

WILHELM WEITLING: HIS DOCTRINES AND AGITATION  
IN SWITZERLAND

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## CHAPTER I

### ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND OF WEITLING'S SOCIALISM

The purpose of this paper is to give an account of the doctrines and activities of the early German communist, Wilhelm Weitling, in Switzerland. Special attention will be devoted to the period from his entrance into Switzerland in March, 1841, until his arrest in Zürich in June, 1843, which was followed by his imprisonment and deportation.

Some estimate will be made of Weitling's significance and his contributions to the socialist movement in its early stages. Attention will be devoted to the circumstances which led to his arrest by the Zürich authorities on charges of "inciting to crimes against property" and "religious disturbances," as well as certain other offences.<sup>1</sup> At that time his papers and correspondence, and a book at the printer's, Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders, were confiscated and delivered over to the Great Council of the City of

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<sup>1</sup>The charges were specifically: "Inciting to crimes against property; inciting to overthrow the government; disturbing the peace; and religious disturbance (presumably blasphemy), Zürich Staatsakten, Obergericht: Die Züricher Prozedur gegen Wilhelm Weitling, quoted in: Ernst Barnikol, Weitling der Gefangene und seine Gerechtigkeit. (Kiel: W. G. Muehlau Verlag, 1929), p. 279.

Zürich.<sup>2</sup> The Council chose a committee of five of its own members to investigate the activities of the communists in the Zürich canton and to draw up a report of them. The report was drawn up under the direction of the committee chairman, Dr. Bluntschli, a prominent member of the conservative party in power in the city at that time. This so-called Bluntschli Report, it might be added, became celebrated later for having acted as a vehicle in the dissemination of communist doctrines, particularly the doctrines of Weitling. The Report succeeded in creating widespread interest in, and some sympathy for him, quite unintentionally, of course. It has been said that:

Communism was brought into Germany from French Switzerland by the tailor Weitling and other workers, and not by the Messrs. Stein, Hess, Marx, Engels and Feuerbach....that these [Weitling et al.] were actually the founders, at least the sources, of German communism and socialism, will be seen from the history of the Young Germany movement.<sup>3</sup>

It was during the two years of Weitling's activity in Switzerland that he produced the works which contributed much to the later development of the communist movement in Germany and elsewhere, and it was during this period that his following, never large, was greatest.

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<sup>2</sup>Grossrat der Stadt Zürich.

<sup>3</sup>August Becker, Geschichte des religiösen und atheistischen Fruehsozialismus. First edition of the secret report to Metternich written by August Becker and delivered by George Kuehlmann, edited by Ernst Barnikol. (Kiel: W. G. Muehlau Verlag, 1932) p. 23.



Weitling's doctrine, which was premature for the Germany of his day, must not be associated with the German nationalism which arose contemporaneously. This latter movement, whose ideals had been so well proclaimed by Baron Stein, by Fichte's renowned Addresses to the German Nation, delivered in Berlin during the Napoleonic occupation, and by others, had stemmed from the Wars of Liberation and from the growing ascendancy of Prussia.

Weitling advocated a thoroughgoing overthrow, on an international scale, of the present social and economic order, and this order was to be replaced, of course, by the establishment of his own system of equality. This communism was in direct contrast to the self-interest of emerging 19th century German nationalism. The two movements were, in fact, fundamentally hostile, and were later to develop in divergent directions.<sup>4</sup>

This was the time of the Metternichian reaction, and the insusceptibility of the German people, as well as the German princes, to the dreams of the early social reformers, and the oppressive conditions under which the

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<sup>4</sup>Veit Valentin, Die Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848-49. (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930) Vol. I, p. 248: "The German nationalist is descended from Romanticism, the German humanist from Classicism, the German revolutionary from the "Sturm und Drang". Conservatism developed from the nationalists, liberalism from the political humanists, and democracy and socialism from the German revolutionary."

German workers lived, caused many of the reformers to seek disciples abroad.

Although the revolution in industry was in full swing during the twenties and thirties in England and France, Germany was still, for the most part, an agricultural country and she clung jealously to many of her old feudal customs, of which guild labor was not the least important. A real proletariat did not as yet exist there, but after the Revolution of 1830 and the unrest consequent to it in Germany, the princes, under the domination of Metternich, passed harsh measures against any liberalizing or reforming influences which did exist. In the early 1830's, after the Hambach Festival<sup>5</sup> and the Frankfurt Putsch<sup>5</sup> and their resultant persecutions, some of the first secret

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<sup>5</sup>The Hambach National Festival was held May, 1832, on the anniversary of the Bavarian constitution. There were 25,000 people in attendance and it appeared to be only the loyal celebration of a patriotic holiday. The representatives of various liberal organizations from central Germany demanded in speeches a great and strong Fatherland, and many demanded that the princes be set aside, others advocated a Republic of Europe, and social needs were also voiced. The representatives did not resolve upon immediate revolution, because they were content with the demonstration of the mobilised people, which they thought would have an effect on the Diets and newspapers in a legitimate way. Veit Valentin, The German People. Their History and Civilization from the Holy Roman Empire to the Third Reich. (N.Y.: A. A. Knopf, 1946) pp. 390-91.

The Frankfurt Putsch was an ill-prepared enterprise undertaken in April, 1833 by a number of students, Poles and Frankfurt patriots for the purpose of abolishing the Federal Diet. They succeeded only in the capture of two detachments of military guards before troops were called out to put them down. The authorities intentionally



unions of German refugees on foreign soil were founded. The German "Outlaws' League" (Bund der Geächteten) in Paris, and "The Young Germany" (Das junge Deutschland) in Switzerland had the same aims at first: "The freeing of Germany from the yoke of dishonorable servitude, and the establishment of a state of affairs which, as far as man is able to foresee, will prevent a relapse into thralldom."<sup>6</sup>

Thus it came about that Weitling, one of the number of those persons discontented with the prevailing social structure, finding his own country both unready and unwilling to hear of social reform,<sup>7</sup> became exposed rather

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failed to prevent the outbreak so that further measures against the liberals would be possible, and so that a central investigating commission could be set up again. Ibid, p. 392.

<sup>6</sup>Frederick C. Clark, "A Neglected Socialist." Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Social Science, July, 1894-June, 1895. p. 718.

<sup>7</sup>"Weitling's ideas are too one-sided, and indeed at the opposite pole, because at heart every German worker dreamed of becoming an independent master. The basic attitude of the German journeyman must be constantly kept in mind if the life and activity of the German worker societies is to be understood. But this basic attitude was inimical to the essence of communism." See conclusion Chap. I: Otto Brugger, Geschichte der deutschen Handwerkervereine in der Schweiz 1836-43, Die Wirksamkeit Weitlings (1841-43) (Bern: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1932).

to the doctrines of the French Utopian schools, which had been formulated after the era of Napoleon. Many of the German refugee workers' societies fell under the tutelage of these schools from the beginning. Inasmuch as Weitling's socialistic thought came very largely from the French Utopians directly, it will be well at the outset to examine briefly the conditions which existed in France and the immediate background which led up to them before Weitling appeared there.

There can be little doubt that, even before the great Revolution in France, socialistic doctrines had not been uncommon in Europe and had received considerable impetus from Rousseau's Social Contract, with its denial of the principle of private property. And yet, it is evident that such socialistic ideas had little diffusion or following at that time. Only a few weak manifestations of the conscious desire for social change were produced by the Revolution, such as the premature conspiracy of Gracchus Babeuf, which failed completely and cost him his life in 1797. His main premise had been that "Nature has given to every man an equal right to the enjoyment of all goods," but nevertheless, although he and his followers had vigorously denied any justification for the existence of private property, they immediately wrote down plans for the distribution of the loot to deserving individuals if their plot was successful.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Buonarotti's Babeuf Conspiracy, quoted in, Alexander Gray, The Socialist Tradition. Moses to Lenin. (London:



The socialist movement could be called a child of the two revolutions which had brought the 18th century to a close, namely the Revolution in Industry, which was predominantly of English origin, and the revolution in thought, which was primarily French. Socialism first manifested itself in a significant way in France not long after the end of the revolutionary wars.

The French Revolution, although its consequences were both numerous and vital, had brought little relief to the straitened circumstances of the wage-earning class, perhaps because this stratum of society was small and of little consequence.

Although the sansculottic element had been a main driving-force in the upheaval of revolution, leadership, almost of necessity, had been taken over nearly from the beginning by men of better social and economic standing. It cannot be far wrong to say that essentially the same class, the middle class, had already held the reins of government even before the actual outbreak of the Revolution, since the aristocracy, for the most part, had become so corrupt in any case as to perform little real function in society at all, and had entrusted the conduct of government to this ambitious, upcoming bourgeoisie. (Their purpose in doing so, however, had been more to relieve themselves of the tiresome responsibility than



to relinquish their preferred position as leeches on the body of the nation.)<sup>9</sup> There was the difference that, with the Revolution, the middle class was left to set its own course.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 had left little doubt that property, "an inviolable and sacred right," would be amply safeguarded.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the gospel according to Rousseau - the Social Contract, the perfectability of man, and absolute equality and individualism - was the order of the day. The guarantee of social democracy had seemingly been asserted in the Constitution of 1791, the debris of feudalism and aristocracy had been swept away, and the stage was set for a bright new era:

There is no longer to be nobility or peerage, nor hereditary distinctions, nor distinctions of orders, nor feudal system, nor patrimonial jurisdictions, nor any titles, denominations, or prerogatives derived therefrom, nor any order of chivalry, nor any corporations or decorations which demanded proofs of nobility or that were grounded upon distinctions of birth, nor any superiority other

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<sup>9</sup>"Aristocracy of the feudal parchment has passed away with a mighty rushing; and now, by a natural course, we arrive at Aristocracy of the Moneybag. It is the course through which all European societies are, at this hour, travelling." The French Revolution, Thomas Carlyle.

<sup>10</sup>In this connection: Paul Janet, The Origins of Modern Socialism, pp. 1-3: "....nowhere, at no time, in no country, has the right of private property been more firmly claimed and more firmly guaranteed than by the Revolution." And the Constitution of 1793 (Article 2) stated the natural rights of man as: "equality, liberty and security of property."

than that of public officials in the exercise of their functions.<sup>11</sup>

After the French Revolution the hitherto unimportant wage-earning portion of the population grew remarkably as a result of the great industrial transformation. The Industrial Revolution was already well underway in England, but it did not begin to create a great landless and propertyless class in France until after 1820. With its penetration, there also arose a large new class of wealth and influence, who became the exploiters of the workingmen, of whom there was a growing surplus at that time. In consequence, the workers, who were at all times subject to unemployment, became mere cogs in a great machine and ceased to have any personal relations with their employers. The latter, on the other hand, became increasingly neglectful of their workers' welfare and directed their energies instead toward the increase of profits.

The July Revolution of 1830 had brought for this rising bourgeois element, in France at least, the fulfillment of most of its wishes. Guizot, the personification of this regime, expressed well the prevailing sentiment: "...If France is prosperous, and remains free, rich, sensible and peaceful, we shall not complain if she exercises but slight influence abroad." But with the passage of time this middle class paradise was to be more and

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<sup>11</sup>Anderson, Constitutions and Documents, p. 61, quoted in Frederick A. Ogg and W. R. Sharp, Economic Development of Modern Europe. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1932) p. 93.



more opposed by the factory workers. According to Louis Blanc the working class, which had formerly been a class of serfs, was now a mere wage-slave class.

Thus, it is possible to establish at least two important conclusions concerning the new economic and social order at the turn of the 19th century: in the first place, the disproportionate advantage derived from the new order of things by the middle class as distinct from the mass of the propertyless wage-earners; secondly, the growing tendency to accentuate class differences and to impose upon the growing proletariat a condition of livelihood no better than that of the poorest peasants of pre-revolutionary times. There was a growing conviction that a society in which each man is free to do as he likes, (barring a few recognized offences against life and property) in which there is oppression of the weak by the strong and exploitation of the ignorant by the intelligent, may be, after all, far from ideal.<sup>12</sup>

Small groups of radicals also doubted that the parliaments would move with sufficient speed or effect to remedy prevailing evils. They sought another solution, and they found it in socialism.

Socialism, or communism (the terms are used inter-

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<sup>12</sup>Ogg and Sharp, op. cit., p. 458.

changeably in this paper)<sup>13</sup> is at best an extremely elusive word, varying according to shades of interpretation given to it by individual socialists and according to the spirit of the times. There is, in short, as one writer puts it, no agreement among the experts as to what socialism actually means, or what constitutes the "Wesen", or essence, of a socialistic system of thought. In broadest terms, a socialist could be marked as one who seeks to establish a better world, not merely through reform, but through a fundamental change in the nature and structure of society.<sup>14</sup> If one is to attempt a definition, it can be said to contain these basic principles:

1. The abolition of private property, which is the basis of capitalistic production. Socialists disagree as to the amount of property to be retained, but most insist upon the dissolution of "unearned increment," including land, instruments of production and distribution, of private "unearned" wealth and the like.

2. State ownership and control of the above-named

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<sup>13</sup>"Socialism and communism, although so closely connected, drew apart from one another during the thirties and forties, and from about 1846 were separate. Socialism was philosophy, the development of man, sympathy, ethics, world-betterment. Communism is action, party criticism, class hatred, political struggle, destruction of the opposition, undermining of the traditional. Socialism was optimistic evolution, communism was revolution born out of contempt for man." Valentin, Die Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848-49. Vol. I, p. 288.

<sup>14</sup>Gray, op. cit., p. 2.



instruments.

