

Reviling of the Great

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INTRODUCTORY

“Audacter calumniare, semper aliquid haeret.”—Hurl your calumnies boldly; something is sure to stick. (Ancient Latin proverb.)

Mr. Chairman, Comrades and Friends of the Socialist Labor Party:

Once more we are gathered to commemorate the birthday of one of America's great men, the outstanding social scientist and Marxian scholar, Daniel De Leon. In addressing you on this occasion it has seemed to me to be fitting to devote some time to a brief review of some of the trials and tribulations of this foremost twentieth-century Proletarian Emancipator, and to point to parallels of similar trials and tribulations in the lives of other great men who gave their all in the service of social progress and of mankind.

In paying tribute to De Leon on these occasions, we do so, not merely out of reverence for a great and noble character, but above all because only in the principles and program of De Leon do we find the answer to the grave and throbbing social question of our age—the question that is really the crucial one in any age, and particularly in great social crises. And if on this occasion we bracket the name of De Leon with those of other great men who played determining roles in the great crises of history, it is because each represents in his person and lifework the issue that had to be settled in his day—the fundamental issue that still must be settled, in order that social progress may continue, in order that civilization may be further advanced. And also because these great men, all of them, were the victims of calumnies and persecution by predatory interests, and the subjects of vilifying and vituperative attacks by the agents of sinister, anti-social forces.

I

To calumniate, to vilify—especially to vilify the noble and the great—is among the most ancient of sports. There is no epoch that has not witnessed it, no outstanding personality in any epoch that has not been its victim. Indeed, it may be set down as a maxim that the greater the man, the greater the calumny; the greater his effort in behalf of the oppressed, the more vicious and malicious the lie. The

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reviling of the Great has become commonplace to the degree where its omission almost causes one to ask: What is wrong with this great man that he has not been reviled? In the New Testament, for example, we find in the Book of Luke this apostrophe to the would-be victim of slander: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you”!

Yet all men of good will, of good character, cherish their reputation, their good name, even though they may profess indifference to the slanderer and his evil commodity. The writings of most great men, even while protesting the calumnies circulated about them, include examples of this feigned indifference. George Washington once wrote: “To persevere in one’s duty and be silent is the best answer to calumny.” Many years later Emerson put it this way: “The solar system has no anxiety about its reputation.” This is the Olympian attitude, but the best and greatest of men are not Olympians—they are, after all, human, sensitive to foul abuse and malicious vilifications, and generally react accordingly. Only the honored dead can remain unmoved by calumny and flattery alike.

II

I propose this afternoon to deal briefly with the campaigns of slander and vilification directed against four very great men—Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Karl Marx and our own Daniel De Leon, whose ninety-fifth birthday we are commemorating this afternoon. And, in comparing the respective slander campaigns carried on against them (even after their deaths), we find a striking similarity in the slanders and misrepresentations hurled at them. Not only are their principles, the purposes and intentions of their lifework, shamefully misrepresented, but their personal characters as well are assailed in the vilest terms; they are charged with every crime on the moral calendar, and with not a few from the criminal code.

We shall, however, make a serious mistake if we conclude that these calumnies sprang from personal hatred of these great men (though personal hatred undoubtedly played a part), or that it was their personal attributes per se which prompted the attacks. Had these four great men (and others similarly reviled)

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chosen to adhere to the *status quo*, had they been content to play along with ruling cliques, had they forsworn their principles and yielded to the prevailing property pressure as against the upsurge and demands of the democratic spirit—in short, had they supported the privileged few and opposed the claims of the despoiled and oppressed, contemporaneous official society would have found them to be veritable moral Pecksniffs and, like Mr. Pecksniff, “fuller of virtuous precept than a copybook.”

They were assailed and maligned because they took their stand with the spirit of progress, because they espoused the cause of the mass of the people, because they hearkened to the voice of freedom and the general welfare, and closed their ears to the falsehoods and blandishments of the powerful and the wealthy. They were vilified and lied about because they placed human rights above property rights, and, above all, because they not merely preached and theorized about the great principles they proclaimed but lived these principles and provided the plans, the ways and means, of putting these principles into practical effect.

Chapter One

THOMAS JEFFERSON

I

There is nothing more common than to confuse the terms of the American Revolution with those of the late American war. The American war is over, but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first great act of the great drama is closed.

—*Benjamin Rush.*

For his day, and considering his station in life, Thomas Jefferson was unquestionably the most reviled of men. His aristocratic birth, his Virginia patricianism, his great contribution in the cause of the American Revolution, none of these saved him from the abuse heaped upon him by those who regarded him as a traitor to his class, as a betrayer of his class interests. Under the stress of the Revolution, and during the early formative years of the Republic, harmony apparently prevailed among the fighters for American independence. Obedient, however, to the law of revolution in class-divided societies, no sooner had the chief objectives of the Revolution been attained by the new top-ruling class than the hitherto obscured, or disregarded, class divisions manifested themselves. The powerful rich, the landed aristocracy, fearful of the threats which they sensed in the presence of a large class of relatively poor or less privileged persons, took steps to safeguard their property, to consolidate their class interests.

This fear of the “lower orders” in post-revolutionary periods has been well described by Dr. Gustav Bang in his *Crises in European History*. Referring to the great French Revolution, and the conquest of power by the uppermost layers of the French bourgeoisie, Dr. Bang writes: “But no sooner had they reached their goal than they were stricken with terror of the movement below. . . . As soon as the Girondins, continually invoking the common people, had conquered political power, they turned around and fought relentlessly against the ‘ultra-revolutionaries’. . . . They saw in them nothing but unscrupulous rioters, who were threatening ‘true liberty.’”

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And Jefferson's "crime" was precisely that he remained true to the original spirit of the American Revolution, as so fervently expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the immortal document that he penned. In this great charter of democracy, Jefferson laid down the principles that inspired men to dedicate their lives and their treasure to the destruction of monarchical and feudal rule in America—the principles which he later developed and applied in the subsequent struggles against the surviving monarchical and nascent plutocratic spirit in America. The Federalists, the Hamiltonians, referred to the mass of the people as that "Great Beast, the People." No wonder they hated the man who could write (as he did on June 24, 1826—ten days before his death):

"All eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that *the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately by the grace of God.*" (Our italics.)

Jefferson has been reproached for his failure to take strong and determined action against slavery. Morally he may have felt the guilt of his failure, and in a measure acknowledged it. But no man, however great, can successfully carry out two missions of major import at the same time. He must choose in accordance with the circumstances of the time, and these circumstances determine the question of priority and the immediacy of issues. But though he could not be a militant in the struggle against slavery, he spoke out against it in the strongest terms. In a letter written in 1787 he said: "This abomination must have an end." In 1814 he wrote: "[My sentiments] on the subject of slavery of Negroes have long since been in possession of the public, and time has only served to give them stronger root. . . . Yet the hour of emancipation is advancing, in the march of time. It will come, and whether brought on by the generous energy of our own minds, or by the bloody process of St. Domingo, . . . is a leaf of our history not yet turned over." And again in 1825 he wrote: "The abolition of the evil is not impossible; it ought never, therefore, to be despaired of." And as early as 1782, in denouncing slavery, he uttered the famous, oft-quoted words: "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. . . ."

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Like Madison he was an outspoken foe of militarism and the military spirit. Realizing keenly that militarism, standing armies and navies were ever the tools of a predatory ruling class, and the foe of a free people, Jefferson wrote in January 1799:

“I am . . . not for a standing army in time of peace which may overawe the public sentiment, nor for a navy which, by its own expenses and the eternal wars in which it will implicate us, will grind us with public burdens and sink us under them.”

A man who so forcefully spoke out in favor of popular rights, who denounced the evil of slavery, and who so boldly challenged the power of the privileged few and opposed their schemes for oppressing and enslaving the mass of the people—such a man could not help drawing upon his head the wrath of the ruling class, and inviting the poison arrows of defamation repeatedly aimed at him. In the bold assumptions of the nascent plutocracy, and its attempts to subvert the revolutionary spirit of 1776, he witnessed what had already transpired in France, where he had spent years representing his country—the subverting of the revolution, the attempted destruction of its fruits, and the foreshadowed reintroduction in America of autocracy and oppression, in slightly different forms. And so, just as in the case of France, so here: Jefferson, preaching and insisting on practicing the democratic creed, and voicing the equalitarian demands of the less privileged, became the bogeyman of the top bourgeoisie, the alleged leader of “unscrupulous rioters,” and so forth. He became the embodiment of their class foe, the personification of their mortal fear of the democratic creed.

This fear of the democratic and equalitarian spirit was no less strong among the would-be plutocratic elements of the North than among the slave holders of the South. New political lines were formed, the chief divisions being between the so-called Federalists, symbolized by Alexander Hamilton, and the so-called Republicans, symbolized by Thomas Jefferson. As we all know, Jefferson won this contest, though the victory was only a temporary one, as in the circumstances it was bound to be. But it was especially during the campaign of 1800, and early 1801, that Jefferson became the object of slander and vilification—the victim of a fouler slander campaign than any man before, or since, has endured. His enemies

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presented him as an immoral atheist, an anarchist, as an enemy of the State, of religion and morality, as a vulgar gambler and frequenter of the cockpit—even as a common swindler of widows and as a libertine and coward, and so forth, *ad nauseam*.

II

The clergy particularly pursued him relentlessly, as the clergy of all ages have persecuted the rebel against the existing order of things, true to the role of the established churches as guardians of the prevailing property system with which their interests are ever closely allied, if not wholly identified. The clergy, then as now, constituted a powerful force in the community. Their pronouncements were, in practice, the equivalent of law among their large following. To dispute them was to dispute, not only religion, but the moral law as well. And Jefferson disputed them all his life, though rarely in public. To them Jefferson's ascension to the Presidency meant loss of influence and power, even loss of property. One minister thundered at Jefferson:

“Let the first magistrate [i.e., the President of the United States] to be a professed infidel, and infidels will surround him. Let him spend the sabbath in feasting, in visiting or receiving visits, in riding abroad [what heinous crimes!], but never in going to church; and to frequent public worship will become unfashionable.”

In short, if Jefferson were elected, so the clergy raved, atheism and anarchism would become rampant, and then, alas, we, the clergy, will lose all our customers, and we may even have to do useful work! *There* was the rub. The same clergyman concluded in an outburst of righteous fervor: “Were Mr. Jefferson connected with me by the nearest ties of blood, and did I owe him a thousand obligations, I would not, I could not vote for him. No, sooner than stretch forth my hand to place him at the head of the nation, ‘Let mine arms fall from my shoulder blades, and mine arm be broken from the bone.’” The story is told of a New England clergyman who was called upon to baptize a child. Like most of his kind, this minister was filled with a consuming hatred of Jefferson. When the father told the minister that he had selected for his child the name of Thomas Jefferson, the reverend gentleman

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exploded: “Thomas Jefferson, indeed! No such unchristian name! John Adams, I baptize thee!”

III

This propaganda by the clergy against a truly great American is strongly reminiscent of the propaganda carried on today against Marxian Socialists, against those who challenge the present property system, and who prove it inequitable, iniquitous and immoral, and the epithets bestowed upon us (chiefly by the Roman Catholic clergy) are almost identical with those bestowed upon Jefferson by the clergy of his day. The same defamation of character, the same falsehoods and misrepresentation of principles, and all to a similar end: to frighten the flock from listening to the voice of reason, from heeding the counsels of sanity, the pleas for a better, a more decent and happy world in which to dwell. That the power of the priesthood is as real today as it was in Jefferson’s day—a power matched with a corresponding, boldness—has been recently demonstrated by the commands issued by the Catholic bishops to their flocks to boycott moving-picture houses which present plays that fail to please them, thus threatening with ruin those wholly legitimate business enterprises that might be bold enough to disobey the priesthood.

In a letter written late in the 1800 campaign, Jefferson took cognizance of the attacks by the clergy—attacks from the pulpit, in the public prints, in lying pamphlets containing forged conversations, etc., etc. Referring to the clergy, their lies and their forgeries, he wrote to a friend:

“The returning good sense of our country threatens abortion to their [the priests’] hopes, and they believe that any portion of power confided to me will be exerted in opposition to their schemes; and they believe rightly; for I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

In these noble words Jefferson gives his evaluation of, and his contempt for, the scurrilous, lying priesthood of his day.

But though the clergy may have been the loudest, the most virulent among the character-assassins pursuing Jefferson, they were by no means the only ones. A descendant of John Adams is reported to have given this estimate of Jefferson and

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his associates as the Federalists viewed them:

“Every dissolute intriguer, loose-liver, forger, false-coiner, and prison-bird; every hare-brained, loud-talking demagogue; every speculator, scoffer and atheist,—was a follower of Jefferson; and Jefferson was himself the incarnation of their theories.”

The distinguished historian Claude Bowers, one-time ambassador to Spain, has summarized this campaign of slander and vituperation in these apt words:

“At the head of the democratic columns rode the red-haired author of the Declaration. Scurrility opened its floodgates upon him. He was a ‘red,’ he was a ‘Jacobin,’ he was an ‘atheist,’ he was a ‘demagogue’—all this meant that he was a democrat.”

