

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

Michael Bakunin

Table of Contents

<u>THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL</u>	1
<u>Michael Bakunin</u>	2
<u>I</u>	3
<u>II</u>	5
<u>III</u>	7
<u>IV</u>	10

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

Michael Bakunin

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.
<http://www.blackmask.com>

- I
 - II
 - III
 - IV
-

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

I

"Up to now," says [the 13 July 1869 issue of *La Montagne*, "we thought that a person's political and religious opinions did not affect his standing as a member of the International; as for us, we maintain that point of view."

At first glance, we might think Mr. Coullery to be correct. For indeed, when the International welcomes a new member into its bosom, it does not ask him whether he is an atheist or a believer, or whether he belongs to any particular political party. It asks him only: Are you a worker? If not, do you wish, do you feel the need, have you the strength, to embrace the workers' cause totally and unreservedly, and are you willing to identify yourself with it, to the exclusion of all opposing causes?

Do you feel that the workers, who produce all the wealth of the world, who are the creators of civilisation, and who have won every bourgeois freedom, are today condemned to poverty, ignorance, and slavery? Have you realised that the chief cause of all the ills afflicting the worker is poverty, and that this poverty, the fate of all workers of the world, results inevitably from the present economic organisation of society, especially from the subjugation of labor—i.e., the proletariat—to the yoke of capital—i.e., the bourgeoisie?

Have you realized that there is, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, an irreconcilable antagonism which results inevitably from their respective stations in life? That the prosperity of the bourgeois class is incompatible with the prosperity and freedom of the workers because this exclusive prosperity [of the former] is based on the exploitation and subjugation of the latter's labor; and that, for the same reason, the prosperity and human dignity of the masses of workers absolutely require the abolition of the bourgeoisie as a distinct class? That as a result, war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is unavoidable, and that its only outcome can be the destruction of the latter?

Have you realized that no worker, however intelligent and strong, can struggle alone against the influence that the members of the bourgeoisie organize so well, an influence epitomized and chiefly supported by each and every State? That in order to become strong you must unite not with members of the bourgeoisie—this would be a folly or a crime, for every member of the bourgeoisie is, as a member of the bourgeoisie, our irreconcilable enemy—nor with traitorous workers who are so base as to curry favor with the members of the bourgeoisie, but with strong and virtuous workers who honestly want what you do?

Have you realized that an isolated local or national workers' association will never be victorious against the formidable coalition of all the privileged classes, property-owners, capitalists and States throughout the world—even if it belongs to one of Europe's largest countries; and that to resist this coalition and win this victory, nothing less is needed than the union of all local and national workers' associations into a worldwide association, the great International Working-Men's Association of all countries?

If you feel, if you have indeed realized and really want all this, then join us, regardless of your political and religious beliefs. But for us to welcome you, you must pledge: (1) to subordinate henceforth your personal interests and even those of your family, as well as your political and religious convictions and their manifestations, to the supreme concern of our association—the struggle of labor against capital, of the workers against the bourgeoisie in the economic field; (2) never to compromise with members of the bourgeoisie for personal gain; (3) never to strive to rise above the working masses as an individual for your personal advantage, for this would immediately make you a member of the bourgeoisie, an enemy and an exploiter of the proletariat, since the whole difference between the two is that a member of the bourgeoisie always seeks his own good outside the collectivity, while the worker seeks his and intends to claim it only in solidarity with all[others] who work and are exploited by bourgeois capital; (4) to remain always faithful to the solidarity of the workers, for the International considers the least betrayal of this solidarity to be the greatest crime and most infamous deed of which a worker is capable. In a word, you must accept our General Rules fully and unreservedly, taking a solemn oath to adhere to them henceforth in your life and in your acts.

We think that the founders of the International were very wise to eliminate all political and religious questions from its program. To be sure, they lacked neither political views nor well defined antireligious views. But they refrained from expressing those views in their program because their main purpose, before all else, was to unite the working masses of the civilized world in a common movement. Inevitably they had to seek a common basis, a

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

set of elementary principles on which all workers should agree, regardless of their political and religious delusions, simply so that they might show themselves to be earnest workers, that is, harshly exploited and long-suffering.

