

THE EVENTS OF MARCH AND THE „VOORUIT”

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The aloofness or non-involvement of the independent press and to a great degree, of the Liberal press as well, contrasted sharply with the emotional reactions of the Catholic papers. The Socialist press, however, is beyond any doubt, the most „engaged” in social affairs and hence one finds *Vooruit* the most fascinating of all the papers in Ghent in this year of turmoil.

The Socialist mouthpiece, from its very beginnings, has been dealing with the entire gamut of social issues and the March events only intensify the paper's eagerness to communicate and to inculcate its readers with Socialist philosophy. Besides the summary-type news reports on the events themselves, the major part of the small four page paper is devoted to social problems in the form of editorials, letters, articles or short stories. The tone of these writings can be angry or enthusiastic, plaintive or rude, but, in general, one must admit it reached the level of understanding of the readers and hence, was successful.

During the early weeks of March the question of universal suffrage is frequently debated and related to the planned demonstration of June 13 in Brussels¹. The *Vooruit* discusses, at length, the involvement of the anarchists in the outbreak of the turmoil in Liège. It is only by the time that the confusion and rioting has spread to the Borinage that the paper begins to take the side of the strikers, mostly because of the harsh repressive measures by the army. This belated sympathy for the strikers does not mean that the *Vooruit* was unsympathetic to their cause. It was definitely a matter of expediency because the paper did not want to be associated with the „criminals and vandals” of the early days. After the first week, *Vooruit* has taken a firm position and begins to withdraw from the initial defensive stand to a more aggressive attitude. This aggressiveness is combined with its first suggestions to remedy the terrible social situations in the country.

The initial proposal is a practical one: to send food to the disaster areas. When people are fed, they will no longer burn and loot, the paper argues. Furthermore, there is an immediate need for negotiations between strikers and management and last, but not least, no more troops should be dispatched². Several subscriptions are started by the paper to get funds to help those workers who have been dismissed by their employers or to pay the legal fees for those who are brought before the courts³. Since the Socialist paper is convinced that the „great and only instigator of the strikes is

(1) *Vooruit*, *March* 13 & 14, p. 1, c. 2; *March* 16, p. 1, c. 2; *March* 20 & 21, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(2) *Ibid.*, *March* 24, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3: *Mass Murder in Liège*.

(3) *Ibid.*, *March* 24, p. 4, c. 2.

hunger" ⁴, it is not surprising that the paper appeals constantly to the readers to contribute foodstuffs for the stricken workers. At regular intervals, the *Vooruit* publishes the number of bread loaves which have been collected. (April 2, p. 4, c. 1).

Even more regular is the appeal to organize — an appeal that is increasingly urgent after the army has killed several strikers ⁵. Besides a better organization for the workers, the chief goal remains the effort for universal suffrage: This particular demand, a little in the background during the first week of the trouble, gains more and more attention and is soon presented as the sole means of salvation. „Universal suffrage will give the people all the power they need. They will become the masters of the State and they will be in a position to change the terrible system of property. Only then will the workers be free and no longer slaves — only when they are granted the franchise." ⁶ The question of changes in the franchise is frequently debated in the heated context of a polemic with either the *Flandre Libérale* or the Catholic *Gentenaar* ⁷. Other occasions to emphasize the importance of universal suffrage are provided at the many Socialist meetings, which always include this issue on the agenda. The striking coal miners are reported also as having adopted as their slogan: „Long live Universal Suffrage! Long live the Republic!" ⁸

The *Vooruit* daily prints an identical appeal to the workers to register as voters. This means an examination at the City Hall which will qualify the workers to vote, at least, in the communal elections of 1887. This test makes the worker an „able or proficient voter" and it gives him the power to defend his interests on the local level. Those who can make it have the grave duty to do so, argues *Vooruit* repeatedly ⁹

(4) *Ibid.*, March 25, p. 1, c. 1; March 31, p. 3, c. 1; April 1, p. 1, c. 2; p. 3, c. 2; April 2, p. 2, c. 3; p. 3, c. 3.