Truly, he *was* a great democrat, and a friend of the despoiled and oppressed, hence a natural target for abuse and character assassination.

Even John Adams, who surely had his moments of greatness, in the bitterness of his defeat stooped to this same kind of vilification. Referring to Jefferson and his friends, Adams said:

“A group of foreign liars, encouraged by a few native gentlemen, have discomfited the education, the talents, the virtues, and the property of the country.”

Mr. Adams’s property-nerve was touched to the raw!

Alexander Hamilton hated Jefferson intensely, though it is probable that he feared him even more. Nevertheless, being compelled to choose between Jefferson and the unprincipled Aaron Burr, he decided to support Jefferson for the Presidency as the lesser of two evils. That he did so reluctantly and in bitter resentment goes without saying. He expressed his resentment in this way:

“I admit that his [Jefferson’s] politics are tinged with fanaticism; *that he is too much in earnest in his democracy*; . . . that he is crafty and persevering in his object; that he is not scrupulous about the means of success, nor very mindful of the truth, and that he is a contemptible hypocrite.”

Being “too much in earnest in his democracy” was the only, the real “crime” of

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Jefferson. And it was this earnestness, this devotion to the democratic creed that earned him the bucketfuls of slander and scurrilities heaped upon him by the propertied interests (and by their clerical and journalistic allies) of his day. The newspapers, of course, did their stint as faithful servitors of the top-ruling class. Bitterly Jefferson wrote: “Were I to undertake to answer the calumnies of newspapers, it would be more than all my own time, and that of twenty aids could effect. For while I should be answering one, twenty new ones would be invented.”

IV

In numerous letters to friends and casual correspondents, Jefferson referred to the villainous campaigns of slanders of which he had been the innocent victim. They are all more or less in the same tenor, but taken together they constitute as foul a record of persecution as one can conceive, by those who count their successes in the wrecking of the careers and assassinating the characters of those whom they oppose, and whose logic they cannot overcome. With a nod to the familiar backstairs gossipers, the underground vilifiers, he wrote to William Duane in 1806: “Secret slanders cannot be disarmed because they are secret.”

Volumes could not better, nor more fully, provide an analysis and an indictment of, and a judgment upon, the cowardly sneak character-assassin, than does this brief sentence. Having suffered to the full the effect of the poisoned arrows unloosed by unprincipled defamers, he was in a position to speak with authority on the subject.

And as to the vast volume of slanders directed at him, a letter to John Adams written in 1823 (when Jefferson was 80 years old) gives an indication of it:

“As to the volume [book] of slanders supposed to have been cut out of newspapers and preserved [by me] it would not, indeed, have been a single volume, but an encyclopedia in bulk. But I never had such a volume; indeed, I rarely thought those libels worth reading, much less preserving and remembering.”

If to be spared slanders and malicious misrepresentation is to render one suspect in point of one’s rectitude and integrity, then, indeed, Thomas Jefferson stands vindicated in all matters respecting his nobility of character, his principles

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and purity of purpose. But the volume of lies and slanders could not in the slightest degree touch him, nor adversely affect him in his unshaken determination to serve progress, and, by so persisting, to lend himself as a finely tempered instrument of social evolution, contributing, as he did, his share to the hastening of the advent of that higher and nobler society wherein the meaner passions in human nature will have been subdued or entirely eradicated, the conditions that make them possible having then forever vanished, and with them all forms of human slavery and poverty, and the evil offspring of all class-ruled societies, crime, fear and bigotry.

Chapter Two

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

I

“This dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute,
 under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history
 known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.”

—*Walt Whitman.*

In incidental and unimportant respects Abraham Lincoln was greatly different from Jefferson. But in the things that matter, and as victims of calumny and deliberate misrepresentation, they were very much alike, and shared the same fate. Jefferson was the born aristocrat; he had the advantage of the finest education that his time could afford; he was well connected, and in his youth the world lay at his feet. Lincoln, on the other hand, was born poor and in obscurity. He had no formal education, and what he acquired he had to wrest from resisting circumstance, and under great physical hardship. His friends were, like him, poor and untutored; he had no powerful friends and allies to ease the way for him. Yet, fumbling and groping, he achieved supreme greatness.

An early Jefferson biographer summarized his subject as, “A gentleman who could calculate in eclipse, survey an estate, tie an artery, plan an edifice, try a cause, break a horse, dance a minuet and play the violin.” The late Stephen Vincent Benet apostrophized Lincoln in these lines:

“Lincoln, six feet one in his stocking feet,
The lank man, knotty and tough as a hickory rail,
Whose hands were always too big for white kid-gloves,
Whose wit was a coonskin sack of dry, tall tales,
Whose weathered face was homely as a plowed field.”

Different, indeed, in externals and in trivial matters, but how equally matched in all the important respects! That Lincoln had a deep and abiding admiration for

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Jefferson, that he learned much from, and was greatly inspired by him, of this there is ample proof. In 1861, for instance, he said: “I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.” Another occasion (on April 6, 1859) found him paying this tribute to Jefferson:

“All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast [foresight?], and capacity, to introduce into a merely revolutionary document [the Declaration of Independence] an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so embalm it there, that today and in all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression.” (Letter to Republicans of Boston, celebrating Jefferson’s birthday.)

II

His opponents would quote Jefferson, against him, even as politicians today will quote this great revolutionist in support of the most reactionary schemes. They would, among other things, try to trip him by citing the fact that Jefferson was a slaveholder. Lincoln had no difficulty in demolishing such dishonest pleas, and he did it with the same devastating logic employed by Jefferson himself. For both were master logicians, though the logic of Jefferson passed through a sharpening refining process, while that of Lincoln came from him roughhewn and in simple terms, often accompanied with homely illustrations. And, as I said before, in one more respect were these two great Americans alike—or, rather, they both suffered the identical fate: both were maligned and vilified to a degree and in a manner that challenge credibility. There were few crimes or vices of which Lincoln was not accused, and no epithet was too filthy or degrading to be hurled at him. And they came from all sides—from politicians, from editors, and, of course, from the clergy. And hired literary hacks and professional scribblers of doggerel did a brisk business in concocting lampoons and composing scurrilous verses in which vituperation and name-calling knew no limit.

“Baboon” was a favorite epithet applied to Lincoln by the editors. A Georgia paper, the Atlanta *Intelligencer*, called him “the Baboon President,” and referred to

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him also as “a lowbred obscene clown.”* Chauncey Burr, a New York pro-slavery editor, wrote: “A Western author has issued a pamphlet adducing evidence to show that Old Abe is ‘part negro.’” And for good measure he included other Lincoln supporters in this would-be indictment: “Hamlin [Lincoln’s Vice President] and Sumner . . . show the presence of negro blood. . . .” * To have Negro blood in one’s veins is supposed to be degrading, according to the reactionary view. De Leon was similarly “accused,” as we shall see later. It is a “crime” of which other outstanding men (outside of those who take their Negro “blood” for granted) were “guilty,” including Alexandre Dumas, Paul Lafargue, and many others. To the slaveholders and Copperheads, the alleged presence of Negro blood in one’s veins was to belong, *ipso facto*, to an inferior race, to be rated as a human being scarcely above the level of the beast. Hence, the intent of such a “charge” was to vilify in the most degrading manner possible the one thus “accused.” And the effect of such an allegation (to the majority at that time, and today, unfortunately, also) was precisely that of arousing blind prejudice against, and insensate hatred of, the one so “accused.”

Orestes Augustus Brownson was among the leading vilifiers of Lincoln. Brownson was a utopian Socialist, so called, in his younger days. In flaming language he had denounced the exploitation of the poor, attacked the power of capital, assailed organized religion, and so on and so forth. Then suddenly, like Saul on the road to Damascus, he saw “the light.” Almost overnight this would-be revolutionary firebrand became converted to Roman Catholicism, and, like all such converts, became an extreme reactionary, renouncing his earlier liberal views, adopting the medieval social and economic philosophy of the Church, etc. One might call him the Louis Budenz¹ of that period, or vice versa. In a letter to Sumner, Brownson wrote: “I do not believe in Mr. Lincoln at all. . . . He is thickheaded; he is ignorant; he is tricky, somewhat astute, in a small way, and obstinate as a mule. . . . He is wrong-headed, the attorney not the lawyer, the petty politician not the statesman, and, in my belief, ill-deserving of the *soubriquet* of Honest”*—the

*Quoted by Carl Sandburg in *Abraham Lincoln*.

¹ [Louis Budenz, American Communist Party member and editor of the *Daily Worker* who turned Catholic and voluntarily denounced his former “comrades” to the FBI.—*Editor*.]

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latter being Brownson's Jesuitical way of charging that Lincoln was dishonest, a crook.

III

It should be noted that the vilifiers of Lincoln were by no means confined to the South, where hatred of Lincoln, in the circumstances, was understandable. Among the vilest calumniators were the Northern editors, and of these James Gordon Bennett was perhaps the most vicious and virulent. Bennett was the owner, and editor of the New York *Herald*. One might call him the Hearst of his day. He missed no opportunity to belittle Lincoln, to traduce him in the most contemptible manner. In his paper, issue of May 19, 1860, we find him spewing forth this venom:

“The Republican convention at Chicago has nominated Abraham Lincoln of Illinois for President of the United States—a third rate Western lawyer, poorer than even poor Pierce. Our readers will recollect that this peripatetic politician visited New York two or three months ago on his financial tour, when, in return for the most unmitigated trash, interlarded with coarse and clumsy jokes, he filled his empty pockets with dollars coined out of Republican fanaticism.”

Again Bennett wrote:

“The highest claims for the candidate [Lincoln] . . . [are] that he can ‘maul rails’ and that he is ‘honest.’ What part the first of these qualities is to play in the science of government we cannot conceive; the second we know to be the quality that commends him to demagogues and robbers that now swarm about the public offices. . . .”

More billingsgate is hurled at Lincoln in this quotation from the New York *Herald*:

“The candidate for President, Abram [sic] Lincoln, is an uneducated man, a vulgar village politician, without any experience worth mentioning in the practical statesmanship and only noted for some very unpopular votes which he gave while a member of Congress.”

Parenthetically, among these “unpopular votes” were Lincoln's strong disapproval of the war with Mexico and his vigorous arraignment of President Polk for involving the country in that criminal adventure!

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Horace Greeley, too, sneered at Lincoln. Ringing the changes on the familiar “rail-splitter” theme, he snarled: “Many a man has split rails—perhaps better ones—than Abraham Lincoln, who never will be President, and never ought to be.”

Poor old Horace (who suffered considerably from the Presidential itch) was not always a good prophet!

Although Lincoln had expressed his strong disapproval of the “direct action” methods of John Brown, the New York *Herald* found it possible to print this scurrilous falsehood:

“Lincoln is exactly the same type as the traitor who was hung at Charleston (John Brown)—an abolitionist of the reddest dye, liable to be led to extreme lengths by other men. Without education or refinement, he will be the plaything of his party, whirled along in the vortex of passion if he should gain control of the government. The comparison between Seward and this illiterate Western boor is odious—it is Hyperion to a satyr.”

The Albany *Atlas and Argus* wrote:

“Lincoln . . . howling with anguish, was driven through the State of Illinois by Douglas. . . . Last Spring he made his debut in this state as an orator, and commenced by charging for his speeches at the rate of \$100 apiece, and was forced to desist amid such public expression of contempt that he may be said to have been fairly hissed out of the state. He has never held public office of any credit, and is not known except as a slang-whanging stump speaker, of a class with which every party teems and of which all parties are ashamed.”

The Boston *Post* echoed similar sentiments:

“Lincoln has merely talent for demagogic appeal, that was thought to be worth in New England \$50.00 or \$100 a speech by those who hired him; but some who heard him were surprised that he should be considered anywhere a great man. He can only be the tool of the fanatical host he will lead on. This is the truth of the case, let the blowers of his party swell him as they may into tremendous dimensions. By this means, and by initiating in every locality the trickery and demagogism that won Lincoln his local popularity, his partisans may attempt to secure his election. But such is the intelligence of the country that this attempt must fail.”

And from the Cradle of Liberty, the city of brotherly love, came this sneer

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(Philadelphia *Evening Journal*):

“His [Lincoln’s] coarse language, his illiterary style, and his vulgar and vituperative personalities in debate contrast very strongly with the elegant and classical oratory of the eminent Senator [Seward] from New York.”

The “elegant and classical oratory” of Seward is all but forgotten, whereas Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” will be remembered until “languages are dead and lips are dust.”

The New York *Herald* also made a similar oblique reference to Seward when editorially it wrote that “The rejection of Seward and the nomination of Lincoln, who represents all that is brutal and bloody in Seward’s political program, without possessing a tithe of his personal ability, is almost as severe a blow at the Republican party organization as was the feud at Charleston to that of the Democracy. . . .” Yet, today, on every February 12, similar-minded editors are singing paeans of praise to the man their progenitors so foully reviled!

