in the East. It would be an advance in Britain, where four nations live on the two islands, and though they have one parliament, they even now have three legal systems beside each other. In little Switzerland it has long been a hinderance, bearable only because Switzerland contents herself with being a purely passive member of the system of European states. For Germany, federalist cantonization on the Swiss model would be an enormous backward step. Two points distinguish the unitary state from the federal state: that each federalized individual state, each canton, has its own civil and criminal legislation and judicial organization, and that, besides the house of popular representatives there is also a house of states' representatives, in which each canton, large or small, votes as such. We have, luckily, got over the first one, and won't be so childish as to bring it back in again, but we have the second one in the Bundesrat (Federal Council), and could very well do without it - if our "federal state" represents at all any transition to a unitary state. And what we have to do is not to reverse the revolution from above made in 1866 and 1870, but to give it the required extension and improvement by a movement from below.

So, a unitary republic. But not in the sense of the present French one, which is nothing more than the Empire founded in 1798, only without the Emperor. From 1792 to 1798, every French Department, every community, had full self-administration on the American pattern, and we must get that too. How the self-administration is to be arranged, and how one can get along without bureaucracy, has been shown to us by America and the first French republic, and even today Australia, Canada and the other British colonies. And that kind of provincial and communal self-administration is far freer than for instance Swiss federalism, where admittedly each canton is independent from the federation, but also independent over the district and the parish. The cantonal governments appoint District Governors and Prefects, which in the English-speaking countries are unknown and which we would welcome in the future just as much as we now welcome the Prussian District Magistrates and Privy Councillors.

Not much on all these matters should come into the programme. I am mentioning them mainly in order to characterize the situation in Germany, where such things cannot be said, and to characterize at the same time the self-deception of imagining that such a state of affairs can pass over peacefully into the communist society. And mentioning them also to remind the party executive that there are other political questions of importance than direct legislation by the people and the free administration of justice, without which we can in the long run get by anyway. Consid-



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ering the general uncertainty, those issues could from one day to the next become burning ones, and what happens then, if we have not discussed them and come to an agreement about them?

However, what can come into the programme and serve at least indirectly as an indication of the unsayable, is the demand;

"Full self-administration in province, district and parish by officials elected by universal suffrage. Abolition of all local and provincial authorities appointed by the State."

Whether it is possible some other way to formulate programme demands referring to the above-mentioned points, you can judge better there than I can here. But it would be desirable for these questions to be discussed inside the Party, before it is too late.

1. The distinction between "franchise and suffrage", and between "elections and ballots", is not clear to me. If one is to be made, this should in any case be more clearly expressed, or at least explained in a commentary accompanying the draft.

2. "right of the people to accept or reject" what? "For all laws or decisions of the legislative body" should be inserted.

5. Complete separation of church and state. All religious groups without exception to be treated by the state as private associations. They are to lose all support from public funds and all influence on public schools. (One cannot after all forbid them from founding their own schools out of their own resources and teaching their nonsense in them).

6. "Secular schools" is then to be omitted; it belongs in the preceding paragraphs.

8. and 9. Here I would have misgivings: these points demand nationalization of 1. the legal profession, 2. doctors, 3. chemists, dentists, midwives, nurses etc., etc., and further on the total nationalization of workers' insurance is demanded. Can all that be entrusted to Herr von Caprivi? And is it in accordance with the above repudiation of all state socialism? (Note: Caprivi was Imperial Chancellor from 1890-94.)

10. Here I would say: "Progressive... tax to meet all expenditure in State, district and parish, insofar as taxes are necessary therefore. Abolition of all indirect state and local taxes, duties, etc." The rest is superfluous and is comm-  
on our motives  
entary which weakens the thing, or its motivation.

#### 111. Economic Demands

On point 2. Nowhere more than in Germany does the combination right also require protection against the State.

The closing sentence, "for the control" etc., should be put in as Article 4 and brought into an appropriate form for that. It should be noted here that with works councils of half workers and half entrepreneurs we would be caught out. For years the majority would always be on the side of the management, since just one blackleg among the workers would be enough for that. Unless it is made clear that

in cases of dispute both halves would give separate opinions, it would be much better to have an employers' council with alongside it an independent workers' council.

