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**FROM CHARTISM  
TO LABOURISM**

# FROM CHARTISM TO LABOURISM

Historical Sketches of  
the English Working  
Class Movement

*by*

*Th. Rothstein*



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THEODORE ROTHSTEIN was born in 1871, at Kovno, Russia, and educated at the Poltava Gymnasium. He came to England in 1891, and thereafter until his return to Russia (1920) worked as a journalist. He acted as correspondent for several Russian Radical papers, and in England worked on the staff of *The Tribune*, *The Daily News*, and *The Manchester Guardian*, specialising on questions of foreign policy. He was for many years a member of the National Union of Journalists. Soon after his arrival in England he joined the Social-Democratic Federation, in which he was active until its merging in the Social-Democratic Party. He entered this Party, and again the British Socialist Party, in which it was merged in its turn. He remained in the B.S.P. until 1914, when he resigned owing to the jingo attitude of the Party majority. Throughout the pre-war years he played a prominent part in the theoretical life of the Party, occupying a Left Wing and revolutionary position in the first against opportunist and Social-Imperialist tendencies, represented by Hyndman. As such, he acted as correspondent for the *Neue Zeit*, the leading theoretical organ of the old International, and attended the International Congress at Stuttgart in 1907 as a British delegate. He was a member of the Executive of the S.D.F. for several years. He took an active part in several revolutionary Nationalist movements, particularly the Egyptian, and contributed frequently to its press, as well as writing an exposure of the rule of British Imperialism in Egypt, *Egypt's Ruin* (1911). Although taking no active part in the Russian movement, he supported the Bolsheviks from 1905 onwards. From 1914 onwards he assisted in the crystallisation of the Left revolutionary and international wing in the B.S.P., which launched *The Call* in 1915 and won a majority, forcing Hyndman and the social-patriots out of the Party, in 1916. He supported the Bolshevik Left in the international conferences at Zimmerwald and Kienthal, and after the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 fought the pro-Kerensky elements in the British Labour Movement. In 1920 he was appointed a member of the first Soviet Delegation, and went to Moscow in August in this capacity to report. Following the defeat of Lloyd George's plan for a war on Soviet Russia, Rothstein was not allowed to return to this country. He has since been engaged in Soviet work—as Chairman of the Universities Reform Commission (1920-21), Soviet Minister to Persia (1921-22),

and since 1922 a member of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Since 1920 he has been a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), as from 1900. Amongst his works may be mentioned *The Decline of British Industry, Egypt's Ruin, Essays in the History of the British Labour Movement* (in Russian, translated into several languages), as well as several earlier historical works in Russian; together with many writings in the British, German, Russian, American etc., Marxist press from 1895 up to the present.

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## PREFACE

THE present volume, like so many other volumes, has a history. It is made up of essays written on various occasions at various times in the course of twenty years which were originally intended for a foreign Socialist (or Communist) public—partly Russian, partly German. The opening essay, which in the present collection may serve as an introduction to Part One of the volume, was written as far back as 1905 at the height of the first Russian revolution, and had for its object to acquaint the militant Russian working class, then preparing under the leadership of the Bolsheviks for an armed insurrection, with its great precursor, the English proletariat engaged in a revolutionary struggle under the Chartist banner, and at the same time to demonstrate, by the example of the contest between the "moral" and "physical force" schools of the Chartist Movement, the futility of the Menshevik policy of compromise and opportunism. The "essay," which in its original form was a series of magazine articles, afterwards republished as a book, had naturally to be popular in style and not over-learned in substance. The English reader, versed in the subject, may, indeed, find it now too popular. In those days, however, it must be remembered, even English political and historical literature had, with the exception of Gammage's well known volume, not a single book or even pamphlet on the Chartist Movement, and my modest contribution to its history might well have been, if translated, the first of its kind even in England. As a matter of fact, the only more or less serious attempt to deal with the history of the Chartist Movement was in those days embodied in the none too satisfactory work of Mr. John Tildsley, who had written and published it in German, not to speak of a small propaganda pamphlet on the subject which had appeared also in German under the auspices of the German Social Democratic Party some years earlier, anonymously, from the pen of Hermann Schleutter, the author of a much later work on Chartism. This state of things was characteristic of the trend of historical studies in England at that time—studies which were then greatly exercised, as I well remember, over the Battle of Hastings, but had no interest for the great and passionate struggle of the English proletariat, the first of its kind in the history of



modern times. Since then English historical literature has been doubtfully enriched by a few monographs such as Mark Hovell's or Julius West's, as well as by the contribution of Mr. M. Beer to the subject in his *History of British Socialism*. But I advisedly refer to these books as of doubtful value, because they have all been written from an anti-revolutionary, opportunist, "Lovettian" point of view, and to that extent are so many misrepresentations of the great movement. More particularly, West's is a piece of supercilious and ignorant humbug worthy of the school of which he was such a promising disciple. It is for this reason that I have allowed this essay, based though it is on no extensive original research, to be translated for the English reader. After all, it is still original in the sense of presenting the subject in a light hitherto carefully screened from the eyes of the British worker, besides containing a new analysis of the factors which contributed to the decay of Chartism. I can claim that I was the first to discover the historical part played by George Julian Harney as the first (one may almost call him) Bolshevik, as well as the sinister rôle of the so-called Christian Socialists. I also was first, after Mr. Tildsley, to make use of the files of the *Northern Star*, which had been shortly before proclaimed by certain English writers to be no longer available. The special merit which I claim for myself in connection with this essay is to have placed in the right light the controversy between the two lines of tactics—a theme which has remained as vital to-day as it was nearly a hundred years ago.

To this essay I have caused an appendix to be added on the famous Tenth of April—an event which, though usually dismissed by the historians in a few lines, has still a controversial interest. This particular essay was written in 1923 in Russian as a contribution to a collective volume commemorative of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the European revolutions of 1848. It is the first work of historical research on the subject, attempted by anyone anywhere.

The next two essays were originally written in German for the readers of the at that time well known weekly Marxist review *Neue Zeit*, edited by Karl Kautsky—one in 1908, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, and the other in 1913 in connection with the then forthcoming, but—on account of the outbreak of the great Imperialist slaughter called the World War—never realised celebration of the fiftieth anniver-

sary of the First International. The object of the first of these two essays was to show that in the enunciation of their great doctrine of class struggle, the founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, had had a group of most remarkable precursors in England in the persons of certain writers (more particularly in that of Bronterre O'Brien, an Irishman of genius) who were the theoretical leaders of the Chartist movement. In studying their utterances as set out in this essay the reader will be astonished to see how deeply these early Socialists have penetrated into the mysterious nature of modern classes and modern society and with what acuteness of perception and analysis they have dissected the vast "ideological" superstructure which rests on the brutal relation of classes. The Fabians and, generally, the champions of compromise and opportunism who have more than once repudiated the theory and tactics of class struggle on the plea that they are so thoroughly "un-English" and have been invented on the Continent, will now see that they are quite native to British soil and were enunciated long before Marx and Engels wrote a single line on the subject. Indeed, these great authorities on the history of English thought will, it may be feared, now fly to the other extreme and proclaim, as was the case with the labour theory of value, the beginnings of which had been found in the writings of some early English economists, that Marx and Engels were unscrupulous plagiarists and paraded "crude" English theories of bygone ages as their own discoveries. We leave them to dispose of the confusion of their ignorance as best they can, but we are certain that the working class reader will derive considerable profit from the study of these early writers, and know how to apply them even in the circumstances of to-day. I may add that an attempt to publish this particular essay in English was made some time before the war by the British Socialist Party. The translation was actually made and set in type, but the publishers found at the eleventh hour that the pamphlet would not "pay," and the publication was dropped.

The next essay dealing with the English origins of the International will also come as a mild revelation to the English reader. In this field also the English proletariat was the precursor, and none of the English historians of the Labour movement knew it. As Bronterre O'Brien was the main exponent of the pre-Marxist doctrines in the previous essay, so does George Julian Harney (and in association with him, Ernest Jones) appear

in this essay the principal exponent of proletarian Internationalism long before Marx.

The above essays form the first part of the present volume, dealing with the revolutionary period of Chartism. The second part is a historical and social analysis of the British Labour movement during the period presided over by the genius of non-revolutionary or, rather, anti-revolutionary trade unionism down to the time of the imperialist war. This was conceived by me shortly before the war as a sort of antidote to M. Beer's book. The latter, in its German original, had then recently been published, and I intended to publish mine also in German, with a view to which I had made arrangements with the German Social-Democratic publishing house of Messrs. Dietz and actually had the first few chapters written when the war broke out and stopped my enterprise. I had before me at the time a vast amount of material in the shape of extracts from official Government and trade union publications as well as newspaper cuttings dealing with various parts of my subject. Had this part of the present volume been completed at the time, it would have been much larger, much more complete, and, above all, would have been richly documented and annotated. Unfortunately, during my post-war travels the greater part of my raw material became lost, and when in 1924-5 I sat down to write it, I no longer had these numerous references at my disposal, and had to make use of my own German manuscript and my old German articles in the *Neue Zeit*, filling in the gaps as best I could from the scanty English material which could be obtained in the Moscow libraries. I mention these details in order to ask the indulgence of the reader in case my references and authorities should be regarded by him as not sufficiently ample. For the rest, the facts quoted by me are well known to anyone acquainted with the subject—so much so, indeed, that I may with equal justice be reproached for submitting to the English reader matter which has almost become trite. But then, the value if any, of this part of my work lies not so much in the facts quoted, as in their analysis and interpretation; and in this respect I may also claim to have been the first to show them in the particular light which I directed on them, and to elucidate the factors which have governed them. The conclusion which I have arrived at in this part is that the policy of compromise and class-conciliation pursued by the British working class since the collapse of Chartism has not been justified by its results, but has,

on the contrary, landed British labour in a veritable *cul-de-sac*.

The English people are notoriously ignorant of their own history—more especially (for reasons brilliantly set out by O'Brien) the British working class. May my modest effort help them to see themselves and their past in a true light, so that they may find their way to the future with as little and as painless error as is humanly possible!

TH. ROTHSTEIN.

*Moscow, 1929.*

## APPENDIX

1848 IN ENGLAND

### § I

#### *General Conditions and Political Currents*

In the panorama of the revolutionary events of 1848 a very modest, an almost microscopic place is usually accorded to England by the historians. In that year—they tell us—there was some unrest among the English working classes who were suffering from a severe industrial crisis; an attempt was made by the Chartists to take advantage of the situation in order to organise on the 10th of April a mass demonstration and a procession to the Houses of Parliament; but the Government took energetic measures and the whole affair ended in a miserable failure. That ends the story. Thus, in a score or so of lines are the events of 1848 in England dismissed even in voluminous works having for their subject the political history of England.\*

In reality, that year in England marked a most important turning point in her history, and its events played a momentous part, not only in her own life, but also in the fortunes of those very revolutions which lent such fullness to the year 1848. For if in France the revolution of 1848 marked the birth of the proletariat as a distinct class, conscious of itself and of its opposition to the bourgeoisie, if in Germany it called into being a similarly class-conscious bourgeoisie opposed to the landlord class and to the autocratic regime of government, in England the revolutionary events of that year marked, after many years of stubborn struggle, the final victory of the bourgeoisie *over* the proletariat. The consequences of that victory are still in evidence to-day, after the lapse of three-quarters of a century, whilst in its own day it reinforced the rear of the retreating Continental reaction, enabling it to rally its forces and to start an offensive. In other words, bourgeois England in 1848 succeeded not only in crushing the revolutionary proletariat at home, but also in checking the course of the entire Continental revolution. Herein lies the meaning of that year's events in England, and for this reason they deserve our attention.

Towards the beginning of '48, England presented the following picture: The country was in the throes of a severe financial and industrial crisis, originating in railway speculation, then extending to the banks, which in many cases suspended payment, and even to the Bank of England, which was permitted by Parliament to suspend the free exchange of banknotes, and eventually paralysing the whole of industry.

\* An instance of this kind is furnished by the 12-volume *Political History of England*, edited by William Hunt and Reginald Poole (1914 Edition), in which exactly 28½ lines are allotted to the events of 1848.