IV

Most of the reviling editors kept up the refrain about the twenty-five cents admission fee apparently charged by Lincoln’s campaign managers on some occasions. *Leshe’s Vanity Fair*, an illustrated satirical weekly, published this scurrilous comment in its issue of May 26, 1860:

“Then he [Lincoln] delivered a course of ‘lectures’—stump speeches in disguise—not long ago, through this region of the country, and charged twenty-five cents admission thereunto. If he ever gets clear of the name of ‘Two-Shilling Candidate’ it will be very singular. . . . Let him continue his electioneering ‘lectures,’ by all means, so that if he fails to get into the White House, he will at least have a good pocket-full of twenty-five cent pieces, next November, to console him.”

The money-grabbing capitalists and their hired scribblers, who never passed up an opportunity for making an honest or dishonest quarter, professed to be shocked because Lincoln and his campaign managers appealed to the people to help finance his campaign. To be sure, the opposition did not need to make this appeal—they were well-heeled, receiving plenty of financial backing from the powerful, wealthy

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interests that were willing to spend fortunes in order to defeat the great Lincoln in whom they instinctively perceived a mortal enemy. Even so today we of the Socialist Labor Party appeal to the workers for financial support, and for similar reasons. No movement receiving its support from the vested interests can be, or is to be, trusted. And that, indeed, is an understatement!

James Gordon Bennett, I repeat, knew no limit in his ferocious hatred of Lincoln. He even went so far as to suggest assassination of the man he hated and so greatly feared. Carl Sandburg, in his work on Lincoln, quotes him as follows:

“If he [Lincoln] persists in his present position, in the teeth of such results as his election must produce, he will totter into a dishonored grave, driven there perhaps by the hands of an assassin, leaving behind a memory more execrable than that of [Benedict] Arnold—more despised than that of the traitor Catiline.”

It is reasonable to suppose that the assassin, J. Wilkes Booth, read this and similar diatribes in the New York *Herald*, and who shall say that Bennett’s infamous sly hint did not plant the idea in Booth’s twisted mind? The New York *Herald*, in its issue of April 15, 1865, announced the assassination of Lincoln under the headline “IMPORTANT!” One of the sub-heads read: “J. Wilkes Booth, the Actor, the Alleged assassin of the President, etc., etc., etc.”! In the adjoining column of the same issue we read: “Popular report points to a somewhat celebrated actor of known secession proclivities as the assassin; but it would be unjust to name him until some further evidence of his guilt is obtained.”! We get the full measure of Bennett’s hypocrisy in this item, also from the April 15 issue of his filthy rag:

“The popular affection for Mr. Lincoln has been shown by this diabolical assassination, which will bring eternal infamy, not only upon its authors but upon the hellish cause which they desire to avenge.”

One wonders if Bennett suddenly remembered his earlier criminal suggestion to the weak-minded and the mentally twisted to assassinate the great President!

To strike at a great man through his son is a familiar device of the slanderer and rumor-monger, the supposition being that as the son is alleged to be, so must the father be. Sandburg quotes this obvious falsehood from the New York *Day Book*

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and the Chicago *Times*:

“The President’s son, ‘Bob,’ as he is called, a lad of some twenty summers, has made half a million dollars in government contracts”! And so the weird and infamous slanders went.

The English editors were not far behind their American cousins in defaming the persecuted Lincoln. Outstanding among the calumniators was the London *Punch*, supposedly a humorous journal. One of the members of its staff, Tom Taylor, was particularly virulent. That the campaign of slander was officially inspired seems fairly certain, since the British government openly favored the Southern cause, at one time coming close to recognizing the Confederacy. However, as in the case of Bennett, *Punch* (and specifically its Tom Taylor) suddenly suffered a change of heart when the news of Lincoln’s assassination reached London. Donning sackcloth and ashes, Taylor ruefully made public confession of his own infamy. In a poem written for *Punch*, he reviles himself (for a change!), one of the verses of his poem reading:

“Between the mourners at his head and feet,
Say, scurril jester, is there room for you?
Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
To lame my pencil and confute my pen”

The “scurril[ous] jester” Taylor and his confreres might have recalled Dr. Sam Johnson’s incisive comment on calumny: “Calumny,” said Dr. Johnson, “differs from most other injuries in this dreadful circumstance: he who commits it can never repair it.”

V

The hireling scribblers, the authors of poisonous doggerel, made a profitable business out of slandering Lincoln. Sandburg, in his monumental work on Lincoln, quotes several examples. One of them (apparently parodying Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt”) read in part:

“With a beard that was filthy and red,
His mouth with tobacco bespread,

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Abe Lincoln sat in the gay white house,
Awishing that he was dead.—
Swear! swear! swear!
Till his tongue was blistered o'er,
Then in a voice not very strong
He slowly whined the Despot's song.”

Then follows a refrain in which Lincoln is portrayed as a self-confessed liar who was at his wit's end because he could no longer make his lies pay. The last refrain traduces the noble Lincoln in these vituperative terms:

“Drink—Drink—Drink!
Till my head feels very queer!
“Drink—Drink—Drink!
Till I get rid of all fear!
Brandy, and Whiskey, and Gin,
Sherry, and Champagne, and Pop,
I tipple, I guzzle, I suck 'em all in,
Till down dead drunk I drop.”

Nowadays, few writers criticize Lincoln adversely, and probably only one recent writer has maligned him after the fashion of the Gordon Bennetts. That one is the poet, Edgar Lee Masters, who in 1931 published a book to which he gave the title, *Lincoln The Man*. Masters is best known for his volume of poetry, *The Spoon River Anthology*. Ironically enough, some of the poems in this volume speak in fulsome praise of Lincoln. But perhaps the 1931 Masters regarded this as the poet's license!

In his book on Lincoln, Masters descends to the level of the revilers of Lincoln's times. His judgment on Lincoln is on the whole worthless, and is noted here merely as a sample of rather belated calumny. A reviewer of Masters' book sums up its slanderous content rather neatly. “Nothing that might have been written by a Secesh editor in 1860,” wrote the *New York World* reviewer, “could be more bitter than this annihilating and emphatic diatribe by an unreconstructed Stephen A. Douglas Democrat from Kansas and Illinois writing in 1931.” The same reviewer further comments: “. . . it tears the public idol limb from limb; robs the young man of honesty of purpose, the budding lawyer of candor and truth, the President of greatness; . . . it shows him as a crafty politician playing fast and loose with his friends to further his ambitions clandestinely; it questions his mental integrity,

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accuses him of using the arts of the demagogue to sidestep a political issue placed squarely before him, declares him defeated by the superior mental wisdom and astuteness of Stephen A. Douglas; it calls him hypocritical . . . ,” etc., etc., etc.

Employing the jargon of the would-be Freudians, this traducer of Lincoln seeks to explain his alleged shortcomings on the ground of an alleged deficiency in masculine virility, and similar rather disgusting speculations. Masters tells us that “Lincoln was a cold man. He went about grotesquely dressed, carrying a faded umbrella, wearing a ludicrous plug hat. He was mannerless, unkempt, and one wonders if he was not unwashed, in those days of the weekly bath in the foot tub, if a bath was taken at all”! And he concludes his 500-page lampoon on this note: “Our greatest Americans are Jefferson, Whitman and Emerson; and the praise that has been bestowed on Lincoln is a robbery of these, his superiors. Armed with the theology of a rural Methodist, Lincoln crushed the principles of free government”!!

Thus the giant Lincoln is slain by this pygmy lampooner of greatness!

Volumes could be filled with examples of similar slanders and vituperative denunciations of the patient, long-suffering Lincoln, but what has been cited here should quite suffice to prove the text, the reviling of the Great. Once again, in the case of the martyred Lincoln, the German poet Schiller’s words were proven true:

“Es liebt die Welt, das strahlende zu schwaerzen
Und das Erhabne in den Staub zu ziehn.”
 (“The world delights to tarnish shining names,
And to trample the sublime in the dust.”)

However much Lincoln may have resented, and undoubtedly did resent, these slanders, outwardly he maintained indifference, exactly as did Jefferson. A story is told of Lincoln that no doubt was autobiographical. He is said to have deprecated the lot of the pioneer in great movements, and the things he has to suffer if he sticks to his course. “The fact is,” he is reported as having said, “that the pioneer in any movement is not generally the best man to carry that movement to a successful issue. It was so in old times—wasn’t it?—Moses began the emancipation of the Jews, but didn’t take Israel to the Promised Land after all. He had to make way for Joshua to complete the work. It looks as if the first reformer of a thing has to meet such a hard opposition, and get so battered and bespattered, that afterward, when

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people find they have to accept his reform, they will accept it more easily from another man.”

There is a good deal of melancholy truth in this rather mournful reflection of the “battered and bespattered” Abraham Lincoln. On the whole, he consoled himself with generalities such as this one (in a letter to Secretary Stanton): “Truth is generally the best vindication against slander.” The trouble with this axiom is that even where truth is recognizable as such, it is painfully slow in getting started, while slander circumviates the earth on speedy wings. He speaks more to the point in the famous comment he made to Frank B. Carpenter, as the latter reported it:

“If I were to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop [the Presidency] might as well be closed for other business. I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

VI

Lincoln’s life and work, and his many utterances on the subjects of democracy, liberty, property and labor, as well as his denunciations of slavery, and oppression in whatever form, give the lie to his vilifiers, as do the many recorded and acknowledged examples of his magnanimity and nobility of character. What he has said on these subjects is well known. We recall, for instance, his trenchant observations on property and its powerful influence on the mind. In the Hartford speech, delivered March 5, 1860, he said:

“One-sixth, and a little more, of the population of the United States are slaves, looked upon as property, as nothing but property. The cash value of these slaves, at a moderate estimate, is \$2,000,000,000. This amount of property value has a vast influence on the minds of its owners, very naturally. The same amount of property would have an equal influence upon us if owned in the North. Human nature is the same—people in the South are the same as those at the North, barring the difference in circumstances. Public opinion is founded, to a great extent, on a property basis. What lessens the value of property is opposed; what enhances its value is favored. Public opinion in the South regards slaves as property, and insists upon treating them like other property.”

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Again, the next day, at New Haven, he adverted to this subject:

“The property influences his [the property owner’s] mind. The dissenting minister who argued some theological point with one of the Established Church was always met by the reply: ‘I can’t see it so.’ He opened the Bible and pointed him to a passage, but the orthodox minister replied, ‘I can’t see it so.’ Then he showed him a single word—‘Can you see that?’ ‘Yes, I see it,’ was the reply. The dissenter laid a guinea over the word and asked, ‘Do you see it now?’ So here. Whether the owners of this species of property do really see it as it is, it is not for me to say; but if they do, they see it as it is through two billions of dollars, and that is a pretty thick coating.”

No shrewder or more accurate observation on the extent to which material interests determine a man’s thinking, his morals and religion, could be made than was done by Lincoln on that occasion. Can a person whose material interests, personal comfort and welfare are at stake render a disinterested decision? Can he view issues involving such personal considerations objectively? Lincoln says no in this quotation

“Certainly there is no contending against the will of God: but still there is some difficulty in ascertaining and applying it to particular cases. For instance, we will suppose the Rev. Dr. Ross has a slave named Sambo, and the question is, ‘Is it the will of God that Sambo shall remain a slave, or be set free?’ The Almighty gives no audible answer to the question, and his revelation, the Bible, gives none—or at most none but such as admits of a squabble as to its meaning; no one thinks of asking Sambo’s opinion on it. So at last it comes to this, that Dr. Ross is to decide the question; and while he considers it, he sits in the shade, with gloves on his hands, and subsists on the bread that Sambo is earning in the burning sun. If he decides that God wills Sambo to continue a slave, he thereby retains his own comfortable position; but if he decides that God wills Sambo to be free, he thereby has to walk out of the shade, throw off his gloves, and delve for his own bread. Will Dr. Ross be actuated by the perfect impartiality which has ever been considered most favorable to correct decisions?”

The moral of this is: he who would be free, himself must strike the blow! Certainly, he who subsists on the fruits of slavery—be it chattel or wage slavery—is not to be trusted to decide whether such slavery should be abolished or not!

Equally penetrating (and of devastating effect on class privilege and class

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parasitism) are his remarks concerning liberty, and the misuse of the word:

“With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men’s labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name, liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.”

VII

On the subject of revolution Lincoln was uncompromising and outspoken. De Leon, in *Two Pages from Roman History*, points out that the modern revolution and its acts are to be judged by the code of legality that it carries in its own fold, and not by the standards of existing usurpation. Lincoln expressed the same thought tersely when he said:

“It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines or old laws; but to break up both, and make new ones.”

In his first inaugural address he flings this magnificent challenge at reaction:

“This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.”

In his famous reply to a committee from, the Working Men’s Association of New York, March 21, 1864, he quoted from his annual message to Congress, December, 1861, in which he had raised his voice in warning against the foreshadowed usurpation of power by capitalist interests. “In my present position,” he said, “I could scarcely be justified were I to omit raising a warning against this approach of returning despotism.” He had previously declared that “Monarchy itself is sometimes hinted at as a possible refuge from the power of the people.” And we all recall his famous comments on the relation between capital and labor. “Labor,” he said, “is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is superior to

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capital. . . . A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and, with their capital, hire or buy another few to labor for them.” And finally we recall his stirring plea for international working class solidarity in these moving words:

“The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues and kindreds.”