Had they unfurled the flag of some political or anti-religious system, they hardly would have united the workers of Europe but instead would have divided them even more; for the priests, the governments, and even the reddest bourgeois political parties, aided by the workers' ignorance, have disseminated a horde of false ideas among the working masses through their own self-interested and highly corrupting propaganda. And these blinded masses are still, unfortunately, too often taken in by lies, the only purpose of which is to make them serve, voluntarily and stupidly, the interests of the privileged classes, to the detriment of their own.

Moreover, there is still too great a difference in the level of industrial, political, intellectual, and moral development among the working masses in various countries for it to be possible today to unite them around a single political, anti-religious program. To suggest such a program for the International and to make it an absolute condition for admission to that Association, would be to establish a sect, not a worldwide association, and it would destroy the International.

There was yet another reason for eliminating from the start all political tendencies from the program of the International, at least in appearance, and only in appearance.

From the beginning of history until today, there has never been a politics of the people, and by "the people" we mean the common people, the working rabble whose labor is the world's pabulum. There has only been the politics of the privileged classes, and these classes have used the physical force of the people to dethrone each other and to take one another's place. The people, in turn, have supported or opposed them only in the vague hope that at least one of these political revolutions—none of which could have been made without their help but none of which has been made for their sake—might alleviate somewhat their poverty and their age-old slavery. They have always been deceived. Even the Great French Revolution betrayed them. It eliminated the aristocratic nobility and replaced it with the bourgeoisie. The people are no longer called slaves or serfs; the law proclaims them free-born. But their slavery and their poverty remain unchanged.

And these will remain unchanged so long as the masses of the people continue to be used as the tool of bourgeois politics, whether this is called conservative, liberal, progressive, or radical politics, even if it gives itself the most revolutionary airs in the world. Because all bourgeois politics, regardless of its color and its label, has at bottom but a single aim: to preserve bourgeois rule; and bourgeois rule is proletarian slavery.

So what did the International have to do? First of all, it had to separate the working masses from all bourgeois politics and eliminate from its program all bourgeois political schemes. But when the International was founded, the only political programs in the world were those of the Church, the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the bourgeoisie. The program of the bourgeoisie, especially that of the radical bourgeoisie, was certainly more liberal and more humane than those of the others, but they were all based on the exploitation of the working masses, and none of them actually had any purpose other than to contend over who should monopolize this exploitation. The International therefore had to begin by clearing the ground. And since, from the standpoint of labor's emancipation, all politics was tarnished with reactionary elements, the International first had to cast out from its bosom all known political systems so that it could establish, upon the ruins of the bourgeois world, a genuine workers' program—the policy of the International.

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

II

The founders of the International Working-Men's Association acted wisely in establishing, as the basis of this Association, the exclusively economic struggle of labor and capital, rather than political and philosophical principles. With such a basis, they could be sure that a worker, as soon as he set foot on its ground, would inevitably discover, through the very force of circumstances and through the development of this struggle, the political, socialist, and philosophical principles of the International—principles, indeed, which are but the legitimate expression of its point of departure and of its goal. They could be sure that the worker would become imbued with confidence, both from his sense of being right and from the numerical strength he gains by uniting in solidarity, in the struggle against bourgeois exploitation, with his comrades-in-labor.

We have explained these principles in ["La Montagne and Mr. Coullery," above]. From the political and social standpoint, they inevitably result in the abolition of classes (and hence of the bourgeoisie, which is the dominant class today), the abolition of all territorial States and political fatherlands, and the foundation, upon their ruins, of the great international federation of all national and local productive groups. Since the principles of the International, from the philosophical standpoint, aim at nothing less than the realization on earth of the human ideal, of human well-being, of equality, justice, and freedom, these principles strive to render hopes for a "better world" in heaven totally pointless, and they will also result inevitably in the abolition of all cults and religious systems.

But if you start by announcing these two goals to unlearned workers crushed by their daily labor, workers who are demoralized and corrupted (by design, one might say) by the perverse doctrines liberally dispensed by governments in concert with every privileged caste—the priests, the nobility, the bourgeoisie—then you will alarm the workers. They may resist you without suspecting that these ideas are only the most faithful expression of their own interests, that these goals carry in themselves the realization of their dearest wishes, and that the religious and political prejudices in the name of which they may resist these ideas and goals are on the contrary the direct cause of their continued slavery and poverty.