The workers were thrown out of employment by tens and hundreds of thousands, and the people in Ireland were dying of starvation—those who could, saved themselves by emigration to America or England. To characterise the situation it will be sufficient to mention that between August, 1847 and August, 1848 no fewer than 4,258,609 persons of both sexes, comprising one-seventh of the total population, received public relief at the hands of the Boards of Guardians in spite of all the degrading conditions which then, even more than now, were imposed by law upon the recipient, and the expenditure under this head reached the record figure of over £8,000,000. Such pauperism had not been witnessed in England since the time of the Industrial Revolution, when entire villages "threw themselves" upon the parish. On the other hand, however, the revolutionary Chartist movement, which only a few years previously had been drawing the masses into a general strike, monster mass demonstrations and even an attempt at armed insurrection, was now in a state of decline, due both to the natural reaction after the failure of the first revolutionary surge and to the relative prosperity of the intervening years which followed upon the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and the Ten Hours Act in the textile industry. The first of these measures, which opened the era of so-called Free Trade in England was passed against the stubborn opposition, not only of the Tory landlords, but also of the Chartists, who justly considered it as a means for the capitalist manufacturers to lower the price of labour and at the same time to draw the weaker elements away from the political movement by promises of the untold blessings which were to be showered upon the working classes by the cheapening of commodities. And, indeed, Chartism was deserted, not only by its middle class supporters, but also by the proletarian elements who had not yet shaken off the mentality of the independent artisans and craftsmen from whose ranks they had sprung. Although the high hopes set before the public by the Cobdenites failed to materialise in the next few years the disappointment of the working classes did not reach any serious dimensions, owing to the financial and industrial crisis which was reasonably assumed to be a hindrance to the realisation of the effects of the reform.

As to the Ten Hour Day in the textile industry, that reform was to come into force only in May, 1848, and in the meantime the workers in that industry who had fought for this reform for many years by Parliamentary methods under the leadership of Tory philanthropists were not inclined, in spite of great unemployment, to resort to other, that is to revolutionary, methods, since the manufacturers were still agitating for the repeal of the Act and the parliamentary fight was flaring up again. This section of the working class was now one of the most docile and tractable—so much so that many years afterwards (in 1864) Gladstone could publicly declare in the House of Commons that the Ten Hour Act had been highly beneficial, "both in mitigating human suffering and in attracting important classes of the community to Parliament and the Government."<sup>\*</sup>

\* Hodder, *Life of the Earl of Shaftesbury*, Vol. II. p. 208.

portionately less than it had been in 1879. This is tantamount to bankruptcy on the part of trade unionism.

In drawing our comparisons we started with the last year of the 70's, which marked the beginning of the rising curve. We have, however, given in italics the figures relating to the *middle* year of the same decade, up to which we brought our figures of the previous period (p. 220). Had our comparison been made with these earlier figures, the progress would appear even more insignificant. We would find that in the textile group wages at the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's were lower than in 1875 and although they rose afterwards, this rise was so slow that as late as 1905 wages were still lower than in 1875. And this in a first class industry! It was only in 1906 that wages began to rise above the level which had been attained in the middle of the 70's, so that the entire advance for the years 1875-1909 amounted only to 2.5 points. The situation in the coal-mining industry was slightly better. There too, the figure for 1875 was higher than those of the following years and was only reached again fifteen years later, in 1890, but only for a moment, as wages immediately fell again, surpassing the level of 1875 in 1899 and the following years. In this way the miners' wages rose by four points in the course of 23 years, and the entire advance over the period under review, that is during 34 years, amounted to some ten points. Among the metal workers things were little better, but even so, wages in 1885 stood below the level of ten years previously. After 1885 they began to rise and finally reached the level of 20 per cent. above that of 1875. Even this figure, the result of the struggle of various unions in the metal trades over a whole generation, is extremely low. The building trades showed the greatest advance. Their wages began to rise not at the end, but in the middle of the 70's and surpassed the level of 1875 by 14 per cent. towards the close of the century. At that figure they remained stationary for the next ten years, so that these fourteen points cover the entire advance for the period 1875-1909—as though the wages suddenly grew tired of advancing rapidly, and for very weariness could move no longer. The aggregate result for all the four groups amounts to this: the figures for 1875 were surpassed by about 0.5 points at the end of the 15 years following and were definitely left behind in 1897, that is, after 22 years; while over the period of 34 years, the net result was an advance of about 9 points. This looks more like stagnation than progress, and reflects the achieve-

ments of the banquet campaign. One month later the Chartists were categorically asserting that the revolution in France was only a question of a few days. The Society of Fraternal Democrats, an organisation led by Julian Harney, and afterwards Ernest Jones, declared in an "Address to the Proletarians of France," drawn up early in February: "The signs of the times proclaim coming changes of vast magnitude and importance to your order. . . It requires not the power of prophecy to foretell your speedy liberation from the degrading and disastrous yoke under which France has groaned for the last 17 years."<sup>\*</sup> It is worthy of note that the Address was directed to the French proletariat, and not to the bourgeois politicians who were holding "opposition banquets"; and that the coming revolution was considered by the authors of the Address as fraught with important issues to the working class. On the very day when the revolution finally broke out, a public meeting was being held by the Fraternal Democrats (still uninformed of the event) to commemorate the anniversary of the Cracow rising of 1846, where a great speech was delivered by Harney, which may serve as an explanation of the above words in the Address. "Emancipation of labour," he said † "is the only worthy object of political warfare. . . That those who till the soil shall be its masters, that those who raise the food shall be its first partakers, that those who build mansions shall live in them. . . In all the revolutions the working men have been the principal workers and sufferers, but the rewards were reaped by their masters. But now at last the hour has come of the doom of the rule of the bourgeoisie." Such being the meaning of revolution, the lessons to be drawn from it for England followed by themselves. In a leading article headed "The Tocsin," in the *Northern Star*, dealing with the reports of the first battles in the streets of Paris, Julian Harney wrote: "Whatever may be the results of the conflict in France, the immediate effect upon Europe generally will be immense. Germany will be roused to action, and Italy will at once burst her Austrian fetters. Furthermore, the English people are bound, by all their hopes of liberty, to sympathise with those who are struggling to achieve freedom. . . If Englishmen are not the most despicable of slaves they will at once set about the work—peaceably and legally—of struggling for their Charter." Of course, the words "peaceably and legally" were merely used as a protection against police persecution, for, in making the announcement of two public meetings to be held, Harney goes on to say: "Let every true democrat and Chartist attend both meetings and testify adhesion to the principle that: 'Whenever a Government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for the people the most sacred of rights, and the most indispensable of duties.'"

In this way the events in Paris had a direct effect in England in reviving the energy and the hopes of the Chartists. Indeed, no sooner had the slogans been launched by Harney and Jones than mass meetings were organised both in London and in the provinces, at which the

<sup>\*</sup> *Northern Star*, Feb. 5.

† *Ibid.*, Feb. 26.



in power in 1908 and set out to prove to the workers the baselessness of the arguments of the Tory protectionists that wages suffered on account of Free Trade. A special investigation of working conditions in the industrial districts was undertaken, and a series of reports were published in the course of a number of years, down to the outbreak of the war, under the general title of *Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople in the United Kingdom in 1906*. The reports give the rates of wages for a selected week in September or October, 1906, with supplementary estimates of earnings on the assumption of employment during a whole year. This assumption is exceedingly bold, and the average figure of earnings shown in the reports and given below suffers from considerable exaggeration. Taking the textile industry, we find the following weekly earnings:—

Industry	Adult		Juvenile		Average Earnings
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Cotton ...	29/6	18/8	11/6	10/1	19/7
Wool ...	26/10	18/10	8/10	8/4	15/9
Linen ...	22/4	10/4	7/8	6/7	12/-
Jute ...	21/7	13/5	10/11	9/8	14/3
All industries...	28/1	15/5	10/5	8/11	17/6

After a century of development of an industry in which English capitalism occupies the world's leading place, and in which the workers are very well organised, an adult full-time worker was earning 28s. and all workers on the average less than 20s. a week. Of course, these are but average figures. In the textile, as in other industries, there are different categories of workers, including for example fine cotton spinners who earned sometimes more than £2 a week. But the low average shows how very small was the number of such lucky fellows. Weekly earnings, in 1906, were distributed as follows:—

Industry	Male %	Weekly		Female %	Weekly	
		Shillings			Shillings	
Cotton	59.7	Under 30		59.3	Under 20	
	40.4	" 25		23.9	" 15	
	67.4	" 30		24.7	From 15 to 20	
Woollen	15.2	" 20		55.6	" 10 " 15	
				10.7	Under 15	
		From 20 to 30		49.1	From 10 to 15	
Linen	36.7	Under 20		41.7	Under 10	
	44.4	From 20 to 30		66.4	From 10 to 15	
	36.0	Under 20		46.2	Under 10	
Jute ...	49.1	From 20 to 30		47.8	From 10 to 15	
	54.0	Under 20		38.9	Under 10	
	19.4					

the events which were taking place in Paris. Whilst Harney, his own editor, was explaining in a thousand and one ways that the events in France were the harbingers of something very important to the proletariat, he himself wrote on the very eve of the victory of the people of Paris, in his "Letter," the first which touched upon this subject, that the contention between the French people and the monarchy was not even about parliamentary reform, but about the right of the people "publicly to discuss their grievances," and since that right had long existed in England, there was no reason for the English people to be unduly excited over the stormy events in France. On the contrary, every excitement on the subject was apt to divert attention from their own important problems. "Let me beg of you," he writes,\* "let me implore of you and beseech you, not to allow any foreign question—however its results may enlist your sympathy—to operate on your great domestic movements. . . I tell you, that as long as I live the Charter and the Land shall never be lost sight of, nor placed in abeyance by any foreign excitement or movement, however we may use events for the furtherance of those great objects." And in his effort to minimise the events in France he extols the liberties enjoyed by the English people with an exaggeration which at other times he would have been the first to denounce. "You must critically understand the position of France," he goes on to tell his readers, "and the cause of disturbance in that country, to be able to estimate the value of those privileges which you have secured in spite of oppression. . . By the dread of increasing moral power more may be done than by any physical outbreak; and the reason of my present address is to preserve you within the bounds of moral discipline, in spite of any agency that may be used to force you from your fastness and stronghold into looseness and weakness."

O'Connor wrote this article at the very beginning of the outbreak, and it was not until some weeks later, after the publication of the decrees of the Provisional Government relating to the organisation of labour, that he began to realise the meaning of the change which had taken place in France. Those decrees made a tremendous impression in England, and in his next *Letter to the Old Guards*, O'Connor wrote something like a public retraction of his previous attitude. "I was slow," he confesses, "to comment upon the good results to be obtained from the French Revolution. Past history made me sceptical. . . But now, from the change I derive hope, consolation and ample reward for all my services, because I see in the exposition of the French mind the resolution that Labour, that achieved victory, shall be the first partaker of its fruits."†

This lack of understanding of the February events in France was one of the reasons why O'Connor took no part in the agitation started by his comrades in connection with the French Revolution; there was another, and an even more important reason—that he did not believe in the possibility of a revolution in England, at least in the near future.

\* *Ibid.*, Feb. 26.

† *Ibid.*, March 18.

## THE FRUITS OF OPPORTUNISM

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Industry	Adult Male	Adult Female	Juvenile Male	Juvenile Female	Average Earnings
Pig Iron ...	34/4	—	12/11	—	33/4
Engineers ...	32/5	13/1	9/7	8/2	25/11
Shipbuilders ...	35/11	14/8	11/10	7/4	30/7
Tin Plate ...	42/-	14/9	12/4	8/10	32/1
Iron and Steel ...	39/1	—	13/-	—	36/10
METAL INDUSTRY ...	33/11	12/8	10/4	7/4	27/4
Wholesale Clothing...	31/8	15/5	9/11	6/4	14/10
Tailoring ...	31/11	12/11	9/9	6/4	14/8
Boot, Shoe ...	28/8	13/1	10/6	5/10	19/10
CLOTHING INDUSTRY...	30/2	13/6	9/8	5/9	15/1
Paper ...	28/11	11/7	10/10	7/4	20/10
Printing ...	36/10	12/3	8/7	6/4	23/10
Bookbinding ...	34/1	12/10	8/8	6/-	16/4
CARDBOARD INDUSTRY	28/10	12/3	10/3	6/1	12/5
PAPER AND PRINTING					
TRADES ...	34/4	12/2	8/11	6/4	20/-
Pottery and China...	32/4	11/11	11/2	6/2	19/8
Glass ...	38/4	8/9	12/4	7/1	26/6
Chemicals ...	29/1	10/8	10/3	7/4	27/5
CHINA AND GLASS					
INDUSTRY ...	29/2	11/10	11/6	7/-	23/6
Baking, etc. ...	38/11	12/8	9/6	6/5	22/8
Brewing ...	26/3	9/4	10/5	7/5	24/3
Tobacco ...	30/6	12/-	9/9	6/2	13/10
FOOD, DRINK AND					
Tobacco ...	26/4	11/5	10/-	6/6	19/-
Saw Milling ...	27/4	12/5	9/8	8/4	22/4
Furnishing ...	33/-	13/1	8/7	6/2	24/10
WOODWORKING					
INDUSTRY ...	32/-	12/11	9/6	6/10	26/7
Gas Workers ...	32/6	12/6	—	—	31/7
Tramways ...	30/6	11/3	—	—	29/3
Water Supply ...	28/8	12/9	—	—	28/3
MUNICIPAL SERVICES	28/1	11/10	—	—	26/3

wealthiest capitalist country and in the best organised large-scale industries. The earnings of adult workers may in some cases appear more or less adequate if we overlook the fact that the figures relate to full-time employment, which is generally most unusual for any length of time in modern industry. England particularly, working for exports and importing her raw material, is highly sensitive to fluctuations on the world market, and the course of her production constantly experiences changes. Nowhere in the capitalist world is there, even in good years, so much unem-