(5) *Ibid.*, March 29, p. 1, c. 2; March 30, p. 1, c. 1, 2; April 2, p. 3, c. 3; April 4, p. 2, c. 2; April 7, p. 1, c. 1; April 8, p. 3, c. 3; April 23, p. 2, c. 3; April 24, 25, p. 1, c. 2; April 26, 27, p. 1, c. 2; April 29, p. 2, c. 2; April 30, p. 2, c. 3; May 30, p. 1, 2; May 12, p. 1, c. 3; May 25, p. 1, c. 2; June 9, p. 2, c. 2; June 12, p. 1, c. 2; June 16, p. 1, c. 1; June 21, p. 1, c. 2; June 24, p. 4, c. 1; June 29, p. 3, c. 3; June 30, p. 3, c. 2; July 8, p. 1, c. 2; Aug. 5, p. 1, c. 1; Aug. 11, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3; Aug. 14, 14, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 16, p. 1, c. 2; p. 2, c.; Aug. 25, p. 1, c. 2; Aug. 26, p. 1, c. 1; Sept. 3, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Sept. 5, p. 1, c. 3; Sept. 7, p. 1, c. 2; Sept. 10, p. 1, c. 2; Oct. 20, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Nov. 8, p. 1, c. 2, 3.

(6) *Ibid.*, March 27 & 28, p. 4, c. 1; March 29, p. 3, c. 2, 3; March 31, p. 3, c. 2; April 21, p. 1, c. 2; April 29, p. 3, c. 1; May 13, p. 1, c. 1; May 21, p. 2, c. 3; June 1, p. 4, c. 1, 2; July 4, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 11, p. 1, c. 2; Aug. 13, p. 1, c. 1; Aug. 14 & 15, p. 1, c. 1; Aug. 16 & 17, (coverage of the demonstration); Sept. 7, p. 1, c. 2; Sept. 28, p. 4, c. 1, (Socialist manifestation in Liège); Sept. 29, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Oct. 19, p. 1, c. 2; Oct. 30, p. 1, c. 2; Nov. 16, p. 1, c. 2.

(7) *Ibid.*, March 29, p. 3, c. 2, 3; April 20, p. 2, c. 2; May 10, p. 1, c. 1; May 18, p. 3, c. 3; May 20, p. 1, c. 3; June 21, p. 2, c. 3; June 23, p. 1, c. 1; June 26, p. 2, c. 2; Aug. 2, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 4, p. 1, c. 3; Aug. 11, p. 1, c. 2, 3; Aug. 25, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(8) The *Vooruit* announces daily several meetings to be held in different locations in Flanders. As for the slogan — it is part of every single manifestation, strike or meeting.

(9) This appeal is repeated many times and a good example is given on March

Next to the demand for enlarged franchise — from the appeal to register for the communal elections to the demand for universal suffrage —, the Socialist press is convinced of the necessity to establish a legal code to protect work and workers¹⁰.

At the end of March, a delegation of five is sent to Prime Minister Beer-naert to present a manifesto at the National Council of the Workers' Party. *Vooruit* notes bitterly that the prime minister was absent and that the manifesto had to be communicated to an aide. The document itself depicts the situation in Liège, Charleroi and elsewhere and blames the bourgeoisie and the government for the things which happened in the country. The cabinet is attacked for remaining unconcerned and inactive with regard to the working classes. The workers Party's manifesto concludes with a summary of remedies which must be initiated and applied immediately. Great public works are requested to provide more job opportunities; a regulation of working hours is imperative; the abolition of taxes on foodstuffs and the abolition of the lottery system for conscription; and the introduction of universal suffrage. It is quite significant that the Workers' Party, in an official document to the cabinet, lists the question of franchise at the bottom of the list of grievances. Not without significance is the last paragraph of the manifesto which is definitely in a threatening tone and states that „in case the government does not take serious measures that there 'could' be an outbreak of a general strike all over the country. The consequences of such a strike would fall upon the ruling classes.”¹¹

With respect to the immediate problem of the coal miners' strike, the *Vooruit* believes that the solution of this economic crisis can only be found in a take-over of this industry by the State and by its management by the trade unions¹². These workers' associations have to be Socialist of course, since they constitute the only guarantee for peace and order. Indeed, the paper points out that in those villages and towns where a strong Socialist organization is present, there is no violence or looting. Hence the conclusion: „that the people are peaceful where they are best organized and most Socialistic.”¹³ The desire for organization is also regularly expressed by readers in letters to the editor. These requests come mostly from the country-side in East Flanders and deal with the particular situations of the workers there. The requests originate in the angry sentiments of the workers who are irritated by the unwillingness of the employers and officials to listen to their legitimate complaints¹⁴. These complaints do not only include insufficient wages and too many hours of work but also the poor

30, p. 4, c. 2. A complete explanation of this problem is given on April 2, p. 2, c. 3; p. 3, c. 1.

