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# The SLP and the SCPA:

## Three Letters from the Party Split, May 1899.

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### I.

To the SCPA from the NEC, SLP  
May 15, 1899

*Headquarters of National Executive Committee,  
and Office of National Secretary  
184 William Street, New York*

May 15, 1899

To the Board of Directors,  
Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association  
184 William Street, New York City

Comrades:—

At the last session of the National Executive Committee, SLP, a number of complaints were received and read coming from subscribers to the Party organ, *The People*, to the effect that they had received a so-called “Monthly Edition of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*,” containing matter injurious to the Party and for the dissemination of which the mailing list of *The People* had evidently been used, because the wrappers, in which the aforesaid sheet had been sent, bore the address labels of *The People* with the term of subscription credited thereon. The complainants conclude that there must be a traitor in our camp to make such a thing possible, and they deem it their duty to call attention to this underhanded work.

The National Executive Committee, upon hearing these complaints, and in view of the fact that the mailing list of *The People* is the result of the tireless work of the Party membership all over the land and must not be diverted to purposes hostile and antagonistic to the principles and tactics of the Party, instructed the undersigned to communicate with your board demanding an explanation as to who is responsible for the act of treachery that has evidently been committed. Awaiting your reply, I am,

Yours truly,

Henry Kuhn, *Secretary*

### II.

To the SCPA from the NEC, SLP  
May 24, 1899

*Headquarters of National Executive Committee,  
and Office of National Secretary  
184 William Street, New York*

May 24, 1899

To the Board of Directors,  
Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association  
184 William Street, New York City

Comrades:—

It has been brought to the attention of the National Executive Committee, SLP, that, with the last issue of the German Party organ, *Vorwaerts*, there has been issued an alleged supplement, wherein the principles and policy of the SLP are assailed, said “supplement” appearing as an integral part of the Party organ, and being so designated in the title.

In view of the fact that neither the duly elected editor of said organ, nor the National Executive Committee, has been consulted in this matter, the said “supplement” having been smuggled in, this action, from whatever quarter it may emanate, appears, apart from its treasonable aspect, like a gross breach of contract existing between the National Executive Committee on the one hand and the Publishing Association on the other. The National Executive Committee instructed the undersigned to communicate with your board, with a view of ascertaining whether the act complained of has been committed by the order of your body.

Awaiting an early reply, I am,

Yours truly,

Henry Kuhn, *Secretary*

## III.

To the NEC, SLP from the SCPA  
After May 24, 1899

National Executive Committee, SLP:

Dear Comrades:—

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letters dated the 15th inst. and the 24th inst., requiring respectively what right we had to use the mailing list of *The People*, and whether or not the last Supplement to *Vorwaerts* had been issued as such by authority of our Board.

From the nature of both inquiries we conclude that the present members of the National Executive Committee are not quite familiar with the arrangements under which *The People* and the *Vorwaerts* are being published, and in the interest of a better understanding between our respective bodies, we think it proper to set forth those arrangements at length.

In the beginning of 1891, when the *Workmen's Advocate*, the predecessor of *The People*, was on the verge of bankruptcy, our Association (the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association) came to the rescue of the Party by entering with the latter into a written agreement, of which the following is a copy:

**Agreement, made between the Socialist Labor Party  
and the  
Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association.**

It is hereby agreed:

1. The Socialist Labor Party agrees to discontinue the publication of the *Workmen's Advocate* with the issue dated March 28th, 1891, and to transfer the subscription list of the same to the Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association.

2. The Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association agrees to publish on April 5th, 1891, the first issue of *The People* and to fill out the undischarged balance of all the prepaid subscriptions of the *Workmen's Advocate*.

3. The Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association agrees to reserve so much of the fifth page of *The People* as the SLP may desire for its official use; that the first column of the said fifth page shall be headed, "Workmen's Advocate, Official Organ of the Socialist Labor Party," and the space used by the SLP shall be under the sole and exclusive control of the said SLP or its National Executive Committee.

4. The chief editor of *The People* shall be elected jointly by the National Executive Committee of the SLP and the Board of Trustees of the SCP Ass'n, and a majority of each of said boards shall be required to elect. In case the said boards cannot agree on an editor, a general vote of the members of the SLP shall decide.

5. The SCP Ass'n agrees to set aside all net profits that may be realized by the publication of *The People*, after all its outlays and expenses are paid, as a separate fund

not to be used except for the publication of *The People* as a daily newspaper.

*The Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association*

**H. Gottschalk, Treasurer**

[Seal of Party]

**Benjamin J. Greutsch, National Secretary**

Dated, March, 1891

A similar agreement was subsequently made for the publication of the *Vorwaerts*, with the difference that the latter since its publication was assumed by our Association never had an independent existence at all, but was simply the weekly edition of the *Volkszeitung*, with the additional heading of the *Vorwaerts* on it, and that the space given to the Party in that edition was limited to but five columns.