I would finally like to ask before I close that you have another look at the French programme; a lot of it seems better particularly for no.111. Unfortunately time does not allow me to find the Spanish programme; it is also very good in many respects. (Note: The French programme referred to is that of the Workers Party issued in 1880, with its introduction by Marx.)

(Annexe to Section I).

1. "pits, collieries" out. - "Railways and other means of transport."
2. In the hands of their owners (or possessors) the social means of production have become means of exploitation. The economic subjection of the workers to the owners of the means of production, i.e. of the sources of life, is the basis of servitude in every form: social misery, spiritual impoverishment, political dependence.
3. Under the rule of this exploitation, the concentration of the wealth created by the exploited into the hands of the exploiters - the capitalists and big landowners - is increasing at an accelerating rate, and the distribution of the product of the labour between the exploiters and the exploited becomes more and more unequal, the number and the insecurity in life of the proletarians becomes ever greater, etc.
4. "Private" (production) away...makes...worse, by the ruin of the urban and rural middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie and the small peasants, widen (or deepen) the abyss between the haves and the have-nots, increase general insecurity to the normal state of the society, and give proof, that the class of owners of the social means of production has lost the calling and the capacity for economic and political leadership.
5. "its" causes.
- 6...and the transformation of capitalist production for the account of individuals or limited companies into socialist production for the account of the whole society and according to a previously determined plan, a transformation for which capitalist society itself creates the material and spiritual conditions, and through which alone the emancipation of the working class and with it the emancipation of all members of the society without exception can be realised.
7. The emancipation of the working class can be the work only of the working class itself. It is self-evident that it can be freed neither by the capitalists and big landowners, their enemies and exploiters, nor by the petty bourgeoisie and small peasants, who, oppressed by the competition of the big exploiters, have no other choice but to follow the rear of either the latter or the workers.
- 8...with the workers who have won through to a consciousness of their class position etc.
- 9....puts..., and thereby unites the power of economic exploitation and political repression of the workers in one hand.
- 10...class rule and the classes themselves, and for equal rights and equal obligations of all without etc...voting. (and deleted). In its fight for...humanity, however, it is held back by the backward political state of Germany. It has first of all to win space to move in, to remove massive vestiges of feudalism and absol-

utism, in short, to take on the task for which the German bourgeois parties were and still are too cowardly. It has also, at least at the present, to include in its programme demands which in other developed countries the bourgeoisie itself has already accomplished.

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July 1971.

NOTE: In clause 7 above, the words from "choice but" on are in pencil, and replace: ...either to cling on to the latter or themselves sink down into the proletariat, and thus be either an opponent or a tail to the working class.

## POSTSCRIPT

Little attention was paid to Engels' points of the formulation of the final version of the Erfurt Programme. Consequently, the essential nature of the state as the instrument of class domination by the ruling class, and in particular, of the feudal-absolutist nature of the German Empire yoked to Prussianism, was fatally overlooked.

The results of such opportunism were dramatically demonstrated in 1914, when the whole Second International (for whose general line the Erfurt Programme was a model), abandoned proletarian internationalism (with the exception of the Bolsheviks and some individuals elsewhere) and wretchedly went over to "their own" imperialist bourgeoisies.

Their rejection of the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the state - even when genuine revolutionary socialists as Luxembourge and Liebknecht - showed, by their own and their followers destruction, that defeat is certain unless the exact role of the state is fully grasped from a Marxist standpoint and it is organised against on a Leninist principle.

The following is Engels' letter to Kautsky (29th June, 1891) accompanying Engels' criticisms of the draft Erfurt Programme; these criticisms were not published until 1901.

"I have escaped here for a few days as the work driving in upon me was getting too much. I was happily immersed in group marriage when the Party Programme descended upon me demanding to be dealt with. Initially, I wanted to clarify the introductory passages (dealing with approach and principles), but lack of time prevented me from doing this. Also I considered it more important to analyse the partly avoidable and partly unavoidable deficiencies in the political section, as this allowed me the opportunity of really attacking the milk-sop opportunism of Vorwarts (SDP's official daily paper) and at the optimistic, righteous and rosy notion of the free 'growing over' of our filthy mess into 'socialist society'. Subsequently I have heard that you have proposed a new introduction to them; so much the better."

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