

# THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT.

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## THE GERMAN ELECTIONS.

DEAR COMRADE,—You ask me for an article on our elections. For an article I have no time—think, from June 6 to June 23 (the eve of the second ballot) I had twenty-seven meetings in different parts of Germany, and almost all mass meetings! But a hurried sketch you shall have, and my opinion, too.

The Government and its patrons and masters—the Junkers—the worthy descendants of the old *Raubritter* (“Robber Knights”), and quite as greedy, as unscrupulous, and as brutal, with the sole distinction that they rob lawfully by legislation in the Reichstag and Landtag, instead of risking their life on the high road, let us say, the reactionary and ruling parties, were for years already in great fear of the General Election, that, in due order of things, had to take place this year. The late Reichstag had been elected on June 15, 1893, and its “mandate” was for five years—up to June 15, 1898. They looked for a pretext to dissolve the Reichstag, and for an opportunity to madden the electors by “the Red Spectre,” or some other spectre, as in 1878 and in 1887. But with the best of wills they could not find nor create an opportunity. We did not allow them to organise anarchistic plots, revolutionary conspiracies, murderous assaults, and other police comedies of terror. The only conspirators were our enemies, the “men of order,” and we crossed and defeated all their conspiracies.

When the newest folly was discovered—the plan to make the German Empire the greatest *sea* power as well as the greatest *land* power—our clever “statesmen” imagined they could play this card against the opposition parties, and they thought of a dissolution of the Reichstag on the question of the German fleet. In olden times, about fifty years ago, the German fleet had been a popular and even democratic dream—just like the German Empire. However, what our Junkers take in hand ceases to be popular. The German people have too much sense not to see that the newest folly was an impossible phantom, and the attempt to realise it hopeless ruin—that it would be burning the candle at both ends. We dared them to dissolve on this question. And they did not dissolve. They contented themselves with the few dribbles given to them with calculating generosity by the Catholic Centre, which, thanks to Bismarck's stupid *Culturkampf*, is now the governing party in Protestant Germany—mind, governing party, not Government Party. The *Centrum* governs our Government!

There was no possibility to dissolve the Reichstag, and the reactionary parties, being without an election cry, were in despair. Then Mr. Miguel, my old friend and companion of the ancient *Communistenbund* (Communist League), and now real Chancellor (Prince Hohenlohe being only Chancellor

for show) came to the rescue. He made last winter his famous "Collection" speech — "*Sammelrede*" — calling upon all burghers, bourgeois, and capitalistically interested and inclined persons, to gather and collect themselves under one common banner against the party of destruction.

We laughed, sharpened our weapons, and kept our powder dry. In Saxony, the most advanced country in Germany, we had known that "Collection" since ten years already, and it had not prevented us from beating our "collected" enemies. We knew long ago that a day must come when all our enemies, forgetting their petty quarrels about the booty, must unite against us; and we know, also, that on that day we shall be strong enough to smash them all.

We made our preparations. We organised the battle, and the victory.

The Government fixed June 16 for the new election—that is just the day following the day up to which the mandate of the old Reichstag lasted.

An electoral campaign is hard work, especially for a party like ours, which cannot dispose of the Government influence, and of the administrative machinery in State, district, town, and village, as the capitalistic parties can; and we have not the other immense forces capital has in its service and at its disposition. Everybody had to do his duty. And everybody did. It was a *levée en masse*—all our comrades in the fight, male and female. Officers and men all vied with one another to do the utmost. There was but one thought—to beat the enemy, and to gain a *great* victory.

We were not in want of an election cry. The numberless crimes committed against the people, the stupidity of our internal and external policy, the 5,000 millions of marks stolen from the German people by the corn laws alone during the last twenty years, the degradation of justice, the infamous conspiracy against universal suffrage and against the right of combination. We had weapons, and we used them. Wherever we did strike we hit a sore point, and gave a home-thrust. What a tremendous sum of courage, of sacrifice, of strength, of work! No other party could equal us—if we except the machinery of the public powers and of capitalism; they have only hired work, the work of hirelings.

On the day of battle we marched against the enemy in full array. Without counting the voters, we had, not thousands, not tens of thousands—we had a hundred thousand and more who distributed the manifestoes, the addresses, the voting tickets; who watched the polling places; who reminded the lazy of their duty.

I did not mention the chief causes—the acts of violence, the intimidations and persecutions, on the part of our enemies, in the Government and out of the Government—this practice is a matter of course in this our half-Russian Empire, the rulers of which lie prostrate before the trembling knout-Czar, the last hope and prop of crumbling capitalism.

Well, the battle is fought. Our Government, with the reactionary host "collected" by Miguel, the ex-Communist, has suffered a defeat so crushing and so ignominious as never has been suffered by any Government before,

and Social-Democracy, fighting single-handed against all, has overcome all, stands victorious over all.

The 16th of June brought us two millions and more than a hundred thousand votes—that is, between one-fourth and one-third of all the votes given in the German Empire. And as the German Empire contains now above fifty-two millions of inhabitants, our vote represents a population of about fifteen millions, while at the last election (1893) our votes represented but twelve and a half millions.

It is their constant growth, in spite of the most desperate efforts to stifle our movement, which shows the invincibility of Social-Democracy, and which bewilders our enemies. Whatever they may do, whatever tactics they may pursue against us, we grow, grow—advance, advance.

Look at the following numbers. They have been often published, yet they cannot be put before the eyes and called into mind often enough. Universal suffrage has existed in Germany since 1867. The two first elections, on the basis of universal suffrage, took place in 1867 for the Norddeutsche Bund—the North German Union, which preceded the German Empire. These two first elections—the one for the constituting Reichstag, and the other for the regular Norddeutsche Reichstag—found only embryonic beginnings of a Socialist movement. The number of Socialist votes cannot be fixed. Certainly they did not amount to more than fifty thousand. And now came the elections for the German Reichstag, and we can see the growth with arithmetic clearness.

	Socialist Votes.		Socialist Votes.
1 71 .....	124,655	1884 .....	549,990 (Socialist Law)
1874 .....	351,952	1887 .....	763,128
1877 .....	493,288	1890 .....	1,427,298
1878 .....	437,158 (Socialist Law)	1893 .....	1,786,738
1881 .....	311,961	1893 .....	2,125,000

Mind: 2,125,000 men of twenty-five years and more! The millions below twenty-five years, amongst whom Socialism is more ripe than amongst the older ones, are not counted.

You see, with the exception of 1878 and 1881, when our comrades were not yet trained to the method of fighting the infamous Socialist Law, which, in fact, was a Law of Proscription, putting out of the pale of common law—the increase has been constant and mighty.

The number of Socialist Deputies has increased too, but not in exact proportion to the number of votes. Our electoral system is very bad. If, as ought to be the case, the number of votes did determine the number of Deputies, we would now have 115 members out of 397. In reality we have only fifty-six—a dozen more than the elections of 1893 gave us—(forty-four).

And our enemies? They are beaten, but they are unable to learn. And the Government? Beaten, and unable to learn. They think now, more than ever, of destroying universal suffrage. They may try it. We are ready for them. And they will be beaten again—till they have learned or till they are no longer capable of mischief.

Good-bye! With fraternal greetings to you and the other companions and friends in England.—Yours,  
 Charlottenburg, July 4, 1898.

W. LIEBKNECHT.