
The Social Revolutionists

[circa January 20, 1881]

by Philip Van Patten

Unsigned article attributed to Philip Van Patten in *Bulletin of the Social Labor Movement* [Detroit, MI], v. 1, no. 14 (Dec. 1880-Jan. 1881), pg. 5.

The National Executive Committee has received the following communication, which explains itself:

Philadelphia, January 17th, 1881.

Philip Van Patten,
Comrade:—

Will you please have the National Executive Committee officially decide the following question: Can members of the so-called “Socialist Revolutionary Club” belong to the Section of the Socialistic Labor Party? Please answer immediately and oblige.

Yours, fraternally,

S. Waldmann

Our direct reply to Comrade Waldmann is this: Members of our Party have a perfect right to belong to any association, of whatever nature, *provided* that the principles, public declarations, official actions, and the Constitution of such association do not conflict with the Platform, Constitution, and Resolutions of the Socialistic Labor Party. Whether or not the so-called Socialist Revolutionary Club is an organization hostile to our Party, we are not prepared to positively state. Certainly, we do know that the Club of that name in New York, as well as the one in Philadelphia, was organized with the aid of Hasselmann, the ex-member of the German Reichstag who was expelled from the Socialistic Party of Germany [Social Democratic Party of Germany] for his

incendiary speeches against universal suffrage and representative government.

We also know that a number of speeches delivered before those two clubs favored military organization and the study of revolutionary tactics, as opposed political action. The fact that such speeches are the rule and not the exception in those gatherings indicates a tendency contrary to the policy of our Party. Not having seen the platform or constitution of either club, we have not the official information to justify decisive action by our Committee. The sections in those cities should, however, lose no time in ascertaining the facts and acting as the circumstances may warrant.

We do not believe it worthwhile to dispute with the so-called “Revolutionists.” When they have no one else to quarrel with they will eat each other up. They are not nearly as dangerous as their wild talk would make them appear, and so long as our sections are careful to keep them out of official positions and to reject their incendiary resolutions, they had best be let alone. But should they dare to interfere with the political policy of our Party, or to compromise the name of Socialism by any gunpowder plots or other follies, they should be crushed without mercy!

When the Republican Party in this country wishes to carry an election, paid emissaries are sent into the Southern States to publish newspapers like the *Okolona States*, filled with violent rebel denunciations of the Union, and swearing that “the

South shall yet be free!" These newspaper articles are, of course, carefully copied by all Northern Republican papers, and people are frightened into the belief that the war must be fought over again if the Democratic ticket should be elected.

As the Socialist movement becomes a power, the capitalistic enemies, finding that open opposition only strengthens that movement, cunningly adopt the plan of sending their tools among us to shout revolution and clamor for blood. There is every evidence to prove that such a scheme is now being systematically carried out. We are collecting all needed information. We rely upon the good sense of our members to avoid any personal controversies concerning these questions, but to guard carefully their business meetings. Within our ranks is complete democratic control, full liberty of discussion, and every legitimate means necessary to accomplish our ends. Only dishonest men can seek to break down that unity.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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