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Adhémar Schwitzguébel,
*[On Resistance Funds]*²⁸

We do not think so [that the commodification of labour is an eternal condition], since labour, the source of all wealth, should also be the condition for all happiness, all freedom. To restore the law of justice in relations between labour and capital, we need a profound revolution that only the classes representing the interests of labour can bring about; a general and universal organization of workers therefore becomes an absolute necessity, not only for the complete and radical demand for labour rights, but also to resist with success the exclusive domination of capital under present conditions, so that the proletariat does not fall into a state of poverty and degradation that makes it incapable of bringing about the social revolution.

The need to organize labour with a view to resisting the unjust demands of capital has long been felt by workers in the most industrious countries, and the founding of trade unions answered this need to group and combine the workers' forces for the purposes of resistance. To oppose the pretensions of the capitalist boss, the power of the associated workers – that is, collective resistance to the domination of one individual – should be the means of counterbalancing the power of capital for the benefit of labour. Resistance societies are not only the sole means for workers to have rights in fixing the price of their labour; they also have the great advantage of preparing the general organization of the proletariat, of accustoming workers to identify their interests, to practise

²⁸ This text reproduces a portion of a report adopted at the general assembly of 29 August 1869 of the District Courtelary section (Switzerland) of the IWMA. Possibly written collectively, one certain author was Adhémar Schwitzguébel [1844–95], an engraver who published numerous writings. He was a delegate to the Congresses of Geneva (1866), Basel (1869) and The Hague (1872), and later a prominent figure of the 'autonomist' IWMA, as well as a participant at its Geneva (1873) and Brussels (1874) Congresses. The full version may be found in PI, II: 123–6.

solidarity and to act in common for the interests of all. In short, they are the basis for the coming organization of society, since workers' associations will have to do no more than take over the running of industrial and agricultural enterprises, while the tools, land, mines, etc. will be accorded to them by the collective once it has become their owner by virtue of company liquidations.

But let us keep to the present.

While the power of labour resistance is being organized, capital – which, with all the wheels of the economy operating to its advantage, is further taking over financial companies by means of large enterprises – becomes master of a large part of industry and all the means of circulation that are ever easier to acquire. The struggle between capital and labour then takes on a new aspect: isolated associations can no longer fight effectively against big capital, and the bosses can bring in foreign workers overnight to replace striking national workers. The federation of all the workers' societies thus becomes an absolute necessity for the present struggle, but also the only possible way of achieving general emancipation.

The foundation of the International Working Men's Association is simply the result of this new necessity, and it is time that, with the help of practical institutions, it enabled itself to achieve some of the hopes of the proletariat and to increase its power of action. To organize resistance internationally: such is one of the duties of our Association. An international federation of resistance funds is the logical counterpart to the international federation of workers' societies.

Thanks to the international solidarity that workers increasingly practise among themselves, it has been possible up to a point to correct the disadvantages resulting from the lack of a general resistance fund, but we are convinced that regular organization would allow us to support strikes more effectively and even make them unnecessary. When a strike breaks out, the societies involved (if they have nearly exhausted their capital) make an appeal to the workers' societies, which then begin fund-raising in support of it; funds come in slowly and often arrive only after the struggle is over; if several subscriptions are opened within a short space of time, the members grow discouraged, the incoming funds slow to a trickle, and the strikes fail for lack of support. If instead we set up one or more central funds, with a capital drawn from

contributions by all resistance societies belonging to the fund plus an extra half-yearly or quarterly contribution from all members of the International (which would advantageously replace special ad hoc subscriptions), we would have a considerable capital that we could use at any moment, strikes could always be supported at the time of the struggle, and workers' associations would acquire a power of resistance that they do not have at present. The bosses would know there was a central standing organization to support strikes, and, having learned from experience that this gives workers an invincible power to resist, they would be more readily disposed to accept the workers' demands, so that many strikes would be averted without any sacrifice of the right of resistance.

We conclude:

In the struggle now taking place between labour and capital, an essentially international struggle, it is indispensable to organize resistance internationally.

This can be organized only by means of a general resistance fund.

The capital for this fund may come: from a contribution by all workers' societies belonging to the general fund; from an additional half-yearly or quarterly contribution by all members of the International.

These funds will serve to support all strikes requiring assistance from the Association.