3. Readjustment of the burden of social maintenance. All persons shall be required to contribute to the community's productiveness under conditions prescribed by the state.<sup>15</sup> A definition of John Stuart Mill closely parallels this:

What is most characteristic of socialism is the joint ownership by all members of the community of the instruments and means of production, which carries with it the consequence that the division of all the produce among the body of owners must be a public act performed according to the rules laid down by the community.<sup>16</sup>

Socialism, at the core, is revolution in all regions of science, state, society, economics and religion, and it is, whether by revolution or evolution, a threat to everything which the nationalistic and liberal movement of European society built up and looked upon as the ultimate good. The socialistic system was basically hostile to the development of nationalism and liberalism, which had arisen out of the 18th century:

Whereas nationalism re-formed states, and divided peoples from another, there developed within the depths of the leading nations a power so completely dominated by economic and social concepts, that it despises nationalism even when its mode of reasoning is fruitful, and seeks to destroy it. Socialism, which arises out of the needs of a great-capitalistic age and from the development of a great new social class struggling for its existence, seeks to transform the world according to its own laws, that is to say, from the standpoint of the working

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<sup>15</sup>Ogg and Sharp, op. cit., p. 463.

<sup>16</sup>Fortnightly Review, April, 1879, quoted in Ibid., p. 462.

class.<sup>17</sup>

When Weitling arrived in Paris, he became fully exposed to the doctrines of the great socialists, and their influence can be traced throughout most of his works. Count Henri Saint Simon has been called the founder of socialism in its historic form.<sup>18</sup>

Saint Simon's life was a colorful one. He had been born into one of the most ancient families in France, claiming descent from Charlemagne; he had fought with some distinction in the American Revolution; he had made a fortune through speculation during the French Revolution and had lost it forthwith as a result of unsuccessful socialistic projects. It is said of him, as it is of Fourier, that there may be considerable doubt as to whether he was a socialist at all. On the question of property, an essential question in socialist theory, he spoke little and with uncertainty, saying that it was to be respected but that the owner was to be educated and compelled to use his wealth for the public good. Equality was to be the equality of opportunity, with the abolition of privileges. He was obsessed with the idea that all should work, and raged against idlers of any sort. In his last book, The New Christianity, (1825) for which he is most noted, he

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<sup>17</sup>Alfred Stern and Friedrich Luckwaldt, and others, "Liberalismus und Nationalsozialismus," Propyläen Weltgeschichte. (Verlag Berlin, 1930) Vol 8, introduction, pp. xxv-xxvi.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Kirkup, A History of Socialism. (London:



asserted that the claims of the masses, of the most numerous and poorest class, were the foremost obligation of the state. Saint Simon held that a society should not be governed, but administered scientifically from above by a dictatorship of the competent, at first by scientists and property owners, and finally by technicians, businessmen and bankers. Saint Simon has been called the first prophet of big business. The idea that society should be administered and not governed, and by a dictatorship of the competent (which was to include himself) was taken up later by Weitling and embodied in his system in a modified, more extensive form.

The all-important question for Saint Simon was where there could be found in the newly arisen industrial age fresh temporal and spiritual powers to replace the old ones, because the Feudal Age had passed, and Saint Simon considered the power of Christianity to be dead. In his first work, Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva to his Contemporaries, his answer was a Council of Savants to be chosen by universal suffrage, comprising three of each of the following professions: mathematicians, physicists, physiologists, writers, painters and musicians, and these were to render to humanity the greatest services of which they were capable. The hypothesis on which Saint Simon built was that the greatest happiness of mankind was yet

to be realized:

The imagination of the poets has placed the golden age at the cradle of the human race, amid the ignorance and grossness of the earliest time. It had been better to relegate the iron age to that period. The golden age of humanity is not behind us; it is to come and will be found in the perfection of the social order. 19

It is noteworthy that with Saint Simon's New Christianity the spotlight was for the first time thrown on the masses. Their condition and welfare were to be the sole end of social and political institutions and activities. Saint Simon declared that men:

....should organize their society in the manner most advantageous to the largest number; they should propose, as the end to be aimed at in all their works and in all their actions, to ameliorate as promptly and completely as possible the moral and physical existence of the most numerous class. 20

The cause of the poor became the central point in his teaching, and took the form of a religion. Previous to the publication of the New Christianity Saint Simon had not concerned himself with religion,<sup>21</sup> but thenceforth, starting from a belief in God, his object was to

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<sup>19</sup>Saint Simon, The New Christianity, quoted in Ogg and Sharp, op. cit., p. 469.

<sup>20</sup>Gray, op. cit., p. 157. Compare Weitling, Garan-tien der Harmonie und Freiheit, p. 239: "Our principle.... is the interest of the most numerous and poorest classes."

<sup>21</sup>Edwin Seligman, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan, 1937) Vol. 13, pp. 194ff.



in the extreme. According to his principle of "attraction", each person was to give free and complete development to his passions, and, for his proposed remolding of society, each person was to enter into the pursuit most attractive to him. Then everyone would work in harmony in the phalanx and for the good of all.

According to Fourier, it was necessary to abandon morality, that evil legacy of civilization, and to listen to our natural impulses. We could in this way overcome all the trickery, hypocrisy, deceits and parasitism which make up civilization and establish Harmony, the co-operation of all men. With Fourier the whole scheme of things as it stood was completely wrong, but he was most hostile to the evils of commerce and industry.<sup>23</sup> His idea of the phalanx might be called a predecessor of the back-to-the-land idea. But the phalanx was to be by no means communistic. Even though the members of the phalanx were to take part in communal life, there would be no abolition of property, as such. In fact, Fourier based his hopes for the establishment of his phalanx system upon the charity of some benevolent capitalist, for whom he waited in vain for the last ten years of his life. Rather than equality, he emphasized that his social system required contrasts.

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<sup>23</sup>Selections from the Works of Fourier. Translated by Julia Franklin. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1901) pp. 98ff

One writer made this amusing comment on Fourier:

There is nothing which his disordered imagination cannot vividly conceive, either at the foundation of the world or in the days of Harmony yet to be realized, and he writes it all down in the minutest detail, with the calm assurance of a perpetual private secretary to Providence from whom nothing has been concealed. 24

Despite Fourier's eccentricities, which bordered on madness, his contributions to the socialist movement cannot be overlooked: his savage but acute criticism of the lack of organization and the waste which were a part of individual capitalistic society; his great influence on the development of the co-operative movement, his abhorrence of industrialism, from which arose his longing for an agricultural society, which was to be attained through his system of phalanxes; and finally, his opposition to the principle of centralization.

Frederick Engels has depicted the conditions of squalor which existed in various English cities in his work, The Situation of the Working Classes in England, and it was this state of affairs which motivated the career of Robert Owen. Owen, a philanthropist-manufacturer, differed from Saint-Simon and Fourier, who had little or no direct connection with the working classes (since a modern industrial proletariat scarcely existed in France during the first quarter of the 19th century.)

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<sup>24</sup>Gray, op. cit., pp. 170-71.



and little practical effect.<sup>25</sup> Owen, on the other hand, sought in practice to work out the principles of social amelioration, to alleviate the lot of the hapless worker, who had no voice in government, no fixed interest in the soil, and little or no education. Labor was the helpless victim of the new industrial plutocracy and <sup>the</sup>paperism was fast becoming a national institution in England.

Owen had amassed a considerable fortune as a cotton manufacturer, and in 1880 began his celebrated experiment at New Lanark, Scotland, as manager and part owner of the cotton mills there. Within a few years he had transformed a degenerate and wretched population into a community of healthy and industrious workers. His model community was noted throughout Europe and was visited from near and far by reformers, princes and celebrities. He had visions of instituting these "co-operative villages" throughout the country, and, for that matter, throughout the world.<sup>26</sup>

Owen's socialism was not strictly a class movement at all, because it was meant to appeal to all classes. It is characteristic ~~of~~ Owen, as of many Utopians, that he had an abiding faith in the governing class for ultimate support of his projects. However, when he was unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade them of the plaus-

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<sup>25</sup>Kirkup, op. cit., pp. 58ff

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

sibility of his plans, he sought the patronage of his wealthy former associates and friends, but again to no avail. His final appeal was to the workers themselves, to unite in brotherhood. He was essentially a philanthropic reformer, conscious of the evils of competition (and profit) and inadequate education. He sought to remedy these evils by establishing co-operative control of industry, and, in his proposals for educational reforms, by inculcating his socialistic ideas into the youth.<sup>27</sup>

Owen derived his doctrine of the brotherhood of men by denying the existence of evil within men, by saying that a man was merely a product of his environment and therefore an improved environment brought about through education would be a path to progress. This was his theory of human irresponsibility, of the necessity of human actions. As a consequence of this belief, Owen had no room in his scheme of things for punishment,<sup>28</sup> and this attitude was later shared by Weitling.

Owen is best remembered for his great work at New Lanark, and for his childlike zeal for reform to better the lot of his fellow men. A famous passage from his writings is in his Address to the Superintendants of Manufactories, in which he contrasted the care given to animate and inanimate machines, and in which he voiced

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



an eloquent plea for the cause of the oppressed, and for the little children:

Many of you have long experienced in your manufacturing operations the advantages of substantial, well-contrived and well-executed machinery..... If then, due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are far more wonderfully constructed!....you will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification. 29

The Utopian socialism which arose after the end of the revolutionary wars was in large measure based upon the social philosophy of the previous century. Sombart<sup>30</sup> says it was responsible for the systems of Godwin and Owen in England, of Fourier and Cabet in France, and of Weitling in Germany. These socialistic thinkers based their views on a metaphysical belief in the goodness of God and Nature. Since God is good, they reasoned, so also must the world and Man himself be good. The view of Cabet is typical of their Utopian reasoning:

It is impossible to assume that the destiny of mankind on this earth is to be unhappy, and if we consider that man is essentially social in his nature, and therefore full of sympathy and affection for others, it is no longer possible to say that he is wicked by nature.

In this naive view, which is in essence the same as Weitling's, there can be detected a note from Rousseau, exalting the goodness of primitive life. "Man, the child

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<sup>29</sup>Owen, A New View of Society. (Everyman) pp. 8-9, quoted in Gray, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>30</sup>Werner Sombart, Socialism and the Socialist Movement. (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1909) pp. 31ff.

by these inventors. Future history, in their eyes, resolves itself into the propaganda and the practical execution of their social plans.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, the Utopians are praised because their work also contained a critical element: "They attack every principle of existing society. Hence, they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working classes."<sup>34</sup>

Marx was also caustic about their unwillingness to take part in political action, (For instance, Owen and the Fourierists.) which was for him an essential step towards his dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>35</sup>

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been described.

<sup>33</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto. (New York: New York Labor News, Co., 1948) p. 44

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 45

<sup>35</sup>Karl Kautsky attempted to prove that Marx wished to retain, for the time being at least, a democratic form of government in certain countries, depending on conditions existing in the various countries. Karl Kautsky, Social Democracy versus Communism. Edited and translated by David Schub and Joseph Schaplen. (New York: The Rand School Press, 1946) pp. 34-36.



## CHAPTER II

### WEITLING'S LIFE AND ACTIVITIES IN SWITZERLAND

According to the baptismal recordbook of the St. John's Church in Magdeburg, "Christiane Erdmuthe Friederike Weidlingen, native of Gera, bore on October 9, 1808, an illegitimate son Wilhelm." The father of the child was the French officer Terijon.<sup>1</sup>

Weitling seems to have revered the memory of his father, although the latter was killed in Napoleon's Russian campaign in 1812. Of his father he said only that he had been kind to his mother as long as he remained in Magdeburg. He wrote that in the summer of 1818, when he was nine, he was placed in the home of a woman to board while his mother earned their living as a cook.

He was imaginative and adventurous as a boy and already at an early age was reading romantic novels. He told of an adventure in Magdeburg which very probably had a profound influence on his later development and was a determining factor in shaping his thought after he reached maturity. One day after he and two of his playmates had

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Weitling, Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit. (Berlin: Vorwärts, Jubiläumsausgabe, 1908) introduction by Franz Mehring.

an enthusiastic discussion about an adventure story of the land of the Moors, they decided to run away to that mysterious land. However, a few miles from the city they were stopped and, Weitling said, mistakenly arrested for the theft of a watch which, by coincidence, had been stolen from a man in their neighborhood at the same time as their departure took place. Because the three boys stubbornly refused to admit their guilt, they were kept in jail. In order to obtain their freedom again they agreed among themselves to tell the authorities that they were the thieves and to reveal where they had supposedly hidden the stolen watch. This confession led to further complications and later, before they were released, they were each given ten lashes for lying. This was Weitling's first experience with courts of law and imprisonment and it left its mark upon him early.<sup>2</sup>

Weitling learned the ladies' tailoring trade from his stepfather, and he spent all his available spare time in reading. He led a melancholy youth and often, when he could not stand the smoky, gloomy tailor shop any longer, he ran out into the air. For this he was severely punished; and he became embittered at life while he was still young *because*, in addition to the fact that he was an illegitimate, he lived in extreme poverty. He spoke of his childhood and

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<sup>2</sup>August Becker, Geschichte des religiösen und atheistischen Frühsozialismus. First edition of the secret report written by August Becker and delivered by Georg Kühlmann to Metternich in 1847, edited by Ernst Barnikol. (Kiel: W. G. Muhlau, 1932) pp. 42ff.



youth only with reluctance.<sup>3</sup>

When Weitling was twenty, he left Magdeburg to evade military duty and wandered about Germany for ten years with a forged military pass.<sup>4</sup> In 1830, his first year as a journeyman, he was forced to go begging because he could find no work; and he was again thrown into prison as a vagrant. It was this event which seems to have brought to consciousness for him the injustice and inhumanity of social institutions at that time.<sup>5</sup>

In his periodical published in Geneva, Der Hilferuf der deutschen Jugend, Weitling told the story of himself as a poor journeyman who, after his last Taler had been stolen from him at an inn, seized a knife in case any policeman should try to arrest him again.