We must distinguish clearly the prejudices of the masses of the people from those of the privileged class. As we have just said, the masses' prejudices are based only on their ignorance and totally oppose their very interests, while the bourgeoisie's are based precisely on its class interests and resist counteraction by bourgeois science itself only because of the collective egoism of its members. The people want but do not know; the bourgeoisie knows but does not want. Which of the two is incurable? The bourgeoisie, to be sure.

General rule: Only those who feel the need to be converted, who have already received through their outward privations or inward instincts everything you want to give them, can be converted. You will never convert those who do not feel the need to change, or even those who are discontent with their situation and want to change it but who, because of the nature of their moral, intellectual, and social habits, seek that situation in a world which is not the world you envision.

I ask whether you can convert to socialism a noble who covets riches, a member of the bourgeoisie who would like to be a noble, or even a worker who in his soul strives only to become a member of the bourgeoisie! You might as soon convert a real or imaginary aristocrat of the intellect, a scientist, a half-scientist, a quarter-, tenth-, or hundredth-part scientist who is full of scientific ostentation and of arrogant scorn for the illiterate masses – often just because he has been lucky enough somehow to understand a few books—and who thinks he is called, with others of his kind, to establish a new ruling, i.e., exploiting, caste.

No argument or propaganda will ever convert these miserable persons. There is only one way to convince them: by acting, by destroying the very possibility for privileged positions to exist, by destroying all domination and exploitation; by social revolution, which in sweeping away every basis of inequality in the world will moralize those persons by forcing them to speak their welfare through equality and solidarity.

The case is different with earnest workers. By "earnest" workers we mean all those who are really overwhelmed by the burden of labor, all those who are in so destitute and precarious a situation that none of them, save in the most extraordinary circumstances, could consider gaining a better situation for himself and only for himself, under present economic conditions and in the present social environment—becoming in his turn, for

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

example, a manager or a State counselor. To be sure, we also include in this category those rare and magnanimous workers who could rise individually above the working class but who do not wish to take advantage of the possibility, workers who would prefer to be exploited by the members of the bourgeoisie a bit longer, in solidarity with their comrades-in-poverty, rather than become exploiters in their turn. These workers do not have to be converted; they are pure socialists.

We are referring to the great mass of workers who, exhausted by their daily labor, are poor and unlearned. These workers, regardless of the political and religious prejudices implanted in their mind, are socialist without knowing it; their most basic instinct and their social situation makes them more earnestly and truly socialist than all the scientific and bourgeois socialists taken together. They are socialist because of all the conditions of their material existence and all the needs of their being, whereas others are socialist only by virtue of their intellectual needs. And in real life the needs of the being are always stronger than those of the intellect, since the intellect is never the source of being but is always and everywhere its expression, reflecting its successive development.

The workers lack neither the potential for socialist aspirations nor their actuality; they lack only socialist thought. Each worker demands, from the bottom of his heart, a fully human existence in terms of material well-being and intellectual development, an existence founded on justice, that is, on the equality and freedom of each and every individual through labor. This is the instinctive ideal of everyone who lives only from his own labor. Clearly, this ideal cannot be realized in the present social and political world, which is founded on injustice and on the indecent exploitation of the labor of the working masses. Thus, every earnest worker is inevitably a socialist revolutionary, since he can be emancipated only by the overthrow of all things now existing. Either this structure of injustice must disappear along with its showy display of unjust laws and privileged institutions, or the working masses will be condemned to eternal slavery.

This is socialist thought, the germs of which will be found in the instinct of every earnest worker. The goal, then, is to make the worker fully aware of what he wants, to unjam within him a stream of thought corresponding to his instinct, for as soon as the thought of the working masses reaches the level of their instinct, their will becomes unshakable and their influence irresistible.