(10) *Vooruit*, March 31, p. 1, c. 3.

(11) *Ibid.*, March 31, p. 3, c. 2.

(12) *Ibid.*, April 2, p. 1, c. 2.

(13) *Ibid.*, April 2, p. 3, c. 3.

(14) On April 5, p. 3, c. 2, one finds an interesting letter which illustrates the case extensively. The anonymous author advocates „organizations” for almost every town in the East Flanders province.

housing conditions and the excessive rents¹⁵. The forementioned issues, together with work conditions, form the agenda of the Convention of the Belgian Workers' Party, scheduled for April 25 and 26 in Ghent. One cannot overlook the fact that the otherwise overriding issue of universal suffrage does not appear on the agenda of the convention¹⁶.

When the Supreme Court in Brussels grants permission to the mayors of cities and towns to forbid the sale of certain newspapers in the streets, the *Vooruit* is understandably infuriated. Indeed the court order is certainly directed against the Socialist press, the *Vooruit* and the *Le Peuple* (Brussels) in particular. Yet, in a way, the paper welcomes this unjust decision because „persecutions will make us stronger, and will give us more enthusiasm and faith.”¹⁷ Moreover, it gives the Socialist press the unique privilege of defending the inalienable right of the freedom of the press, which of course puts the Liberals in an awkward position. The *Vooruit* editors play very skillfully the role of martyrs and they admit to their readers that this kind of unjust measures will precipitate the change in the social conditions since it accelerated the destruction of the bourgeois monopolies¹⁸.

Rienzi, a regular contributor to the *Vooruit*, occasionally devotes an editorial to the question of „class-struggle”. By the middle of April, he becomes quite vehement in advocating a life or death conflict between capitalism and Socialism. The time has come for the final battle since one witnesses armies splitting up to join the Socialist cause. Furthermore, the workers are no longer willing to accept compromises: „the fight will be long and bloody but Justice will triumph.”¹⁹

In order to spread Socialism „one has to use the tongue of the nineteenth century”,²⁰ *Vooruit* exclaims in great enthusiasm on the day the paper acquires a brand new printing press. It will be the best propaganda tool possible and *Vooruit* will be equipped to realize the dream to make the people the masters in the state, to regulate work, to abolish poverty and to introduce equality²¹. „The new press will lead to the ultimate triumph of Socialism” may seem a somewhat exuberant slogan but to the *Vooruit* it was an honest conviction and the paper was proven right by history: the press became the most forceful propaganda tool for Socialism. Besides the food stores, clothing stores and pharmacies, the *Vooruit* had in its daily paper the best instrument to gain the sympathy of the workers in Ghent and its environment.

The newly equipped newspaper is highly critical of the *Commission du Travail*, instituted by the government. In the first place, the paper argues, the Commission is a perfect device from the government's point of view since every complaint of the working classes can now be channeled into

(15) *Vooruit*, April 10, p. 3, c. 3.

(16) *Ibid.*, April 12, p. 1, c. 1.

(17) *Ibid.*, April 14, p. 1, c. 1.

(18) *Ibid.*, April 14, p. 1, c. 1, 2 ; April 22, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(19) *Ibid.*, April 16, p. 1, c. 2 : *Class Struggle*.

(20) *Ibid.*, April 17, p. 1, c. 2.

(21) *Ibid.*, April 17, p. 1, c. 2.

this „dead end street.” Moreover, the selection of the members proves the dishonest intentions of the government: all of them capitalists and the majority are Catholics. University professors, priests, politicians, lawyers and engineers are totally oblivious to the social conditions of the lower classes. Since there is not a single worker on the board, the paper fears that nothing substantial and truthful can be expected from these „comedians.”²²

In the middle of April, the rumor reaches *Vooruit* that many coal miners in Jumet have formed an organization which plans to demand that the mayors of the Bassin (Charleroi) negotiate between the strikers and the management of the mines. If this effort fails, the association intends to appeal to the King for help. If this step also fails to bring about serious social legislation, then the coal miners will emigrate to the United States as a last refuge²³. The *Vooruit* is exasperated by this suggestion and calls the miners naive. Not only the idea to appeal to the monarch but much more the idea of emigration aggravates the Socialist paper. To leave the country is to admit defeat! And to move from Belgian capitalism to American is worse! Moreover, the paper fears that the best workers will leave first and this will make the struggle even more difficult for the others. The *Vooruit* expresses the hope that these workers will forget about America and put their energies to work to achieve the dreams of the working classes in Belgium, to change institutions, to fight for their women and children and to get an education and the franchise²⁴. *Vooruit* uses the most bombastic style to condemn emigration and there is no doubt that the paper considers this the worst possible device to solve the social troubles of the lower classes.