In 1830 he went to Leipzig where he saw the September Revolution, which he later derided. He gained here his first applause for literary ability, after the publication of several little satirical poems. From Leipzig he went to Dresden in 1832, and in 1834 to Vienna where, according to anecdote, he had a romantic affair with a young woman who was the mistress of a high official in the government. Weitling is said to have been driven out of the city by the wrath of this personage, but he took with him to Paris a

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<sup>3</sup>Wilhelm Weitling, Gerechtigkeit. Ein Studium in 500 Tagen. Edited by Ernst Barnikol. (Kiel: Muhlau, 1929) pp.18-26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Becker, loc.cit.

new innovation in the tailoring trade which he had hit upon. He is said to have returned to Vienna a little later with the intention of marrying a tailoress there, only to find that she had been imprisoned for robbery; and to make matters worse, he found that his new accessories were out of style when he came back to Paris. Mention has been made of these details because they had a determining influence on him and can account for his increasing bitterness, because he was often in want. Thus, it is not surprising that he should have sought a better social order. He was sharp-sighted and clever by nature, and he easily discovered the weak side of the social order; but his emotionalism made him shortsighted. The applause later given him by his fellow workers made him conceited, according to his friend August Becker, and he was deprecatory of things about which he knew little. His pride was that of a worker, and he regarded life only from the point of view of the worker and measured all men by this standard.<sup>6</sup>

Such a man, living in such circumstances, was easily drawn into the revolutionary intrigues in Paris at that time. In 1838 there were two revolutionary societies of German workingmen in Paris, "The Young Germany" movement and the "Outlaws' League" (Bund der Geächteten). Weitling was dissatisfied with the purely political aims of the "Young Germany" movement, because he could see no advantage

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<sup>6</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 44.



to be derived for himself and his class in a program which demanded a united Germany, universal suffrage, freedom of the press and the like. He wanted a society in which all men would have equal rights and responsibilities, in which tailors and shoemakers would be as well off as scholars and politicians.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore Weitling became a member of the "Outlaw's League,"\* which had been founded in 1834 by refugees driven from Germany because of the murder of Kotzebue. They were later joined by Germans driven from Prussia after the July Revolution of 1830 at the behest of the king. The League followed the aims of the French "Society for the Rights of Man" and like it, was a secret, hierarchically graduated, conspiratorial society which demanded unconditional obedience to its superiors. (After the headquarters of the League of the Just, which was the successor of the Outlaws' League, moved to London, it became in 1845 the Communist League, which in 1847 commissioned Marx and Engels to draw up its program in The Communist Manifesto.) The French mother society was prosecuted in 1835 and its leaders fled. In its stead new secret societies were formed under the leadership of such energetic men as Barbes and Blanqui, who were soon joined by the Babeufists; and in these organizations the proletarian element was outweighed by the petty bourgeoisie. Barbes and Blanqui, although they were men of

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.,

action, were primarily political revolutionaries and were unprepared to bring about a social revolution. In the German model, however, the social aspect was more strongly emphasised. Its members were mostly journeymen and followers of Lamennais, a Catholic priest and an eloquent speaker who was much concerned for the welfare of the masses.<sup>8</sup>

Gradually a more progressive element evolved, embracing doctrines of strengthening class consciousness through propaganda and conspiracy, and this element was led by Theodore Schuster. It brought about a split in the society, and a new society was formed called the "League of the Just" (Bund der Gerechten). This new society had a more democratic constitution and embraced communistic principles, and the old rival society soon died out.<sup>9</sup>

It was thus things stood when Weitling arrived in Paris from Vienna. He wrote several articles for the society demanding common ownership of property, but his position in the organization was rather insignificant because of his frequent quarrels with the leaders. It is important to note at this time the full significance of Weitling's ideas, because at the beginning of the nineteenth century there existed a great number of social systems and plans for society; but they were for the most part based on the idea that capitalistic society could be transformed by good will

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<sup>8</sup>Garantien, Mehring introduction.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.



and cooperation, because the lower classes had already cooperated with the middle class to combat and defeat feudalism. But now for the first time, after the Revolution of 1830 in France and the Reform Bill of 1832 in England, the working classes began consciously to fight the possessing classes. Weitling, in contrast to such Utopian socialists as Louis Blanc, Proudhon and Cabet, thought not to bring about a reform through the agency of government but to lay the axe to the roots of capitalistic society itself.

Furthermore, he did much to reconcile the socialist movement with the worker movement, although he did not clearly formulate the concept of class struggle as Marx did later.

The League of the Just printed <sup>one of</sup> the first German communistic writing since the time of Thomas Münzer, namely Weitling's first large-scale work, Die Menschheit wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte (Mankind as it is and as it Should be) in 1838. This the members of the society printed themselves on a wooden press and on wretched paper.<sup>10</sup> In this first work Weitling was strongly influenced by the priest Lamennais and made frequent use of biblical quotations to support his communistic doctrines. Joint ownership of property was for Weitling the goal and the revolutionary emancipation of the worker-class the means. Long before Louis Blanc emerged with his theories, Weitling considered it to be impossible to help the proletariat through a financial measure of the state. He proposed the enlightenment of

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<sup>10</sup>Becker, loc. cit.

of the masses, a common theme among Utopians, so that after the fall of capitalistic society, they would not relapse into the hands of new tyrants or into anarchy. He did not claim to have stated the most ideal social reform possible: "Otherwise we must assume that we have exhausted our sources of knowledge." He allowed all socialistic Utopias their due, because he recognized in them evidence of the possibility and necessity for communistic reform; but, in contrast to Fourier, he thought: ". . . we must write the best work on communism with our blood."

In 1841 Weitling was sent by the League of the Just to Geneva, where he was to establish a workers' newspaper and form a sister society to work in conjunction with the one in Paris. However, according to Wilhelm Marr, a contemporary communist in Switzerland, there are evidences that Weitling went to Geneva more as a Messiah than as an apostle for the Paris society. When he arrived in Geneva, there were still a few remnants left of the Young Germany society there, which had recently been broken up by the Swiss government at the urgency of the German states.<sup>11</sup> One may gain some idea of the hostile reception Weitling's arrival evoked both from the native Genevans and the states of the German Reich, which had a marked influence on the Swiss cantons at that time in the suppression of liberal movements, by reading characteristic comments of the German press, one of

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<sup>11</sup>Garantien, Mehring introduction.



which it was thought worthwhile to reproduce here in its entirety:

Even among the Germanic element within the walls of Geneva a not entirely uninteresting phenomenon has appeared. An apostle of community of goods [Gütergemeinschaft] who preaches Parisian communism with astonishing fervor has arisen in the midst of the German craftsmen living here. The new reformer of the world and society is the journeyman tailor who recently arrived here from Paris, who has taken up his abode in the German workers' society here, and by means of financial support from his colleagues on the Seine, has founded a journal bearing the title, "Der Hilferuf der deutschen Jugend." We see then a new edition of the Münster Tailor-king. In the latest number (the third), in an article, "Communism and the Communists" he entered the lists with visor up against the opponents of communism, especially against the "Oberdeutsche Zeitung" and the slumbering "Volkshalle." And we must admit that the tailor has a firm seat in the saddle. The Man's calling is to preach communism. He is truly a fiery apostle, who is distinguished not only for a rare - for a journeyman tailor at least - facility of speech and intellect, but more particularly by the essential "Christian love." That he is also somewhat vicious, one will gladly make allowance for. He wishes, moreover, to realize his principles entirely through the "free, individual conviction" of men. Yea, he would not even - "make the stipulation that the rich distribute their goods among the poor, as the first Christians did." "Robbery, war and bloodshed [his] apostles would find abominable, and there would be neither plans for conquest nor idle national vanity etc." - Some few loafers, among them a runaway student, [August Becker, who will be mentioned presently] who, a typical communist, lives at the expense of others in Geneva, is said to comprise his [Weitling's] entire congregation and following. But nevertheless, that the incident did not remain completely ignored here is proved by the fact that on the past Sunday the minister of the German Lutheran Church here, Pastor Wendt, felt moved to deliver a sermon on "The Christian Community" and to invite the presence of the whole worker's society. Beyond this, we hear, the discourse was incapable of evoking real conviction. It is sufficient that this outgrowth of diseased minds communism finds its most stubborn opponent in the common sense and the fine feeling for justice of the German craftsmen. Nothing more

is needed to repel cultured minds than the unbridled arrogance with which these Gallic messengers appear to transplant among their German brothers the robber-socialism which these frenchified lowest of Germans learned abroad. Truly, this is fool's propaganda. 12

From this article it can easily be seen in what contempt socialistic doctrines were held, particularly because of their predominantly French origin, for chauvinistic reasons; and it is to be observed that although the doctrines of Weitling were despised, his intelligence was not.<sup>13</sup>

Weitling met with considerable difficulty in Geneva at first, and he was most violently opposed by the leaders of a workers' "educational society" which had been established by the Young Germans. He found few friends among the workers in Geneva but gained the friendship of August Becker, a onetime follower of Georg Büchner in Giessen. He had been imprisoned for four years in Darmstadt for taking part in a conspiracy against the government. Weitling was also helped by the communist leader in Lausanne, the tanner Simon Schmidt, who was known as a capable organizer.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung. Number 329, Nov., 1841, quoted in Becker, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>13</sup>See Die Kommunisten in der Schweiz nach den bei Weitling vorgefundenen Papieren. Kommissionsbericht an die H. Regierung des Standes Zürich. (Zürich: Orell-Füssli, 1843) p. 55: "It cannot be gainsayed that the communists who most frequently correspond with Weitling in no way give the impression of being brainless fanatics. Weitling himself, with all the one-sidedness of his principle and despite the depravity of his aims, has in his utterances something



Although Weitling succeeded in converting Becker to his beliefs, the two leaders of the Genevan workers' society, Hochdörfer and Döleke, became his bitterest enemies. Not long after Weitling's arrival in Geneva, Hochdörfer wrote an article in a newspaper similar in vein to the one cited previously.<sup>15</sup>

Döleke was planning at this time to publish a workers' newspaper; and when he heard that Weitling had the same intention, he called him a French spy sent by the Paris police to undermine the German workers' societies. Döleke was attempting to re-establish secretly a Young Germany society. But, according to Becker, secret organizations were of advantage only in countries like France where they were forbidden. In Switzerland, however, where it was a constitutional right to form such societies, secret organizations were more harmful than good because they gave members an exaggerated sense of their own importance and a feeling of insecurity which hindered propaganda. If there were a single unreliable individual in the group, there would be fear that he might denounce them. For these reasons Becker and Weitling were opposed to secret organizations, although it soon became necessary for them to go underground themselves on account of the agitation stirred up against the "French spy" Weitling by his enemies, which

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reasonable, clear and vivid; even with all the unnaturalness and practical impossibility of his proposals, there is something practical in them.

<sup>14</sup>See Brugger, op. cit., Chap. I, Part II.

made it almost impossible for him to propagate his doctrines openly. The systematic persecution which the new social doctrine brought from France had to endure from the nationalistic leaders forced the communists to form their own society.<sup>16</sup>

Communism first gained some significance in Switzerland in the middle of 1841 when Weitling immigrated. Supported by the German communists in Paris and London, he founded a monthly journal called Der Hilferuf der deutschen Jugend in Geneva, and after 1842 it was published successively in Bern, Vevey, Langenthal and Zürich as Die junge Generation. The obstacles put in the way by the Swiss cantonal governments caused the frequent changes in its location. From the beginning the journal represented the emancipation of the Fourth Estate, and it emphasised the class interests of the workers.<sup>17</sup> Weitling emphasised

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<sup>15</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>17</sup>Georg Adler, Die Geschichte der ersten sozialpolitischen Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland (Breslau: Eduard Trewendt, 1885) p. 30. In the first number of Die junge Generation: "We too want a voice in public discussions of the welfare and woes of mankind; for we, the people in blouses, jackets, overalls and caps, we are the most numerous, useful and powerful men on God's wide earth..... We too want to have a voice because we are in the nineteenth century and we have never yet had one." Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Garantien, Mehring introduction.



the impossibility of receiving understanding from the upper classes, who had never shared a common lot with the underprivileged. "Whoever wants to judge correctly the situation of the worker must be himself a worker, otherwise he can have no idea of their plight..... The physician can only have a perfect knowledge of a disease if he himself has suffered from it."<sup>18</sup> This sentiment reflects Weitling's somewhat narrow class pride.

The journal at the same time combatted purely political radicalism, asserting that a mere republic would be of little help; and it vigorously demanded the abolition of property. Along with the propaganda of the press, oral propaganda was carried on by Weitling at the frequent meetings of the workers in Geneva. In order to prove the practical value of the community of goods, he proposed in the first number of Hilferuf (September, 1841) that an associative restaurant for members of the society should be set up. He ventured to predict that it would yield an annual profit of 14, 000 Francs. The society voted to adopt his plan; but, because the majority was not in favor of his communistic principles, he was not permitted to manage the establishment despite the fact that he had offered to accept the post for no salary if the promised profit were not forthcoming. According to Becker, it was the intrigues of the Young Germans which caused not Weitling to be chosen manager of the restaurant but one of the bitterest opponents of the plan, and this latter did his best to make the plan a

failure.<sup>19</sup> In any case the restaurant was founded, but at the end of a year's time the treasurer absconded with the funds, amounting to 9000 Francs. Thus the first communist-ic experiment turned out inauspiciously; and, although the results proved nothing, they were not favorable to attracting new adherents to communism.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, violent controversies were going on between the communists and the Young Germans. In the November issue of Hilferuf Weitling sought to define his new doctrine, and he gave it a rather harmless and mild definition: "Whoever dries the tears of widows and orphans and lifts up the hearts of the oppressed is a communist."<sup>21</sup> He sought to justify his views through the Bible. His article caused such an uproar that the communists were compelled to take refuge thenceforth in secret propaganda. The police hampered Weitling by threatening his printer, and eventually Weitling had to leave Geneva to find a new printer. The Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung made sarcastic note of his departure, just as it had of his arrival:

The Germanic element in Geneva meanwhile has been purified of the foreign alloy of Gallic communism. Our Tailor-king has left Geneva, and what is more, in complete silence and modestly, on foot. He was expelled from the German society because of

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<sup>19</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>20</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>21</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 51.



his propaganda for secret associations. It is said that he is on his way to Lausanne, where he will join his powers to those of another apostle of the community of goods, a tanner by trade [Simon Schmidt] and will continue to spread his communist gospel, which no one here would print any longer. 22

From Geneva Weitling went to Bern, where he found a printer; but he soon became uneasy here too and left for the more tolerant canton Vevey, where he remained for the most part until he left the French section of Switzerland for Zürich in March, 1843. The canton Vevey, Franz Mehring says, was a favorable soil for communism because a few men in influential positions of government were favorable to it, and here Weitling~~en~~ continued publication of his journal under the title Die junge Generation. For the most part Weitling's articles in the journal were statements of individual problems of his communistic thought and can be considered as preparation for his theoretical magnum opus, Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit.