Can anyone, reading such language, wonder why Lincoln was hated by the powerful propertied interests of his day? And is it not clear why he was so shamefully slandered and misrepresented? Like Jefferson, and like Marx, De Leon, and others before them, he paid the penalty of greatness in action—the penalty exacted from those who take their stand against class privilege and usurpation, against slavery and oppression, and who espouse the cause of freedom and true democracy, the cause of the exploited, the downtrodden, the disinherited of the earth.

Lincoln’s reply to the Working Men’s Association recalls to mind the message sent by the International on the occasion of Lincoln’s death. On behalf of the Central Council of the International Working Men’s Association, Karl Marx drafted a letter, addressed to President Andrew Johnson, in which were expressed the sorrow and indignation of the International over Lincoln’s assassination. The letter, dated London, May 13, 1865, bore the signatures of the 38 members of the Central Council, including that of Karl Marx. The letter reveals Marx’s generous appreciation of the greatness of Lincoln. The following is quoted from that letter:

“It is not our part to call words of sorrow and horror, while the heart of two worlds heaves with emotion. Even the sycophants who, *year after year, and day by day, stuck to their Sisyphus work of morally assassinating Abraham Lincoln*, and the great republic he headed stand now aghast at this universal outburst of popular feeling, and rival with each other to strew rhetorical flowers on his open grave. They have now at last found out that he was a man, neither to be browbeaten by adversity, nor intoxicated by success, inflexibly pressing on to his great goal, never compromising it by blind haste, slowly maturing his steps, never retracing them, carried away by no surge of popular favor, disheartened by no slackening of the popular pulse; tempering stern acts by the gleams of a kind heart, illuminating scenes dark with passion by the smile of humor, doing his

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titanic work as humbly and homely as heaven-born rulers do little things with the grandiloquence of pomp and state; in one word, one of the rare men who succeed in becoming great, without ceasing to be good. Such, indeed, was the modesty of this great and good man, that the world only discovered him a hero after he had fallen a martyr.”

And with a word of friendly warning to President Johnson, the letter concluded on this note:

“You will never forget that to initiate the new era of the emancipation of labor, the American people devolved the responsibilities of leadership upon two men of labor—the one Abraham Lincoln, the other Andrew Johnson.”

Lincoln died the martyr’s death. He was murdered, not by the wretched Booth, who was but a tool, cunningly and fiendishly fashioned for the foul deed. He was murdered bit by bit, day by day, by official society—by the predatory ruling class of his day, acting through, their rust-encrusted institutions and their pliant henchmen. It was the old dying order that guided the hand of the fanatic Booth, because those identified with that old, rotten order sensed in him a menace to their security and power, their wealth and class privileges. In flaming language, in an immortal poem, “The Murder of Abraham Lincoln,” the great Norwegian poet and dramatist, Henrik Ibsen (himself the victim of slander from which he sought to escape by going into voluntary exile), pointed the finger of indictment at the ruling class and its predatory usurpers. In part Ibsen wrote (addressing the ruling class criminals):

“The scarlet rose that grew in the West,
Which frightened you when it bloomed,
Was grafted from Europe’s corrupted stock,
And nurtured in yon virgin soil.
You planted as sapling that fruitful vine
That reddens America’s shore,
’Twas you who fastened, with criminal hand,
The deep-crimsoned ribbon of martyrdom
On Abraham Lincoln’s breast.”

In the next stanza Ibsen’s scornful words might even have been written for today, when again a rotten old order is dying, and dying hard, its beneficiaries, like

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snarling, cornered wolves, fangs bared, are again resorting to every crime in order to save their skins and their corrupt order:

“With pledges forgotten, with broken words,
With sacred treaties torn in shreds,
With last year’s oath outraged this year—
You have fertilized history’s field!
And yet you expect, so tranquil of mind
A harvest of purest grain!
Your seed is sprouting. What a lurid glare!
You marvel! You can neither think nor act,—
Not grain, but stilettos you reap!”

And so, when they had murdered Lincoln, they turned him into their patron saint, even as the Catholic hierarchy crowned with sainthood the maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc, who was burned at the stake by the corrupt French Catholic bishop, Cochon, and his allies, the British invaders of French soil. Lincoln’s assassins were not satisfied with murdering him in the flesh, but his spirit, his principles they murdered as well, and the crime goes on to this day. Again Ibsen scornfully flung, and flings, the truth in their hypocritical faces:

“Now he is praised by friend and foe,
But not till ye had laid him low.

He lit a torch the goal to show;
Ye snatched the brand to sear his brow.

Fiercely he fought the brood of hell;
Ye crushed him, mocking as he fell.”

Thus Lincoln, the simple man, the modest, great man of the people, stands today as the victim of ruling class fury, reviled in life, tortured in death; yet, he remains one of the great symbols of hope for the oppressed and despoiled, as an inspiration to the crucified and long-suffering mass of mankind.

Chapter Three

KARL MARX

I

Not for the thought that burns on keen and clear
Heat that the heat has turned from red to white,
The passion of the lone remembering night
One with the patience day must see and hear—
Not for the shafts the lying foemen fear,
Shot from the soul's intense self-cent'ring light—
But for the heart of love divine and bright,
We praise you, worker, thinker, poet, seer!
Man of the People—faithful in all parts,
The vein's last drop, the brain's last flickering dole,
You on whose forehead beams the aureole
That hope and "certain hope" alone imparts—
Us have you given your perfect heart and soul;
Wherefore receive as yours our souls and hearts.
—*Francis Adams: "To Karl Marx."*

And now we cross the ocean, to Europe's corrupt old soil, to review briefly the life and work of a man who belongs preeminently to the noble company of the reviled Great. The life and undying achievements of Karl Marx are too well known to warrant extended treatment on this occasion. But in the fate that pursued this great champion of the world's workers we recognize again the consequence of the same general causes, the same predatory interests that caused Jefferson and Lincoln to be sacrificed on the altar of calumny and shameful vituperation. And, again, Marx did not suffer this fate because his enemies did not like his whiskers, or because he was, allegedly, intolerant, dictatorial, and what not. He was, like the others, hated and feared because he challenged the existing order of things, because, above all others, he laid bare the root cause of social conflicts, slavery, poverty and all their accompanying evils.

Marx, like Jefferson, but unlike Lincoln, was born into a family of wealth and bourgeois respectability. He was the beneficiary of the finest education obtainable. His father was a counselor, who became an official legal functionary in the city of Trier (Treves). In the words of Franz Mehring, Karl Marx "enjoyed a cheerful and

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carefree youth”; his father expressed the hope that his “splendid natural gifts” would some day “be used in the service of humanity,” while his mother “declared him to be a child of fortune in whose hands everything would go well.” And in a manner of speaking, Marx did fulfill the hopes and expectations of his parents, though hardly as they had envisioned them. For no one ever rendered greater service in the interests of humanity than Marx—with no one else did things go so well, if by that we understand the great achievements that crowned his life.

It is entirely understandable why Marx earned the hatred of ruling class society, why he was pursued by slander and personal vilification to his dying day—and beyond. In a magnificent passage in his preface to the first edition of his immortal work, *Capital*, he reveals, in a manner of speaking, the reason for this. Marx was the historian, the philosopher, the linguist and political economist, but before anything else he was the political economist. In the passage referred to he wrote:

“In the domain of political economy, free scientific inquiry meets not merely the same enemies as in all other domains. The peculiar nature of the material it deals with summons as foes into the field of battle the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private interest. The English Established Church [he continued] will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1/39 of its income. Nowadays atheism itself is *culpa levis* [pardonable fault], as compared with criticism of existing property relations.”

Here Marx touched the most sensitive of ruling class nerves, the property nerve. It is important that we should understand this clearly, for unless we do we shall get hopelessly lost in considerations of the myriad of trivia that are either secondary effects of the basic factor, or that constitute apologies or serve as masks for that crowning passion in class-divided societies, the passion for property, and, under capitalism, the passion and unceasing quest for profit. It has become axiomatic with all thinking persons that it is property that rules man, and not man who rules property. An early Greek poet wrote: “That man does not possess his estate; his estate possesses him.” Our own Emerson put it this way: “If a man owns land, the land owns him.”

And in the pursuit of acquiring property, all moral considerations are either

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forgotten, or subconsciously covered over with a thick coating of pretense, or they are ruthlessly flung aside. “Make money, my son,” said the dying father, “make money, honestly if you can, but make money.” Another ancient said frankly: “*How* you get your property, that is the question—regardless of the rightness or the wrongness of the method.” Referring to the Democratic party, Lincoln said in his letter to the Bostonian Republicans who were celebrating Jefferson’s birthday: “The Democracy of today hold the *liberty* of one man to be absolutely nothing, when in conflict with another man’s right of property.” That is still the rule and the prevailing code in capitalist circles.

II

If it is recognized that property per se so completely dominates the possessor’s mind, so entirely determines his moral conduct and course of action, is it any wonder that hatred and calumny fall to the lot of men who challenge, not merely contemporaneous possession, but the very system that makes possible the acquisition of property, which, in toto, represents the non-compensated labor of others? And is it any wonder that Marx, above all others, earned this hatred and vilification—Marx, who established scientifically that the worker receives in return for his labor only that part of his product required merely to replace wasted tissues and the rags and shelter required to cover and protect his body, and to insure a constant progeny of wage slaves? Unlike his predecessors and most of his contemporaries, Marx did not merely declaim against the iniquity of the rich and deplore the presence of the poor. He proved, with facts, with logical reasoning, that one class, the capitalist class, subsisted on the labor of another class, the working class. By so doing, Marx revealed the prevailing system as an immoral system, and its beneficiaries as persons who lived and flourished by the commission of, or the concurrence in, an immoral act.

Capitalists and their hangers-on generally are not much concerned about morality as such. But when the question of morality—social morality—becomes the heart of a political issue, the burning question of an age, then there is grave danger ahead. Scoff as we may at moral issues, the historic truth is that no great social

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question ever becomes a paramount issue until it is also recognized as a moral issue—that is, as *the* moral issue of an age. It was thus with chattel slavery, and with all other *unnecessary* evils of long standing. Only so-called *necessary* evils are condoned, even though otherwise questioned, on the score of morality.

Hence, when Marx established conclusively that the capitalist class subsisted and survived by practicing and perpetuating an evil that (in the social and technological setting) was no longer a necessary evil, he at the same time established that a great moral wrong, a morally indefensible iniquity, was being perpetrated for the exclusive benefit and protection of a favored class at the expense primarily of the useful producing class—the wage workers—and generally at the expense of social evolution and humanity at large, the corollary of which was a conscious and planned policy of obstructing all basic social progress. In the long run, no social order can survive which rests upon what is universally conceded to be a moral wrong, on a demonstrated *unnecessary* social evil. Hence the countless efforts made by the ruling class to justify or explain the presence of social evils by invoking the claim of inevitability and necessity; hence their desperate efforts to cover these socially unnecessary evils with the cloak of “morality”; and hence their frenzied and oft-repeated efforts at traducing and vilifying Marx (and others, before and after him), imputing all sorts of petty personal and evil motives to him; and hence, finally, their hopeless and ever frustrated efforts to “prove” Marx wrong, to pick flaws in his works, and to misrepresent his principles, and set up all kinds of strawmen so easily, but so foolishly, knocked down by them.

The attempts at falsifying the teachings of Marx, and the efforts made to belittle and vilify him, and to present him as a worthless, a degraded character, are as numerous as they have all proved futile. The volume of misrepresentation and calumny (as in the cases of Jefferson and Lincoln and others) is so great that it is possible here only to scratch the surface. Most of us are familiar with the howl that went up from the bourgeois camp when the *Communist Manifesto* made its appearance. Distorting the language of this classic, quoting passages out of context, the beneficiaries of the immoral capitalist system charged Marx (and Engels) with immorality—falsely charging that Marx advocated promiscuity, brazenly claiming that he favored community of wives, and similar false and inane tripe. This

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particular slander is now a favorite with the clergy, and particularly with the Roman Catholic clergy, who, from the Pope down, make a regular practice of citing the *Communist Manifesto* as proof of Marx's alleged immoral teachings, and who generally in shameful fashion lie about and calumniate Marx and his great achievements.

When Marx published his monumental work, *Capital*, the capitalist class and its host of hireling scribblers, with a few honorable exceptions, rose as one man to misrepresent, distort and misconstrue Marx's masterpiece, and to defame the man who wrote it. In his preface to *Capital*, Marx himself took note of some of these attempts to destroy his great work and himself. "The learned and unlearned spokesmen of the German bourgeoisie," he wrote, "tried at first to kill *Das Kapital* by silence, as they had managed to do with my earlier writings. As soon as they found that these tactics no longer fitted in with the conditions of the time, they wrote, under pretense of criticizing my book, prescriptions 'for the tranquilization of the bourgeois mind.'"