About the same time the paper repeats the need to pay the workers on a weekly basis and maintains that this should not be left to the judgment of the employers. It is a matter of justice and therefore a question to be regulated and enforced by the government²⁵.

When the convention of the Workers' Party is opened in Ghent, the event is celebrated with a big parade throughout the city. Noticeable in the parade are the many red flags and posters carried by the demonstrating workers. The latter are very interesting since they reflect the feelings of the people committed to the Socialist cause. Most numerous are the placards demanding an enlarged franchise and several ask for education and human rights²⁶.

The convention itself makes a tumultuous start since the very first discussion centers around the freedom of the press. The debate is even more heated when the Juni 13 demonstration is discussed. Since the mayor of Brussels has threatened to forbid the march, several delegates suggest civil disobedience in that event. Others however, prefer to hold several demon-

(22) *Ibid.*, April 20, p. 1, c. 3 ; p. 2, c. 1, 2.

(23) *Ibid.*, April 21, p. 3, c. 2.

(24) *Ibid.*, April 21, p. 3, c. 3.

(25) *Ibid.*, April 24 & 25, p. 3, c. 3.

(26) *Ibid.*, April 28, p. 1, c. 3.

strations in all major cities simultaneously if Mayor Buls refuses permission to march in the capital ²⁷.

Another touchy problem foremost on the minds of the Socialist conventioners is the „international regulation of work”. The discussion, held during the second session, is dominated by delegate Cesar de Paepe, who being a medical doctor himself, insists with vigor upon the enforcement of health measures in hazardous industries. The doctor cites the example of Switzerland where steps have been taken by the government ²⁸. The wish is expressed that an international convention will be held on this issue and this proposal gets the immediate endorsement of the eloquent British delegate, Headingly, and the Ghent Socialist leader E. Anseele.

After studying the international legislation, the convention comes to an unanimous conclusion which states the seriousness of the problem. It adds some specific stipulations: „the abolition of child labor; the regulation of the work of adolescents so that they can combine their apprenticeship with further education; the abolition of work of women in those areas of the industry which are incompatible with the nature of women; the fixing of a normal workday; the establishment of health precautions in plants, factories and mines; legal control of the use of poisonous material in manufacturing; and lastly, severe control with regard to the introduction of the new machinery if this is concurrent with substantial increase in unemployment.” ²⁹

The report recommends that the Belgian government imitate the Swiss initiative in order to achieve international legislation ³⁰. At the insistence of the Ghent delegation, the convention includes some remarks on the international economic crisis — which is caused by the imbalance between products and the use thereof — and on the situation in the Belgian coal mine industry. With respect to the latter, the report suggest two remedies: the absorption of the coal mines by the State and the organization of „chapters of miners” who will negotiate with the government on the exploitation of the mines ³¹.

Although there was an obvious difference of opinion between several leading delegates on the expediency of discussions on the turmoil in Liège and Charleroi ³², the convention does not refrain from concluding the meeting with a statement blaming the Belgian government for the crisis. Besides expressing the classical sympathy for „the comrades in distress”, the communiqué points to the uselessness of the *Commission du Travail* and reiterates its belief that only universal franchise will solve the problem ³³.

The socialist April convention in Ghent certainly constitutes the broadest single contribution to „Socialist remedial literature” with respect to the March crisis in Belgium. The vigorous tone of the documents is beyond

(27) *Ibid.*, April 28, p. 2, c. 2, 3.

(28) *Ibid.*, April 29, p. 1, c. 3. The speaker does not give any specifics about this Swiss program.

(29) *Ibid.*, April 29, p. 2, c. 2, 3.

(30) *Ibid.*, April 29, p. 2, c. 3.

(31) *Ibid.*, April 29, p. 3, c. 1.

(32) *Ibid.*, April 30, p. 1, c. 3.