Gradually communism had won support in many parts of Switzerland. In Aargau, Zofingen, Zürich, Winterthur, Bern, Murten, Neuchatel, Vevey and Morges there were communistic societies, although they were not usually called "communist!" Weitling made personal visits to these societies and carried on an extensive correspondence with them. He also corresponded with the League of the Just

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<sup>22</sup>Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung, Dec. 12, 1841, quoted in Ibid., p. 112.

in Paris and London.<sup>23</sup>

The societies in Switzerland were to form a whole, and individual societies, large and small, as well as scattered single individuals were to meet from time to time. They were to hire places to meet and, if this was not possible, to meet in homes wherever convenient. It was their duty to propagate communistic ideas at all times. All communists should be considered brothers and were to be addressed as "Du." Arguments among themselves were to be avoided, and it was their duty to educate themselves in the various social systems and to win as many adherents as possible for the gospel of the proletariat. The rules for members of the society were a mixture of Utopian and Christian principles: to observe moderation in all the pleasures of life, to rebuff all scandal-mongers, to be straightforward about any dissatisfaction with the conduct of a brother, and to speak openly to him rather than behind his back, to look upon anyone who used insulting or disgraceful language as "ill" at the moment and not master of himself, and to consider criminals also as ill. A member should announce his departure and destination if he wished to leave the society; and, if he went to a new city, to attempt to establish a society if there were not one there already, in any case to communicate to the society to which he had belonged what

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<sup>23</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 32.



propaganda was carried on. Finally, each member was to pay a small fee for purpose of agitation.<sup>24</sup>

Adler points out in his Geschichte der ersten sozial-politischen Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland that members of the organization in Switzerland were recruited from the better paid workers rather than from the worst paid class or from those suffering want. The members stood for class solidarity, and there was a certain idealistic motive which led them to join these societies which even the official report of Bluntschli could not deny.<sup>25</sup>

The men who comprised the main portion of these societies were, if not of high intellect, at least intelligent; and they felt an unusual urge to acquire education. They paid teachers to instruct them in various branches of learning: in arithmetic, history, geography, foreign languages and the like. And this fact, that they should have expended their few leisure hours and money for intellectual activity, is evidence of their idealistic tendencies.

Letters were printed in the "Junge Generation" from the society in London, which had been founded in 1840 by Karl Schapper under the influence of the League of the Just in Paris and in the spirit of Weitling's principles. There is in the letters a permeation of communistic ideas of class consciousness and Christian principles, and a certain cosmo-

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<sup>24</sup>Die Kommunisten in der Schweiz, pp. 34-35.

<sup>25</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 34.

politan attitude which counteracted the patriotic transports of members of the Burschenschaft within the League of the Just.<sup>26</sup>

In the London society there was much enthusiasm for the socialistic principles of Owen, with whom Schapper was in close contact. In France the ideas of Cabet were at that time widespread. The opposition of the French ministry of Guizot to the communists made it difficult to smuggle Weitling's periodicals into Paris, which, under the leadership of Dr. Ewerbeck, remained the mother society.

The high point of Weitling's agitation in Switzerland came with the publication of his major work, Garantien, in December, 1841, in an edition of 2-3000 volumes. Again, this was printed at the expense of the workers throughout Switzerland, and Becker said it would not have been possible without Simon Schmidt's influence over the workers and without his credit and private contributions.<sup>27</sup> Weitling himself paid tribute to the willingness of the workers to sacrifice: "If Rothschild should give 100 millions for . . . the welfare of the community, he still would have to be ashamed of the sacrifice of these workers, of whom four gave their entire savings for the work which recently appeared."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>See Brugger, op. cit., Chap. 4, Part II.

<sup>27</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 66.



The publication of the Garantien created a great sensation at that time, not only in Switzerland but also throughout Europe, because it contained a spirited and, in many points, original statement of communistic principles. It was written moreover in extremely clear and simple language. The secret of Weitling's success lay not in learned hairsplitting nor in the doctrinaire setting down of a system. He wanted action: "To arms! To arms! Blindly, whatever you can lay your hands on."<sup>29</sup> Whereas Fourier thought that Harmony was to be based on a system dependent not only on labour but ability and capital as well, Weitling shouted "damned nonsense" to this. He did not let himself be compared to the other Utopians but instead wished to tear down the barriers which separated them from the working class, and for this reason he loomed menacingly for the ruling classes. But along with the terror which Weitling inspired there was the joy of awakening for the worker class, for whom, Heine said, Weitling's work became a catechism. Many remedies had been advanced to improve the lot of the underprivileged, but even to their most well-wishing sympathizers they were never men with minds of their own, men whom it was customary not to make free and happy but satisfied with their lot.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>29</sup>Garantien, preface.

<sup>30</sup>Garantien, Mehring introduction.

Although Weitling did not wish to be considered merely one of the number of the Utopians, it is clear that he owed them a great debt in the writing of his works. He merely repeated an idea of Saint Simon's when he said: "A perfect society has no government, it has an administration; no laws, but duties; no punishments, but means of cure." Owen was the initiator of the concept of substituting work certificates for money (which Weitling called "Kommerzstunden"). The chapter on money and goods is from Fourier, and throughout Garantien his influence is perceptible, even as to the title, for harmony was a pet idea of Fourier's.<sup>31</sup>

A very important point to make about the publication of Weitling's principle work is that it enabled every member of a communistic workers' group, or any other interested persons, to come into possession of an easily understood and popular book on the socialistic principle. In addition it had the advantage of being written by a member of their own social and economic group, who, in contrast to them, had the rare ability to lend expression to their joys and sorrows and hopes in words moving and sometimes eloquent.<sup>32</sup>

Weitling's strength and weakness lay in the same

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>32</sup>Brugger, op. cit., p. 150.



roots, in the fact that he knew how to concentrate all that moved the worker class as under a concave mirror; his weakness lay in his limitation to this class. Of a modern proletariat of great industry, which first arose in England, Weitling knew nothing. "He was a proletarian, but still an artisan proletarian," as Mehring said of him. Weitling knew nothing of the history of the working class, and he lacked the historical perspective and insight of Marx. He depicted admirably the evils of capitalistic society, but his understanding of the time from which these evils arose was weak. Because he did not recognize historical development from the past, neither did he recognize it for the future. Consequently, his new society, based on common ownership of property, he could imagine only as a Utopian. Today his biting criticisms of the old society are read with far greater respect than his plans for the organization of a new one, but during his age it was the reverse, and not only, says Mehring, among the workers. Karl Marx was also of the opinion that abilities not persons should be selected for positions; and some years later Engels contended against Carlyle that talent had the highest claim to position in society, just as Weitling had contended against Fourier. It may be true that Weitling's Utopia was an improvement on former ones and that it contained reform ideas of some worth; it remained nevertheless a Utopia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Garantien, Mehring introduction.

After the publication of Garantien Weitling went to Lausanne to live at the house of Schmidt, and here again he became embroiled in quarrels with various members of the society. He travelled about the canton Vevey and Neuenberg, where he established several new societies; and wherever he went, he organized secret propaganda for the League of the Just. He had recourse to secrecy because he had learned from bitter experience that he could not always achieve his goals by means of discussion and voting. As a result of his experiences with the liberal societies he acquired a hatred for the republican form of state and a low opinion of the intelligence of the people.<sup>34</sup>

The growing successes of Weitling in Switzerland provoked a corresponding attention and reaction from the middle-class world, and the French government prohibited the importation of the periodical Die junge Generation into France. With this stroke the journal lost all of its French and English readers, who furnished about one-half of the subscriptions. In consequence Weitling found himself in great want even though his needs were few. His situation became so perilous because of the reaction against him that he decided to move out of French Switzerland to Zürich, in spite of the fact that Julius Fröbel, the editor of the liberal Zürich newspaper, warned him not to stick his head into the lion's jaws. The conservative

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<sup>34</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 66.



organ in Zürich, the Allgemeine Schweizer Zeitung, declared threateningly: "Herr Weitling can rest assured that careful note will be made of every step he takes."<sup>35</sup>

Becker gave Weitling letters of introduction to Fröbel and to the young German poet Georg Herwegh when he went to Zürich in April, 1843, because he knew that these men were interested in social reform. He hoped that Weitling might smoothe away some of his rough communistic one-sidedness through contact with intellectuals, but in this he was disappointed. Weitling needed money for the publication of his Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders; but the treasuries of all the cantonal communistic societies were empty, and there was not a publisher in Switzerland who wanted to print a book that might easily lead to another Strauss episode. Weitling had expected Herwegh to put up the money; and when the money was not forthcoming, he complained bitterly of the egotism of the literati and of the luxury in which they lived.<sup>36</sup> Antipathy to culture was a tendency of Weitling's system in any case. Nevertheless, despite Weitling's hostility toward men of learning (Gelehrtenhass), he was personally not an enemy of culture. He made, in fact, titanic efforts to acquire knowledge, although he was hampered by lack of education and insufficient leisure.

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<sup>35</sup> Emil Kaler, Wilhelm Weitling: Seine Agitation und Lehre. (Hottingen-Zürich: Verlag der Volksbuchhandlung, 1887) p. 39.

It was policy of the German communists in Switzerland to try to win favor and new adherents among the notables and German intellectuals who stopped there.

The year 1843 was a year of persecutions and suppressions in Germany, and likewise in Switzerland there was conservative tyranny. In April of this year the poet Herwegh came to Geneva and was soon invited to a meeting of the communistic society there. He was given an ovation and treated as a confederate, but Becker, the leader of the society, revealed the real purpose of the reception given Herwegh in a letter to Weitling:

Eat and drink well, so that you will live long and enjoy life. Don't push Herwegh too hard.... We must not make him shy away. Just wait a bit, later, later we'll extract some of his ducats for our purposes, or, if he doesn't come across, we can write a brochure entitled "Herwegh, a Man Like the Others."<sup>37</sup>

Marr, a communist who was also associated with Weitling in Zürich in 1843, tells of the expulsion of Herwegh from that city. There had been considerable enthusiasm for Herwegh's verse there, especially on the part of the liberal element, but the conservative newspapers complained of the favorable reception given to this "godless" poet; and after Herwegh wrote a letter to the King of Prussia (evidently advocating liberal reforms), he was expelled from the city.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>37</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 39.



The conservative party had come to the helm through the "Züriputsch", the peasant uprising incited by the ecclesiastics against the appointment of David Strauss to the University of Zürich. Strauss' Life of Christ (1835) had held the story of Christ to be a myth, and he had revealed fallacies in the Gospels and had sought to prove the existence of contradictions in evangelical history, thereby becoming a pioneer in biblical criticism.

Thus it can be seen that there was precedent in Zürich for the imprisonment and expulsion of Weitling, and in addition, the conservatives, who held down their liberal opponents only with difficulty, looked upon the opportunity to crystallize their supremacy through a new "blasphemous offence," which Weitling was to present to them, as highly welcome." <sup>39</sup>

Weitling also came into contact with another intellectual who was in Zürich at that time, the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, to whom Herwegh had written a letter of introduction from Aargau for Weitling. Bakunin was impressed by Weitling's natural acumen, energy, and above all, by his wild devotion to and belief in the liberation and the future of the oppressed masses. But, Bakunin said, Weitling's best qualities were lost when he came into contact with the literati, and Bakunin tried unsuccessfully

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<sup>38</sup>Marr, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>39</sup>Garantien, Mehring introduction.

to introduce him to the philosophy of Hegel at that time. Although Bakunin listened with interest to Weitling's theories and plans, he had little to do with the communists and did not share their views. It is significant that he said of the trial of Weitling that it was an attempt of the conservatives to make themselves important in the eyes of Europe and partly too an idle hope of compromising the liberals in Zürich. He said further that Bluntschli himself admitted <sup>having</sup> knowledge of Weitling's arrival in Zürich and tolerated his presence for a few months before having him arrested, assuming that he would find important documents among Weitling's papers with which he could embarrass Zürich liberals. Bakunin himself, it might be added, was later prosecuted by Bluntschli and likewise expelled from the city.<sup>40</sup>

The communists devoted very special attention to winning over Dr. Julius Fröbel, the editor of the liberal organ, the Schweizerische Republikaner. Without declaring himself unequivocally for the communistic doctrine, he had adopted a sympathetic attitude toward it. On March 5, 1843 he wrote to Becker a letter which shows his wavering attitude:

Tell Weitling for me that I do not yet know to what extent I can concur with individual ideas in the communistic direction, but that meanwhile my heart is with you. I divide men into Egoists and

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<sup>40</sup>Michael Bakunins Beichte. Aus der Peter-Pauls-Festung an Zar Nikolaus I. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1926) pp. 6-10.



Communists and, if this is understood, I belong to the latter. The future will make clear how far I agree with you. 41

Toward the end of 1842 Fröbel accepted the editorship of the Republikaner, which was the chief liberal newspaper in Switzerland and the organ of the cantonal Liberal party. He said in his autobiography that the Liberals, who had been defeated in 1839, were practically and theoretically bankrupt of ideas. They were conscious of the need for new ideas to regenerate the spirit of the people and to defeat the reaction and had called in Fröbel from the University.<sup>42</sup> He did not, however, become the creature of the party as had been expected and even in the first numbers of the paper he began to break with the party. His program contained the statement that "material living conditions are the basis of all political conditions." As a result of this he was regarded as a communist by the reaction, and the liberals shrank from his proposed program. Indeed, it was not long before the Liberal party considered him its bitterest enemy, and it publicly disavowed the newspaper for being too "extreme."