We have dwelt at some length on O'Connor's attitude towards the French Revolution because it explains the weakness of the Chartist revival of 1848 and, it may be said, doomed it in advance. O'Connor's influence over the masses was unbounded. His powerful eloquence, his great energy and working capacity, his—hitherto—revolutionary tactics which looked for support to the rank and file of the workers, and, finally, his unquestionable loyalty to the movement—all this had won him unusual popularity among the proletariat, particularly in the North, despite his Irish descent and extreme Irish nationalism, against which strong prejudice prevailed at the time among the masses of the working class. As to his exceptional conceit and boastfulness, his resentment to the least opposition to his views, coupled with woeful political ignorance, this was a matter on which, of course, the masses were quite uninformed, and which did not concern them. Those who suffered from these defects were his closest associates, who had either to submit or to quit the movement. But the fact that his influence over the masses was so great could not fail to tell on the movement after it had become known that he was opposed to revolutionary methods and was in favour of "moral" force. After his advocacy of revolutionary methods in the past, when the situation seemed far less favourable—an advocacy which was based on a correct appreciation of their educational and organisational effects, if not for the immediate present, at least for the future when the situation would be more favourable—his present opposition to the revolutionary agitation carried on by his associates was bound to impress the masses with the view that the latter were wrong and that it was necessary to confine oneself to demonstrations and parliamentary petitions.

Of course, it was not easy for his friends and opponents to attack his position, partly because of his great popularity among the masses, and partly because open advocacy of revolutionary tactics—or "physical force," as it was then called—was very dangerous. Even so, they were not always able to withhold their criticism of O'Connor's position or to refrain from stating their own views on the questions of policy. Particularly daring in this respect was Ernest Jones, perhaps the most brilliant man in the Chartist movement, a talented poet and orator, later a close friend of Marx and Engels, who approached nearest to their views. At one of the numerous meetings addressed by him, he, without mentioning names, ingeniously observed: "We are told the power of the mind is to subvert despotism—so it will, if rightly used; it is as to the use we differ. The people are marching on the high road to progression, but across the way class rule has built a cold stony wall of monopolies. Now then, let the people stand before it and think, let them look at it and say in their minds: "You naughty wall, you ought to be lying low, you oughtn't to be there—why don't you tumble down?" Do you think that will clear their road? No! But if their 'power of mind' tells them to take a pick-axe and a mallet and a crowbar, and break the rotten barrier to atoms, then the highway to liberty will soon be clear."\*

\* *Ibid.*, April 1.

of production, and what becomes of the remaining six millions employed in trade and industry, mentioned by the census reports. Even with these limitations, the table shows that about one million workers, or  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the total number, earned less than 20s. per week, while one-half the total number—or to be more precise, 53 per cent.—earned less than 30s. Nobody will contend that the condition of the working class in England at the close of the fifty years period after the collapse of Chartism, as illustrated by these figures, was anything like satisfactory. Would other methods of fighting have yielded better results? Or were the English industries really unable to stand a larger expenditure on wages? On the occasion of the enactment of the Minimum Wage for the coal mining industry, a confidential memorandum was sent out to its members by the Mine Workers' Association of Northumberland and Durham, giving the movement of wages in these districts for a number of years. It showed that the rates for a two shift day were: in February 1872, 6s. 6d.; in July 1872, 8s.  $0\frac{1}{2}$ d.; in March 1873, 9s.  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d.; in April 1874, 8s.  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d.; and in October 1874, 7s. 8d. But in the year of grace 1912, a minimum wage of 5s. 6d. was established by law for the miners, and a minimum wage of not more than 6s. 9d. for the highest paid category of miners, the hewers, a rate that is, very much below that of 40 years before. Had the coal mining industry been ruined in the course of these long years? Nothing of the kind. Since the 70's there had been a tremendous development in technique and productivity in the mining industry, and the coal magnates had amassed great wealth. But the miners in these two districts were, until very recently, among the most determined representatives of the ideology of the post-Chartist period; they had adopted the sliding scale, and for a long time even refused to join the Miners' Federation, as they were wholly opposed to governmental interference in such "private" business as the regulation of working hours, which formed one of the main planks in the platform of the Federation. The only explanation for the decline in their wages as compared with the 70's is to be found in the effectiveness of their methods of dealing with the employers.

From the figures quoted at the beginning of the present chapter, we may conclude that practically the same conditions as in the coal mining industry obtained in other trades: the low wages prevailing at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century were the closing figures in a *downward* series

mental effect upon their capacity for action and, generally, upon the progress of the movement and its popularity among the masses.

At the same time the masses themselves were undecided and were more than ever in need of firm leadership. On March 9, a conference of delegates from different trades was held in London on the question of unemployment.\* The prevailing tone at the conference was one of complete disappointment in Free Trade and of bitter resentment against the Government. One of the delegates, a cabinet maker, said: "They had seen a change across the water in the last few days; and mark, almost the first act of the provisional government was to look to the interest of labour." The French people were promised a Minister of Industry; and why? Because universal suffrage now prevailed in that country." Another delegate, a bootmaker, said: "From his knowledge of trade societies, he was convinced that nothing could be done for them without they first possessed a direct control on the affairs of government. The position they at present occupied appeared to him exactly the position the Government wished them to hold, but the events that had transpired in Paris, within the last fortnight, had taught them much. . . ." The conclusion to be drawn from these premises seemed obvious, but the resolution moved from the platform merely "draws the Government's attention" to the existing state of distress and prays for measures of relief! Nay, when one of the delegates, a tailor, moved an amendment, demanding universal suffrage, an interminable discussion ensued, the amendment was put as a substantive motion and was eventually talked out without a vote being taken on it. Such being the state of mind among the masses, the waverings in the ranks of the Chartists were bound to have a most detrimental effect on the movement.

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie and the Government circles revealed remarkable unity and determination. The Whigs and the Tories, the industrial bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy, at once composed their political and social differences in face of the common menace, and what seemed to O'Connor as well as to his opponents a corrupt and decomposing oligarchy suddenly became a mailed fist which quickly rallied all the possessing classes. As far back as the beginning of February, a "Queen's Own Volunteer Rifle Corps"—or White Guard, as we would call it to-day—was formed in London which boasted in its press advertisements that the Government had promised them equipment and munitions, and invited all "gentlemen" to join them. The *Northern Star*, in a leading article,† pointed out that the Volunteer Corps was intended not against any external, but against the internal enemy, and queried whether the Government would be as ready to supply arms and munitions to the Fustian Jackets if they were to form a volunteer corps?

As a matter of fact, the ruling clique quickly grasped the danger threatening from across the Channel. "I grieve at the prospect of a Republic in France," Lord Palmerston, the then Secretary for Foreign

\* *Ibid.*, March 18.

† *Ibid.*, Feb. 19.

Affairs, confessed in a message to the British Ambassador in Paris,\* "for I fear that it must lead to war in Europe and fresh agitation in England. . . The example of universal suffrage in France will set our non-voting population agog, and will create a demand for an inconvenient extension of the suffrage, ballot, and other mischievous things." The Government soon demonstrated the real value of the boasted constitutional liberties enjoyed by the British people. A Radical M.P. had arranged for a meeting to be held in Trafalgar Square to protest against the proposed increase of the income tax. The Government, in nervous fear of any big assembly of the people, invoked an obsolete and reactionary law of George III. to forbid the meeting. The valiant Radical M.P. cancelled the meeting, but it was taken over by the Chartists, who came in great force led by Reynolds, a brilliant young journalist, who had just joined their ranks, and turned it into a magnificent demonstration for the Charter. The meeting was already over and the resolution had been carried, when two unknown individuals created a disturbance, and the police, suddenly appearing on the scene, charged the crowd with their truncheons, sparing neither women nor children. It was an undoubted provocation, and the *Northern Star*, with justice, observed: "We beg our readers to mark these circumstances well. A system of terrorism is evidently aimed at. Our Government mean to adopt an opposite course from that of France. Guizot permitted 47 banquets, and stopped them when too late. Russell, the Guizot of England, thinks he will nip English demonstrations in the bud."† Not content with this, the Government, or perhaps the police acting on its own, began during the next three days to let loose crowds of hooligans on the streets of London after dark, who would get drunk and then go about smashing shops and windows and street lamps till morning, when they would be dispersed by the police or would themselves scatter to their homes. The newspapers would come out with scaring stories about alleged Chartist robberies and riots, urging the Government to take vigorous measures against the rebels and anarchists. It was a sort of rehearsal of the coming drama, or, as the *Northern Star* put it, "the discordant tuning up of the orchestra before the grand overture of liberty begins."‡

The Government, of course, "yielded" to the clamour of "public opinion," and issued an order forbidding street demonstrations at "unsuitable" hours and public meetings of any kind after six o'clock in the evening. When a few days later the Chartists arranged another public meeting to be held on Kennington Common, an order was issued to dealers in firearms to unscrew the rifle barrels and sell no cartridges and gunpowder, and all good citizens were urged to enrol as special constables, and to get arms from the Government stores. The meeting itself was attended by a force of 4,000 policemen, 100 plain-clothes detectives and 80 mounted police armed with sabres and pistols, who all

\* Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Palmerston*, Vol. II., p. 73.

† *Northern Star*, March 11. See also the description of the meeting in the same issue.

‡ *Ibid.*, March 18.

the time rode round the crowd. In addition, a section of the garrison troops was held in readiness in the barracks.\* All these elaborate measures aimed at scaring the general public as well as the Chartists. The position of the Cabinet had hitherto been shaky, and it shrewdly took advantage of the situation to consolidate and mobilise the support of the entire bourgeoisie. On March 13th, Sir George Grey, Home Secretary, could boast in the House of Commons of the tremendous response of the bourgeoisie to the Government's appeal for special constables, Manchester having offered 10,000, Glasgow 20,000, and so on.

Indeed, riots occurred throughout March and April in many cities in the North of England, mostly among the unemployed, and everywhere the bourgeois "specials" lent active aid to the police forces. Only in Glasgow the troops had to be called in, when at the beginning of April a crowd of 5,000 unemployed, after a meeting, suddenly began to loot the foodshops and various business premises, and the police, together with the special constables, proved unable to cope with them. On the following day, a military force of 2,000 was brought into the city, a collision with the crowd ensued, and several volleys were fired. A number of people were killed, many wounded, and the unemployed were subdued. The Government was rapidly acquiring skill and experience in dealing with unruly elements.

Finally, it is interesting to note the conduct of the bourgeois press. Then, as nowadays, it showed great skill in the rôle of the guardian of law and order, and in fighting the revolutionary movement. On the one hand, it carried on a furious campaign against the French Revolution, and particularly against the Parisian workers and their demand for the Right to Work. The state of France was painted in the gloomiest colours, and the entire responsibility for the prevailing conditions was placed upon the lazy workers and the Socialist demagogues within and without the Government who took advantage of the economic ignorance and animal appetites of the proletarian mob. This, of course, was done, as by the bourgeois press of to-day in regard to Soviet Russia, for propaganda purposes. "The writers in the public press," says O'Connor,† are endeavouring to scare us from our pursuit of liberty by the unhappy state of the working classes of France at the present moment. . . . But you, who are philosophers, must understand that a great revolution, produced without previous concert, must, in the first instance, be productive of hazard, vicissitudes, and, perhaps, calamity. But the question is for you, whether or no it is not worth while to pass through the ordeal of temporary suffering to establish permanent liberty?" Golden words, which it would do well for the working class in Western Europe to take to heart to-day!

The Chartists had to wage continuous struggle against the vilifying campaign of the capitalist press against the workers and Socialists of France. For example, in one of their manifestoes the Fraternal Democrats directly appealed to British workers to protect their brethren

\* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*, April 1.



across the Channel from unmerited attacks: "In your meetings—your workshops—your homes—everywhere, defend the brave French working classes against the vile aspersions and foul calumnies heaped upon them by the prostituted press of England—the salaried apologists of the rapacious capitalists and the soulless shopocracy."\* But the forces of the capitalist press were many times greater than the means of publicity at the disposal of the Chartists, and the vicious campaign of the reactionary press no doubt had its effects upon the ignorant popular masses.