III

Again, they criticized Marx's style—it was ponderous, heavy, unreadable, and so forth. "The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economy," he observed, "fell foul of the style of my book." Against such petty and false contentions, Marx quoted from one or two current journals of general repute, one of them saying that "the presentation of the subject . . . is distinguished by its comprehensibility by the general reader, its clearness, and, in spite of the scientific intricacy of the subject, by an unusual liveliness." The alleged "heavy" and "unreadable" style of Marx's writings has become one of the stock arguments of the capitalist hirelings, and the answer to all of them is the same as the one by Marx just quoted.

In a work published by the Socialist Labor Party, *Karl Marx and Marxian Science*, a section is devoted to an exposure of the falsifiers and traducers of Marx. It is necessary here to mention only a couple of samples of the slanders and falsifications recorded in that volume. Among the outstanding falsifiers of Marx we find Harold Laski, English professor, and putatively a spokesman for British labor,

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and a somewhat irregular defender of Stalinist Russia. Mr. Laski, among other things, brazenly charged that Marx had failed to mention that “utility . . . is a necessary factor in value.” Yet, on the very first page of *Capital* Marx expressly states that “every commodity has a twofold aspect, that of *use value* and exchange value.” That is lie No. 1.

Again Laski imputes to Marx the theory of “the iron law of wages,” when Marx specifically criticized Lassalle for embracing this theory! Laski imputes to Marx the philistine view that the political State “was, at any given time, the reflection in structure of the ideas of that epoch,” when, as is well known, Marx argued to the very contrary—that is, that ideas are the reflexes of the materio-economic conditions of a historic epoch. And so forth. And, of course, Laski, too, fell foul of the style of Marx’s chief work, which (parrot-like) he says is written “in a German particularly cumbrous and involved. . . .”

A spokesman for the notorious priest, Father Coughlin, charged Marx with being “a philosophical panhandler, a scientific beggar and a literary plagiarist,” and as “an impostor” in general. The writer of “best sellers,” one Manuel Komroff, slanderously charged that “Mohammed’s crooked scimitar was noting compared to the brazen dishonesty of Marx.” One recalls here Edgar Masters’ charge that Lincoln was dishonest and crooked! The same Komroff also charges Marx with plagiarism, with insincerity, anti-Semitism, sponging on friends, being an indolent gourmet, a dictator (of course!), and even stoops to making the infamous charge that Marx was a petty thief who stole from his own daughter! And stupidly this Marx reviler claims that Marx “blames the evil of capitalism on the Jews. . . .”!

And, believe it or not, this gentry, these literary lackeys of capitalist interests, receive cash for writing such rubbish, a fact that causes one to wonder at the business acumen of their supposedly shrewd employers!

IV

During his lifetime Marx, of course, was constantly the victim of calumny. Much of this resulted from his rigid adherence to party discipline, which galled many of his supposed co-workers. In this respect his experiences were much like

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those of Daniel De Leon. Lassalle caused Marx no end of trouble, and the relations between them were therefore strained, and became more so toward the end of Lassalle's life. In 1858, Lassalle had got himself involved in a quarrel with a certain nondescript character who challenged him to a duel. This appealed to Lassalle's romantic nature, and apparently he was ready to go through with it. It would seem that he had written Marx (in London) for advice, and he received plenty! In his characteristic analytical style Marx denounced the duel idea as ridiculous, and warned Lassalle not to make a fool of himself and of the Marxian movement. He concluded his letter to Lassalle on this note: "...the demand of these fellows... must be treated with utter derision. To recognize it would be directly counter-revolutionary." The duel did not take place, and it is easy to visualize Lassalle's resentment against Marx. (Incidentally, five years later Lassalle was again challenged to a duel and this time it did take place. He was mortally wounded, and died shortly thereafter.)

Subsequently Lassalle came out with a plan that would have involved the Marxist movement in a European power plot with the autocratic regimes of Austria and France (that is, Louis Napoleon) as opposing contenders, with Lassalle coming out in support of the French usurper's plan. Marx vigorously opposed the whole scheme, and referring to Lassalle's part in it he wrote to Engels (May 18, 1859): "If Lassalle takes it upon himself to speak in the name of the party, he must in future either make up his mind to be publicly disowned by us, for the situation is too important for personal considerations, or else, instead of pursuing his mixed inspiration of passion and logic, must previously come to an understanding with the views held by other people besides himself. *We must absolutely insist on party discipline now or everything will go to the dogs. . . .*"

At about the same time a Swiss professor, Karl Vogt, came out with views similar to those of Lassalle on the aforesaid question of European power politics. Marx's devastating criticism of this Vogt-Lassallean plan aroused the bitter resentment of Vogt, and the clashing views led to a bitter polemic between Marx and the opposition, in the course of which the charge was made (but not by Marx) that Vogt was in the pay of Louis Napoleon, an accusation which Vogt denied, bringing suit against the newspaper that had published the charge. The case was

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thrown out of court.

Vogt blamed Marx, who had had nothing to do with the charge, and referred to Marx in such terms as the directing head of a band of blackmailers, whose members lived by “so compromising people in the Fatherland.” (Mehring.) Mehring writes in his biography of Marx that “Although Marx was always unwilling to bother about answering scurrilous attacks upon himself, no matter how vile they might be, he realized that this time an answer was absolutely necessary,” and he decided to sue the German paper, which had printed Vogt’s charges, for libel. This paper, *National Zeitung*, had accused Marx “of a number of criminal and infamous actions before a public whose political prejudices made it inclined to believe anything against him, no matter how monstrous it might be, though . . . it had no facts at all on which to judge his personal character.” (Mehring.) “He felt,” writes Mehring, “that quite apart from political considerations he must bring the *National Zeitung* to book for defamation of character out of regard for his wife and children. . . .”

The incident involved Marx in a tremendous waste of precious time, time that should have been used for constructive and creative work. But this is always what happens as a result of slander campaigns, and internal conspiracies and disruption. One can only guess how much more Marx might have accomplished, one can only speculate as to the priceless treasures that were lost to the proletarian movement as a result of Marx’s having to waste time on such, relatively speaking, criminal trivia.

Years later Marx received his vindication in the Vogt case. During the Paris Commune there was found among the papers of Louis Napoleon a receipt for 40,000 francs, signed by Karl Vogt, establishing conclusively that this amount was paid out of the little Napoleon’s secret-service fund to this wretch, as a hired tool of the utterly corrupt and degenerate Louis Napoleon. In a letter to Dr. Kugelman, written April 12, 1871, Marx casually refers to this discovery. He wrote: “In the *official publication* of the list of those receiving direct subsidies from Louis Bonaparte’s treasury there is a note that Vogt received 40,000 francs in August, 1859.”

This case is revealing, not only as an example of the shameful slandering and vilification of Marx by his enemies, but as a sidelight on those who set up the howl of dictator, tyrant, etc., against such men as Jefferson, Lincoln, Marx and De Leon.

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And yet, countless numbers were deceived by the scoundrel Vogt, and believed Marx guilty of the charges the bourgeois scum leveled against him.

V

As we have seen, this campaign of slander and defamation of character, of falsification and misrepresentation, continued, and continues to this very day. There is scarcely a year that does not witness a new book on Marx wherein are rehashed the same old calumnies, the same old and stupid distortions, the same vulgar fabrications. One so maligned, even sixty-five years after his death, must indeed be a specter of terror to the official corrupt society now in the throes of its final death struggle. How the ruling class of our day, as of his own day, must hate him and, even more so, how they must fear him! And good cause, indeed, they had and have to fear this intellectual giant who stands as the ever-present judge, passing the sentence of death on their corrupt social system, as the ever-living symbol of working class hopes for emancipation from capitalist thralldom and exploitation!

As I said before, books on Marx's alleged errors and personal shortcomings continue to be ground out by the calumniators of the Great, year after year, world without end! It is, of course, impossible to take note of all of them on this occasion. One or two must suffice. Not quite twenty years ago there appeared a translation of a biography of Marx by a German Social Democrat by the name of Otto Ruehle, of whom little else is known than the fact that he married a rich woman who was reputed to be an expert on psychoanalysis, etc., a fact that obviously influenced the style and content of his biography of Marx.

The book by Ruehle purports to be the appraisal of an admirer—and in part Ruehle does pay tribute to Marx—but in all really important respects it is to be considered as just one more lampoon against Marx. A typical example of this is the author's account of the struggle between Marx and his supporters, on the one side, and the notorious anarchist Bakunin, on the other. It is not necessary to go into details here. The particular point here concerns the fate of the old International, which, through Bakunin's intrigues and trickery, was in danger of being captured

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by the anarchists. Rather than have it suffer this fate, Marx and Engels and their supporters decided to remove the headquarters of the International to New York, even if that meant its early dissolution. The Marxists saved the International from falling into the hands of Bakunin, and its headquarters was moved to New York, where soon after it expired. Its usefulness had come to an end, and it had amply served its historic purpose.

Ruehle quotes approvingly from a letter written by Bakunin in which Marx is paid the customary compliments, of which these are samples: “Marx loved his own person much more than he loved his friends and apostles, and no friendship could hold water against the slightest wound to his vanity. . . . Marx will never forgive a slight to his person. You must worship him, make an idol of him, if he is to love you in return; you must at least fear him, if he is to tolerate you. He likes to surround himself with pygmies, with lackeys and flatterers.” How familiar this sounds—and how wearisome!

Of course, Bakunin, being a victim of megalomania to the extreme degree characteristic of most anarchists, could not consider himself a “pygmy,” so obviously he could not serve as “lackey” and “flatterer” to Marx! But he could, and did revile him, in the manner characteristic of all underlings. According to Bakunin, Marx’s “circle of intimates” was “a sort of mutual admiration society.” Again, how familiar! “Marx,” continues Bakunin, “is the chief distributor of honors, but is also invariably perfidious and malicious, the never frank and open inciter to the persecution of those whom he suspects, or who have had the misfortune of failing to show all the veneration he expects.” Even the familiar poison of anti-Semitism is administered by this mental dwarf. “Himself [Marx] a Jew,” he continues, “he has around him in London and in France, and above all in Germany, a number of petty, more or less able, intriguing, mobile, speculative Jews. . . . These Jewish men of letters are adepts in the art of cowardly, odious, and perfidious insinuations . . . they hurl the most abominable calumnies in your face.”

And Otto Ruehle, the supposed admirer of Marx, refers to this slander, these vilifications of Marx and his co-workers, as “destructive analysis”! Analysis, indeed! Ruehle now jumps to the defense of Bakunin and joins this creature in defamation of Marx. He writes: “Marx had won the victory over his detested adversary. Not

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content with breaking the political ties between himself and Bakunin, he had emphasized his animus by securing that Bakunin should be stigmatized publicly as an embezzler. It was said that Bakunin had failed to repay an advance of three hundred rubles made him for the translation of *Capital* into Russian.”

There was no “it was said” about it—Bakunin had, the record shows, and as reported by Mehring, “repeatedly recognized his obligation in connection with the advance, and promised to pay it back in one way or the other. . . .” The question of fact, then, was not involved, but only that of motive. And the character of Bakunin was not of the kind to warrant taking any purity of motive on his part for granted. Accordingly, Marx was justified in his charge. It was he, not Bakunin, who was slandered.

But Ruehle is not content with slandering Marx in this respect alone—he continues: “Such was the rope used by Marx to hang his enemy—Marx who had been involved in a thousand shady financial transactions, and had lived all his life as pensioner on a friend’s [i.e., Engels’] bounty.”

And these contemptible slanders and vilifications, and more of the same kind, were hurled at Marx by his “admirer,” Ruehle! God save us from our friends—our enemies we can take care of!

VI

A few years ago an Austrian hack named Hayek wrote a book, *The Road to Serfdom*, which was loudly acclaimed as the final, utterly devastating answer to Marx! Once and for all, and at last, Marx was finished! The book followed the pattern of its predecessors. There were no original falsifications by Hayek, no new angles in this clumsy attack, but it contained the familiar, stupid misrepresentations. Yet it was viewed by the capitalist apologists as a sensation, but who today recalls it? How many would remember the author’s name, how many the title of his book? Hardly any. The book, as Artemus Ward would say, is now deader nor Caesar!

But still they come. Earlier this year we were presented with the latest “final and conclusive” answer to Marx—this time Marx was really done for! The book is by

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one Leopold Schwarzschild and bears the malicious and vituperative title, *The Red Prussian—The Life and Legend of Karl Marx*. It was, as you may recall, reviewed in the WEEKLY PEOPLE last August. The review was given the appropriate title, “A Professional Lampoon on Marx.” There is nothing new in this latest lampoon except, perhaps, that it places a bit more emphasis on the personal slandering of Marx. Otherwise it is as lying a document as the rest, in part stupid, in part cunning, but altogether malicious and vicious. There would be no point in considering it at length. Our WEEKLY PEOPLE reviewer aptly remarked that “As a biography, *The Red Prussian* reveals the author as a painstaking researcher of other biographies and would-be biographies of Marx.” It is a compilation of compilations of slanders and misrepresentations of Marx. In this respect it is almost perfect, though, being human, it is to be expected that the author did miss a few calumnies and scurrilities in the works of his predecessors. Naturally, Mr. Schwarzschild draws upon Ruehle’s work, among others, and he derives considerable satisfaction from quoting and enlarging upon the slanderous statements by this supposed admirer of Marx.