With each number Fröbel made increasing concessions

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<sup>41</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>42</sup>Julius Fröbel, Ein Lebenslauf. Aufzeichnungen, Erinnerungen und Bekenntnisse. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1890-91) Vol. I, pp. 139-148.

to communism, and he dared to declare: "Radicalism. . . . is the bridge which leads to humanitarian reform."<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile the attitude of the conservatives, as well as of the liberals, toward Fröbel was becoming ever more threatening, and the Republican combatted both. Fröbel's acquaintance with Weitling was exaggerated by the conservatives, and it seemed to them to indicate that Fröbel would become the new leader of the communists. They raved that property as well as religion was in danger and that no means should be neglected to stir up the people against Fröbel and the Germans in the city. The Liberals, of course, looked upon this agitation against Fröbel with secret pleasure and hoped for his downfall, although they were linked to him. There was great agitation among the parties of the city, and Marr said that he read several anonymous threatening letters written to Fröbel at this time. The Republican had its back to the wall and therefore thought it advisable to bring forth a confession of faith (Glaubensbekenntnis). In this, Fröbel said that the politicians were completely ignorant of the fact that a great struggle was about to take place. Democracy, he said, was irresistible, and this new democracy was appearing not as a political system but as a condition of social life, a religion of the free as he called it. He spoke cuttingly of the ex-

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<sup>43</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 44.



clusiveness and narrow point of view of Swiss politicians, and he predicted that the upheaval would not leave Switzerland unaffected:

If ever the trampled upon and oppressed people comes upon the discovery, which lies so close at hand, of its huge preponderance, and rises up in battle, from the naked and starving Irish in the West to the knouted serfs in the Russian East, if ever such a drama is seen, to which the German Peasants' War will seem a mere prelude, will our Switzerland be spared? 44

Fröbel attacked the particularistic political principle of Switzerland which was closely connected with the national consciousness. He dared, said Marr, to see further than the Swiss political system, and for this he could not be forgiven. The Liberals tried to alienate subscribers of the Republican, and the conservatives loudly preached hatred of foreigners, so that at any moment the storm might break.

The political situation in Zürich, and particularly as it centered around Fröbel, has been dealt with in such detail because Weitling's acquaintance with Fröbel was to be of fatal significance for him. Although it is hardly likely that Weitling's presence in Zürich would have been tolerated for long in any case or that a communist would have been received with open arms by either the liberals or the conservatives, it is doubtful if there would have been such a hue and cry in the city and such a

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<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Marr, op. cit., p. 50.

witch-hunt for the communists if the political situation had not been what it was and if Weitling's link with some liberal elements in the city had not provided both parties with a means of attacking mutual enemies. Weitling, who was considered at best a crackpot and at worst a dangerous anarchist by the Swiss middle class politicians, was simply engulfed in the political vortex of the city; and the worst aspects of his system were seized upon, distorted and magnified so that Weitling was made to appear as a menace to God and society.

Weitling himself helped no little in his own incrimination. This was especially true of a plan which he put forth in letters to his various associates at a time when he must have felt hunted and abused by both the authorities and by his own co-workers (He had just quarreled with Schmidt and various communist leaders in French Switzerland); this was his wild desperation scheme of the "robbing proletariat," later employed by Bluntschli in his report and by the authorities to convict him. The plan was namely to gather together the dregs of the large cities and to turn them loose stealing and attacking property in order to bring about a communistic state so much the sooner. In the Bluntschli report the letters of the Paris leader of the League of the Just, Dr. Eduard Ewerbeck, to whom Weitling was officially responsible with respect to propaganda and overall conduct of activities in Switzerland, were printed,



and in them Ewerbeck implored Weitling to give up his frightful plan,<sup>45</sup> Weitling had written to Becker too that he was carrying on propaganda and ". . . if communism makes progress in this respect, soon there will be 40,000 communists in Switzerland with whom something worthwhile can be accomplished." Becker believed that Weitling wanted to start a revolution with this forty thousand and sneered at Weitling's plan and at his secret propaganda in general. Weitling took Becker's bantering attitude hard and complained bitterly that Becker should think him so foolish as to plan a revolution with 40,000 men in Switzerland:

Surely, one cannot make a revolution with 40,000 men; we can, however, form a powerful party and publish newspapers and periodicals on a large scale and exert a significant influence on public opinion and in this way accomplish something worthwhile. <sup>46</sup>

There is, however, ample evidence from Weitling's writings that he did plan a revolution,<sup>47</sup> although when he was questioned in the investigation about his proposed army of forty thousand men, he explained that it was a misunderstanding of Becker's. Weitling dictated a letter to his attorney (to Becker) at that time and asked Becker to send the correspondence to him in Zürich so that he could present it as evidence, but Becker had not kept the

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<sup>45</sup>Kommissionalbericht, pp. 106-115.

<sup>46</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 67.

letters and could only testify orally as to their contents. Becker said that Bluntschli should have been honest enough to mention these facts in his report.<sup>48</sup>

Weitling had no love for political parties, and he expected no social reform from them, least of all from the republicans. It can be seen from his Junge Generation that he expected much more from sheer accident, if, for instance, a king of genius reached the throne. "We need a total revolution, but a peaceful one is to be preferred to one of violence," said Weitling. He did not think, however, that the communists should start the revolution:

The republicans will do that; our affair is to exploit this revolution. While the republicans are fighting with the soldiers, we communists must attack property, empty out the money chests and stores of goods and throw their contents into the streets for general looting; in short, disrupt property as it is so that it can never be restored. In this way we can defeat the republicans and those in power at the same time; the republicans by the fact that we shall make it impossible for them to return to the old property values, and the princes, in that we shall rob them of the means of paying their soldiers. 49

The gathering flood of protest against the Schweizerische Republikaner needed only one last drop to reach the point of overflow; and this was soon added when Weitling's

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<sup>47</sup>See Weitling's Gerechtigkeit, pp. 306-10, and Garantien, pp. 239-41.

<sup>48</sup>Becker, loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 68.



book, recently completed, was given to the printer Hess, who had been recommended to Weitling by Fröbel. The immediate cause of Weitling's arrest was the publication of a prospectus of his book, Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders, which came to the notice of the office of the Public Prosecutor and was considered by it to be blasphemous and degrading to the personality of Christ and to the Christian religion.<sup>50</sup> The police broke into the house of the printer, and the manuscript and pages already printed of the Evan-gelium were confiscated. It was useless for Hess to protest that Weitling had requested to have the manuscript back (Weitling had planned to move to Aargau).<sup>51</sup> Thus,

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<sup>50</sup>Kommissionalbericht, p. 1. The prospectus of Das Evangelium: "Introduction. - Faith.-Hope.-Love. The Bible. - The Carpenter and his Brothers. • Doubt and Disbelief. - Parables and Play on Words. - Signs and Wonders. - The Last Supper is a Supper of Love. - Jesus Teaches the Abolition of Private Property. - Jesus Teaches the Abolition of Money. Jesus Teaches the Abolition of Punishment. - Principle of Jesus' Doctrine is the Doctrine of Communality of Work and Pleasure. - The Principle of Jesus is the Principle of Freedom and Equality. - Sacrifices which Jesus Consideres Necessary for the Dissemination of the Doctrine of Association. - The Fallible Jesus. - Jesus Travels about the Countryside with Sinful Women and Girls and is Supported by them. - Jesus Renounces the Family. - Jesus Preaches War. - Jesus has no Respect for Property. - Jesus' Attacks against Property." Adler, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

<sup>51</sup>Becker, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>52</sup>Marr, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>53</sup>Kommissionalbericht, pp. 1-2.

said Marr, the Zürich government violated the law of sanctity of the house of a citizen (Hausrecht) and of private property. They took everything which pertained to Weitling. A few hours before, Weitling had been arrested on the street. With these events the death knell was rung on the Schweizerische Republikaner. Shortly after the arrest, the Liberal representatives made all haste to disavow any connection with Fröbel before the assembled Council, to which he replied in the second last number of the paper that he had already repudiated any connection with them months before. The Republikaner went under despite last minute efforts of the conservatives for it to continue so that it would embarrass the Liberals.<sup>52</sup>

The conservative newspapers were full of the news of the great communist conspiracy, the existence of which they said was proved by the uncovering of the Weitling papers. There was discussion of a deportation of foreigners, and foreign workers were daily arrested. Finally the governmental Council appointed a committee of five of its own members under the conservative leader Dr. Bluntschli to investigate the activities of the communists and to draw up a report of them which was to be presented to the Council.<sup>53</sup> Marr, who had associated and corresponded with Weitling, feared arrest and left the canton because he said that the conservative government wished to give a semblance of great importance to the arrest of Weitling and to implicate as many persons as possible in the affair



to justify their despotic measures. Marr thought this belief was proved with the publication of the report when, for example, the Liberal, Professor Follen, whom he (Marr) had merely mentioned in passing in a letter to Weitling, was undeservedly suspected of being a communist. The great bulk of the Bluntschli report published private correspondence between Weitling and his associates and persons sympathetic to them, and was significant only in that it was calculated to undermine Fröbel and others of the liberal element in the city. It served in actuality, however, to propagate the writings of Weitling. Bluntschli gave too many excerpts from these writings, and they were well enough written to arouse considerable sympathy for the martyred Weitling. A paper in French Switzerland wrote: "Bluntschli is shameless enough to say that Weitling would kill the intellectual and ideal values of humanity while exactly the opposite is true." A Cologne newspaper also rebuked Bluntschli: "Herr Bluntschli has published a writing which has demonstrated the talent and the organization of the communists in their best light and yet he expects us to be against these ideas and men rather than for them."<sup>54</sup>

Mehring says that by 1846 so much favor had been gained by the radicals in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe that a special law proposed in the Zürich canton against communist

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<sup>54</sup>Quoted in Garantien, Mehring introduction.

agitation could be suppressed by the radical opposition. In any case, Bluntschli was much ridiculed for his report, and the Paris communists sent him a message of thanks for having so zealously spread their doctrines. For his efforts Bluntschli was eventually rewarded with the cross of the French Legion of Honor and with an order of Bavaria.

Weitling was imprisoned in June and was not tried until September 16, 1843, at which time he declared to the court that he had become a communist through the Bible and that "the filth which has been heaped upon human society will first be purged away through the philosophy of the French socialists."<sup>55</sup>

Weitling was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment at this trial but appealed to a higher court (Obergericht) and on November 27 was again tried. His appeal was half serious, half ironic: "The law is like water; both are for all equally, but as on the water he who cannot swim goes under, so too through the law, he who cannot pay is put into prison."<sup>56</sup>

At the end of his defence he said laughingly to the judges: "I hope the Holy Ghost enlightens you and gets me a mild sentence." But the "mild sentence" of the Obergericht was to ten months in prison with four months off for

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<sup>55</sup>Kaler's statement on the defence of Weitling, quoted in Barnikol, op.cit., p. 264.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.



good behavior, and deportation from Switzerland for five years. He was cleared of charges of "inciting to crimes against property," and of "religious disturbance," and was convicted of "inciting to rebellion" and of being a "public nuisance."<sup>57</sup>

During his imprisonment Weitling imagined that the authorities were plotting his death, and, as Wittke points out, after his release, the psychological effects of the period of confinement marked the end of his major productivity both as a writer and as a communist leader;<sup>58</sup> during his imprisonment he wrote a work called Gerechtigkeit, which clearly demonstrated his Messiah complex.

At the expiration of Weitling's prison term the Swiss handed him over to the Prussian authorities, since he was still wanted in Magdeburg for evading military duty. Here it was made known to him that he must leave the state as soon as possible. Therefore he went to Hamburg, where he published his Kerkerpoesien and also met Heine in August, 1844. Heine recounted their meeting with displeasure and remarked upon Weitling's rudeness, but he said also: "This Weitling, who is now forgotten, was after all a man of talent. He did not lack for ideas, and his book entitled Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit was for a long while the catechism of the German communists."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Barnikol, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>58</sup>Carl Wittke, "Marx and Weitling." Essays in Political

From Hamburg Weitling went to London, where he remained for seventeen months and where he was warmly greeted by German, French and English communists,<sup>60</sup> but he seems not to have used this opportunity to study the great industries and the growing proletarian class of England of this time, and he did not take part in the English worker movement of the Chartists, perhaps, as Wittke says, because the English movement was becoming less and less Utopian and more practical. Instead, Weitling devoted his time to the creation of a universal language, and, since he could find no publisher for this, he moved in 1846 to Brussels, where the historic meeting with Marx took place. In an essay concerning this meeting Hans Mühlestein wrote: "The clash between Weitling and Marx represents the historic moment in which the nascent socialist humanitarianism finally rejected and left behind the utopian wanderings of the masses of an entire epoch."<sup>61</sup>

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Theory. Cornell University Press, 1947. p. 184.

<sup>59</sup>Barnikol, op. cit., pp. 261-263.

<sup>60</sup>For an account of Weitling's reception by the English socialist society see: Young Germany. An Account of the Rise, Progress and Present Position of German Communism with a Memoir of Wilhelm Weitling, its Founder. (London: J. Watson, 1844).

<sup>61</sup>Hans Mühlestein; "Marx and the Utopian Wilhelm Weitling." A Centenary of Marxism. Edited by Samuel Bernstein and the editors of Science and Society. (New York: Science and Society, 1948) p. 113.

<sup>62</sup>Quoted in Garantien, Mehring introduction.



Both Marx and Engels had given Weitling's Garantien an enthusiastic reception when it appeared and in Brussels too he was at first warmly greeted, but it soon became apparent that he was too stubborn and set in his own principles, as well as lacking in the education which would have enabled him to cope with the younger Marx's new historical principles of economic determinism. Engels said later of Weitling's appearance in Brussels:

Later Weitling came to Brussels, but he was no longer the naive young journeyman tailor, bewildering at his own gifts.....He was a great man, persecuted by the envious because of his superiority, who everywhere suspected rivals, secret enemies and traps, the prophet hunted from country to country, who bore in his pocket a recipe for the realization of heaven on earth and imagined that everyone wanted to steal it from him. 62

In March, 1847 a meeting of the seventeen "founding fathers" of modern communism took place in Brussels to discuss how communistic propaganda was to be carried on. But much more this meeting represented a showdown between the old-line, primitive Utopians, such as Weitling and Moses Hess, and the less sentimental "scientific" Marxian type communists. It was, furthermore, the intention of Marx and Engels to purge the party of the "Gefühlsozialismus" which Weitling represented and to bring about unity within communistic ranks, under the leadership, of course, of the aforementioned Marx.