On the other hand, the same capitalist press—again, like to-day—employed the method of minimisation when reporting on the force and influence of the revolutionaries at home. While sparing no colour in depicting the harm likely to follow their unchecked agitation, the bourgeois press represented them as a contemptible handful of adventurers or criminals of no influence or importance. "The Press of this country," O'Connor wrote,† "has always been the most deadly enemy to liberty. . . . If a paltry meeting is got up by the middle classes to oppose the income tax, every word of every fool is reported in their press, whereas scores of enthusiastic, bold and splendid meetings have been held in the metropolis to congratulate the French upon their emancipation from despotism, and yet not a line has been reported."

The conspiracy of silence has been carried to a fine art by the British press as by no other, and as it is to-day, so it was three-quarters of a century ago. A favourite method in those cases, when it was absolutely impossible to ignore a labour demonstration, was ridiculously to minimise the number of people attending it, and this method proved so effective that even contemporary historians were deceived and were led by the paltry figures of press reports to consider the events insignificant. On this subject O'Connor advised his followers "how to arrive at something like a guess at the numbers attending a Chartist meeting: take all the numbers stated by the papers to have been present, add them together, multiply them by four, and then you may make a guess."‡

\* *Ibid.*, March 25.

† *Ibid.*, March 4.

‡ *Ibid.*, March 25.

*The Tenth of April*

In describing the conditions in which the Chartist agitation, spurred on by the revolutionary events in France, revived, we had perforce to anticipate somewhat the course of events and to detach ourselves from the various stages through which the agitation was passing. Now, with a fuller understanding of the situation, we may resume our narrative of the events.

We have seen that among the Chartist leaders there was a fundamental divergence of views on the question of tactics. Jones, Harney, and many others among the younger members advocated a straightforward and open fight, having no faith in demonstrations and "constitutional" forms of struggle. They were opposed by O'Connor, who, if not on principle, at least on grounds of policy, considered it inexpedient to go beyond constitutional methods, being convinced (or perhaps pretending) that they would prove sufficient to break down the resistance of the ruling oligarchy, as happened in 1832, when the Reform Bill was forced through without a revolution. The analogy drawn by O'Connor was, of course, erroneous: in 1832 the possessing class, the landlords, in league with the big trading capitalists, had yielded to another propertied class, the industrial capitalists, backed by the petty-bourgeoisie and the working class; it yielded precisely in order to prevent a revolution. Now it was a question of the united possessing class, the landlords, the trading, industrial and financial capitalists, in alliance with the petty-bourgeoisie, yielding to the non-possessing class, the proletariat. Such an issue could not be expected to be settled in a peaceful way. At the same time, no successful issue could be expected from revolutionary, physical force methods, as the proletariat was still weak, whilst the united possessing classes were already fairly strong. The situation was quite different from that in France, which resembled more that in England in 1832. In other words, England had already had its 1848 some 16 years ago, and now the situation was what it came to be in France a few months later, in June, when the proletariat, single-handed, and badly organised, found itself confronted by the united forces of reaction, by all the possessing classes acting in unison.

All this, of course, was realised by neither of the Chartist factions, but each was dimly conscious of the need to be up and doing, so as to take advantage of the general revolutionary situation. As might have been expected, O'Connor's arguments prevailed. It was decided to act in the manner which had already been tried by the Chartists, namely, by submitting a mass petition to Parliament and by holding a Convention to back the petition and other measures. The petition, covered by millions of signatures obtained at public meetings throughout the country and containing the demands for universal suffrage and

the other points of the Charter, was to demonstrate to Parliament that there was a great body of public opinion in support of the reforms. If, moreover, as was expected, the petition were to be adopted and signed at numerous great meetings after an energetic agitation, the "moral force" which would thus be mobilised by it would, it seemed certain, compel the oligarchy to yield. In order to back up that force, a Convention of delegates elected at those meetings was to be summoned—not a mere Congress, but a *Convention*, the very name of which contained an ominous warning as to its intent and character: it was to be an instrument of the people's will, which, drawing its strength from the masses, might contend for power even against the oligarchically elected Parliament and, if needs be, proceed by mobilising those masses to more extreme measures than mere petitioning.

It is true there had been such a Convention and such a petition in the past, and the result was nil. The petition was presented, Parliament calmly threw it out and the Convention was unable to do anything. Many of its leaders were arrested, imprisoned or deported, and its members ultimately dispersed without coming to any decision. But those were different times. Now, when the high tide of revolution was surging all around, and the masses themselves had had full opportunity of learning the necessity of attaining political rights at all costs, could a similar failure occur again? The course of action was conceived as follows: at least five million signatures would be collected for the petition, the Convention would meet on April 4th and publicly discuss its plans, and on April 10th there would be held a monster mass meeting attended by at least half a million people, and this great army, led by the delegates of the Convention and the Chartist Executive, would march in procession to Westminster to present the petition. Would Parliament fail to be impressed by such an imposing demonstration? "Old Guards," O'Connor wrote\*, "see the altered state of Europe, see the fact that by the 3rd of April, the blessings of free institutions, not only in France, but throughout the Continent of Europe, will have been developed; see what support that fact will give to your supporters, when half a million men—of living men—shall accompany the minds of five millions, demanding their freedom, to the door of the House of Commons. . . Old Guards, the tocsin sounds. The day of Chartist resurrection has arrived. . . It will be a proud day for me when I march at the head of the mind of England, followed by the sinews of England, in procession to the House of Commons, for I will allow no man to go before me; and my position will be still prouder if, instead of sixteen able-bodied men, that it required to move your petition last time, it requires thirty to do it now."

This was how O'Connor pictured to himself the affair, and a similar picture was drawn by the Chartist Executive in a manifesto urging the people to hold meetings for the election of delegates and the signing of the petition. The petition, it stated, "shall be accompanied to the House of Commons by an immense concourse of the people of this metropolis, who will form an excellent guard. The Executive

\* *Ibid.*, March 4.

Committee wish to convert the presentation of the petition into a demonstration of national sympathy, and with such a view it is their intention to spare no pains to make such a display of strength as will make the cause respected."<sup>\*</sup>

On another occasion it laid particular emphasis on the moral nature of this action. "The time for securing the liberties of Britain (it declared in a manifesto) has arrived. It remains to be seen whether you are prepared for the great moral battle the trophies of which will be freedom and independence. Now or never! Remember that to will liberty is to win it. Will it then, will it. . . you, seven millions of English slaves, and no power on earth can prevent you from riving the manacles of your thralldom."<sup>†</sup> In the final appeal prior to the demonstration of April 10th, addressed to the people of London, to the Irish population of the metropolis, to the trade unions and others, it said: "The liberty-seeking German, the emancipated Italian, the struggling Pole, and the proud French republican, will regard you with an eye of disdain if your aim be not to demolish oligarchic usurpation and to substitute for it the legitimate power of the whole people. . . Remember that the eyes of Europe are fixed upon you. . . Prove yourselves worthy of their attention, congregate on the morning of the 10th in your thousands, legally, peaceably, but enthusiastically. Leave no pretext for the minions of power to utter the old calumny that you are indifferent to your political rights and satisfied with your present condition. Now or never is the auspicious moment to press your claims with success on the legislature. Now is the day, now is the hour to strike the great blow that shall give liberty and happiness to every sect and class in the British Empire."<sup>‡</sup>

The agitation, no doubt, was conducted with great vigour and ability, but we doubt whether the Jones and Harney faction were particularly elated at the stress laid on moral force, or possessed much faith in its efficacy. *Their* moral talk had a different flavour. "Friends," Jones declared at a meeting, "we'll steer the straight course, we won't be intemperate and hot-headed, we'll respect the law, if the law-makers respect us; if they don't—France is a Republic. . ."<sup>§</sup> And on another occasion: "On the 10th of April the final notice would be given to the Whigs: they (the Chartists) would deliver their petition in the proper manner and disperse peaceably and quietly, but if they would have to go to Parliament again, they would come armed. . . The Government had better not try the game of physical force, lest it turn against itself. If they denied the Charter, the people would next time ask for a Republic."<sup>||</sup> In this way Jones and his friends managed in their campaign to smuggle in their little tactical amendments, and even the *Star*, *i.e.*, its political editor Harney—whom O'Connor was not always successful in controlling—ventured the suggestion that the

\* *Ibid.*, March 18.

† *Ibid.*, March 4.

‡ *Ibid.*, April 5.

§ *Ibid.*, April 1.

|| *Ibid.*, April 8.

Convention would no doubt devise "a plan of action to meet all eventualities." The opposition were not content with such occasional utterances and it had its own little "plan of action" ready for the Convention.

The Convention met on April 4, after a campaign of many months throughout the country, during which delegates were elected at numerous public meetings addressed by Chartist orators. As the law only permitted congresses of less than 50 members, the Convention was made up of 49 delegates, among whom we find the names of all the prominent leaders of Chartism. The proceedings began with reports by local delegates. One after another the delegates drew a picture of the terrible distress among the working people in all parts of the country, and many of them asserted that the workers, driven to despair, were prepared to resort to the most extreme measures. Ernest Jones at once raised the question of the Convention's intentions in the event of the petition being rejected by Parliament. There was audacity in the mere raising of the question, as it loudly proclaimed a lack of faith in the efficacy of O'Connor's methods. In Jones' opinion the question was so important that it demanded an immediate reply, and he moved that the Convention, in the event of the petition's failure should call upon the Crown over the heads, as it were, of the Government and Parliament, to dismiss the Ministry and to appoint such men to office as would make the Charter a Government measure, whilst the Convention itself should remain in permanent session, so that there would ensue "a struggle for power between the two parliaments." The report of that meeting gives no indication of the impression made by this unexpected proposal, but it gave rise to a debate which lasted several days.\* The first one to speak in opposition to the proposal was Bronterre O'Brien, the best theoretical exponent of the class struggle in the Chartist movement. He was against the Convention taking a revolutionary course and declaring itself in "permanent session." He argued that at least London, which he represented in the Convention, was not with them and totally unprepared to go to "extreme measures." Personally he would not go against the law so long as he believed the law was just to them, but the moment that he found the law to be unjust, and the people stronger than the law, he would calmly turn his back on it. O'Connor, apparently, thought it too risky to oppose wholly Jones' proposal and thereby to assume before the Convention unqualified responsibility for the success of the petition. He therefore proposed a compromise: the Queen indeed should be called upon to dismiss the reactionary Ministers and appoint a new Government from among such persons as were favourable to the Charter, but not before the people had sanctioned such an unconstitutional procedure. He therefore moved a resolution to the effect that in the event of the petition being rejected simultaneous meetings should

\* *Ibid.*, April 8. For the rest the proposal was not entirely novel, as Jones had already suggested at a mass meeting early in March that instead of petitioning Parliament, a procession of 800,000 people drawn from all parts of the country should appeal directly to the Queen to dismiss the Government. (*Ibid.*, March 11.)

be held in every part of the country to obtain the people's authorisation "to address the Queen to dismiss the Ministry, and call to her Council men who would make the Charter a Cabinet question." "If that were unavailing," he added, "he would never flinch, but would sooner die than not win the Charter. He meant to wait no longer than the time when the majority of the people demanded it, and were prepared to establish their rights."\* This was a fairly vague statement, for O'Connor was evidently unwilling to pledge himself to revolutionary action even if a direct appeal to the Crown should fail to achieve any results. However, it satisfied the opposition, and on the following day a motion was introduced by the Executive providing that in the event of the rejection of the petition, a memorial should be presented to the Queen. The memorial was to be drawn up by the Convention and submitted to the people for approval at numerous public meetings to be held on April 21 (Good Friday). The memorial was to be presented, not by the Convention, but by another body to be known as the National Assembly, the members of which were to be elected in the same manner as those of the Convention, and which was to meet on May 1. It was to discuss the measures necessary to force the Crown to receive the Memorial and to act upon its recommendations.