Acting upon the letter and spirit of these agreements, our Association has founded *The People* and has ever since been publishing both organs.

Thus you see our Association has always been and now is a sole owner of both *The People* and the *Vorwaerts* and everything connected with them, including the mailing list as well as the right of issuing the said organs in any form it may desire, and with or without a supplement, as it may think best: The rights of the Party to those organs are limited to the choice of the editors in conjunction with our board, and to the unrestricted use of a limited space of each of the said organs for Party purposes. And this is not a bare legal claim, but a good moral right as well.

The arrangement set forth in the agreement above quoted, was by no means a business arrangement: Our Association could never expect any pecuniary benefit from it, as all profits were from the outset set apart as a fund for the publication of a *Daily People*; on the other hand, however, we assumed the entire burden of all deficits and losses arising from the publication of those organs without receiving any contribution worth mentioning from the Party. And those deficits were until recently quite heavy. From the date of the agreement until this date our Association has paid deficits of *The People* amounting to over \$5,000, and our right to pay those deficits was never questioned.

Such was the situation when the editor of *The People*, with a zeal worthy of a better purpose, commenced his campaign of petty and malicious slander against our Association and its members, and of his puerile, ill-mannered, and entirely unprovoked attacks against its brother organ, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, a campaign in which he was ably seconded by the editor of the *Vorwaerts*. The sight now offered to the members of our Party was something that was never precedented and, it is to be hoped, will never be repeated in the history of our movement. A few theoretical questions of very subordinate importance to the work of the Party, and on which, by the way, the stand of the *Volkszeitung* was, in our opinion, fully in accord with the principles of scientific Socialism, were made the pretext for the vilest abuses against a Party organ that had served the interests of Socialism unflinchingly and tirelessly over twenty years. The editor of *The People* seemed to have forgotten all other missions of our Party organ and exhausted his entire famous vocabulary of abuses on the *Volkszeitung*.

Under those circumstances it became our imperative duty to defend against those attacks and to give our side of the case to the comrades at large. We drew up an explanation, moderate in tone and style and very pertinent in substance, and as a matter of mere courtesy, applied to your Committee for permission to publish it in the organs to which we have the paramount rights.

You know how this courtesy was appreciated: Your Committee not only presumed arbitrarily to shut the columns of our organs to our defense, but it in addition to it, issued a very one-sided, and, let it be said, a very hasty and ill-considered statement of its own, containing new attacks against the *Volkszeitung* and the Association publishing the same. And this without giving us any opportunity to present our side of the case. We are a self-respecting body of Socialists, sirs, and we could not afford to remain branded as enemies to the Party in the eyes of our comrades; our defense had to be published. Our contracts with the Party having been grossly violated by you through your refusal to allow us even a small part of the space reserved to us in our organs, we could resume the sole ownership of the same and continue their publication in a manner more subservient to the interests of the Party than at present; we could also order our explanation published in *The People* and *Vorwaerts* without consulting anybody, or we could publish

our defense in a separate edition or as a supplement to either of the two organs, and thus reach the members of the Party and our own subscribers.

We chose the latter as the most peaceful means, desiring to avoid a breach with the present members of the National Executive Committee. We authorized and ordered the use of the mailing list of *The People* and the issue of the supplement to the *Vorwaerts*, and shall do so again and as often as occasion requires until your body comes to a better comprehension of the duties of the trust placed in its hands by the Party, and ceases to deny us the right of self-defense as it did in flagrant violation of the most elementary principles of common decency, the principle of according to the accused the right of defense, which is respected even by the most reactionary bourgeois governments in their dealings with criminals of the most dangerous character.

We shall refrain from answering such flattering epithets as “act of treachery,” “underhand work,” and similar expressions, with which your letters abound — they are only embellishments of style; but we certainly protest against the designation of our publication as “matter injurious to the Party.” That phrase, which seems to be borrowed from some of the Pope’s encyclicals, is sorely out of place in a communication of the National Executive Committee of the SLP. Our issue consisted of our explanation and a series of articles on the question of taxation; our readers might agree or disagree with us, but we believe our Party is based on a sound scientific basis, and can stand the light of criticism; we believe in placing everything pertaining to Party matters before the forum of the membership, and from that point of view we do not regard even the scandalous attacks of *The People* injurious matter, all the less a dispassionate and decent criticism of Party affairs such as was contained in our publication in question.

Yours truly,

*The Board of Directors,  
Socialistic Cooperative Publishing Association*

F.H. Koenig, *Secretary*

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