Mr. Schwarzschild mentions particularly a pamphlet allegedly written by Marx, which is not generally known today. It was the indictment drawn up on behalf of a commission of the Hague Congress of the International, in which Bakunin was charged with conspiracy and disruption, etc., and on the basis of which he was expelled. Schwarzschild writes about this document (which he sneeringly refers to as the “epilogue”) as follows:

“The epilogue took the form of one hundred and sixty printed pages. *Marx wrote them* in collaboration with Engels and Lafargue. . . . After a long career as pamphleteer, Marx rose to heights never reached before. Never before had his genius for slander given vent to such stupendous mudslinging.”

And so on, and so forth, *ad nauseam*. Let us see what we can do with this brainchild of Mr. Schwarzschild.

In the first place, whatever may have been the language, it contained facts proving the crimes of Bakunin against the International.

In the second place, Marx had no “genius” for slander, as his traducers well know. The assertion is pure billingsgate.

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In the third place, Marx did not give, and could not have given, “vent to stupendous mudslinging,” least of all on this occasion, because—

In the fourth place, Marx did not write the document in which Schwarzschild charges that Bakunin was slandered!

But aside from these considerations, Schwarzschild told the truth, namely, that this “epilogue” consisted of some 160 pages!

Now, Schwarzschild lied deliberately when he charged Marx in the manner just described. He knew that he lied, because the book from which he quoted gives the lie to his slander. Schwarzschild quoted a brief reference that Franz Mehring makes to this document in his biography of Marx. Franz Mehring wrote (referring to the Bakunin indictment):

“This memorandum was drawn up by Engels and Lafargue, whilst Marx’s share in the work was no more than the editing of one or two of the concluding pages. . . .”

Mehring does say, notwithstanding the fact that he had just mentioned, that Marx “naturally . . . is no less responsible for the whole than its authors.” That, of course, is Mehring’s personal opinion. The fact remains that Marx was not the author, or co-author, of it, as Schwarzschild falsely charged, hence he did not “rise,” and could not have “risen,” to any “heights,” nor could he have been capable of “mudslinging,” by reason of this document. If “mudslinging” there was, it was by Engels and Lafargue—patently not by Marx, whatever he may have thought of that document.

Throughout his book Schwarzschild refers to Marx in vulgar derogatory terms, including such beauties as “this poisonous monster,” this “man with the huge beard of the cave-dweller,” “living corpse, etc., in addition to his malicious designation of Marx as “The Red Prussian,” as imbecile as it is maliciously false. And like his predecessors, he whistles in the dark by repeating the familiar clichés: “For many years the course of economic history had run counter to Marx’s theory.” “There were no signs of increasing misery.” “The workers and employers were both moving forward together. . . .” “There were not fewer small capitalists, there were more of them.” “. . . there was no increase of class antagonism.” And so forth.

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It is useless to ask if this man is alive, if he has eyes to see with, ears to hear with, useless to ask him if he is aware that capitalist development has produced a global war, resulting in all but universal destruction; that it has caused the slaughter of millions in that war, that chaos reigns, and capitalist statesmen, so called, are at their wits' end; useless to ask him if he is aware that strikes in ever larger volume, and with increasingly devastating effect, take place with the regularity, almost, of the tides; useless to ask him if he has ever heard of the Congressional committee on small business whose recent report viewed with alarm the growing power of monopoly and the gradual disappearance of small business—useless to ask him any or all of these questions, because he knows the answers. But the answers do not suit his purpose of slandering and besmirching the name of a towering personality, whose genius pervades the world today, whose teachings inspire the masses of the world, and whose name is one to be reckoned with as none other is, or can be, this side {of} capitalist slavery.

Thus again a great fighter for human freedom, a great champion of the masses, an outstanding advocate of genuine popular democracy, a truly great and good man, whose lot in life was one of poverty and personal misery, receives his reward in the shape of calumny, vituperation and persecution. But to slander an outstanding personality, a man of personal rectitude and intellectual integrity, to besmirch him and belittle his lifework by misrepresenting him and by falsifying the record, is in effect to pay a high tribute to him. For by so doing the vilifiers tacitly acknowledge that they cannot meet him on his own high ground, that they cannot overthrow his arguments or refute his logic.

Moreover, if Marx were the nincompoop and the wretch his assailants charge that he was, why bother with him—why not let nature take its course? It is, indeed, strange, is it not, that a man such as his enemies make Marx out to be should today occupy a position so commanding in the world's affairs! Marx was, according to his traducers, a charlatan and a faker; an impostor and a swindler; a parasite and a petty thief; a plagiarist and a speculator! He was, so wags the slandering tongue, a boor, uncouth and unmannerly, an ignoramus and a fool! What fools these creatures be that they can hope to sell humanity, and above all the working class, such a line of shoddy goods! This phony “Marx” they present to us is a strawman set up by

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them (like the practitioners of “black magic”) in the hope that by destroying the strawman, they are succeeding in destroying the real Marx!

No, it takes more than “black magic,” more than the feeble efforts of a few imported bankrupt scribblers, more than all the professors and hired pen-pushers in the world, to make even a dent in the armor of Karl Marx! For the real Marx is the universal genius who, sixty-five years after his death, still dominates and largely directs the sane thinking of the world. He is a mental colossus bestriding the globe, towering far above the murk and the mud of the little men who so industriously seek to bespatter and belittle him. He is too far above them to enable them to see him even if they wished to do so. They are too small, and he too gigantic in all proportions, to make it possible for them to see him as he is. And being too close to him, and they so very little, they can in any case see but a very small part of him. Might it not be that what they do see are but the wrinkles and the creases, perhaps an ink spot, and a little dust here and there, on his outer garment? But whatever they do see, they see it through the blackened glasses of hate, greed and envy, distorted and monstrously fantastic!

So let them revile him, let them traduce and misrepresent him, and let them earn the filthy dollars handed out to them by the ruling class exploiters. As for us, and the exploited workers, in the words of the working class poet—

“We praise you, worker, thinker, poet, seer!
Man of the People—faithful in all parts.”

Chapter Four

DANIEL DE LEON

I

Contemporaries are too easily mistaken in their appraisal of the great men of their day: their extraordinary qualities irritate them; their logical and useful lives distort their views, prevent fair estimates and acknowledgment of their achievements. But dust, fog and clouds disappear, they settle down and then we see the vista before our eyes, clear and distinct; we see light and shade, we examine the achievements of these great men, with a spirit of calm, as we are in the habit of gazing upon the glorious orb of the full moon on a clear summer night.

—*Goethe.*

Goethe's words are as true of Daniel De Leon as they are of Jefferson, Lincoln, Marx and of the great host of libertarians and fighters for social progress and human rights throughout the ages. As in the case of the others, De Leon was misunderstood and misjudged, slandered and maligned shamefully by the ruling class and its apologists and hirelings, from the professorial bankrupts, corrupt politicians and labor fakers, down to the petty intriguing politicians and shyster lawyers in the so-called Socialist party, not to forget the conspiring, vilifying, disruptive wretches who rose within the Socialist Labor Party to join cause with the outside foe. In virulence, maliciousness and reckless falsity, the slanders and abuse heaped upon De Leon were second to none of which the other great rebels and fighters for humanity were the recipients. And, again, for similar reasons and to similar infamous ends.

Daniel De Leon, too, was born to wealth and ruling class comforts. The son of wealthy Venezuelans, he was given all the advantages bestowed upon the offspring of the well-to-do. His education was of the highest order; he was sent to famous universities abroad, and he seemed destined to achieve a distinguished career in the bourgeois world, to match fame with his greatest contemporaries. When he graduated from Columbia College in 1878, President Barnard, in awarding him

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prizes in constitutional history and constitutional law, and in international law, said to him, in part:

“Your successful labors afford ground for the just expectation that you may find your place among the distinguished publicists of the age and country.”

But fate, or shall we say De Leon’s rebellious spirit, his passion for humanitarian justice and truth, decreed otherwise. Having been aroused by the vindictiveness displayed by the authorities toward striking New York workers in 1886, he spoke out against the ruling class of the time, and came out in support of Henry George in his campaign for mayor of New York, George being then considered a subversive character by the capitalist class and its journalistic spokesmen. Recognizing shortly thereafter the bankruptcy of Henry George and his reactionary “single-tax” nostrum, De Leon soon joined the Socialist Labor Party, then scarcely more than a reform organization by present-day Marxist standards. But it was not long before the Party, largely through De Leon’s efforts and teachings, turned to the road of revolution, eventually following Marxian principles and policies.

In the meantime Columbia College went back on its word to give him a permanent professorship, and in protest De Leon resigned, henceforth devoting his entire time to revolutionary S.L.P. activities, serving as editor, lecturer, representative at international Socialist congresses, and as candidate for various public offices on the Party’s ticket. His uncompromising tactics and scientific principles soon brought him into conflict with the traders and trimmers in the Party, whose primary objectives were to feather their own nests at the expense of the wage slave class, and from that time on the floodgates of calumnies were opened on him. Like Marx and the others, he fell foul of the private vested interests, inside as well as outside the labor movement. Particularly vicious were the so-called labor leaders whom De Leon ever referred to as the labor fakers, or the capitalist labor lieutenants, adopting the phrase bestowed upon them, complimentarily, by the late capitalist Warwick, the Ohio plutocratic politician, Mark Hanna.

Once again, as in the cases of Jefferson, Lincoln and Marx, buckets of slime

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were heaped upon De Leon's sinful head—sinful, that is, in the eyes of the ruling class criminals. Among his foulest defamers was the unprincipled labor faker, Sam Gompers, who hated De Leon with the insensate fury that only a petty, time-serving soul can entertain toward a great, towering character. The facts and logic presented by De Leon in condemnation of Sam Gompers and his fellow fakers and Social Democratic allies were answered by Gompers & Co. in terms of vituperation and slander, which led to the presentation of still more damning facts and logic by De Leon, producing still viler calumnies by Gompers and his allies and masters. And so on, and so forth.

Again we ask: Why was De Leon so reviled? Why was he made the victim of this hatred and unspeakable (sometimes unprintable) vilification? And again the answer is that he was vilified and lied about because he fought ruling class usurpation, because he exposed the traitors of the working class, and because he espoused the cause of the downtrodden, of the exploited workers, and taught them the principles and program that would bring them emancipation and freedom. De Leon challenged and fought the beast of private property, and the beast fought back with all the fury and savagery of the cornered beast.

When capitalist officialdom, and the labor fakers and their allies, preached the brotherhood between capital and labor, between the robbers and the robbed, De Leon replied, in terms of his masterful logic, with an exposure of the fraudulent claim; when they preached reforms, he exposed reforms as a snare and a delusion, as a trap set by the capitalists and their lieutenants in which to catch the unwary workers; when they spoke of compromise, he thundered: There can be no compromise between right and wrong! When they urged palliatives, De Leon answered: "The palliative ever steels the wrong that is palliated." When they pleaded that half a loaf is better than none, De Leon rejoined: "Request a little when you have a right to the whole, and your request, whatever declamatory rhetoric or abstract scientific verbiage it be accompanied with, works a subscription to the principle that wrongs you."

When De Leon exposed the fatal weakness of the pro-capitalist craft unions, the labor fakers (echoing their masters' voices) howled that he was a union wrecker, an enemy of labor, and what not. De Leon followed through with more proof of the

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corruption of craft unions, and the venality of the bosses' labor lieutenants. When the enemies of the workers urged "tolerance" and "forgiveness," De Leon scathingly denounced those who pleaded for toleration of the very evil that the labor movement was called into being to root out. The fatuous reformers and "middle-of-the-roaders" argued for the buying out of the capitalist class, professing to believe that this was a strategy for achieving a painless revolution. De Leon told them: "Preach to the proletariat . . . the abstract principles of their own, the Socialist, revolution, and then let that man seek to sugar-coat the dose with suggestions or acts that imply the idea of 'buying out the capitalists,' and he has simply wiped out clean, for all practical purposes, all he said before: he has deprived the revolution of its own premises, its pulse of its own warmth."

II

Again, it is easy to understand why De Leon was hated and reviled. Cicero, in stately Latin, said: "When you have no basis for an argument, abuse the plaintiff." De Leon's enemies adopted this maxim, and applied it against him with a vengeance. No tale was too fantastic, no lie too foul, no defamation too vile, as weapons against De Leon. They struck at him with their calumnies in the wild frenzy of the guilty and the corrupt—slandered him in public as well as in his private life. But vilification and character-assassination were no more of a deterrent to De Leon than they had been to the others of his noble company. And as in the case of Marx, the slander campaign was carried on against him, not alone during his lifetime, but after his death, and to this very day.