The opposition found this proposal inadequate. Reynolds, a spokesman of the extreme Left, declared that there was no need to call a new Convention under a new name to look about for means to enforce a new-fangled memorial, and supported the proposal made by Jones the day before to the effect, that in the event of rejection the present Convention should remain in permanent session and declare the Charter the law of the land. O'Brien, also considered the memorial business superfluous, but thought that the Convention would be ill-advised to proclaim itself the organ of the people's will without having received any mandate for revolutionary action and without being sure of the support of the masses (he had himself been elected by two thousand people, whereas the population of London was two millions). He therefore proposed that upon the delivery of the petition the Convention should consider itself dissolved, and that a National Assembly should then be elected at simultaneous meetings of the people, and declare itself permanent. Jones, however, supported by Harney, was prepared to accept the compromise proposed by the Executive: let there be a National Assembly and a Memorial, but the National Assembly must proclaim its session permanent until the Charter had been actually carried, and in the meantime the Convention itself should not be dissolved. After some discussion both Reynolds and O'Brien agreed to this proposal, and it was carried by the Convention.†

O'Connor scarcely took part in the debates on the Executive's proposal, although they went on for two days and were carried at times to a high pitch of passion. He attended the Convention very irregularly, almost casually, rarely rising to speak, and then, merely to points of order, always pleading lack of time and the need to look

\* *Ibid.*, April 8.

† *Ibid.*, April 8.

after the interests of the movement in the House of Commons. This aspect of his work in the House of Commons presented a sorry spectacle: the brilliant people's champion and public orator having been returned to Parliament in 1847, had become the slave of parliamentary formalities, never daring either to make a stand against his opponents as befitted a revolutionary representative of the proletariat, or to lend sufficient aid to his party in its struggle outside Parliament. When, prior to the meeting of the Convention, he had given official notice, as required by parliamentary procedure, that on April 10 he would move a resolution in favour of the Charter, he was greeted, we are told in Hansard, with "loud general derision." The Chartists, particularly the *Northern Star*, made full use of this incident for propaganda purposes, recalling that in France, too, Guizot and his supporters in the Chamber of Deputies on one occasion had met with equal "loud derision" the proposals for reform made by the liberal opposition. O'Connor gave no suitable reply to this insult, but humbly asked permission to address the House on that day, promising, in return for this "privilege" that he would not "claim the attention of the House too long." Lord Russell, however, was "extremely sorry" to be unable to grant his request, as according to the schedule of the House, the 10th of April was to be devoted to the Irish question. He suggested the 14th instead, and O'Connor accepted, "expressing his profound gratitude to the noble lord."<sup>†</sup>

This was not all. On April 6, the very day on which the Convention adopted Jones' resolution concerning the future plan of action, Sir G. Grey announced in the House of Commons the Government's own plan of action. In answer to a question by a member as to whether a mass procession would be permitted on the 10th to approach the House of Commons to hand in the petition, Grey replied that the Government intended on that same evening to issue a proclamation to the population of London warning them of the illegality of the procession and even of the meeting as planned by the Chartists, and appealing to law-abiding citizens to refrain from taking part in them on pain of severe penalties. It appeared that in the reign of Charles II.—the King who had been deposed for violating the constitution—a law had been passed prohibiting meetings and processions of more than ten people for the purpose of petitioning or appealing either to the King or to Parliament, and this obsolete law was now invoked by the "progressive" Government of Lord Russell against the working class movement. The bourgeoisie did not scruple to employ weapons forged in times of darkest reaction whenever the class struggle grew so acute as to menace its privileged position. O'Connor protested against such a course, recalling the fact that as recently as 1831 the bourgeoisie, when engaged in the fight for parliamentary reform, had led a procession of 50,000 people to the House of Commons and that three years later the Government did not prohibit a demonstration of a hundred thousand people before the House of Commons protesting against the sentence to deportation of six rural labourers

<sup>†</sup> *Ibid.*

for membership of the "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union." The Government made no reply except to observe that precedents were not analogous to the present case, and, Grey added, amid the general cheers of the House, that a bill would shortly be introduced for supplementary emergency powers "for the defence of the Crown and the Government." This Bill (which really legalised lawlessness) was indeed, introduced and passed with lightning rapidity by both Houses a few days later. The new Act, nicknamed by the Chartists, "the Gagging Act," provided severe penalties, including hard labour and deportation for a term of not less than seven years at the discretion of the courts, for any intent to influence the Crown or the Government by force, or "for any expression of such intent either in printed or written form, or by word of mouth" . . . The Government, expressing the unanimous will of the ruling bourgeois and aristocracy, threw down the gauntlet, and the Chartists, having lost the initiative of action, found themselves at a great disadvantage. They were faced with the dilemma of either giving up their plans or raising the standard of revolt.

All these events were happening in London—a city in which, on the one hand, was concentrated the whole machinery of the bourgeois government, all its physical forces and all its moral and ideological influence, and in which, on the other hand, there was no organised and concentrated factory proletariat, as in the cities of the North, but a huge petty-bourgeoisie composed of shopkeepers and petty Government officials, and the world's wealthiest mercantile and financial bourgeoisie. London was the least auspicious place, not only for revolutions, but for any new social movement in general, and this accounts for the fact that not only Chartism in its revolutionary period, but even the bourgeois reformist movements drew their nourishment not from London, but chiefly from the provinces, from the industrial centres of the North and Scotland. The Chartist Convention, suddenly confronted (although, properly speaking, this might have been expected, since the discussion of its plans had been carried out with full publicity) with the definite alternative of reacting one way or another to the Government's challenge, could think of nothing better than to issue a manifesto to the shopkeepers and other petty-bourgeois elements of the London population, assuring them of the perfect orderliness of the proposed demonstration, and to send a deputation to wait on Sir G. Grey with similar assurances that it would be an unarmed demonstration and that no revolution was contemplated.\* True, the Convention decided at the same time, in the teeth of the Government proclamation, to hold the demonstration, though without any procession to the House of Commons, and the *Northern Star* wrote in a leading article: "Whilst engaged in this holy and godlike undertaking, should lewd power let slip the dogs of war, power must take the consequence, and great and dreadful will the consequence be, if vengeance and despair should once possess the minds of the millions of freemen who pant for liberty, and demand the restoration of their long with-

\* *Ibid.*, April 8.



held rights." Nevertheless, when Harney, supported by Jones and others, moved, in view of the changed conditions, the immediate appointment of delegates to represent the various constituencies in the event of the arrest or death of the present delegates on April 10, the majority opposed the motion on the ground of the "undemocratic" character of the procedure suggested, and decided instead that such a contingency should be met with the re-election of delegates at regular public meetings.\*

O'Connor himself no longer took part in the Convention's deliberations, partly on account of illness, but no doubt also because he foresaw the failure of his plan. On the morning of the 10th, immediately before the demonstration, he appeared at the Convention to charge his opponents with responsibility for the turn of events: "Had it not been for the folly of some people outside of the Convention, and a few in it, there would never have been any opposition to their demonstration and it would have been the grandest thing of this kind ever seen in England."† This charge was both ungracious and untrue, but no one cared to argue with him. He was evidently suffering great pain, and was only anxious to prevent a catastrophe. He declared that in spite of his illness he would march in the demonstration to prevent any disturbance of the peace, as the Government had firmly resolved to crush the demonstration by military force upon the least attempt made by its participants to resort to violence. This practically foredoomed the grand demonstration which, according to original plans, was to be, if not a revolution, at least its prelude.

The Government had, indeed, taken all possible measures to nip the movement in the bud. Taught by the experience of France and Germany—bourgeois governments are always ready to learn from the experience of others, which cannot be said of the proletariat—the Government of Lord John Russell had firmly resolved to take no chances, and, in order to make some political capital out of the situation, organised a gigantic mobilisation of its forces. At its signal the capitalist press yelled in one voice that the Chartist agitation was nothing but the work of aliens and Irishmen who were seeking to disrupt the British Empire (this caused the alien emigrants to declare publicly, through Harney at the Convention, that they would take no part in the demonstration), thus playing upon the "patriotic" sentiments of the shopkeeping class, and incidentally facilitating the passing of the Gagging Act. At the same time extraordinary powers were given to Lord Wellington to put the London area under military control. The Iron Duke concentrated 12,000 troops of all arms, including artillery, to bar all the approaches to the Houses of Parliament and to the royal palaces, while the police in full force, armed with truncheons, bore upon Kennington Common and the bridges leading over the Thames to Westminster. They were further reinforced by 170,000 special constables who were to look after law and order in the city, particularly in the aristocratic quarters and the busiest streets. All

\* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*, April 15.

the Government offices were turned into miniature fortresses, barricaded with all kinds of objects from sandbags to heavy bound volumes of *The Times*, and all the officials, from the highest to the lowest, were armed from head to foot. These extraordinary proceedings naturally created a panic and the city resembled a fortress awaiting the enemy's assault. The aristocracy made a hasty flight from the perilous city, and the Queen and her family were shipped away to the Isle of Wight. In all these preparations there was one remarkable feature to be noted: the Government not only did not look for, but was most anxious to avoid conflict and bloodshed. Lord Russell wrote to the Prince Consort on the eve of the 10th: "Colonel Rowan, the chief of police, advised that the procession should be formed and allowed to come as far as the bridge they may choose to pass, and should there be stopped. He thinks this is the only way to avoid a fight. If, however, the Chartists fire and draw their swords and use their daggers, the military are to be called out. I have no doubt of their easy triumph over a London mob. But any loss of life will cause a deep and rankling resentment. I trust for this and every reason, that all may pass off quietly."<sup>\*</sup> Wellington himself, on being asked by a friend about the preparations being made for the 10th, replied: "Yes, we have taken our measures; but not a soldier or a piece of artillery shall you see, unless in actual need. Should the force of the law, the mounted or unmounted police, be overpowered or in danger, then the troops shall advance—then is their time. But it is not fair on either side to call them in to do the work of police; the military must not be confounded with the police, nor merged in the police."<sup>†</sup> Each viewed the problem from his own point of view, but both the civil and the military authorities were determined to avoid a bloody collision, and certainly not to provoke it. This, no doubt, showed the political sagacity of the English ruling class, a virtue in which both contemporary and subsequent rulers on the Continent seem to have shown themselves woefully deficient. It was a sagacity not dictated by internal political considerations alone. In his reply to Lord Russell, Prince Albert wrote: "To-day the strength of the Chartists and all evil-disposed people in the country will be brought to the test against the force of the law. . . I don't feel doubtful for a moment who will be found the stronger, but should be exceedingly mortified if anything like a commotion was to take place, as it would shake that confidence which the whole of Europe reposes in our stability at this moment, and upon which will depend the prosperity of the country."<sup>‡</sup> Accordingly, the military were concealed in barracks and ambushes, and, with the exception of the police and the special constables, no armed forces were visible in the streets.

From nine o'clock in the morning the marching columns began to gather at the points of assembly, whence they proceeded to Kennington Common by routes indicated by the police. Everything passed off quietly and peaceably: the police did not interfere and did not even

<sup>\*</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. II., p. 198 (1907 edition).

<sup>†</sup> Theodore Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, Vol. II., p. 33.

<sup>‡</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. II., p. 199.

touch the banners inscribed with suitable slogans, while the marchers, on their part, created no disturbances. At noon the procession reached Kennington Common, and the Convention also arrived in full force, in special buses chartered and decorated for the occasion, carrying the huge petition. The Convention had previously held a short formal meeting, at which O'Connor delivered his speech, but the delegates were manifestly in an anxious mood: who could tell how the Government would act, and how the crowd would behave? The meeting passed off more quietly, not to say more tamely, than either side might have expected. As soon as the Convention arrived, O'Connor was told that Colonel Rowan wished to see him. O'Connor probably thought that he was going to be arrested, but the Chief Commissioner of Police merely wished to impart the final warning that the Government had decided that the procession should not be allowed to pass the bridge, and that any attempt to break through would lead to bloodshed. O'Connor returned to the meeting, and, mounting the platform, delivered a speech to the effect that the crowd, having fulfilled its duty, should now peaceably disperse, giving the police no pretext for attack. He spoke long and pathetically, with all the fire of his eloquence, but not a word about the Charter, not a word about the things which he had during so many years called upon the people to fight for. Less than two hours later the crowds began to disperse, and the famous roth of April came to an end. O'Connor and the Chartist Committee, seated in hired hackney coaches, proceeded to the House of Commons to deliver the petition.\*

There have probably seldom been other such days on which so much was expected to happen and all expectations were utterly disappointed. It is in this very futility of the results that the significance of that day lay. To the ruling classes, who had been aware of the importance attached to that day by O'Connor and his faction, of the high hopes they had entertained for an impressive procession, and of the great moral effect they had expected from the popular march to the House of Commons in support of the petition—to them the virtual renunciation of the procession and, practically, of the demonstration itself, was a great triumph. In order to heighten the effect, the capitalist press, duly inspired by the Government,† minimised the number of the crowds on Kennington Common, stating that there had assembled not more than fifteen to twenty thousand, which figures are repeated by historians to this day. In reality, in spite of the Government proclamation, there had assembled, apparently, about 150,000 people, although O'Connor—by far the most competent man in England to estimate the number of people attending public meetings, but partial in this case, put the Kennington crowd at 400,000. Be that as it may, the outcome was an undoubted victory for the ruling classes, and particularly for the Government, and Lord Russell reported elatedly to the Queen on the following day: "Lord John Russell pre-

\**Northern Star*, April 15.