What impedes the swifter development of this salutary thought among the working masses? Their ignorance to be sure, that is, for the most part the political and religious prejudices with which self-interested classes still try to obscure their conscious and their natural instinct. How can we dispel this ignorance and destroy these harmful prejudices? By education and propaganda?

To be sure, these are excellent means. But, given the present plight of the working masses, they are insufficient. The isolated worker is too overwhelmed by his daily grind and his daily cares to have much time to devote to education. Moreover, who will conduct this propaganda? Will it be the few sincere socialists who come from the bourgeoisie and who certainly are magnanimous enough but who, on the one hand, are too few in number to propagandize as widely as necessary and, on the other hand, do not adequately understand the workers' world because their social situation puts them in a different world, and whom therefore the workers rather legitimately distrust?

"The emancipation of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves," says the Preamble to our General Rules. And it is a thousand times right to say so. This is the principal basis of our great Association. But the workers' world is in general unlearned, and it totally lacks theory. Accordingly, it is left with but a single path, that of emancipation through practical action. What does this mean?

It has only one meaning. It means workers' solidarity in their struggle against the bosses. It means trade-unions, organization, and the federation of resistance funds.

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

III

If the International at first tolerated the subversively reactionary political and religious ideas of the workers who joined it, this was hardly because the International was indifferent to those ideas. The International cannot be accused of being indifferent because it detests and rejects those ideas with all the strength of its being, for as we have already shown, every reactionary idea is the inversion of the basis of the International.

This tolerance, we repeat, is prompted by a far-seeing wisdom. The International knows full well that every earnest worker is socialist because of all the wants intrinsic to his wretched station in life, and that any reactionary ideas he has can result only from his ignorance. To deliver him from that ignorance, the International relies on the collective experience he gains in its bosom, especially on the progress of the collective struggle of the workers against the bosses.

And indeed, as soon as a worker believes that the economic state of affairs can be radically transformed in the near future, he begins to fight, in association with his comrades, for the reduction of his working hours and for an increase in his salary. And as soon as he begins to take an active part in this wholly material struggle, we may be certain that he will very soon abandon every preoccupation with heaven, voluntarily renounce divine assistance, and become increasingly accustomed to relying on the collective strength of the workers. Socialism replaces religion in his mind.

The same thing will happen to the worker's reactionary politics, the chief prop of which will disappear as his consciousness is delivered from religious oppression. On the other hand, through practice and collective experience, which is naturally always more broadening and instructive than any isolated experience, the progressive expansion and development of the economic struggle will bring him more and more to recognize his true enemies: the privileged classes, including the clergy, the bourgeoisie, and the nobility; and the State, which exists only to safeguard all the privileges of those classes, inevitably taking their side against the proletariat in every case.

The worker thus enlisted in the struggle will necessarily come to realize that there is an irreconcilable antagonism between the henchmen of Reaction and his own dearest human concerns. Having reached this point, he will recognize himself to be a revolutionary socialist, and he will act like one.

This is not the case with the members of the bourgeoisie. All their interests are opposed to the economic transformation of society. And if their ideas are also opposed to it; if these ideas are reactionary or, as they are now politely called, moderate; if their heart and mind detest this great act of justice and liberation that we call the Social Revolution; if they are horrified of real social equality, that is, of simultaneously political, social and economic equality; if at the bottom of their soul they desire, as many bourgeois socialists now do, to preserve a single privilege even just their intellect—for themselves, their class, or their children; if they do not abhor the present order of things, with both mental logic and impassioned strength: then we may be sure that they will remain reactionaries and enemies of the workers' cause all their life. They must be kept far from the International.

They must be kept very far away, because their admission would only demoralize the International and divert it from its true path. There is, moreover, an unmistakable sign by which the workers can tell whether a member of the bourgeoisie who seeks admittance to their ranks comes to them straightforwardly, unhesitatingly, and without subversive hidden motives. This sign is the relations he maintains with the bourgeois world.

The antagonism between the world of the workers and that of the bourgeoisie is becoming more and more pronounced. Every serious thinking person whose opinions and ideas are not distorted by the often unconscious influence of self-interested sophists must now realize that there is no reconciliation possible. The workers want equality and the bourgeoisie wants to maintain inequality. The one obviously destroys the other. Thus the vast majority of bourgeois capitalists and property owners—the ones who have the courage honestly to admit what they want—are also bold enough to show just as honestly the horror that the present labor movement evokes in them. These are our resolute and sincere enemies. We know who they are, and this is good.