In a letter to Hess later, Weitling outlined Marx's proposed program which had been given at the meeting:

1. A sifting of the communist party must take place.
2. This can be effected by criticising the unfit and by cutting them off from funds.
3. This sifting is now the most important thing which can be done for the best interests of communism.
4. Whoever has the power to obtain influence among men of wealth also has the means to push aside others and would do well to make use of it.
5. "Artisan communism" the communism of Weitling and "philosophical communism" (Marx first made these distinctions, or if it was someone else, it was not I) must be combatted. Emotion must be scorned because it is mere dizziness. No oral propaganda, no organizing of secret propaganda, nor even the word propaganda will be used any longer.
6. The realization of communism is not the chief issue now. The middle class must first come into power. 63

Marx and Weitling had a heated argument over this program and Weitling finally ended the discussion by saying that whoever could obtain the money could write whatever he wished.

Marx also introduced a stranger to the meeting, who was later revealed to be the Russian writer Anienkow. His account of the affair was deprecating to Weitling:

Marx put the direct question to Weitling:

"Tell us, Weitling, you have made so much stir in Germany with your communist propaganda, you have gathered so many workers and made them lose their jobs and their bread; what arguments do you have to justify your social-revolutionary agitation, and what do you intend to base it on in the future?"

Weitling apparently wanted to keep the discussion on the level of liberal high-sounding platitudes..... He spoke at length, but to my

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<sup>63</sup>Berlin SPD Archiv, quoted in Barnikol, op. cit., p. 267.



great surprise, his speech was in form too tangled and unclear.....He often repeated himself, he corrected his own language and made painful progress toward conclusions which usually came too late..... Now he had before him listeners of a different sort than he had been used to having around him at his shop. 64

It can be seen from this somewhat smug account that Weitling was clearly out of his class at the meeting, which Marx ended by thundering "Ignorance never did anyone any good." Weitling, on the other hand, later complained bitterly that Marx concentrated on winning over wealthy persons for support rather than concentrating his efforts for the good of the working classes of whom he spoke so much. He said further: "I see in Marx a good encyclopedist but not a genius."<sup>65</sup>

The meeting in Brussels marked the end of Weitling's influence on the Continent and he eventually went to America, where he carried on his agitation among the workers. This period, however, does not lie within the scope of this paper, His activities in the New World were at first carried on with some success, and he returned to Germany during the revolution of 1848 but his influence there was negligible, whereupon he returned to New York where he died impoverished and nearly forgotten in 1871.

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<sup>64</sup>Quoted in Mühlestein, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>65</sup>Barnikol, op. cit., p. 270.

"I believed that we would do better to work upon the people and organize a segment of them for the spreading of our popular writings, but Marx and Engels are not of this opinion, and in this they are supported by their wealthy patrons....."<sup>66</sup> On this note of resignation Weitling left the field to his more learned but less warmhearted associates.

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.



### CHAPTER III

#### WEITLING'S DOCTRINES

Criticism of Existing Society. Weitling's social philosophy may be said to occupy a connecting position between the "primitive" and the modern socialism; between the early French Utopians, such as Babeuf, Saint Simon, Cabet, Fourier and others, and the new scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. It was in Paris, during the years 1837-41, that Weitling absorbed the radical theories and systems of the Utopians, and his writings betray the unmistakable influence of these early socialists. He himself was in the main a Utopian. He based his philosophy on exclusively moral grounds,<sup>1</sup> and for him, as for Fourier, misery and poverty were but the results of human ignorance and malice, which destroyed the harmonious balance which had existed between man and his environment originally. In a manner similar to Rousseau, he described the beauty of the primitive life of man at a time when there was sufficient room for all and all man's needs were supplied for him. Man had only to eat, drink, love and play, according to Weitling in his best-known work, Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit. What man needed, he took, and his neighbor partook freely thereof; there was not yet the concept of

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Wittke, "Marx and Weitling," Essays in Political Theory. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1947) p. 187.

mine and thine. Weitling compared that life, which he described in such idyllic terms, to the life of his own time, with its lack of freedom and independence and its economic bondage.

Unlike his French socialistic preceptors, from whom he drew so much, Weitling was less concerned about the establishment of his own particular system for the future than for the immediate rooting out of the present society with all its evils. This is an important point in linking him to Marx and the later school of thought among socialists, because the earlier schools depended for realization of their various systems upon the good will of those in positions of power.<sup>2</sup> It is said of Fourier, for example, that he waited at noon each day during the last years of his life for the arrival of some benevolent capitalist to provide the means for the establishment of Fourieristic communities.<sup>3</sup> Weitling was more concerned about the immediate

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<sup>2</sup>At the conclusion of Garantien, Weitling made one last plea to those in power: "Mighty ones of this earth! you have the means to obscure the memories of Alexander and Napoleon with your glory. You have the means to remove the ills of society in a way agreeable both to us and yourselves. If we must undertake the task alone with our crude expedients, it will be accomplished laboriously and painfully for us and for you." Sombart says of this: "Here the mood is already becoming impatient. It is, as it were, the last warning, the last attempt to persuade before the new view of things takes its course." Sombart, Der proletarische Sozialismus. p. 338.

<sup>3</sup>Gray, op. cit., pp. 195-196.



future:

If we can show society what it is in this bad organization and what it could be in a better one, and make it comprehend this fact, then we shall not trouble ourselves in the least about its structure for the future and not lay too great stress on our favorite plans for its new erection. We must rather tear down, ever down, the old rotten structure, and down with any new scaffolding, and new basis which attempts to preserve any of the residue of the old evil. 4

Unlike most of the Utopian school then, Weitling did not place chief emphasis on his society of the future but on the immediate<sup>4</sup> present and the intermediate period during which a basis for that future could be laid. Also unlike them, his future society was not to have been static, or perfect in itself: "Never, so long as the world exists, will an organization of society be considered by all generations and by all individuals to be unalterably good or perfect," and in this he anticipated the Marxian idea of the evolution of society. But, in direct contrast to the millenium which Marx foresaw after the bringing about of his dictatorship of the proletariat, Weitling thought: "Mankind will never reach the highest ideal of perfection, otherwise one would have to assume the cessation of man's progress."<sup>5</sup>

Another point of contrast between Weitling and the early Utopians is that the latter were out of touch with the people and with the working classes. Their movements, in the beginning at least, were isolated intellectual ones,

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<sup>4</sup>Garantien, introduction, p. v

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., .

and, with the exception of Owen, they had little actual contact with that class which their Utopian communities were designed to benefit most. Weitling, however, never neglected the workers themselves for the sake of theory, and, although he himself was not one of the great Utopians, he carried their thought to the working-class.<sup>6</sup> He was himself a worker, an itinerant tailor, and he was in constant contact with workingmen from the time he joined the revolutionary society of German working men in Paris. In the preface to his Garantien he wrote:

They worked for me and I worked for them the workers , had I not done it, a hundred others would have been found to do it instead. The following work, therefore, is not my work alone but our work. I have united the combined material and spiritual powers of my brothers here.

It might have been impossible, in fact, for Weitling to have published his books and pamphlets without the monetary assistance of the workers' organizations in Paris, and later in Switzerland.<sup>7</sup> One of Weitling's chief contributions to the communist movement was the spreading of his gospel by the use of propaganda and by using his talent for organization among the German workingmen abroad.

Weitling then, was firstly a revolutionary communist, but at the same time he strove to reconcile his views of society to Christian ethics, and in his book, Das Evangelium

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<sup>6</sup>Morris Hillquit, A History of Socialism in the United States. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1903) p. 161.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter II, p. 13.



eines armen Sünders, he even attempted to prove that Christ himself was the first communist and that socialism is based on ethical Christianity.<sup>8</sup> He had the happiness and well-being of Man at heart and used the Christian precept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," as the basis of his philosophy. This can account for his one-sided interpretations of the Bible to justify his views: "Do not believe that negotiation with your enemies [he addresses the workers] will avail you anything. Any negotiation with them is calculated to your disadvantage." And he quoted Christ: "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I am not come to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10.34)<sup>9</sup>

In this revolutionary way Weitling interpreted the Bible, treating it merely as a religious cloak for socialism, not as a socialistic cloak for religion, as did Laménais, the social-minded priest whose propaganda had a strong influence on Weitling during his Paris years.

It must be remembered that Weitling's efforts were made for the benefit of the workers, and he addressed himself to them. For him, to be rich and powerful was to be evil. The poor must work for the rich, he said, and what the rich could afford to squander, the poor had to do without. ". . . for they love their sleek hounds well,

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<sup>8</sup>Mielcke, op. cit., p. 18: "The founder of Christianity is for him first of all the social reformer; the carrying out and proof of this idea through biblical citations comprises the contents of the Evangelium."

<sup>9</sup>Wilhelm Weitling, Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie

but a hungry worker doesn't worry them in the least," was Weitling's viewpoint.

Already in his first work, Die Menschheit wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte, published in Paris in 1838 for the "League of the Just," the core of Weitling's doctrines can be seen.<sup>10</sup> One of the chief elements of Fourier's system was the concept of harmony, and it was Weitling's wish also to re-establish the harmony which had supposedly existed during the primitive age of man. This concept of harmony, of the harmonious order of things in the universe, Weitling accepted as a law of nature, as the state of things given to begin with. And this rationalistic concept he had presumably taken from Fourier as an immediate source. Fourier, in turn, had received it from the 18th century adherents of the Enlightenment. The dogma was accepted by Weitling without question because, otherwise, if it were not true, the world would be "irrational" (unvernünftig), contradictory to the laws of Reason.<sup>11</sup> Nature was God for Weitling, and Nature's work, the harmony of social life and of man's relation to his environment, had been destroyed by human volition.<sup>12</sup>

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sie sein sollte. (München: Dreiländerverlag, 1919) pp. 23-24.

<sup>10</sup>Mielcke, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>"The idea itself [harmony] is very old; it was a part of the stoic philosophy, was revived in the philosophy of the Renaissance, and was especially accepted by the 18th century. Charlotte von Reichenau, "Weitling," Schmollers Jahrbuch, 1925, p. 297.



Weitling's watchword was "whoever is satisfied is happy." (Wer zufrieden ist, ist glücklich.) The same lot for all would bring about freedom from care and a friendly spirit and thus, happiness. If we would have universal happiness, he said, then each person must have so much, according to his needs, and no more. Unfortunately, however, he neglected to state what should determine a person's needs.

Weitling complained constantly of the unequal division of the goods produced, which caused the disparity between poverty and wealth. He said that the desire for the possession of property, which he called the "property-drive" (Besitztrieb), had its origin in the instinct of self-preservation, and it was not bad in itself, per se, until it became a social evil. He blamed the ills of society on faulty organization: "In a well-ordered society there are neither vices nor crimes, neither laws nor punishments, only regulations and remedies (Regeln und Heilmittel). Those things which we today call crimes are diseases provoked by a defective organization of society, by the unnatural aims of our desires and abilities. Furthermore, all organizations of society, good or bad, have a common origin in the desires of men (menschliche Begierden), and the means whereby these desires are satisfied are our abilities (Fähigkeiten), which he called the "natural limits" of the desires. Although there is a pretty ba-

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<sup>12</sup>Garantien, pp. 12, 17-19.

lance in society between human desires and the abilities to satisfy them, it is not the case with individuals. No one, Weitling said, is capable any more of satisfying his needs through his own abilities alone, he must combine them with the abilities and talents of others, since man, taken alone, is a weak creature. One of the most powerful means to increase and develop man's abilities was, from the beginning, life in society.<sup>13</sup>

As one writer puts it: "Above all, man himself, as a feeling, willing being, does not come into consideration for Marx; his point of view is intellectual, ideational..."<sup>14</sup> For Weitling, on the other hand, man was the figure around whom he would have built his society. Man was not for him a mere figure in a play of impersonal forces, he was doing, acting, history-making. Man was viewed by Weitling as a constant who remained the same during the course of time, wholly in accord with the rationalist standpoint. Man was the basis of all Weitling's works.

The Utopians in general were motivated by the desire to bring man happiness and contentment. Engels said of them in his Entwicklung des Sozialismus: "They are to introduce the kingdom of reason and of eternal justice," and, "Socialism is for all of them the expression of the absolute truth, reason and justice, and needs only to be

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<sup>13</sup>Garantien, quoted in Sombart, Grundlagen und Kritik des Sozialismus, pp. 391-415.

<sup>14</sup>Mielcke, op. cit., p. 9.



discovered to conquer the world by virtue of its own force." At the opposite pole from the Utopians, said Engels, was Marx. According to Marx's doctrine, "The ultimate causes of all social changes and political upheavals are not to be sought in the heads of men with their increasing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes of methods of production and exchange."<sup>15</sup>

Gottfried Keller, after the conviction of Weitling in Zürich, mentioned the communistic activities in Switzerland and gave a deprecating judgement of the communists' motives. Communism seemed to him to be:

. . . . only the result of an ever-increasing quest for pleasure and comfort. .... It seems to me to be chiefly a shortsighted and greedy jealousy by these people towards the rich in the world. They do not merely want to eat, as Weitling clearly says, they want to live in fine style, in abundance and plenty. They want to have their turn now too. <sup>16</sup>

Keller's judgement of Weitling's communism seems to be based more on the Bluntschli report than on knowledge of his writings and activities, and, although there is a germ of truth in Keller's observation, there is a distinct lack of understanding of the essence of Weitling's principles, for Weitling rejected communism for the motives Keller ascribed to him. The idea that communism meant simply the division of existing goods and properties, a sort of glori-

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<sup>15</sup>Friedrich Engels, Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus und der Utopie zur Gesellschaft. 2nd Edition. (Hottingen-Zürich: Genossenschaftsbuchdruckerei, 1883) p. 35.