†On the eve of the 10th, the Government had requested the newspapers to estimate the crowds at not more than 15,000-20,000 (*Ibid.*, April 22).

sents his humble duty to your Majesty, and has the honour to state that the Kennington Common Meeting has proved a complete failure."\* Prince Albert, too, wrote to his friend and counsellor, Baron Stockmar: "We had our revolution yesterday, and it ended in smoke. London turned out some hundreds of special constables; the troops were kept out of sight, to prevent the possibility of a calamity and the law has remained triumphant."†

Lord Palmerston also wrote to the British Ambassador in Paris: "Yesterday was a glorious day, the Waterloo of peace and order. . . The Chartists made a poor figure, and did not muster more than fifteen thousand men on the Common. Feargus was frightened out of his wits, and was made the happiest man in England at being told that the procession could not pass the bridge. The Chartists have found that the great bulk of the inhabitants of London are against them and they will probably lie by for the present and watch for some more favourable moment."‡ Palmerston felt like a patient happily recovering from a crisis, and was therefore inclined to give credence to all manner of gossip; nevertheless, he narrates an interesting detail which sounds quite credible, namely, that "the aliens did not turn up, but the police and the special constables had sworn to give exemplary treatment to any bewhiskered and bearded rebels that might fall into their hands, and he was sure they would have ground them into powder."

What particularly gladdened the hearts of the ruling cliques was the unanimous rally of the possessing classes to the defence of the sacred rights of private property. According to Lord Palmerston (in the dispatch just quoted) there had been over 100,000 special constables enrolled in London, some people putting their number as high as 250,000: so eager were the people of all classes and social stations "to rally to the defence of law and property." The Marquess of Lansdowne, in the House of Lords, in reply to universal congratulations, declared: "If there was anything which had imparted to Her Majesty's Government that degree of confidence which was necessary to enable them to act as they had done, it was the certainty which they had acquired within the last eight and forty hours that, if they had occasion to call on any part of the community for support, it would be readily afforded." Another aristocrat, the Marquess of Northampton, also "desired to express the gratitude of their lordships for the noble conduct of the people of London on the present occasion. The spirit of order and attachment to the English Constitution—of religion and morality exhibited by the middle classes—would long be remembered." § It was, indeed, a lesson which the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were in no hurry to forget: it taught them not to fear any revolution and to have faith in the strength and stability of their class position. "The strength of our institutions," so ran the Queen's speech

\* *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. II., p. 199.

† Martin, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 34.

‡ Ashley, *Life of Palmerston*, Vol. II., p. 80.

§ *Northern Star*, April 15.

at the close of this notable Session on September 5, "has been tried and has not been found wanting. My people feel too sensibly the advantages of order and security to allow the promoters of pillage and confusion any chance of success in their wicked designs." Henceforth, the ruling classes of England had the assurance that the spectre of revolution spelt no terror to them, that they could effectively cope with any danger of that kind, and that if there was one country in Europe which could withstand the general commotion ushered in by the February days in France, it was England. This was the second lesson derived by the English ruling class from the outcome of the events on April 10th. Not only was Palmerston convinced that "the result of yesterday would produce a good and calming effect all over this and the sister island (Ireland)"\* but it was even claimed by Grey in the House of Commons that the result would prove most beneficial, not only in England, but also throughout all Europe, as it would be manifested that the authorities had been aided in the performance of their duties by the cordial co-operation of the great body of the people themselves.† Prince Albert, who, as we have seen, attached great importance to European confidence in the stability of the bourgeois order in England, for the sake of which he wished to avoid even the appearance of a revolution, could now write to Baron Stockmar: "I hope this will read with advantage on the Continent" (referring to the rallying of the bourgeois elements), and to his secretary, Sir Charles Phipps: "How mightily this will tell over the world!"‡

England, indeed, by her example, not only raised her own international prestige, but also pointed out to the other Governments the way to deal with revolution, thereby inspiring them to counter-revolution. There is no doubt but that the June days in Paris had their spiritual origin in the lessons of April 10th in England; England on that day not only beat back the wave of revolution which had attacked her shores, she also sent out a wave of counter-revolution which was soon to sweep away all the conquests gained by the revolution. One may even go further and say that England became the political workshop of European counter-revolution, having gathered in her midst all the reactionary and monarchist emigrés, with whom the court and the ruling classes established intimate contact, giving them the benefit of their advice and aiding them by every means in the furtherance of their plans. England gave hospitality to the royal family banished from France, that family being related to Queen Victoria; the Prince of Prussia, too, who had fled from Berlin at the first rising of the people, found in England a home from which he could now send advice to his father, and it was also in England that Louis Napoleon, the future hero of the *coup d'état*, who served as a special constable on April 10th in one of the aristocratic streets of Mayfair, was gaining his political experience. These foreigners were not affected by the Gagging Act nor even by the special Aliens

\* Ashley, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 86.

† *Northern Star*, April 15.

‡ Martin, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 34.

Act issued after the 10th of April. On the contrary, they enjoyed special favours from the court and the aristocracy, and continued to hatch their counter-revolutionary plots in peace. A day will come when the court and State archives will reveal their secrets, and we shall then learn of the rôle played by the triumphant English bourgeoisie in encouraging European reaction in those years.

### § III.

#### *Decline and Repression*

The curve of the revolutionary movement, which had been rising since the end of February, began to fall after April 10, and in its decline there were many instructive features meriting our attention.

The rejoicings in the camp of the ruling class had their counterpart in the disappointment among the Chartists. The mass procession to the House of Commons, intended as an imposing demonstration of the forces which supported the Charter, did not take place, and although 150,000 people assembled on Kennington Common in the teeth of the Government proclamation, it proved a failure. The resolute action for which the Chartists had been preparing themselves and the public for weeks in advance and which, according to their—or rather O'Connor's—notation was to start the working class in its fight for freedom, if not for the direct overthrow of the “weak and corrupt oligarchy”—this action, the centre of attention of all Europe, ended in an obvious fiasco. Disappointment grew still more depressing on the following day, when the Petitions Committee of the House of Commons reported that the great Chartist petition did not contain the five or six million signatures claimed by O'Connor, but barely two million signatures, many of which were obviously fictitious, like those of the Duke of Wellington, Robert Peel, the Queen herself, and such nicknames as “Flat Nose,” “Snub Nose,” and so on. In vain did O'Connor argue on simple arithmetical grounds that the committee could not possibly have examined even two million signatures in one day, and point out, by referring to past experiences, that petitions invariably contained fictitious signatures and indecent scribbling, which Parliament had never considered as detracting from the value of such documents—Parliament, elated at its triumph, paid little attention to O'Connor's argument and subjected him to ridicule and insult, and the fact that the ruling cliques could indulge in such arrogance while the Chartists were powerless to hit back intensified the depression.

What was to be done now? According to programme, the Convention was to wait for the outcome of the petition, and in the event of its rejection, to prepare a Memorial and to call mass meetings for endorsing it and for electing delegates to the National Assembly. Was there any sense in waiting for a favourable issue of the petition? Was it not obvious that the petition would be rejected by Parliament with contempt? Even O'Connor no longer entertained any illusions, and did not attend Parliament on the day when he was scheduled to move his resolution on the Charter. If the petition was thus doomed in advance, were the chances of the Memorial any better? Could it reasonably be expected that the Crown would treat the Memorial with

more consideration than that accorded by Parliament to the petition? And if the Crown were to reject the Memorial, what forces were there at the disposal of the Chartists to overcome its resistance after the poor demonstration of April 10? No doubt the Chartists were asking themselves these questions and found no reassuring reply. The campaign was apparently lost, and the only thing to be done was to recognise the defeat and to start work afresh.

Still the Chartists could not make up their minds to such a course, and O'Connor particularly tried to prove that all had not yet been lost. In his opinion, the crisis brought about on the 10th of April, due to "the folly of some, the indiscretion of some, and the treachery of some of those professing to belong to our ranks," had this good side to it, that it had made the whole world speak of the Charter, of the grievances of the people, and of the condition of the working class, so that in this sense the Chartists had even scored a moral victory over the enemy. Now was the time to take advantage of the situation, and not to injure the cause by undue haste. He, O'Connor, would next week submit a plan of action which would lead to the speediest overthrow of the brutal Whig Government.

From his articles in subsequent issues of the paper\* we learn what he meant by "undue haste," and the nature of his new plan. He believed that to take up at this juncture the plan of the Memorial and the National Assembly, *i.e.*, to take up an unconstitutional position, would be dangerous, because it would open the door to all manner of provocation on the part of the Government and would be inexpedient so long as the people's resentment had not grown sufficiently strong under the stress of unemployment and the disappointment in Free Trade. It would also be premature in the sense that the legal possibilities embodied in the original draft of the petition had not yet been exhausted. His proposal, therefore, amounted to this: the idea of a Memorial and of a National Assembly was to be dropped, and in view of the failure of the *national* petition, the method of local petitions, strictly scrutinised on the spot, was to be adopted, the petitions being submitted singly to the House of Commons by members representing the respective constituencies, thereby causing continual discussion of the Charter in the House. This would be effective propaganda and would also place the House of Commons and the Government in an intolerable position.

This plan, published in the Press at a considerably later date, was apparently submitted to the Convention shortly after April 10th, and rejected by that body, for on the 15th it was resolved by the Convention to get up a Memorial and to organise mass meetings for the election of delegates to the National Assembly, and on the 25th, in the final session of the Convention, the resolution in favour of the National Assembly was carried "in spite of O'Connor's recommendation."† Did the Convention take its own plan seriously? Scarcely, although its own programme seemed less utopian than O'Connor's. On the whole, O'Connor's prestige had suffered greatly, and his plans no longer commanded confidence or even respect. He was now attacked

\**Northern Star*, April 22 and May 20.

†*Ibid.*, April 29.



by his closest friends, as may be seen from the apologetic article which he published at the time in the *Northern Star*,\* and also from the debates in the National Assembly, which was opened in London on May 1st.†

In the columns of the same paper we find many glowing descriptions of the mass meetings held under the auspices of the Convention, but apparently the most interesting of them were those at which Ernest Jones spoke. Vigorous, resourceful and eloquent, he did not hesitate even now to plead for revolutionary methods of fighting, declaring that "not by processions were they to achieve their end, but let every man be prepared with a musket in his hand."‡ As a matter of fact, he was the only one of the "Old Guard" to take part in the National Assembly, as O'Connor had not only refused to allow his own candidature at public meetings, but had also prevailed on Harney to do likewise, on the plea that as editor of the *Northern Star*, he was to give the whole of his time to the paper.§ Bronterre O'Brien, too, stepped aside, devoting himself to his own particular circle of followers, among whom he advocated his pet schemes of land nationalisation and currency reform. In this way the National Assembly was practically boycotted by two of the oldest and hitherto most popular leaders of the Chartist movement, who even now—O'Connor particularly—continued to enjoy great popularity among the masses in the provinces. This was naturally bound to tell both on the mood and the personnel of the Assembly, since many of the delegates, on learning of O'Connor's attitude, after being elected, also withdrew from that body. The result was that instead of the anticipated 100 delegates, there arrived in London only about 60, and among them were a good number who either rarely turned up at the meetings of the Assembly, or did not attend at all. This, in its turn, led to great resentment among the delegates against O'Connor's attitude and to consequent recriminations which greatly reduced the working capacity of the Assembly.

Its meetings began with a discussion of the question as to whether the law forbidding conventions with more than 49 delegates was to be ignored or complied with. After long debates it was decided to ignore the law. The first two days were given up to local reports on the conditions of the labouring masses and the sentiments revealed by them at the mass meetings. The overwhelming majority of the delegates drew a picture of misery and despair, analogous to the one drawn by their predecessors in the Convention, and just as then, opinions were divided as to whether or not the people were ready for revolutionary action. This meant, in point of fact, that an attempt to raise a revolt in the event of the failure of the Memorial would lead to a disaster. The Assembly therefore adopted the following programme of deliberations: "the means of enabling the Assembly to give renewed

\* *Ibid.*, April 15.

† Writing in the *New York Tribune* of May 3, 1853, in connection with O'Connor's death, Marx pointed out that as a political leader he had practically been dead since 1848.

‡ *Northern Star*, May 20.