There is a sameness in this contumely that is as fascinating as it is abhorrent, though this sameness may seem somewhat tedious and wearisome. But in this very sameness resides the vulnerability of the calumnation, for it is bound to awaken the thoughtful and the honorable to a realization that a man maligned in a manner so similar to others in the cavalcade of the reviled Great must himself personify a great cause and almost certainly possess elements of greatness, his cause must be at least as great as the causes of the others—the causes now vindicated before the bar of history. And the fact is apt to lead to the conclusion that this man is due for a

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vindication as great as that accorded the others; hence his cause is destined to become equally vindicated. Thus calumny of the Great may, in the long view, at least, work the direct opposite of that intended by the calumniator. And because this may be so, because this very probably *will* be so, it is useful to pause long enough in our work to review these cases of comparative, and comparable, campaigns of slander and character-assassination in the lives of great men.

As in the cases of the others, volumes could be compiled of such slanders and misrepresentations against Daniel De Leon. We shall, of course, have time to cite only a few. He bore most of them with outward patience, though on occasions he did speak out in words of deep resentment. He was philosopher enough to know that he who takes his place in the front ranks of the army of freedom must needs become the instant target of the poisoned arrows shot by the savage foe. Towering man invites towering wrong. As Herodotus, the Father of History, wrote:

“The god smites with his thunderbolt creatures of greatness more than common, nor suffers them to display their pride; but such as are little move him not to anger; and it is ever on the tallest buildings and trees that his bolts fall.”

One of the ever-recurrent charges against De Leon was that he was a dictator, an autocrat, a tyrant, boss, “pope,” or what have we! None of his traducers ever explained how a man, certainly not a physical giant, and certainly not in position to seduce with financial bribery, could bend others to his will! None of them ever charged (strangely enough!) that De Leon had a band of strong-arm men who, at the point of pistol or dagger, compelled others to do his bidding! No one ever complained that De Leon possessed hypnotic powers that he exerted on his “victims” in order to render them helpless! And no one among his alleged victims was so superstitious as to yield to any supposed magic, or threat of hell and damnation, that he might use against them! And some, or all, of these methods are, as we know, used by the real dictator and tyrant. How, then, could De Leon be a dictator, especially in an organization such as the S.L.P., where power rests entirely and exclusively in the hands of the membership? The obvious absurdity of these charges and suppositions is their own refutation. De Leon obviously was not, and could not have been, a dictator, boss, etc., even if he had wanted to be.

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What his traducers ignored was that the so-called power of De Leon lay in his learning, in his command of facts, and in his matchless logic, and, conversely, in his enemies' false positions, hence in their weakness and vulnerability. "Argument [i.e., logic]," said Sir Francis Bacon, "is like the shot of the cross-bow, equally forcible whether discharged by a giant or a dwarf." In their blind folly, the contemners of the Great cannot conceive of impressing others except through the application of brute force. Themselves lacking, or being deficient, in the power of logic, they cannot conceive of anyone persuading others except through plain frauds or force. And yet nothing was further from De Leon's mind than to force others against their wills. If the power of logic, and the presentation of facts, did not impel people to his side, De Leon would have none of them. In answer to a slander by one of the politicians in the Socialist party, De Leon observed: "The statement that I own the S.L.P. is absurd. The S.L.P. owns itself. If it didn't I would get out. I have no taste for leading cattle."

In reply to another he wrote: "The idea that De Leon is a boss because 'he does so much work' is a brand new light on 'bossism'; it is also a light on the gentleman who uses the term." In a splendid passage De Leon completely answers the slanderer, the conspirator and disrupter:

"We have yet to see the person who charges us with 'bossiness' and who is not a person who, if he only had the chance, a chance he pants after, would not out-boss any boss; we have yet to see the person who charges us with intolerance, and who does not thereby plead guilty of intolerantly demanding that his nonsense be accepted as chunks of wisdom; we have yet to see the person who charges us with viciousness and ill nature, and who is not morbidly petulant, and who, moreover, would not be a physical wreck suffering of ill-natured nervous prostration if he had to stand one thousandth part of the strain the S.L.P. has to stand in order to uphold the banner of Sense and Socialism; we have yet to see the person who charges us with being a 'pope,' and who does not by his every act insult the independence of thought of others by having his unsupported conclusions accepted as gospel truth; we have yet to see the person who charges us with 'intriguing,' and who is not himself an intriguer, the bones of whose intrigues the straightforward course of the S.L.P. has broken."

In this answer De Leon seems to have included the entire catalogue of those calumnies and falsehoods constantly flung at him, and at those who occupy an

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exposed post in the S.L.P. It is so complete, so overwhelming in its finality, that one would think that it would silence for all time the slanderer and the falsifier. But the slanderer's mouth is not stopped until it is stopped with dust.

III

De Leon's invincible logic and his practice of citing facts, chapter and verse, drove his assailants to fury. Having been licked on the field of logic and fact, the character-assassins thereupon turned their endeavors into an assault on De Leon's personal character, on his antecedents, etc. In the 'nineties the wildest stories were circulated by the enemies of the Party and of De Leon concerning his alleged obscure origin and supposed efforts to cover up his past. These calumnies have had their echoes in recent years. Goaded finally beyond endurance, and probably out of regard for his family, De Leon decided to bring charges against one of the calumniators, one August Waldinger. The charges opened as follows:

“I hereby charge August Waldinger, a member of this Section [New York], with the act of deliberate defamation of my character and good name, to the injury not of myself only, but of the Party itself.”

He then reproduces a letter in which, among other things, the yarn was told that, in the history of the Seligmans in the Astor Library (now incorporated in the New York Public Library), De Leon's name was allegedly mentioned; that De Leon was supposed to have been adopted by the Seligmans (another slanderous version was that he was Seligman's illegitimate son!) and received from them the name of De Leon. De Leon, in his charges, thereupon comments:

“In itself, such a matter would seem too trifling for notice. It, however, happens, as you surely know, that, for the last five years, the charge has been brought against me in ever increasing volume through the labor fakers of the land, that I am traveling under an assumed name, quite a variety of names, especially 'Loeb' being imputed to me by them as my real name. Hardly a paper of theirs but attacks in this manner. It is their favorite attack. Against this foul slander I have been helpless; the slander and libel have been uttered in such cowardly manner that I cannot bring a criminal action on them, and a civil action for libel either, because an 'alias' is not in itself a wrong thing, so that legal technicalities would afford my libelers loopholes by which to escape. Nevertheless, the motive for the

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slander, however concealed, is evident and is none other than to raise suspicion against my character as a man whose antecedents are such that he thinks it advisable to conceal them by dropping his old and assuming a new name.

“In this sense, for instance, a lampoon was distributed last year during the campaign [1898] throughout the 16th Assembly District of this city, where I was the Party’s candidate for Assembly, and the attempt was thus made to discredit the Party through me. Indeed, whoever uttered the slander has evidently for its [his?] real purpose to injure the Party and its propaganda by throwing discredit upon one of its agitators.”

De Leon then cites the fact of Waldinger’s repeating the slander in the presence of others. And he continues:

“For him [Waldinger], a Party member, to say what he did at such a public place as a barroom, where strangers go in and out and stand around, cannot have had any object other than to fortify the slander against me, and [the] ugliness of his conduct is not weakened by the ‘hearsay’ method that he adopted; on the contrary, it is aggravated by the very aggravation that accompanies the coward’s assassination of character.

“This slander against my good name has not been brought upon me by any private act of mine. The wounds that the slander has inflicted, and continues to inflict, are earned by me in the camp of the Party, owing to my activity in the Party’s work. Even so, I would have taken up my own cudgels outside of the Party, were it not for the reasons given above explaining my helplessness before a charge that, though evidently malicious, is everywhere made in so cowardly a manner as to allow technical loopholes for the slanderers’ escape from the clutches of the law. The action of Waldinger is the first on the part of my slanderers on this serious subject that CAN be taken hold of; and it can be taken hold of simply because it enables me to bring it before the only court that can deal with the equities of the case; the only court that need not be trammelled with legal technicalities; above all, the only court that must have a deep interest in establishing whether or not a member whom it entrusts with grave responsibilities is a nameless adventurer of shady antecedents, and finally a court that must also be deeply interested in doing for its own sake what it can in defending those of its own members who, by reason of the work imposed on them, are exposed to the poisonous arrows of an infamous foe, especially seeing that what it can do is the only thing that can at all be done in the premises—the branding of the slanderers within its own jurisdiction.”

The bitterness, the deep resentment, of De Leon against the calumny, expressed here, was also expressed in a letter of protest that he wrote to a member,

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Morris Ruther, editor of a trade union journal, *Labor*:

“Do you [he asked Ruther] father that slur upon our New York comrades and upon me personally? We have to be extremely jealous of one another’s clean repute; he who is unfit should be cast off; the enemy will sufficiently malign us; if we don’t protect one another’s character against unjust aspersions, who will? And in that case the Party is ‘busted.’ It will break up in a wrangle of fishwives. To put up with the bucketfuls of slurs and infamies that *Labor* weekly dumps upon one, one must be a dishclout. That I am not; and I have made up my mind that this shall end if Party discipline and Party decency can bring it about; if not, the Party is not fit for a decent man to join, let alone give his time to. The organization where one’s character is not safe and in which one’s fellow workers will not chivalrously stand by one another unless convicted is not worthy of the devotion without which no organization can succeed, but is bound to sink into the mire.”

IV

During the same period there was circulated a lampoon written by one Eugene Dietzgen, unworthy son of the famous Joseph Dietzgen, hailed by Marx and Engels as the philosopher of the proletariat. Dietzgen had joined the intriguers against the Party, had lauded and supported Debs’s Social Democratic party, and, having been rebuked, spewed his venom on those who had exposed him, especially De Leon. His lampoon contained the familiar vilifications—De Leon was a dictator, a tyrant, etc., and he was an ignoramus, a charlatan and deficient in his understanding of Marx. De Leon’s *Reform or Revolution* was singled out as a special target. In the manner of some of our latter-day character-assassins, it picked flaws in De Leon’s masterpiece, in a tortured and quibbling fashion. The Party’s platform (presumed to have been written by De Leon) was similarly attacked, of which attack this is a sample: Quoting from the platform—“Again through the perversion of democracy to the ends of plutocracy, labor is robbed of the wealth which it alone produces. . . .” Dietzgen argued: “Not labor, but labor power is being robbed”!!

This infamous document bears a striking similarity to those circulated by recently expelled disrupters. Indeed, did we not know better, we would conclude that it was prepared by one of the current gang of howling dervishes who in similar fashion are maligning the S.L.P. and those among its members who are holding

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responsible posts in the Party. Indeed, with respect to the latter-day vilifiers, it is a case of history repeating itself—first, as Marx put it, as a tragedy, later as a farce! It is the eternal process of calumniated and calumniator all over again.

As the enemies of the Party and of De Leon discovered again and again, their slanders and vilifications brought them no results other than their own exposure as guttersnipes and slummists, who proved their real purposes and true motives by going over to the camp of the enemy. They found that in tangling with De Leon, they tackled a bear—or perhaps I *should* say a lion! As the Dickens character said:

“Rather a tough customer in an argeyment, Joe, if anybody was to try and tackle him”!

In recent years several writers of literary green-goods have gone out of their way in maligning De Leon, misrepresenting his teachings and falsifying the record with respect to his life and work. A few years ago a notorious renegade who earns his pennies by toadying to labor fakers wrote a book called *Tailor’s Progress*. This particular sycophant took special pains to pour his filth on De Leon’s name, bringing in again, among other things, the question of his antecedents, making the amusing, though unimportant, “charge” that De Leon (who once referred to himself humorously as “a respectable Venezuelan Catholic”!) was a Jew with Negro blood in his veins! The “charge,” though unimportant in itself, was obviously made, with malicious intent, to discredit De Leon, who on this particular point expressed himself as follows (in his report as Editor to the 1912 National Convention of the S.L.P.):

“If the correspondence [letters, articles, submitted for publication] is rejected, your national editor runs serious personal risks. He makes an enemy who forthwith discovers and proclaims that the editor ‘is a Jew and denies it,’ or that ‘he is not a Jew and claims to be one,’ and sundry other and similar interesting discoveries.”

The frequent charge that De Leon was a Jew, and denied it, and vice versa, gave him many a chuckle. Once one of the S.P. “Alte Genossen” (old German Social Democrats) wrote him, chiding him about being a Jew, etc. De Leon wrote a suitable letter box answer and had the Yiddish compositor in the Party plant translate it

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and set it in type, so that it appeared in Yiddish in the *Daily People*. The “Alte Genossen” is supposed to have said triumphantly to one of his cronies: “Seh’, was habe ich gesagt? Der ist ja doch ein Jud!” (“What did I tell you? The man *is* a Jew!”)

In the same book the author quotes, with evident relish, the old faker Gompers as having said:

“De Leon came of a Venezuelan family of Spanish and Dutch Jewish descent with a strain of colored blood. That makes him a first class son of a b—.”

The foulness of this calumny equals any that was leveled against Abraham Lincoln by the venal press of his day.