(33) *Ibid.*, April 29, p. 3, c. 1.

doubt a sign of the increased confidence in the Socialist movement. This confidence is only a reflex of the ever-growing frustration in the working classes. The awareness of the Socialist leadership that here is a unique opportunity to catch the imagination of the lower classes is amply illustrated by the enthusiasm of the *Vooruit* and the uneasiness of both Catholics and Liberals.

During the first week of May, several small town mayors in East Flanders forbid the sale of the *Vooruit* on the newsstands. The anger of the paper is justified but simultaneously, the editors realize the value of such a blatant oppression of the rights of the press. Such activity on the part of the bourgeois „officialdom” makes the Socialist cause more attractive to the general public and *Vooruit* is convinced that it will gain from this martyrdom³⁴.

In a dispute with the Liberals, the paper gives a harsh and bitter editorial whip-lashing at the address of the outstanding Liberal Statesman, Frère-Orban³⁵. When the aging Liberal claims that the Socialist philosophy understands collectivism in the sense of the „coal mines for the coal miners”, *Vooruit* retorts bitterly: „This man, Prime Minister for many years, knows less than a simple workman.”³⁶ The Socialist paper then explains that the „collectivism of Socialism intends that the property, the factories and the work materials belong to the State or the local government and that these industrial institutions are to be governed by chambers composed of workers, engaged in these particular industries.”³⁷ This is not just a Socialist opinion the paper argues; it is the only way to solve the industrial crisis and the workers’ problem. The conviction that Socialism, definitely after universal franchise is a fact, will mean the salvation of the working classes is eloquently described in an editorial announcing the candidacy of comrade Anseele for the provincial elections of May 23³⁸. Realizing that Anseele’s candidacy for the provincial council is more a matter of principle than a political possibility or practicullity, the *Vooruit* still insists that this „historic first” means a great leap forward for the Socialist cause³⁹. The campaign surrounding this impossible candidacy is intense and widely covered. It takes the entire front page from May 14 up to May 23, the day of the election. The candidacy of Anseele is viewed as a „medicine” to cure the social discomforts of the times. The pride of *Vooruit* has no limits when the paper presents its leader. To vote for him will mean more for the progress of the workers than all the bourgeois articles and work commissions combined⁴⁰. When the candidate campaigns he insists that he expects many of the small bourgeoisie to cast their vote for him. He even expresses the hope that the bourgeoisie at-large will realize the seriousness of the situation and will join the lower bourgeoisie in support of

(34) *Ibid.*, April 30, p. 2, c. 3 ; May 4, p. 2, c. 1, 2.

(35) *Ibid.*, May 7, p. 1, c. 1, 2 ; May 8, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(36) *Ibid.*, May 8, p. 1, c. 2.

(37) *Ibid.*, May 8, p. 1, c. 1 ; May 26, p. 1, c. 1.

(38) *Ibid.*, May 10, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(39) *Ibid.*, May 10, p. 1, c. 1 ; May 14, p. 1, c. 1.

(40) *Ibid.*, May 17, p. 1, c. 3.

a worker-candidate⁴¹. Anseele does not have a specific program which would differ from the general principles laid down by the Belgian Workers' Party. He expands regularly on the need of universal suffrage as a necessity of historical growth and he urges legislation to prevent disasters like the ones in Charleroi⁴². For the rest, one finds Anseele's campaign mostly directed against the Catholic cabinet in power, the Liberals, the priests, the army, and the *Commission du Travail*. All of them are considered incompetent and without genuine interest for the plight of the workers⁴³.

When the election returns are in and the Socialist candidate pulls about 20 % of the votes, the *Vooruit* shows reserved enthusiasm and satisfaction: „We knew that we could not win but our party gained votes without any increase in the franchise. Bravo and Forward.”⁴⁴.

One may wonder if the Anseele candidacy for a public office has to be discussed in the frame of „remedies for the social crisis of March”. Indeed, it may appear to be part of the political growth of Socialism in Ghent and Belgium. However, related to the contribution of the *Vooruit*, one cannot fail to recognize that it was the paper's intention to project Anseele's candidacy as one of the most concrete remedies to ameliorate the conditions of the lower classes. That this candidacy was concurrent with a reaction against the March events is part of the contingencies of history. There is a remarkable side aspect to Anseele's first attempt in political life: in the weeks preceding the elections he was summoned before the Gent Court for *lèse-majesté*. The political analyst may believe that it was expedient to promote Anseele's candidacy in such circumstances. At first sight, one can only conclude that it enhanced the candidate's popularity among the lower classes since he became more and more a martyr in the eyes of popular opinion. *Vooruit* was an essential instrument in building such an image⁴⁵.