§ *Ibid.*, May 13.

vigour to the movement; the organisation of the Chartist body; the great social grievances; the policy of the Chartist body in reference to other parties seeking a reformation short of the People's Charter; and the most approved mode of presenting the Memorial to Her Majesty." On the first of these questions it was decided, after a lengthy debate, to raise a campaign fund of £10,000. This was a pious wish rather than a serious decision, as no one could say from what sources such a sum of money could be raised. The time was long since gone when the Chartist movement enjoyed the support of the Birmingham bankers, whilst, on the other hand, the state of unemployment among the working class excluded any possibility of raising such a sum by means of small contributions. There was particularly keen discussion on the second question: a motion was even made to change the party's name and give up the name of "Chartism" altogether, because it was too closely identified in the mind of the public with the name of O'Connor. The motion caused a storm of indignation, both on the part of those who cherished the historic name of the party and its glorious traditions, and of those who, actuated either by sincere regard or commiseration for the old leader, resented any ungracious aspersions on the name of O'Connor in order to court favour with bourgeois public opinion. The debates were protracted and passionate. Eventually Jones succeeded in bringing about a truce among the contending factions by a diplomatic reference to the fact that the Assembly itself, in one of its latest manifestoes, had demanded "Measures, not Men." It was nevertheless a significant fact that there were no fewer than 14 votes recorded in support of the motion, whilst even among the opponents of the motion there was not one to defend O'Connor unreservedly or on grounds of principle. Further, in connection with the question of organisation there were lengthy debates about the personal expenses of the members of the Executive or the need of an Executive at all, and a new plan of organisation was drawn up.

On the item concerning tactics a good deal of discussion turned on the question as to the need of issuing further manifestoes to the people, on the attitude to be adopted by the Chartists towards permanent armies, on the temperance movement, and on the ways and means of starting a daily paper. There was in all these discussions much that was unreal and academic; but so much time was wasted in them that on the ninth day the Assembly was almost startled when reminded by some of the provincial delegates that during the whole of that time the Party had not addressed a single public meeting and that there was serious danger of the agitation dying out entirely.\* It also transpired that the Chartist treasury was absolutely without funds, and that the number of members paying dues had shrunk to 5,000. † A large open-air meeting was then decided upon by the Assembly to take place on May 15th. Further, a resolution was carried on a motion made by Jones, in favour of "arming the people"—an unexpected excursion into the realm of revolutionary tactics, rendered possible by the fact

\* *Ibid.*, May 13.

† *Ibid.*, May 6.

that the majority of the delegates considered it a mere declaration which did not imply any action. For the rest, it was so worded as to give no ground for legal proceedings on the part of the Government. Since the times were "turbulent" and Europe was, forsooth, very unstable, and war imminent, a war in which England would have to take part, and since England might become the object of attack on the part of her powerful neighbours, while, according to the admissions of the Government itself, the country's forces were wholly inadequate, the resolution recommended every citizen, on constitutional grounds, to supply himself with arms. . . . It is hard to tell whether this was meant to be ironical or serious. However, some working people in the provinces did begin to procure arms and to train themselves in the use of them, but were cruelly punished. Far more interesting was another resolution moved by M'Douall and Jones and carried by the Assembly, dealing with the campaign which had just been started by liberal and bourgeois radicals in favour of a "moderate" reform of the franchise. While "noting with satisfaction" the interest shown by the bourgeoisie in suffrage reform, the assembly resolved "that all public meetings held for the purpose of affecting changes short of the People's Charter, be attended by the Chartist body, not for the purpose of obstruction, or of moving factious amendments, but to demonstrate calmly, rationally and pointedly, the superiority of the People's Charter over all other proposed reforms, and, in case of attack, to defend our principles by reason and argument."\* This decision was effectively carried out, and Chartist speakers addressed bourgeois reform meetings with great success.

All this was more or less interesting and important, but the most interesting and important of all questions, that of the Memorial, for which purpose it had been elected by the people, had so far been left substantially undiscussed by the Assembly. True, the newly-elected Provisional Executive was instructed to approach the proper authorities for the purpose of securing an audience of the Queen to present the Memorial. This gave rise to long debates as to whether they were to apply to the Home Secretary, as required by the Constitution, or direct to the Court; whether the deputation was to comply with all the rules of court etiquette, and so on. Some were altogether opposed to such procedure and moved that a great open-air mass meeting be organised from which the whole crowd should march in procession to the palace and demand an audience. Finally, it was decided to act through a small deputation which should comply with all the rules of etiquette, and request an audience, not through the hateful Lord Russell, but through the Lord Chamberlain. In all these debates the central question was studiously evaded, namely, what further steps were to be taken if the Memorial should meet with the same fate as the Petition. It was for this very purpose that the Assembly had been convened, and its duty was, in the event of the Memorial's failure, to declare itself in permanent session, as a sort of rival Parliament of the people! Jones himself, in speaking against mass presentation of the Memorial,

\* *Ibid.*, May 13.

drew attention to the fact that the situation "had changed in the last few weeks," and that it was "necessary thoroughly to organise the people before taking up a fight against the rebels in high quarters, who might try to raise a revolt against the principles of the British Constitution and the advocates of the People's Charter." This meant—and everybody realised it—that the Assembly was powerless to achieve the task for which it had been convened, and since it was reluctant to admit this openly, so as not to give its enemies ground for rejoicing, it deliberately evaded the discussion of this tragic question.

Meanwhile, in the provinces, where feelings were more revolutionary and the knowledge of the details of the situation less intimate, attention was riveted on this very question, and the Assembly's policy of silence caused a good deal of irritation. From all parts letters began to arrive denouncing the passive attitude of the Assembly upon this cardinal question and instructing the delegates to press for a decision. This, by the way, did a great service to O'Connor, who openly appealed to his "Fustian Jackets" against the attacks of his opponents and began to publish in his paper numerous resolutions from his supporters in all parts of the country expressing their confidence in him and their disgust with his adversaries. Upon a motion by M'Douall, the Assembly adopted a resolution in which it categorically declared that, "as a whole, it had never raised the question of the personal integrity of O'Connor or of anyone else, as it was opposed on principle to the introduction of the personal element in their debates." The purpose of this resolution, however, was not precisely of the kind that O'Connor might have wished for. Its real object was to silence the bourgeois press, which was giving prominence to reports of a split in the Chartist ranks. Nevertheless, O'Connor declared himself satisfied and expressed his elation at the restoration of the united front against the common enemy. But the settlement of the differences among the leaders could not reconcile the masses to the Assembly which had failed to justify their expectations, and the Assembly was eventually constrained to open a discussion on the fateful question.\* Here it revealed its utter helplessness. It was admitted by one speaker after another that it was their duty to carry out the Memorial campaign to the end, but when it came to the question of methods, they got into a hopeless impasse. Again was the question raised of "physical" versus "moral" force; again some recommended the organisation of mass meetings and petitions, whilst others were for vigorous action of a vague kind; some warned against scaring the bourgeoisie and provoking the Government to repressive measures, whilst others insisted on carrying out their pledges to the letter. Someone moved that the Assembly be dissolved and that the fate of the Memorial be left in the hands of the Executive. This "cowardly" motion caused quite a storm of indignation, and some of the delegates threatened to quit the Assembly in the event of its adoption. Leach, one of the members of the Executive and a stalwart Chartist, finally had the courage to express openly the thought that was in everybody's mind when he declared that "it was no use

\* *Ibid.*, May 20.

to blink it, they were not there a National Assembly—they did not represent England—they did not represent the Chartist body—they did not represent themselves.\* Then the inevitable happened: the Assembly, weary of acrimonious and fruitless wrangling, decided to dissolve and leave the business of the Memorial in the hands of the Executive. Even Jones spoke in favour of this decision, alluding in an emotional, yet optimistic speech to the "funeral orations" which had just been delivered by the delegates. He thought—and in this he was right—that the Assembly was only handicapping the movement, and that without it the Executive Committee, consisting of such seasoned fighters as himself, M'Douall, Kydd, Leach, McGrath, would carry on the work much better. In this way, the National Assembly, which was to challenge the authority of the oligarchic Parliament, came to an inglorious end exactly two weeks after its opening session. O'Connor had been right. In the situation which arose after the events of April 10th the calling of the National Assembly was a mistake. But, in pointing this out in a leading article in the *Northern Star* devoted to the dissolution of the Assembly, he failed to mention the fact that a good deal of responsibility for this state of affairs devolved upon himself.

We are now reaching the end of our narrative, but in order to furnish the necessary background, we must cast a glance at what happened during this period in the enemy's camp. The thing which strikes one most in reviewing the period after April 10, is the unusual moderation of the authorities in making use of their victory. They seemed to be bent on sparing the vanquished enemy, and not only were no arrests made, but even the illegal Assembly was allowed to go on and to adopt any resolutions it pleased. No use was made of the Security of the Queen's Crown and Government Act, and the Aliens Act remained a dead letter. The *Times* wrote: "We have put down Chartism, but we have not conciliated discontent."† And it seemed to be the reasoned policy of the Government, at any rate, not to aggravate the discontent by excessive measures of repression. In a letter to the Queen, dated April 15, Lord Russell outlined his view of the situation on the Continent, incidentally affording an insight into the reasons which prompted him at this stage to a cautious, not to say mild, policy in regard to the Chartists. In his opinion the blame for the Revolution in France and for the "great calamity which had descended upon Europe" fell entirely upon Louis Philippe because of his inability to form "a moderate constitutional Government" in France. "It was impossible," he writes,‡ "that the exclusion of free speaking and writing, which formed the essence of Prince Metternich's system, could continue. It might have been reformed quietly; it had fallen with a crash which spreads ruin and death around." As against this, he extols the milder policies of the ruling class in England, and adds: "The example of Great Britain may, however, secure an interval of reflection for Europe. The next six months will be very trying, but they may end with better prospects than we can now behold." Appar-

\* *Ibid.*

† Quoted in *Northern Star* of May 27.

‡ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. II., p. 201.

ently, Lord Russell put high hopes on the effects of the policy of conciliation.

The conciliatory efforts of the Government were seconded by the Liberal bourgeoisie. O'Connor was perfectly right in saying that after April 10th the whole of England began to speak sympathetically of Chartism, but he was wrong when he interpreted this as the conversion of the bourgeoisie to the standpoint of the working class. In reality, the bourgeoisie in all its talk about Chartism was guided solely by the thought of corrupting the movement and detaching the masses from it. The corruption of Chartism was the special task entrusted to a group of people—mostly clergymen—who were the founders of Christian Socialism. The central figure in this group was the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice, a prominent theologian who took an interest in the labour question and had founded evening classes in the poorer quarters of London. On the eve of April 10th he had shown his love for the working class by offering his services as a special constable, although excused on account of his clerical rank. Barely was the Chartist demonstration over, than he was visited by his friends Kingsley and Ludlow, who, greatly excited, came to confer with him on the ways and means to "save the country from disturbances, and the people from harmful utopias." They decided to get up a campaign for "Co-operation" (purged, of course, of the utopian ideas of Robert Owen) as opposed to Chartism, and of "internal" as against "external" freedom. This propaganda they called Christian Socialism and immediately set about popularising it. On the following day the hoardings of London were covered with posters signed by "A Working Parson" (Kingsley's *nom-de-plume*), in which Chartism was subjected to sharp, but ingenious criticism, after which a new poster appeared every day. "I am a radical reformer," said one of them.\* "I am not one of those who laugh at your petition of April 10th; I have no patience with those who do. . . . But my quarrel with the Charter is that it does not go far enough in reform. I want to see you free, but I don't see how what you ask for will give you what you want. I think you have fallen into just the same mistake as the rich of whom you complain—the very mistake which has been our curse and our nightmare—I mean the mistake of fancying that legislative reform is social reform, or that men's hearts can be changed by Acts of Parliament. If anyone will tell me of a country where a charter made rogues honest or the idle industrious, I shall alter my opinion of the Charter, but not till then. . . . Be fit to be free and God himself will set you free." Or another time: "You think the Charter will make you free? Would to God it would. But *will* the Charter make you free? Will it free you from slavery to the £10 bribes? Slavery to gin and beer? . . . There will be no true freedom without virtues, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God and love to your fellow-citizens."