The slummist character of Gompers, the man’s maliciousness and vulgarity are perfectly illustrated in an event that took place in 1898. The occasion was the celebrated New Bedford strike which yielded as its most precious fruit De Leon’s masterpiece *What Means This Strike?* Gompers had become enraged because of De Leon’s efforts to expose the labor fakers and their corrupt craft unions. In his autobiography Gompers claims that “In a long, carefully prepared address, De Leon set forth the principles of the new unionism and made a savage attack upon trade unions and upon me in particular.” He goes on to make the false claim that he (Gompers) came to New Bedford the following evening, allegedly addressing “large numbers of textile strikers and succeeded in materially changing the impression made by De Leon. . . .” And he added boastfully: “. . . the offensive for the new unionism was successfully checked. . . .”

The facts are briefly: Gompers did go to New Bedford, but it was two days *before* De Leon spoke; his appearance there diminished, rather than enhanced, the prestige and influence of craft unionism among the workers, Gompers himself cutting a sorry figure, and addressing a much smaller audience than the one that two days later turned out to hear De Leon.

Upon arriving in New Bedford, on February 9, 1898, Gompers was handed the following letter which had appeared the day before in the New Bedford *Evening Standard*:

“To Mr. Samuel Gompers:

“In the name of Section New Bedford, S.L.P., I am authorized to issue

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the following challenge:

“That you shall appear in debate on next Friday evening, February 11, at City Hall, with Daniel De Leon. The subject to be: ‘The principles which you [Gompers] represent, known as the American Federation of Labor, as opposed to those represented by De Leon, and known as Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, or Socialism.’

“Yours, in behalf of Section New Bedford,

“James F. Hancock,

“Organizer of the local Section.”

Here was Gompers’s chance to “expose” and “crush” De Leon. Did he seize it? Nary a seizure! Instead he denounced the challenge as “traitorous,” with the intended foul, slanderous reflections on De Leon. According to the account in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, February 10, no sooner had Gompers flung the slanderous charge against De Leon than Hancock (the S.L.P. organizer) jumped up and “challenged Gompers then and there.” The *Dispatch* described the pandemonium that followed, and continued its report as follows:

“‘Don’t do that,’ said Mr. Gompers. ‘Don’t sink to his level. I know this red button brigade [S.L.P. men]. You will find a Pinkerton agent, the paid hireling of the mill corporation, here Friday night to divide you against yourselves.’ This was taken as a reference to a Socialist [De Leon] who is to speak here Friday night, and mingled applause and hisses followed. But Gompers continued, saying that men who would not fight together were traitors to each other. He was several times interrupted, and at length was forced to break off to catch a train.”

This contemptible slander proved too much even for the non-Socialist strike leaders, one of whom, Wm. Cunnane, president of the Cotton Weavers’ Protective Association, and financial secretary of the strike council, said in a statement published in the *Evening Standard* of February 11, 1898:

“... Mr. Gompers also warned his audience that the Socialists were about to bring a paid Pinkerton into the city in a few days, and in this connection used language that suggested that the said Pinkerton was Daniel De Leon, who is billed to speak in the City Hall tonight. I have always had a certain amount of respect for Mr. Gompers, but when a man will stand up in front of an audience and make a deliberate statement which he knows is false and a lie, a statement made evidently for the purpose of winning over to his side an excited and passionate audience, then that man loses my respect.”

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It was thus that Gompers “succeeded in materially changing the impression made by De Leon”—who was yet to make that “impression” in New Bedford!! The actual results of Gompers’s false and libelous charges were a series of successful meetings addressed by De Leon in New Bedford, and the organizing of three S.T. & L.A. locals of weavers and spinners, and the securing of much valuable publicity for the S.L.P. To Gompers the liar, the vulgar faker, were administered crushing defeat, exposure and, on the part of the workers, the contempt he had so richly earned.

Another one of the literary green-goods dealers, one Waldo Frank, not so long ago wrote an article in the magazine *Commentary* (July, 1947), published by “The American Jewish Committee,” in which another fantastic tale is spun about De Leon. The story told by Mr. Frank is supposed to be sympathetic to De Leon—as sympathetic, in fact, as was Otto Ruehle’s slanderous biography of Marx! Apart from containing numerous stupid errors concerning events relating to De Leon’s activities, and a complete falsification of Marxism—all done in the best manner of the “neo-Freudians”—the article contains slurs and falsehoods such as this one:

“In the thirty years that have followed [since De Leon’s death], no fresh thought, no fresh emotion [!] appears to have emerged from his disciples; who courageously if vituperatively carry on what became first an ‘Academy of De Leonism’ [?!] and is today at best a mausoleum where the sacred dry bones are piously conserved. De Leon inherited the Marxist tradition of wordy abuse, as did Lenin and Trotsky and indeed the whole contemporary Communist press in and out of Russia.”

No comments seem necessary on this contemptible and imbecile vilification.

In this charlatan’s article one runs across the most astonishing and, at the same time, the most amusing observations. We are told, for example, that “The Marxist psychology is obviously *extrovert*,” and, so this owlish gentleman assures us, both Lenin and De Leon “accepted the extrovert Marxist psychology.”! Marx’s mistake was to assume “that man is naturally good,” despite the alleged fact that (according to Mr. Frank’s “Marx”) “all evil has issued from the economic classes,” which sad state of affairs apparently has no relation to man, good or evil! And we are solemnly told by this literary buffoon that “Marx, De Leon must not be rejected;

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they must be deepened.” And Mr. Frank, of course, will do the deepening, in the most approved Greenwich Village fashion! There is much more of such cultish tripe, which it would be amusing to report, but hardly with any profit. Suffice it to say that Mr. Frank’s “portrait” of De Leon is one of the weirdest things ever to be hung in the international gallery!

Other recent articles and books have dealt with De Leon in much the same irresponsible and falsifying manner, most of them bearing witness to the fact that the authors cribbed generously from the equally weird works by fellow literary hucksters. One of them, by one Charles Madison (on the whole sympathetic and decent), sinned chiefly by accepting uncritically some of the slanderous and belittling references to De Leon by his critics and revilers.

One of the very latest traducers is that “literary” boudoir artist, Irving Stone, who turns the private lives of the great and near-great into lush profits. In his latest book, the Debs “biographical novel,” *Adversary in the House*, he succeeded in creating a masterpiece of calumny and falsification concerning De Leon, his character, his work and his principles. Since we have paid our compliments to Mr. Stone on this score in the current issue of the WEEKLY PEOPLE (December 13, 1947), nothing more need be said on the subject on this occasion except to say that as a piece of deliberate lying about, and vilification of, De Leon, it deserves the Ananias prize! At any rate, there is no doubt it will receive proper reward at the hands of a grateful plunderbund, well served by the gentleman.

V

It has become axiomatic that those whom the predatory classes cannot buy or corrupt they will seek to destroy. Men such as Jefferson, Lincoln, Marx and De Leon were not for sale, and this is, indeed, fortunate for mankind and the progress of the world. And though they may be destroyed in their physical entities, either with one foul blow (as in the case of Lincoln), or by denying them the opportunities for leading normal, healthful lives (as in the cases of Marx and De Leon), they cannot really be destroyed, for their works and deeds survive them, bestowing upon them an immortality that no assassin’s hand can reach. And though the mortal blows are

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struck by the ruling classes and their henchmen, unwittingly friends of the victims not infrequently contribute their share.

Elsewhere I have told the story of the thoughtless manner in which De Leon sometimes was treated by those who appreciated his genius, who even revered him. He, like Marx, lived a life of poverty, though his lot could have been eased, and possibly his life lengthened, and with that the working class emancipation cause immeasurably benefited, had his friends viewed his problem more thoughtfully. Of course, De Leon never complained, and he would have resented any demonstration of sympathy or pity. Yet, there were occasions when he did give vent to chagrin at the inconsiderateness of those who might have been presumed to take a more understanding view of his trials and personal problems. Even so, he did this in a humorous way, as if aware of the danger of being misunderstood. There is an example of this in a letter which he wrote to a New York member, one who worshipped De Leon, and who probably would have laid down his life for him. I refer to the late Adolph Orange. The letter was written in August (19), 1912, less than two years before De Leon's death. Orange had written to De Leon, requesting him to speak "at one of our noon-hour meetings on 'printing square' [near City Hall]. Any Wednesday in September will be all right."

It is easy to understand De Leon's reactions to this request. He carried an enormous burden as the Party's editor; he had insufficient help at the office; he was beset with worries, Party and personal worries, and he had even by that time taken on outside work—analyses of cases involving problems in international law—legal work, sent him by his friend, the Party's attorney, Benjamin Patterson. This extra work, done in order to supplement his scant earnings, especially during the long periods when he was not paid his wages due to the condition of the Party "treasury"—this outside work meant, of course, long hours of exacting labors in his so-called spare time. And De Leon was, after all, getting on in years. In these circumstances one can appreciate his feelings, which he sought to repress, conveyed in the gently chiding letter he wrote Adolph Orange:

"Dear Comrade—

"Among the visitors to Pleasantville is the celebrated traveler from Mars. He happened to be on my dining porch when your letter came; and

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he looked over my shoulders—he is an inquisitive traveler, you know; and he read your letter; and he said to me: ‘I was under the impression that, being within five months of 60, and having done a hell of a lot (that traveler has learned to swear in English) of open-air speaking sometimes 3 and 4 speeches on an evening; and that not hankering after a speedy flight to heaven where angels are waiting for you—I was under the impression that you had taken your name off the list of open-air orators, and were keeping your vocal strength for in door spellbinding.’ Says I to him, said I: ‘Right you are.’ Said he to me, says he: ‘Then what in hell is the matter with that Orange?’ Said I to him, says I: ‘That is Orange’s way of joking.’ ‘Oh!’ then he replied: ‘Tell him to take a run up here on a Sunday for us to punch his nose for cracking such jokes, and to bring his wife along to nurse him.’ Said I, says I, ‘I shall do so.’ Which I now do. So then take a run up this way with Mrs. O. on a Sunday.”

The banter and the humor cannot quite conceal De Leon’s resentment at having been asked to address a routine noon-hour meeting, when he was frantically struggling to keep his head above water, when his strength was being sapped by the endless work and worries, all of which was known to the loyal members in New York. One sometimes feels that there is more truth than poetry in Oscar Wilde’s claim that “each man kills the thing he loves.”

Despite the killing pace, despite the countless worries and distractions, despite vituperation and slanders, De Leon wrought mightily. His contribution to social science was second only to that of Marx. In his epochal work, *Ancient Society*, Lewis Henry Morgan pauses to pay a tribute to Cleisthenes, the ancient Greek state builder. Pointing to his “invention of the township,” Morgan wrote that “It was an inspiration of the genius of Cleisthenes; and it stands as the master work, of a master mind.” Similarly we point to De Leon’s “invention” of the Socialist Industrial Union principle, and its corollary, the Socialist Industrial Union Government—the administrative machinery of the future Socialist Republic of Labor. There is not time on this occasion to go into this subject in detail. However, a quotation from De Leon will serve. In his epoch-making address, *The Burning Question of Trades Unionism*, De Leon said:

“Civilized [i.e., Socialist] society will know no such ridiculous thing as geographic constituencies. It will know only industrial constituencies. The parliament of [Socialist] civilization in America [and elsewhere] will consist, not of Congressmen from geographic districts, but of

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representatives of trades [industries] throughout the land, and their legislative work will not be the complicated one which a society of conflicting interests, such as capitalism, requires, but the easy one which can be summed up in the statistics of the wealth needed, the wealth producible, and the work required—and that any average set of workingmen’s representatives are fully able to ascertain, infinitely better than our modern rhetoricians in [today’s political] Congress.”

Here is the kernel of De Leon’s epochal discovery—a discovery that sets him apart from the average Socialist agitator and marks him a man of genius, indeed! Misunderstood, reviled, persecuted by slander, his life made miserable by the yelping yellow canines who snarled and snapped at his heels, but a towering genius who in the times to come will be bracketed with the supreme Great of the race—of whom, in ages to come, it will be said as Morgan said of the ancient Greek, Cleisthenes: “His discovery stands as the master work of a master mind!”

Through countless ages men have been haunted by a dream, a dream that has persisted through storm and stress, through suffering and death, a dream that has defied the torture rack, the scaffold and the fagot, a dream that has heartened and sustained the race even in the darkest hour. It is the dream that man some day shall be fully free—free of superstition and fear, free of misery and want. It is the dream that man—man, the race, and man, the individual—shall one day rise far above the brute’s level, and take his destiny into his own strong and capable hands. The dream that in an attainable future man shall live at peace with himself and his fellows; when no man’s hand shall be raised against his brother; when brotherhood shall become something more than just a matter of kin and blood, when it shall be a fraternity of all the children of Earth dwelling together in peace, in harmony, and in abundance. That dream was born in the hearts and minds of our forebears during the dismal centuries, and nurtured by them in their great agonies. That dream was given wings by Thomas Jefferson, faith by Abraham Lincoln, realism and substance by Karl Marx, and form and certainty by Daniel De Leon. It is the dream of the ages, and, by all that we hold dear, the dream that we of our generation will cause to be materialized, and insure *for* the ages, for all the unnumbered years to come.

(The End)