The eloquence of the paper is once more manifested when Mayor Bols of Brussels officially refuses a permit to the Belgian Workers' Party to demonstrate on June 13. *Vooruit* is angered by this untimely decision but admits that Bols is not the real culprit. „It is the proportioned class of Liberal and Catholic opinion, which prevents this demonstration.”⁴⁶ The paper, with justification, points to the violation of the workers' constitutional rights to congregate. On the other hand, Bols made the decision on the grounds of protection of public safety, which constitutes a permissible legal reason for his decision. The mayor explained that he did not have adequate police forces and that there was evidence that guns had been sold to prospective demonstrators, and that the railroad company could not take care of the increase of transportation. For these very reasons, Bols refuses permission for a provincial demonstration for which the secretary

(41) *Ibid.*, May 18, p. 3, c. 2, 3; May 22, p. 2, c. 1, 2.

(42) *Ibid.*, May 18, p. 3, c. 3.

(43) *Ibid.*, May 19, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3; May 20, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(44) *Ibid.*, May 24, p. 3, c. 2.

(45) *Ibid.*, May 18, p. 2, c. 2, 3; May 19, p. 2, c. 3; p. 3, c. 1, 2; May 21, p. 3, c. 1.

(46) *Ibid.*, May 27, p. 2, c. 2, 3.

of the Workers' Party, Joseph Maheu, had applied immediately after the national demonstration was forbidden⁴⁷.

During the first weeks of June, *Vooruit* reports in emotional editorials, articles and notes on the progress of the trials of De Fuisseaux and Anseele. On this occasion the paper elaborates frequently on some of the important Socialist aims, notably universal suffrage. With regard to this issue it is interesting to note that the accusation against Alfred De Fuisseaux, sent by the prosecutor general to the Court of the Brabant Province, states that the „pamphlet, with a red cover, entitled *Le Catechisme du Peuple*, written by De Fuisseaux, attacks the basic institutions and laws of the country, under the disguise of a plea for universal suffrage.”⁴⁸

The catechism is called a „harbinger of the grave incidents” in Liège and Charleroi; and the prosecutor points out that the first strikes break out on the payday of the first fortnight after the publication of the pamphlet⁴⁹. No matter how the legal authorities view the catechism, be it either as an attack against the laws of the country or an assault on the person of the King, — as is stated in the act of accusation, — is it beyond any doubt that the author's intention was a fervent plea for the cause of universal franchise. Besides this repetitious appeal for this all-important goal⁵⁰, De Fuisseaux argues for some other remedies as well to improve the conditions of the workers. Foremost on his mind is the need to associate: „all the workers have to join the *Parti Ouvrier*. As soon as they are united, they will be masters.”⁵¹ The latter proposal is only second to universal suffrage: it will solve the problem of the „slavery of the worker” and make him a free man (p. 2 and p. 4); equity in taxation will only be achieved after universal suffrage is a fact (pp. 8-11); limits have to be set to the scandalous expenses of the King and the army (pp. 11-13) and justice will come to the industries and factories (pp. 15-16)⁵².

Anseele and De Fuisseaux are both found guilty of *lèse-majesté* and *Vooruit* publishes the picture of both on the front page on the very same day⁵³. There is little regret since the paper senses that the trial has enhanced the popularity and prestige of the Socialist cause. There is a peculiar but definite enthusiasm in the halls and rooms of the *Vooruit* building after the Anseele trial. Thousands of well-wishers have flocked to the center of Socialism in Ghent and the crowds listen eagerly to Van Beveren who attacks the Jesuit government, the injustice of the court and the lack of freedom in the country. However, he adds that „all these injustices and Anseele's trial will open the eyes of all the workers and they will unite.”⁵⁴

(47) *Ibid.*, May 31, p. 2, c. 1, 2; p. 3, c. 1.

(48) This accusation was sent to the court on April 1, 1886 and included the printer, Alfred Maheu as well. The *Vooruit* gives the entire document on June 3, p. 2, c. 1, 2; p. 3, c. 1, without further comment. The significance of the accusation is proportionate to the impact of the Catechism itself.

(49) *Vooruit*, June, p. 3, c. 1.

(50) Seven times in a pamphlet of 16 small pages!

(51) *Catechisme*, p. 15.