But there are other members of the bourgeoisie who are of a different kind; they have neither the same candor nor the same courage. They are enemies of social liquidation, which we call, with all the force of our souls a great act of justice, the necessary point of departure and the indispensable basis for an egalitarian and rational

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

organization of society. Like all other members of the bourgeoisie, they wish to preserve economic inequality, the everlasting source of all other inequalities; and at the same time they claim to want what we want, the all-round emancipation of the worker and of labor. With a passion worthy of the most reactionary members of the bourgeoisie, they support the very source of the proletariat's slavery, the separation of labor from landed property and capital, which are now represented by two different classes; and they nevertheless pose as apostles who will deliver the working class from the yoke of property and capital!

Are they fooling themselves or are they just fooling? Some, in good faith, fool themselves, but many are impostors; most fool both themselves and others. They all belong to the radical bourgeoisie and the category of bourgeois socialists who founded the League of Peace and Freedom.

Is this League socialist? As we have already noted, it rejected socialism with horror in the beginning, during the first year of its existence. This past year, it triumphantly rejected the principle of economic equality at its Berne Congress. Now, sensing that it is dying and wishing to live still a bit longer, but finally realizing that the social question is now the crux of political life, it calls itself socialist. It has become bourgeois-socialist and wants to decide all social questions on the basis of economic inequality. It wishes to preserve rent and interest, as it must, but it pretends to emancipate the workers with them. It tries to give nonsense some substance.

Why does it do this? What makes it attempt so unseemly and unproductive a task? This is not difficult to understand.

A large part of the bourgeoisie is tired of the reign of Caesarism and militarism which it itself founded, out of fear of the proletariat, in 1848. Just remember the June Days, those precursors of the December Days; remember the National Assembly that unanimously offered nothing but curses and insults after the June Days, unanimously but for a single voice, the voice of the illustrious and heroic socialist Proudhon, who alone had the courage to throw down the challenge to this rabid bourgeois herd of conservatives, liberals, and radicals. Nor should we forget that some of those citizens who reviled Proudhon are still alive and more militant than ever, [while others] have since become martyrs to liberty, beatified by the December persecutions.

There is therefore absolutely no doubt that the entire bourgeoisie, including the radical bourgeoisie, was the creator of the Caesarean and military despotism, the effects of which it now deplors. Having used this despotism against the proletariat, the bourgeoisie now wants to be rescued from it. Nothing is more natural; this regime ruins and humiliates the bourgeoisie. But how to get rid of it? In the past the bourgeoisie was daring and strong, and its triumphs gave it strength. Now it is cowardly and weak, troubled by the impotence that accompanies age. It recognizes its weakness only too well and senses that it can do nothing by itself. Therefore it needs help, and only the proletariat can provide this; consequently, the bourgeoisie needs to win over the proletariat.

But how to win it over? By promises of freedom and political equality? These words no longer touch the workers. They have learned at their own expense, and they have realized through harsh experience, that these words mean nothing to them but the preservation of their economic slavery, often harsher than before. If you want to touch the hearts of these wretched millions of labor's slaves, speak to them of their economic emancipation. Every worker knows that this is the only real, serious foundation of every other emancipation. Accordingly, the workers must be approached on the ground of economic reforms of society.

Well, said the Leaguers of Peace and Freedom to themselves, let us do that, and let us call ourselves socialists as well. Let us promise them economic and social reforms, but always on the condition that they fully respect the bases of civilization and of bourgeois omnipotence: individual and hereditary property, interest on capital, and rent on land. Let us convince them that the worker can be emancipated only under these conditions, which guarantee our domination and their slavery.

Let us even convince them that the achievement of all these social reforms requires that they first make a good political revolution, but an exclusively political one, as red as they like politically and with much headchopping if that becomes necessary, but with the greatest respect for the inviolability of property: in short, a wholly Jacobin revolution that will make us masters of the situation. And once we become the masters, we will give the workers, well, what we can give them and what we want to give them.