<sup>16</sup>Ermatinger, Gottfried Kellers Leben, Briefe und Tagebücher. (I, 10.7.43), quoted in Mielcke, op. cit., p. 13.

fied division of the loot held by others after the existing social order had been done away with, ran counter to his basic conception. He did not want simply to "have his turn," he wanted to replace altogether the social order upon which private property rested. Furthermore, it was his intention that "no one may be poorer than the government" in his proposed future state, that such government, or administration, as did exist should in no way have a socially or economically preferred position.<sup>17</sup>

Weitling thought that the principles of freedom and equality would assure the restoration of the former harmonious order of the world. By freedom he seems to have understood the greatest possible freedom from restraint; he might easily have borrowed the word from the vocabulary of the French Revolution. The spiritual freedom which had been the old demand of the philosophers of the Enlightenment played no great role for him. Man, he said, must be free except to encroach on the freedom of others. It might almost be said that he wanted to transform the free-enterprise economists' principle of laissez-faire from an economic-political modus vivendi to a social one. But he also had the idea that the realization of the abstract concept of freedom is dependent upon the establishment of a new order of society, which had already been pointed out by Saint Simon, otherwise he thought that freedom would be an empty word.

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<sup>17</sup>Weitling, Garantien, p. 168



Private property was the great bugbear for Weitling, and he thought that property was supported by the money system. He attributed to money all the evils of modern society. The motive of Weitling's communism was not raw materialism but a deep feeling for justice, and true justice he thought possible only if external equality could be assured. But the means of maintaining the present state of disorder is money, otherwise the rich and poor would find it necessary to live together with community of property. Instead of bringing society into equilibrium for all individuals, the present wretched condition is maintained for the benefit of those in power. "Do you not think it is time to throw out the money-bags from your scale of justice, these moneybags which suppress the desires and abilities of the one for the advantage of another....?"<sup>18</sup>

Since the time money was introduced, man had become worth nothing at all, he could be bought for a crust of bread, and, although the term slavery was gradually abolished, and its ugliness glossed over by laws and contracts, it continued to exist and to an even worse degree. Weitling savagely attacked the evils which he thought had been brought about by an inequality which was sustained by the money system, and he returned to this theme again and again in his magnum opus, Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit: "No matter

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<sup>18</sup>Weitling, Garantien, p. 45

what corner of the old rotten structure of society we look at, we see evils and defects whose cause is inequality, and the means of sustaining this inequality is money."<sup>19</sup>

Private property and robbery were for Weitling merely two ways of saying the same thing. The original right of a man to take and keep a thing without detriment to anyone else (since there was enough to satisfy the needs of all) was neither property nor robbery. But later, with the increase of population and the tendency of men to cluster together at certain points, when it became necessary to work in order to live, certain individuals did not have to work because of the excessive amount of their private possessions. It was then, Weitling said, that this natural right became unjust. Possession by a few of land necessary for the maintenance of livelihood for all he called robbery committed against society as a whole.<sup>20</sup>

But in the ancient time theft and robbery had not yet become a disgrace and a crime, it was much more an honor; for it required cleverness, courage, cunning and strength to get and keep possessions. Thus, after awhile, the land acquired in this way was called property, the term was made respectable, and it was made legitimate for a father to pass on his possessions to his sons. But, Weitling said, human nature rose up in protest against this legitimized robbery,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-51.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-118.



and thenceforth, any other sort of robbery (that is, robbery committed against these property owners) was prohibited by law and punished.

In this ingenious, if naive way Weitling accounted for the origins and rise of property owning, and, so he thought, for the evils of existing society. He called the transformation of these practices into custom the basis of our morality.<sup>21</sup> He defined a "moral" man (according to the standards of his day) as follows:

A moral man is therefore one who scrupulously continues to travel along the course officially prescribed for him, the way along which the ancients have taught him to go. Anyone else, who digresses to seek out a way for himself, is called immoral. <sup>22</sup>

Any change, improvement, or modification of the accepted morality arises from the successful (approved) deviation of a few pioneers from the old morality, but each deviation from the norm is in the beginning called immoral. Weitling recognized only a few moral virtues based on "natural feeling" as necessary for the maintenance of harmony in society, such as love, integrity and loyalty, and these were to be the only limits of freedom in a moral code.

Weitling's third major work, Das Evangelium, was the result of long reflection on communism and religion, and the relationship between them. He attacked religion, calling it a mere hoax, a swindle perpetrated by Church and State to maintain themselves in power. Religion was to

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

Weitling an instrument whereby the people could be kept in a state of ignorance and suppression, a state of dumb faith so that they would more readily accept and preserve the conditions of inequality imposed upon them.<sup>23</sup> Weitling insisted on instruction and knowledge for the people rather than blind acceptance. In the same way, Owen and other Utopians considered education to be almost a panacea for the ills of society. It was, too, a fundamental tenet of the Enlightenment that a religious belief could be derived as a result of rational processes.

Weitling asserted that God had become in modern religion a God of human form but lacking in human weaknesses, in passions and imperfections which all men have in common. He rejected such a God, saying that the sufferings and death of Christ would have been meaningless in such a case. He maintained that religion should not be abolished altogether, but cited one of his preceptors, Lamennais, and other Christian reformers as having attempted to show that all democratic ideas emanate from the Christian doctrine. Therefore, he said, religion should be used for the liberation of mankind, and he called Christ a "prophet of freedom" whose doctrines had been love and freedom. Christ had been a symbol of God and of love. Weitling thought that Christ should be regarded as the friend and brother of poor sinners, subject to the same weaknesses as all men, and not a remote

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<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm Weitling, Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders. (Birsfeld: Walser'sche Buchdruckerei, 1843) pp. 9-10.



and supernatural being.<sup>24</sup>

Weitling called Christ "the carpenter," in an obvious attempt to bring him closer to the workers and said that the position of a man who wishes to set a new course for his generation is always difficult because of the persecutions and obstructions set up by those whose laws and institutions he must attack. Furthermore he boldly stated that communism was the doctrine which Christ had taught.<sup>25</sup> Weitling said that great caution had to be exercised by Christ to disguise his doctrine to escape persecution, that he had to instill faith, rather than try to instill knowledge into the people, both because of the short duration of his stay on earth and the low level of education of that age. But now, Weitling thought, it was no longer necessary to preach faith, on account of the great advance in education since the time of Christ. Thus the people were ready for knowledge. But Weitling overlooked the fact that he himself had the simplest sort of faith, in the efficacy of his communistic doctrine, and that the same kind of faith would have to be preached to the people to put it into effect.

After the fashion of communists of the present day, who detach certain elements from the main body of a piece of literature or philosophy, or read into it communistic

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

flavoring so that they may claim it for their own, Weitling cited such passages from the Bible as: "I am the bread of Life. Whosoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whosoever believes in me shall never thirst." (Verse 25, St. John)

Weitling mentioned the fact that the disciples did not bind themselves to Christ but often grumbled and protested at what he said, and that "the carpenter" was met with much opposition and disbelief. There is in this a tacit comparison of the opposition to Christ to the opposition he himself met with 1800 years later.<sup>26</sup> For the idea gradually evolved in Weitling's mind that he himself was actually the second Messiah to whom he frequently alluded.

It can arouse little wonder that the conservative Swiss bur~~g~~ers should have considered Weitling a blasphemer and a menace to society when they read such passages as the following in Weitling's writings:

It will be only unwillingly admitted that even Jesus had to employ deception for the dissemination of his doctrine. I too have unwillingly accepted this view, but I have found incontrovertible evidence for it in the Gospels.....<sup>27</sup>

Weitling went on to say that Christ often instructed in parables, which sometimes even his disciples did not understand, but he took care to explain them to his disciples, whereas he left the people in darkness. Weitling said

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.,



that Christ explained his purpose for this in Matthew (13:11-12):

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have in abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Weitling interpreted "whosoever hath" as meaning "whosoever hath understanding," and said that Christ clearly intended to deceive the people by leaving them in darkness. He defended Christ in this by saying that the end justified the means, and this philosophy was taken up by many of the heirs of Weitling, among others. It is part of Weitling's thesis that Christ himself was fallible and that he was not above the use of propaganda, that his parables often began with, "The kingdom of heaven is like ....[followed by a comparison] ," that these parables do not contain a description of heaven itself, but are much more an explanation of how to attain it. According to Weitling, it would have been more understandable if Christ had used the words, "The propaganda for the kingdom of heaven is like....."<sup>28</sup>

Weitling maintained that Christ and the Essenians had employed Jesuitical methods for the attainment of their purposes, and that for them the end justified the means. The Essenians, a sect to which he believed both John the Baptist and Christ himself belonged, had the principle of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-37.

the community of goods and was thought by Weitling to be similar in principle to the communism of his own age.<sup>29</sup> The sect reached a position of some significance only with the rise of Christ in public stature (although Weitling said he used another name). Christ's position as a leader was a difficult one, said Weitling, because as an illegitimate,<sup>30</sup> born in a stable and brought up by a carpenter, he could not easily win the confidence and favor of the people. And what Christ, a simple worker, could not bring about, could be accomplished by the Essenians without the knowledge of the people. John the Baptist, likewise a member, had proclaimed the equality of men on earth: "He answereth and saith unto them, he that hath two coats, let him impart

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<sup>29</sup>The Essenians, although they never numbered more than 4000 at any time, were significant in that they professed to practice complete communism. On being admitted after a rigorous novitiate of over three years, they surrendered all their possessions to the community, and, according to Philo, all the wages they earned they did not keep as private property, but they threw them into the common stock. They were ascetics who regarded the soul as imprisoned in the body, and their goal was to obtain release from the bonds of the flesh. Thus, they "despised" marriage, and the community had to be recruited perpetually from the outside. The unusual feature in their system of religious communism was that they did not withdraw from the rest of the world and worked and lived with the rest of the Jewish population. Gray, op. cit., pp. 35-38.

<sup>30</sup>Weitling himself was of illegitimate birth. He lost no opportunities to draw parallels between the first Messiah and the second who was to come : "We are on the eve of important events, the most important this world has ever seen. A new Messiah is coming to put into effect the teaching of the first one. He will demolish the rotten structure of the old social order, . . . and transform the earth into a paradise." Ernst Barnikol, Weitling der Gefangene und seine Gerechtigkeit. (Kiel: Walter G. Muhlau Verlag) p. 130.



to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." (St. Luke, 3:11).

Weitling's rationalistic viewpoint would not permit him to believe in the miracles which Christ worked according to the Bible. They were for him carried out only through the efforts of the whole Essenian sect, and their truth was upheld and propagated by the four Evangelists in the Gospels. The superstitious nature of the people of the age made these things necessary, so that they could be led along the right path.

Weitling attempted to prove, by means of appropriate citations of the Bible, that Christ, like himself, had been in favor of the abolition of private property, of money and of the right of inheritance; that Christ had believed in the principles of freedom and equality and in the equal division of labors and pleasures among all men; and finally, that Christ himself had been a human being, capable of error.

In the conclusion of Das Evangelium eines armen Sünders, Weitling admitted that one could read the Bible and make of it what one would. For Weitling, Christ was above all a social reformer, his doctrines were basically communistic and essentially the same as Weitling's own.

Elements of Weitling's Proposed Social Order. There can be traced in Weitling's works a motive for the establishment of a new social order which, although it is less pronounced than his motive of justice based on moral or ethical grounds, is nonetheless important. This motive is his desire for order. This desire made the seemingly anarchistic condition of the economic and social life in his world intolerable to him, and in its place Weitling wished to establish a well-thought-out, regulated system which would have made possible a harmonic organization of human relationships.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, there can be detected in Weitling's various writings the outlines of his social order for the future, although his method of procedure was so unsystematic as to prevent its being fixed into any definite system. Because Weitling, unlike many of his contemporaries and predecessors, was no mere critic, he was also an enthusiastic preacher, an apostle of the new faith; and his speeches and writings breathed of love for his fellow men and a desire for their happiness.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Mielcke, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>32</sup>See Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit, p. 125: "Here we are not concerned with exposing the defects of the old organization, the defects whose evil impress have been felt and are felt daily. We are concerned now much more with the fashioning of a new and better order of things, with the careful consideration of all wishes and interests, all abilities and desires, and with finding a system which, wherever possible, is qualified to satisfy all the demands put to it."



The second part of his Garantien, called "Ideas for the Reorganization of Society," gives the best exposition of what principles should be requisite to the establishment of the new order.<sup>33</sup>

According to Weitling, all organizations of society, good and bad alike, have one and the same original element to which one must revert before any changes are undertaken in an existing society. This element is the human desires (menschliche Begierden), by which he meant all the wishes, needs, hopes and longings of men. The means to satisfy these desires are the abilities (Fähigkeiten), which he called the natural limits of the desires; and the application of abilities are the physical and intellectual labors of mankind. The senses, so he thought, arouse the desires. The desires motivate the abilities, and the abilities human activity, whose fruits are the pleasures of man. Thus the whole mechanism is set in motion. The desires are the mainspring of the whole organization, and with every improvement and development of man's abilities and talents the desires become stronger. In this manner progress, said Weitling, is achieved.

The sum total of human desires and abilities balance each other in society, so that in a well-ordered

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<sup>33</sup>Werner Sombart, Grundlagen und Kritik des Sozialismus. (Berlin: Askanischer Verlag, 1919) Vol. I, pp.391ff.

society the desires of each person, despite all dissimilarities, may be satisfied effectively. As Man's desires, and with them his abilities, increased down through the centuries, his love for sociability became stronger, because in social life he found the means whereby he could increase his pleasures. In order to satisfy their desire for pleasures, Weitling said, men had to live together rather than singly; so that the products of each man's abilities would be available for all, and the "method of exchanging the abilities of individuals which least disturbs the natural law of progress is the best organization of society." Everything good arises out of the freedom and harmony of the desires and abilities of all; everything bad from their suppression for the advantage of a few.<sup>34</sup>

The idea of individual freedom for the satisfaction of desires can be traced to Fourier, in whose phalanx the impulses of the individual were to be given free reign insofar as they were consonant with "universal attraction" and "Harmony."