(52) Number between parenthesis refers to the pages in the *Catechisme*.

(53) *Vooruit*, June 5 & 6, p. 1.

(54) *Ibid.*, June 8, p. 3, c. 3.

The enthusiasm and emotion reached a climax when Anseele thanks the gathering in romantic and ebullient language for their affection and he appeals to them to form one front. He tells the people how his trip to jail, for six months, will be a triumphant march for the party ⁵⁵.

When June 13 arrives and no popular commotion appears imminent, the *Vooruit* finds that the „bourgeoisie has granted the workers a moral triumph by forbidding the demonstration” and that this particular day will bear fruit of great political importance. The editorial ends quite abruptly with the statement that „the 13th of June will be the beginning of the decisive class struggle in Belgium, which lead ultimately to the disappearance of all classes.” ⁵⁶

An improvised Workers' Congress on June 14 gives the leadership of the Socialist movement an opportunity to express itself after the frustration of the canceled demonstration ⁵⁷. With a practical unanimity (102 against 1 and 7 abstentions) the congress decides to continue „legal propaganda” for the Socialist cause. They remain convinced that this remains still the best vehicle to remedy the social conditions in the country. Representative Van Beveren adds to this decision that the „best propaganda tool is the cooperative”, not only because it is the best way to unite the workers but more so because it is the best guarantee for a successful strike ⁵⁸.

Besides the cooperatives, which have to be modeled after the „*Vooruit*” example, several delegates urge that the party should participate in all the elections in the country and that the major Socialist papers *Le Peuple* and *Vooruit* have to inform the public about those bourgeois candidates who fail to support the workers' cause ⁵⁹. It is the first time that such a political move is verbalized but all the delegates at this Brussels Convention do agree on the usefulness of this suggestion.

The second major point on the agenda, after the question of the propaganda, is the intricate problem of a „general strike”. Many of the representatives of the workers' associations favor the use of this ultimate weapon and Cesar de Paepe, of Brussels, exclaims: „The gravest revolutionary movement is the legal movement. The general strike is a legal means!” ⁶⁰ This popular delegate of Brussels gets a standing ovation when he ends with a request to organize a national demonstration for universal suffrage on August 15 ⁶¹. The president of the assembly, E. Anseele, points out the great dangers of a general strike since such a move contains the seeds of revolt. The propaganda has to be very cautious; the organization of such a strike very carefully planned and the guide lines of the central committee of the

(55) *Ibid.*, June 9, p. 2, c. 2.

(56) *Ibid.*, June 13, p. 1, c. 2.

(57) The convention was held in Brussels and the records show an attendance of approximately 500 representatives of 138 different Socialist and Workers' associations from the entire country. Edward Anseele of Ghent presided and opened the session.

(58) *Vooruit*, June 16, p. 1, c. 1.

(59) *Ibid.*, June 16, p. 1, c. 2.

(60) *Ibid.*

(61) *Ibid.*

party have to be followed scrupulously⁶². The hero of the Ghent Socialists replies to a delegate of Brussels, who advocates revolution and anarchism as the sole remedies to change the social injustices, and admonishes all the comrades not to listen to the anarchist voices but to follow intelligent counsel and common sense⁶³.

The remarks of Anseele become even more concrete when during the following week several strikes break out in the Hainaut province and the danger is imminent that it may become a general strike⁶⁴. The origin of this renewed tension in the coal mine industry is nothing but hunger, according to *Vooruit*. But, the paper continues, it remains a grave mistake to begin a strike without a penny in the strike-fund. Insufficient wages, exhaustive work and the desperation of hunger have driven the hopeless miners to vandalism which is to be deplored, *Vooruit* explains, but which ought to open the eyes of the government. There is no cause to send troops but there is to send food and clothing⁶⁵.

The Ghent paper complains bitterly about the lack of organization, an exact reflection of Anseele's philosophy, but does not hide its sympathy for the frustrated comrades who scream for bread, the Republic and France!⁶⁶ *Vooruit*, very disturbed about the events in the Borinage, interprets these disorders as the „final sign for the decisive battle to redeem the fourth estate.”⁶⁷

Vooruit refers to Germany, where Bismarck is implementing Socialist principles; to England, where the government is seriously handling the Irish question — „which is a social question par excellence” according to *Vooruit*; to France, where the authorities interfere in the dispute between miners and capitalists; and concludes that Belgium is still in the first phase of the class struggle⁶⁸. This leads to growing frustration and despair among the lower classes; it will be manifest in the August 15 demonstration planned by the Workers' Party. If the government fails to comply to this latest request and forbids the march in sinister fashion as it did in the case of June 13, then only one peaceful weapon is left: the general strike⁶⁹.