Here is an infallible sign by which the workers can recognize a false socialist, a bourgeois socialist: if, speaking of revolution, or if you like of social transformation, he says that political transformation must precede economic transformation; if he denies that they must be accomplished together and simultaneously, or if he denies even that political revolution is something other than the immediate and direct implementation of full and

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

complete social liquidation, let the workers turn their backs on him, for he is either a fool or a hypocritical exploiter.

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

IV

If the International Working–Men's Association is to be faithful to its principle and if it is to remain on the only path that can bring it success, then it must above all counteract the influences of two kinds of bourgeois socialists: the partisans of bourgeois politics, including even bourgeois revolutionaries; and the so–called practical men, who advocate bourgeois cooperation.

Let us first consider the former.

We have said that economic emancipation is the basis of all other emancipations. This summarizes the entire policy of the International.

Indeed, the following statement appears in the Preamble to our General Rules:

"That the subjection of labor to capital is the source of all political, moral, and material servitude, and that for this reason the economic emancipation of the workers is the great goal to which every political movement should be subordinated."

Of course, every political movement which does not have the full and definitive economic emancipation of the workers for its immediate and direct goal, which does not have written clearly on its standard the principle of economic equality, that is, the full restitution of capital to labor or Social Liquidation—every such political movement is bourgeois and, as such, must be ruled out of the International.

As a result, the policy of bourgeois democrats or bourgeois socialists, which declares that political freedom is the prior condition for economic emancipation, must be mercilessly ruled out. These words mean nothing but that political reforms or political revolution must precede economic reforms or economic revolution, and that the workers must therefore unite with the somewhat radical members of the bourgeoisie in order first to carry out political changes with them, but without later carrying out economic changes against them.

We strongly dispute this pernicious theory, which can only make the workers once more a tool of their own exploitation by the bourgeoisie. To gain political freedom first can only mean to gain it by itself, leaving economic and social relations as before, that is, the property–owners and capitalists with their impudent riches and the workers with their poverty.

But, they say, once this freedom is won, it will give the workers a means of later gaining equality or economic justice.

Freedom, indeed, is a splendid and powerful tool. The question is whether the workers will really be able to use it and whether it will really be theirs, or whether, as has always been the case until now, their political freedom will be but a false front and a fraud.

Wouldn't a worker who, in his present economic predicament, is told of political freedom, respond with the refrain of a well–known song:

Do not speak of freedom:

Poverty is slavery!

Indeed, one would have to be in love with illusions to imagine that a worker, under present economic and social circumstances, can really and truly make use of his political freedom or fully profit from it. For this he lacks two little things: spare time and material resources.

Furthermore, didn't we see precisely this in France on the day after the Revolution of 1848, the most radical revolution desirable from the political standpoint? The French workers were certainly neither indifferent nor unintelligent, and despite the most far–reaching universal suffrage they had to let the members of the bourgeoisie do as they pleased. Why? Because they lacked the material resources necessary to make political freedom a reality, because hunger forced them to remain slaves to hard labor, while radical, liberal, and even conservative members of the bourgeoisie—republicans of recent vintage, some converted the day before the revolution, some the day after—came and went, agitated, spoke, took action and conspired freely, some able to do so because of their annuity or other lucrative bourgeois situation, and others able because of the State budget, which they

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

naturally preserved and made stronger than ever.

We know what happened: first the June Days; later, their inevitable result, the December Days.

But, someone will say, the workers have become wiser by their very experience, and they will send common workers, rather than members of the bourgeoisie, to Constituent or Legislative Assemblies. As poor as they are, they will somehow manage to give their parliamentary deputies something to live on. Do you know what the result of this will be? The worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois political ideas, will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will become bourgeois, and perhaps even more bourgeois than the Bourgeois themselves. For men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them. And we know from experience that bourgeoisified workers are frequently no less egoistic than bourgeois exploiters, no less pernicious to the International than bourgeois socialists, and no less vain and ridiculous than bourgeois nobles.