Weitling divided desires into three categories: acquisitive desires (Begierden des Erwerbes), such as the desire for wages, property and possessions; desires for enjoyment (Begierden des Genusses): good health, prosperity, fame, honor and pleasure; and lastly, desires for knowledge:

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<sup>34</sup>Weitling, Garantien, pp. 127-130.



reason, wisdom and talent. The impulse toward knowledge, said Weitling, was the most important of the three. Consequently, the means to establish a social order for its satisfaction was to have been education, voluntary and universal; voluntary, because everyone was to permit his desires and abilities to run their natural course so long as they did not interfere with the desires and abilities of others.

In order to insure the harmony of desires and abilities in society, Weitling wanted to entrust the conduct of society to an administration of men of learning (Wissenschaftler). And to this end, the administration of society could not be given over either to a prince or a dictatorship, or to a democratically elected majority because all these, Weitling thought, administer to personal interest and always reach power through it. For the "transition period," however, a dictatorship would be necessary to establish the new organization. No special privileges were to be given to those who governed because, for Weitling, the first should be the last and the last first. The personnel of Weitling's "Administration" were to comprise:

1. Such persons as have cultivated their abilities in various fields to a more perfect degree than any others.
2. Such persons as possess the most perfect knowledge of man's various abilities and powers.
3. Those who have studied successfully the natural tendency and abilities of all and in this study have ac-

Weitling pointed out that among the many branches of knowledge many are more harmful than useful. And, "at its zenith of perfection, where it assures ideas a sphere of influence, every branch of work becomes a science." Philosophy is the knowledge of all branches of learning which are most useful to society; it is not a special branch but universal, because it is bound up with all the others. For Weitling the three branches of learning most useful to society were:

1. "The systematic therapeutics of society" (Die wissenschaftliche Heilkunde), all useful knowledge of the philosophers, lawyers, doctors and theologians of the time. This knowledge was to be sifted of everything harmful, and all physical and spiritual weaknesses and "illnesses of society" were to be rooted out by these "healers of society."

2. Physics, by which he meant a knowledge of the forces of Nature and a study of their application for the benefit of mankind. This was to include agriculture, mining and various crafts necessary for material welfare.<sup>38</sup>

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versations with Goethe. (January 4, 1824), quoted in Hermann Weigand, Goethe, Wisdom and Experience. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949) p. 279.

<sup>37</sup> Hermann Weigand, Thomas Mann's Novel "Der Zauberberg." (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1933) p. 45. Further: "Familiarity with this legend is part of the literary background of the average cultured German."

<sup>38</sup> It is to be observed that Weitling placed chief emphasis and value on the material and utilitarian aspects of learning. He had little to say of art, except



3. Mechanics, including handicrafts and machine manufactures and inventions.<sup>39</sup>

Weitling criticized the principle of Legitimacy which dominated his age (the Age of Metternich). He thought that there was more opportunity for progress in a democracy but that in it talent came to the top only by accident. And the "rule of knowledge," which he considered desirable, could not be assured by it because the purest democracy was possible only with complete communism; and the method of election in a democracy would never realize a solution of social problems. The method of election which republicans thought assured a rule by government of the people, he said, was nothing more than a pleasant fraud, a concept which promised much but accomplished little. In the first place, he said, it is inconceivable that a people could rule. Such a concept is a mere myth because unanimity is impossible; there must always be a minority group; and if there is to be government by the people (Volksherrschaft), then all must rule. With the democratic system of election there is only the accidental rule by a few over the people because very often a majority is elected by sheer accident. He said that the French communists, despairing of the imperfections of the electoral system, proposed a dictatorship for the "transition period," the interim during which the new society was to be established after the old one had been abolished, and they

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insofar as it provided pleasure, and seemed to regard it as an amusement.

<sup>39</sup>Weitling, Garantien, pp. 142-43.

left over improvement of the electoral system to the future. With Owen there had been the idea of election according to seniority; the more important positions were to be given with increasing years. Fourier, said Weitling, had recognized the importance of ability but had bound it up with personal interest and paralysed it with the influence of money and left it to the mercies of an elected majority. Thus, for Weitling, a parliamentary majority was very often "nothing more than a weak, ignorant and malevolent minority."

Weitling's first principle for the new social order was to be that "philosophy must rule." Knowledge should cease to be the privilege of the few, and it should become possible for persons of the most limited intelligence, as well as for the greatest geniuses, to satisfy their desires (for knowledge) under the same conditions.<sup>40</sup>

In Weitling's social order the greatest geniuses and the persons of greatest talent were to have places at the head of the Administration in charge of the most important work. No one would envy them because these leaders were to earn no more than anyone else, and their responsibilities would be much greater. Thus, it was not to be persons who were chosen, but abilities. To choose leaders, "Academies of Knowledge" were to be established, to which ideas for the solution of current problems should be handed

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<sup>40</sup>Weitling, Garantien, p. 156.



for testing, discussion and approval. Written essays, similar to dissertations, were to be sent to them so that personality could have no bearing or influence on acceptance or rejection.

At the head of the Administration there should be a Trio, a three-man council, comprising the three most learned men in the fields above-mentioned: Therapeutics of society, Physics and Mechanics. Under the Trio there should be the "Central Master Company," which would administer the most important offices, and elect the Trio. Then, beneath the Central Companies, would be the "Master Companies," which were to conduct the administration of the districts or Länder. To simplify administration, each Master Company was to choose from its own membership a Board of Directors for Labor (Werkvorstand). The Central Master Company, was to elect a corresponding Central Board of Directors, which was to operate side by side with the Trio to assist it in an executive capacity. All of this bureaucratic apparatus was to function for "necessary and useful occupations." For the conduct of merely "agreeable occupations" (angenehme Arbeiten),<sup>41</sup> which were to cultivate pleasures, the arts, entertainments and light amusements, Academies were to be added to the Master Companies.

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<sup>41</sup>Georg Adler, Die Geschichte der ersten sozialpolitischen Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland. (Breslau: Eduard Trewendt, 1885) p. 24.

The tenure of office of the administrative personnel was to be indefinite. Members were to give way as soon as they were excelled in ability and knowledge. The Trio was to ascertain the amount of "necessary and useful" products which were needed for the entire population. Time requisite for the production of necessary goods was to be assigned uniformly to all those capable of work. Choice of work was to be left to the individual, and all possible provision was to be made for the frequent varying of work to escape monotony. Along with the equal distribution of labor, there was also to be an equal portion for all of the necessary and useful products. The overseeing of execution of these tasks was to be the responsibility of the Boards of Directors.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, the production and consumption of "agreeable" goods was to be regulated according to the individual's desire for them. Hours of labor spent in the production of such articles beyond the required necessary and useful labors Weitling called "Kommerzstunden." Each person was to have a "Kommerzbuch" in which were to be recorded the number of hours he worked at such "agreeable" occupation; and when the book was presented to the establishment where goods were held in common, he was to be given the desired

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<sup>42</sup>Fourier thought that all labor should be made attractive by shortening the hours of labor and frequent changes. Selections from the Works of Fourier. Julia Franklin. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1901) p. 166.



articles.<sup>43</sup> The value of these "agreeable," luxury articles was given as the exact number of hours necessary for their manufacture, and this number was to be recorded in the "Kommerzbuch." Accordingly, Kommerzstunden would provide means of satisfying various desires and inclinations and at the same time maintain a balance between work-hours and the value of the articles, in other words, between supply and demand.

With respect to work, the female sex was to be organized just as was the male, into its Boards of Directors, Master Companies, Academies, Kommerzstunden and the like; but women should not be qualified to become members of the Trio and the Central Master Company until they could prove themselves equal in talent to the men. But they should have first choice of the work they wished so that theirs might be the lighter tasks in which their abilities were not behind men's. Special preference should be given to mothers of small children so that they could perform their tasks at home near their children. The children, at from three to six years, should enter into a "school army" to which they should belong until they were ready to pass examinations to

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<sup>43</sup>Becker criticized certain communists who, when they could no longer defend the unnatural theory of absolute equality, took refuge in such devices as Weitling's "Kommerzstunden" so that only necessary articles were evenly divided, whereas luxury articles were divided according to the individual's desire for them. The difficulty was to determine what was necessary. Becker, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

prove their skills and knowledge in fields of their choosing.

Beyond this, it has been mentioned that Weitling recognized neither crimes, nor laws, nor punishments for his social state because these were only a consequence of the social disorder of the present system. Everything which remained of these weaknesses was to be treated rather as a disease which had to be cured than as crimes to be punished. All such "diseased" persons were to be regarded as minors under the guardianship of physicians before they could be permitted to enter society.<sup>44</sup>

Men of privilege were to be excluded from Weitling's system of administration because to govern was to be a duty and not a privilege:

No one may be poorer than the government.....  
No one can become a representative of the people if he refuses to place his properties at the disposal of the state..... So long as it is permitted those who shall administer the wealth of all to have special wealth for themselves and to profit from their positions, they will damage the interests of all by their administration. 45

In Die Menschheit wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte, Weitling outlined the principles on which his proposed society was to be based. He said that there could be no happiness without the realization of these principles, which

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<sup>44</sup>Adler, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>45</sup>Weitling, Garantien, p. 168.



were based on the Christian maxim, "Love thy neighbor as thyself:"

1. The law of Nature and of Christian love is the basis of all laws to be made for society.

2. The universal union of all mankind into a great confederation of families (Familienbund) and the removal of all narrow-minded conceptions on nationality and religious sects.

3. The equal distribution of labor and the fruits of labor at all.

4. Equal education and equal rights and responsibilities to both sexes according to the laws of Nature.

5. The abolition of inheritance and property of individuals.

6. The determination of leading authorities by universal suffrage. The principle of responsible government and the right to dismiss those who govern.

7. No privileges for the authorities in the distributing of goods necessary for life; hours of work for authorities to correspond to that of the rest of the population.

8. Each person is to possess the greatest possible freedom of speech and action, insofar as he does not encroach on the rights of others.

9. All possible freedom for the exercise and perfecting of individual intellectual and physical capacities.

10. A criminal may be punished by deprivation of his rights of freedom and equality but never of his life, and

of his reputation only by expulsion and exile from society for life.<sup>46</sup>

In order to bring Weitling's state into existence it was thought necessary that government be placed in the hands of Weitling himself and his followers; and this government, it was thought, could be accomplished by one of two means. The first was the enlightening of the people, for which was necessary freedom of the press and public court proceedings as well as the personal zeal of Weitling's apostles. The second means was the one which Marx also advocated later, namely that the already existing disorder of things be driven to its highest pitch, so that the patience of the people should finally be exhausted and the reins of government be handed over to those people who were supposedly acquainted with the real situation and knew how to better it.<sup>47</sup> The distinction must be made between Marx and Weitling, however, that, whereas Weitling's philosophy was founded upon the assumption that Harmony was the natural state of things in the world and human reason was the means

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<sup>46</sup>Weitling, Die Menschheit, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup>Adler, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>48</sup>Sombart, Socialism and the Socialist Movement, p. 51. Sombart says further that Marx's whole view of things may be expressed in the lines:

"The earth belongs to the Spirit of Evil, and not  
To the Spirit of Good. What the gods send us  
From above are things which may be used by all alike.  
Their light makes glad the heart, but it does not make  
man rich;  
In their estate no one can win possessions for himself."



to bring it about ( in other words, essentially a re-statement of the perfectability and the philosophy of the eighteenth century Rationalists ), Marx, on the other hand, accepted Hegel's assertion that it is the spirit of evil which brings about progress in the history of mankind.<sup>48</sup> Marx's communism was based, according to him, on conditions evolved historically, on actual existing conditions.<sup>49</sup> He believed, for instance, that no revolution could be "manufactured" but must result rather from historical conditions; and he expressed his opposition to plots and coups de main.<sup>50</sup>

Thus it can be seen that Weitling thought a communist revolution would be an expression of the will of individuals who were guided by rational processes. Marx thought that revolution would result from historical necessity which would find expression in the will of the proletariat to overthrow their oppressors.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>The Communist Manifesto, quoted in Ibid., p. 54: "The body of communist doctrine is not based on imaginary ideas, or on principles discovered or invented by some visionary anxious to improve the world. It is but the general expression of actual conditions in the existing struggle of class against class, the expression of history taking place before our very eyes."

<sup>50</sup>Karl Kautsky, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>51</sup>In the Paris Vorwärts of 1844 Karl Marx made the following pronouncement about Weitling: "Where could the middle class - their philosophers and scribes included - show a work to compare with Weitling's Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit, with respect to the emancipation of the bourgeoisie, the political emancipation? If we compare the insipidity and timid mediocrity of German political literature to this extraordinarily brilliant debut of

In the interrogation of Weitling on June 8, 1843, the evening of his arrest, he gave a statement which very well summed up the general aims and purposes for which he strove in all his writings and activities, and in it can be seen how widely his philosophy differed from that of Marx:

As it is in educating a child, so it also is in educating a nation. A child who is educated with blows, who receives cruel and barbaric treatment, will himself become cruel and barbaric. A child who is led with kind words and prayer will become noble in his whole being.....Therefore through my works I wanted to make this growing element of the nation realize that badness is not inherent in men and that it should not be increased even further through excessive punishments. I could only accomplish this by representing the evil in a milder light, and I tried to prove that it was not a result of wickedness in the human heart but of faulty education and defective administration and poor leadership in the conditions of society.<sup>52</sup>

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the German workers, and if we compare these gigantic childhood shoes of the proletariat to the dwarfishness of the old, worn-out political shoes of the German bourgeoisie, then we must prophesy an athletic figure for the German Cinderella. We must conclude that the German proletariat is the theoretician of the German proletarian class, (Weitling's book is proof of this!) just as the English proletariat is its national economist, and the French its politician." Quoted in Franz Mehring's introduction to Garantien. Of course, Weitling changed completely in Marx's eyes later, especially after his fall from grace in Brussels.

<sup>52</sup>Zürich Staatsakten. Weitling, Obergericht Nr. 3, quoted in Ernst Barnikol, Weitling der Gefangene und seine "Gerechtigkeit." (Kiel: Muhlau Verlag, 1929) p.138.



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