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Friedrich Adolph Sorge, [*The Struggle With Bourgeois Society*]¹⁰⁹

[...] The official report of the General Council of the Hague Congress gives a short account of it, concluding thus: ‘You, the delegates of the working class, are at this moment assembled to give a more militant organisation to a society which wants to emancipate labour, and to extinguish national hatreds.’

Workers, if our wounds reopen, when we recall the persecutions we have endured, when we recount this history of the International, of which we ourselves have been the protagonists, we inevitably arrive at the conclusion that there are for us but two alternatives, two paths to choose from.

The alternatives are:

A *submission*, patient, servile and passive to modern society, which assigns us to the position of dispossessed wage-slaves with the absolutely certain prospect of ever-increasing impoverishment and continual deprivations, until the point of famine.

Or else *resistance*, the struggle not only against the few privileged groups of the old society, as in the long-standing, historical struggles between classes, but against the entire organization of this society in the midst of which we live, that is to say against bourgeois society.

One thing is certain, as demonstrated by our own experience:

Modern bourgeois society, though divided into hostile factions, one against the other, and always openly or secretly at war – this society is united and

¹⁰⁹ This text is an excerpt from the *Public Address to Members of the IWMA* dated 20 October 1872. It was the first act of the new GC of the ‘centralist’ IWMA in New York. Friedrich Adolph Sorge [1828–1906] was a German Communist who immigrated to the United States in 1852. Author of various articles on the labour movement, he was among the founders of the overseas IWMA, and was its General Secretary between 1872 and 1874. This text was published on 15 December 1872, in the Belgian magazine *La Science Populaires* and its full version is found in PI, III: 15–17.

unanimous when it comes to maintaining at all costs its political and economic domination over the worker.

It thus vehemently opposes all attempts of the working class to produce an advantageous transformation of the existing social order. [...] Given that bourgeois society is possessed of a powerful, centralized organization to oppress us, are we to believe that we can make a single step towards our emancipation through decentralization, division, isolation, disorganization!

When, upon its birth, bourgeois society solemnly proclaimed 'the freedom of the individual,' a new slavery of the working classes resulted from this principle. [...]