Regardless of what is said and done, the workers will have no freedom so long as they remain in their present predicament, and whoever advises them to gain political freedoms without first mentioning the boiling questions of socialism, without saying the words that cause the members of the bourgeoisie to pale—social liquidation—that person simply says: First win this freedom for us, so that we can later use it against you.

But, someone will say, these bourgeois radicals mean well and they are sincere. [We reply that n]o good intentions nor any sincerity can counteract the influence of one's [social] standing; and since we have said that the very workers thrust into this situation inevitably become bourgeois, that is all the more reason for those who remain in this situation to remain bourgeois.

If a member of the bourgeoisie, motivated by a great passion for justice, equality, and humanity, earnestly wishes to work for the emancipation of the proletariat, let him begin first by breaking all political and social ties with the bourgeoisie, all connections between the bourgeoisie and his interests, his mind, his vanity, and his heart. Let him understand before all else that no reconciliation is possible between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which lives only by exploiting others and which is the proletariat's natural enemy.

After he has turned his back on the bourgeois world for good, let him fall in under the workers' standard, on which are written the words: "Justice, Equality, and Liberty for all. Abolition of classes through worldwide economic equalization. Social liquidation." He will be welcome.

We have only one piece of advice to give the workers about the bourgeois socialists and the bourgeoisified workers who will tell us about compromise between bourgeois politics and workers' socialism: turn your backs on them.

Since bourgeois socialists are now trying, with socialism as bait, to agitate a great workers' unrest in order to gain political freedom, a freedom which we have seen would profit only the bourgeoisie; since the masses of workers, enlightened and set in motion by the International, have reached a clear understanding of their predicament and are in fact organizing themselves and becoming really strong, not along national lines but internationally, and not for the bourgeoisie's designs but for their own; since a revolution is necessary even to achieve the bourgeoisie's ideal of complete political freedom with republican institutions; and since revolutions can succeed only thanks to the people's might—for all these reasons, this strength must stop being used to pull chestnuts out of the fire for Bourgeois Gentlemen. It must from now on contribute only to the victory of the people's cause, the cause of everyone who labors against everyone who exploits labor.

The International Working-Men's Association, true to its basic principle, will never lend a hand in any political agitation that has any immediate and direct purpose other than the complete economic emancipation of the worker—that is, the abolition of the bourgeoisie as an economic class isolated from the bulk of the population—or in any revolution which, from the first day, from the first hour, does not have written on its standard the words Social Liquidation.

But revolutions are not improvised. They are not made arbitrarily either by individuals or even by the most powerful associations. They occur independently of all volition and conspiracy and are always brought about by the force of circumstances. They can be foreseen and their approach can sometimes be sensed, but their outbreak can never be hastened.

Convinced of this truth, we ask: What policy should the International follow during this somewhat extended time period that separates us from this terrible social revolution which is so universally anticipated?

Paying no attention to any local or national politics, as its articles require, the International will give labor

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL

unrest in all countries an essentially economic character, with the aim of reducing working hours and increasing salary, by means of the association of the working masses and the accumulation of resistance funds.

It will propagandize its principles because these principles, which are the purest expression of the collective interests of the workers of the entire world, are the soul and the whole vital force of the Association. It will propagandize widely without regard for bourgeois sensibilities, so that each worker who emerges from the intellectual and moral torpor that has been used to restrain him may understand his predicament, understand exactly what he must do, and know under what conditions he can gain his human rights.

The International will propagandize so much more vigorously and whole heartedly that we shall often encounter influences in the International itself that will attempt to portray the latter's principles as a useless theory and affect disdain for them, trying to restore the workers to the political, economic, and religious catechism of the bourgeoisie.

Lastly, the International will expand and organize across the frontiers of all countries, so that when the revolution—brought about by the force of circumstances—breaks out, the International will be a real force and will know what it has to do. Then it will be able to take the revolution into its own hands and give it a direction that will benefit the people: an earnest international organization of workers' associations from all countries, capable of replacing this departing political world of States and bourgeoisie.

We conclude this faithful statement of the policy of the International by quoting the last paragraph of the Preamble to our General Rules:

"The movement occurring among the workers of Europe's most industrialized countries, in giving rise to new hopes, gives solemn warning not to fall back into old errors."