This propaganda for "inward reform" as the source of "true liberty" and "true happiness" was as clever as it was insidious. It

\* See Stubbs' *Charles Kingsley*, pp. 103-116-118.

upbraided the rich to gain the confidence of the poor. Particularly gifted and attractive among the Christian Socialists was Charles Kingsley, of whom Ludlow wrote: "I believe a great many Chartists and working men will have faith in him and in the clergy which they never had before, when they find he does care to take the beam out of his own eye before he begins to take the mote out of theirs."<sup>\*</sup>

At the same time efforts were being made to split the movement. Two days prior to the 10th of April, several Chartist renegades, including William Lovett, the prototype of the modern Labour leader, had founded jointly with a group of bourgeois radicals a so-called People's League, whose purpose was said to be the advocacy of the Charter by constitutional methods, and on the eve of the 10th another group of ex-Chartists and radicals formed a similar organisation under the name of the People's Charter Union.<sup>†</sup> After April 10th some bourgeois radicals—mostly Members of Parliament, acting without the aid of Chartist renegades—began to form various organisations for the extension of the suffrage and similar reforms, with the obvious aim of taking the wind out of the Chartists' sails.<sup>‡</sup> One of these organisations was headed by Hume, the Radical M.P., who had once assisted in drawing up the People's Charter and had sponsored the Chartist cause in the House of Commons; another organisation was led by Muenz, the M.P. for Birmingham, who had taken part in the first Chartist Convention in 1839, but was afterwards the foreman of the jury in the Chartists' trial, sentencing Chartists to long terms of imprisonment. A third organisation was backed by Cobden himself, the bitterest enemy of the Chartists, and so on. All these organisations were carrying on a concerted campaign, arguing that the Chartists were utopian dreamers, and that their own abridged programmes were more likely to rally the support of all true friends of freedom among all classes and thus to attain success. As already mentioned, their meetings were attended by Chartist speakers, who usually got the best of the argument. Later on, in June, a resolution in favour of the extension of the suffrage was moved by Hume in the House of Commons, meeting with vigorous opposition from Lord Russell, who argued that a reform of the suffrage would have a baneful effect on the situation on the Continent. "Their adhesion to the ancient forms of the Constitution," he said,<sup>§</sup> "had procured them the admiration and respect, not only of those countries that were attached to the fortunes of this, but also of those nations that were hostile to them. He hoped that the House would do nothing to lose that respect, or forfeit that admiration, which had caused them to be regarded

'Like a great sea-mark, braving every storm,  
And saving all who eye it!'

He admitted, however, that in the near future it might perhaps be expedient to grant some sort of reform of the franchise, in view of "the state of public opinion."

<sup>\*</sup> Dr. F. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, Vol. I., p. 477.

<sup>†</sup> See Julius West, *History of Chartism*, p. 258 et. seq.

<sup>‡</sup> *Northern Star*, May 6 and 13.

<sup>§</sup> *Ibid.*, July 24.

Finally, there was a third method of peacefully fighting Chartism, namely, that of simulating sympathy with the working class—a method quite familiar nowadays, but then quite novel, even in England. In the above-quoted letter of the Prince Consort to Lord Russell on April 10th, urging the need for avoiding a collision between the Chartist procession and the police, the Prince goes on to say: \* "I have enquired a good deal into the state of employment about London, and I find, to my regret, that the number of workmen of all trades out of employment is *very* large, and that it has been increased by the reduction of all the works under Government, owing to the clamour for economy in the House of Commons. Surely this is not the moment for the taxpayers to economise upon the working classes! And though I don't wish our Government to follow Louis Blanc in his system of *Organisation du travail*, I think the Government is bound to do what it can to help the working classes over the present moment of distress." The Government, of course, did not heed this good advice, but ten days later the Queen herself summoned the famous sponsor and author of the Ten Hour Bill, Lord Shaftesbury,† in order to obtain "his opinion as to the manner in which they could show their interest in the working classes." Shaftesbury's advice was that the Prince Consort show interest "in social movements affecting the poor," and the Prince did attend a meeting of the "Society for the Improvement of the Conditions of the Working Classes," at which he unburdened himself of a speech concerning the need for the bourgeoisie to help the working masses, saying at the same time that "real improvement would be the result of the efforts of the working class themselves" along the line of self-education, self-improvement, and persistent toil. Since that time it has become part of the ordinary political duties of the Crown of England to show "royal" interest in the working classes, but at the moment the "brave" step of the Prince created an enormous sensation. "Aye, truly," Lord Shaftesbury wrote in his diary‡: "This is the way to stifle Chartism."

The example set by the Prince was emulated by the more advanced elements among the nobility, and in many towns they lent their aid and encouragement to the building of working class dwellings, the establishment of Working Men's Colleges, of medical dispensaries, the organisation of legal advice, of advice to emigrants, and so on. Educational work in the form of the dissemination of elementary scientific knowledge and the popularisation of the theories of bourgeois sociologists was regarded as particularly important, and the Rev. F. D. Maurice wrote: "The question is how to eliminate Owenism and Chartism. Repression has failed, and the Queen, in conversation with Lord Melbourne, has indicated the proper way, that of education."§ All these forms of activity and social patronage were subsequently developed on a large scale and played an important part in the social system, but at that time they were but the first attempt improvised on the spur of the moment, and were not carried very far, because the

\* *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Vol. II., p. 99.

† Hodder, *Life of the Earl of Shaftesbury*, Vol. II. pp. 246-249.

‡ Hodder, *op. cit.*

§ Dr. F. Maurice, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 269.



Government itself, in spite of the good intentions of its head, did not long maintain its part and eventually succumbed to the provocation of its own police, who were supported and even encouraged in this game by the more reactionary section of the Press. As mentioned above, the National Assembly, on the eve of its dissolution, had made arrangements to hold an open-air mass meeting on Clerkenwell Green on May 15th. Ernest Jones was anxious from the first to make this meeting a success: "The people," he said at the Assembly, "were to attend in their thousands in order to show that they were not going to be intimidated by obsolete laws from meeting and discussing their rights." \* The meeting was, indeed, attended by several thousand people; the members of the Chartist Executive, Jones, Kydd, M'Douall and others, delivered "incendiary" speeches, scathingly ridiculing the bourgeois reformers' attempts to outbid the Chartists, and bitterly attacking the Government which had imagined that the Chartist movement could be destroyed by police measures and repressive legislation. The meeting went off quietly in spite of the presence of the police, and it was followed by similar meetings in London and in the provinces. The despondency of the masses seemed to be passing away, and something like a spirit of militancy began to spread, when Lord John Russell declared in the House of Commons, in reply to a question by Hume, that "the middle and working classes neither wished for the People's Carter, nor for Hume's Four Points." † The Chartist Committee immediately appealed to the masses to come out on to the streets to repudiate Lord Russell's calumny, and the workers did come out, holding demonstrations and meetings. The police could no longer restrain themselves, and while abstaining from direct injunctions on the ground of the Gagging Act, resorted to provocation, starting fights and disorders in order to have a legal pretext for attacking and bludgeoning the people. The meetings and demonstrations were turned into street fights, and the scared middle class began to enrol as special constables and to appeal to the Government to protect them against "anarchy." ‡ By the end of May the situation grew exceedingly tense. The Press got up a noisy campaign, the police indulged in an orgy of terrorism and provocation, and, finally, the courts intervened by imposing severe penalties on persons arrested at public meetings and charged with rioting and resistance to the police authorities "in the discharge of their duties."

We find a curious reference to the turbulent scenes of that period in a letter written by the Prince Consort to a relative in Belgium: "Belgium and England stand up to the present time unshaken, and furnish useful standards of what constitutes real freedom. Yet we have to deal here with a mass of artisans suffering hunger and privation through the complete stagnation of trade. There have been conflicts every night between Chartists and the police. The latter, thank God! have kept the upper hand without putting the military in requisition.

\* *Northern Star*, May 20.

† *Ibid.*, May 27.

‡ *Ibid.*, May 27 and June 3.

Still, one night they had to break with their truncheons the heads of between three and four hundred people."\*

On June 2nd these and similar occurrences were the subject of a debate in the House of Lords, in the course of which the Government was charged with showing undue mildness. The Duke of Wellington, and others, demanded vigorous measures against street demonstrations, whilst the Duke of Richmond asked for greater severity on the part of the courts.† It happened just then that the Chartist Committee, having been refused by the Lord Chamberlain an audience of the Queen for the presentation of the Memorial, decided to address a letter personally to the Queen, stating the reason for which the audience was sought, and assuring her of their highest respect. At the same time, they decided to hold, in support of this step, a number of open-air mass meetings in and around London on Whit Sunday (June 12th). This exhausted the patience of the bourgeoisie, and the Government, forgetting all about England's international prestige, surrendered. A special proclamation was issued by the police declaring all Chartist meetings illegal, and threatening severe penalties to anyone taking part in them. London was again flooded with troops (about 10,000 men), the streets were placed in charge of "special constables," and public buildings were turned into forts for military action.‡ The public places where the meetings were to be held were occupied by the police in advance, and when the marchers arrived, they had either to disperse or engage in a fight with them. The Chartists were, of course, forced to retreat, after duly registering their protest, but in some places riots took place provoked by police agents and hooligans.

Again, as on April 10th, the bourgeoisie was victorious. This time however, the Government was no longer content with moral laurels, and decided—for the third time in the history of Chartism—to make a "clean sweep" of the Chartist movement by eliminating its most active leaders. On June 7th three prominent London Chartists were arrested for seditious speeches delivered by them at a meeting on Clerkenwell Green on May 26th, and Ernest Jones himself was arrested at a meeting in Manchester on Whit Sunday, and brought to London. A couple of days later another popular Chartist leader was arrested. All five were indicted on warrants in which they were charged, "with having in a certain open place called Clerkenwell Green, wickedly, maliciously, and seditiously, published, uttered, and pronounced certain scandalous, wicked and seditious words, in the presence of divers persons there and then assembled, of and concerning our Sovereign Lady the Queen and her Government," and so forth.§

Only a short time before, at a meeting on Clerkenwell Green on May 15th, Jones had expressed his confidence that the agents of the Government would not catch him with any unguarded utterances under the "Gagging Act"—"although young in the movement he was too old

\* Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, Vol. II., p. 76.

† *Northern Star*, June 3.

‡ See article by *L'Ami du Peuple* (Harney) in the *Northern Star*, June 17.

§ *Ibid.*, June 10.

a bird."\* Alas, Jones had still faith in the existence of some law, even if a bad one, under which he would have to be "caught" before being persecuted. As a matter of fact, there had been nothing seditious in his utterances. He had pleaded for organised action, and against sporadic outbursts; he had urged his listeners first to organise on a national scale, and then to take up the fight for the cause, even if they were to die for it. He had concluded his peroration with the appeal: "Organise, organise, organise." But the Government was not looking for any legal, formal excuse to apply the gag. It was not a question of right and law, but of political expediency and force, and all the five accused were sentenced at the Old Bailey to terms of imprisonment of two years and more hard labour. They were tried by a packed jury of shopkeepers, and the judge was the notorious Sir Thomas Wilde, who had boasted shortly before the trial, at a banquet in the City: "Just give me the proper jury, and I will find the proper article of the law for them."† Regardless of such a cynical attitude to law and justice, the bourgeois press found Jones' sentence too lenient. The *Times* wrote that Jones had got off too cheaply, and other papers expressed open regret that the sentence had not been more severe.‡ It should be borne in mind that Jones himself had sprung from the aristocracy class (his father had been equerry to the Duke of Cumberland, subsequently the King of Hanover), and the ruling class could not forgive him his desertion and the devotion of his gifts to the working class.

Here we may conveniently conclude our narrative. We are not writing a history of Chartism, but the story of the revolutionary events of 1848, which may be considered at an end with the sentencing of Ernest Jones on July 7, 1848. After him another member of the Chartist Committee was arrested, M'Douall, who was also sentenced to two years' hard labour. This was followed by wholesale arrests, about five hundred people being put behind prison bars, and the movement was crushed. Just as the 10th of April had given encouragement to the counter-revolution all over the Continent, so the bloody June events in Paris no doubt encouraged the reaction in England and inspired it to deal the death blow to the Chartists. This was achieved by the total suppression of the Chartist organisations and by the elimination of their leaders by long terms of imprisonment.

It was a blow from which the revolutionary movement in England did not recover for generations, and to this day the English bourgeoisie is enjoying the fruits of its victory in 1848. True, this was not the only conquest which has sustained and is sustaining the English bourgeoisie; even more brilliant and important was the subsequent victory on the ideological front by means of timely economic and political concessions which gradually reconciled the working class to the capitalist order and fastened around its neck the yoke of bourgeois ideology. But even this second victory was rendered possible only as the result of the first, which had broken the revolutionary backbone of the proletariat, and

\* *Ibid.*, May 20.

† *Ibid.*, July 22.

‡ *Ibid.*, July 15.

made the working class soft and pliable in the hands of its artful conquerors. After 1848 a new chapter is opened in the social history of England—not a chapter perhaps, but a whole volume—and this new volume has an entirely different content, and is permeated with quite a different spirit. If on the Continent of Europe the year 1848 marked the *appearance* of the proletariat upon the stage, henceforth fighting for its emancipation, in England it marked the moment of the *retreat* of the proletariat, henceforth tied body and soul to the triumphal chariot of the bourgeoisie, which it is dragging along to this day. Herein lies the importance of this year to England, and for this reason its story should be told.

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