"Friedrich Engels, *[On the Importance of Political Struggle]*." *Workers Unite!: The International 150 Years Later*. Ed. Marcello Musto. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 274–275. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501302367.0088>>.

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Friedrich Engels, *[On the Importance of Political Struggle]*⁹⁸

[...] As you say, the attention of the people has undoubtedly been attracted to a very large extent by the empty declamations of the old political parties, which have thus greatly obstructed our propaganda. That happened everywhere during the first few years of the proletarian movement. In France, in England and in Germany, the Socialists were compelled, and are still compelled, to combat the influence and activity of the old political parties, whether they be aristocratic or bourgeois, monarchist or even republican. Experience has shown everywhere that the best way to emancipate the workers from this domination of the old parties is to form in each country a proletarian party with a policy of its own, a policy which is manifestly different from that of the other parties, because it must express the conditions necessary for the emancipation of the working class. This policy may vary in details according to the specific circumstances of each country; but as the fundamental relations between labour and capital are the same everywhere and the political domination of the possessing classes over the exploited classes is an existing fact everywhere, the principles and aims of proletarian policy will be identical, at least in all western countries. The possessing classes – the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie – keep the working people in servitude not only by the power of their wealth, by the simple exploitation of labour by capital, but also by the power of the state – by the army, the bureaucracy, the courts. To give up fighting our adversaries in the political field would mean to abandon one of the most powerful weapons, particularly in the sphere of organization and

⁹⁸ This excerpt is from a letter written on 13 February 1871 *To The Spanish Federal Council of the International Working Men's Association*. Reaffirming the importance of battle in the political field, Friedrich Engels (see note 47), Corresponding Secretary for Spain at the time, tried to counter the advance theories on the Iberian Peninsula of Bakunin's. The full version is in GC, IV: 479–82.

propaganda. Universal suffrage provides us with an excellent means of struggle. In Germany, where the workers have a well organized political party, they have succeeded in sending six deputies to the so-called National Assembly; and the opposition which our friends Bebel and Liebknecht have been able to organize there against a war of conquest has worked more powerfully in the interest of our international propaganda than meetings and years of propaganda in the press would have. At present in France too workers' representatives have been elected and will loudly proclaim our principles. At the next elections the same thing will happen in England. [...]