Although the final paragraph of this editorial sounds like an ultimatum to the Belgian government, it is obvious that the Socialist paper hopes fervently that permission to demonstrate will be granted. The *Vooruit* is indeed, not looking forward to a general strike since the experiences in the Borinage prove that the workers are insufficiently organized to strike on such a vast scale⁷⁰. The appeal to organize is a stereotype for the paper and looks like a fixation to the outsider. However, one may not dismiss it as such, since „organization” will definitely prove to be the strength of the

(62) *Ibid.*, June 16, p. 1, c. 3.

(63) *Ibid.*

(64) *Ibid.*, June 18, p. 1, c. 2.

(65) *Ibid.*, June 18, p. 4, c. 2; June 21, p. 1, c. 2.

(66) *Ibid.*, June 18, p. 4, c. 2, 3; June 21, p. 1, c. 1.

(67) *Ibid.*, June 19 & 20, p. 1, c. 1.

(68) *Ibid.*

(69) *Ibid.*, June 19 & 20, p. 1, c. 2.

(70) *Ibid.*, June 21, p. 1, c. 1.

lower classes in their struggle in society. In this contest one can understand the rather startling appeal of *Vooruit* to help the worker in the Walloon provinces to get organized: „It is of utmost importance that Socialist missionaries are trained for Charleroi and the Borinage.”⁷¹

When strikes break out in the flax mills of J. Casier, industrialist and senator, and others as well, the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers' Party of Ghent denies any connection with these strikes. The party refuses to support officially the activities of the strikers even though, simultaneously, they offer their sympathy by opening a strikers' fund for the victims⁷². Severe criticism is in store for police brutality and bourgeoisie indifference; but also for the strikers who have failed to organize better. *Vooruit* appeals for composure and unity among the Ghent workers⁷³. The paper does this on principle and also because of the bad reputation it is receiving in the bourgeois press which is daily blaming the Socialists for the disorderly conduct of the workers in the Ghent industry. These allegations infuriate the *Vooruit* and the reaction against Catholic and Liberal press is vigorous⁷⁴. When *La Flandre Libérale* claims that the workers are uneducated and stipulates that this is the major cause of their servitude and poverty and hence that the solution lies in compulsory education, and *La Chronique* answers that this particular measure will not provide more bread for the workers' families and demands therefore that major public works are initiated, *Vooruit* enters the debate as an arbiter⁷⁵. After granting that both papers are correct, but that *La Chronique* shows more practicality, the Socialist paper elaborates further on what the Socialists think ought to be done. State and government definitely need to intervene dramatically to provide food, clothing and work because the greedy capitalists will not move on their own initiative. But, according to *Vooruit*, this is far from practical and therefore, there remains the only alternative solution: that the great land-owners be expropriated, since this is the only justified measure and even the only practical one.”⁷⁶

This rather unusually adamant statement of the *Vooruit* can only be explained in the context of the strikes which are springing up in all the factories in Ghent. The paper is certainly embarrassed by this phenomenon since it refuses to be associated with it. On the other hand, one can see that the situation makes the editorial staff nervous and hence it proposes an extreme proposal. *Vooruit* on several occasions will be very harsh in judging the Catholic and Liberal factory owners in the Ghent industry⁷⁷.

After publications of a manifesto, addressed to all the workers, demanding universal suffrage or else a general strike⁷⁸, *Vooruit* publishes another

(71) *Ibid.*, June 21, p. 2, c. 3.

(72) *Ibid.*, June 24, p. 3, c. 1; June 25, p. 2, c. 2.

(73) *Ibid.*, June 24, p. 4, c. 1.

(74) *Ibid.*, June 24, p. 4, c. 2; June 25, p. 1, c. 3; p. 2, c. 3; June 26 & 27, p. 2, c. 2; June 28, p. 1, c. 3; p. 3, c. 1.

(75) *Ibid.*, June 29, p. 1, c. 1.

(76) *Ibid.*, June 29, p. 1, c. 2.

(77) *Ibid.*, June 30, p. 3, c. 2, 3.

(78) *Ibid.*, July 4, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

demanding true freedom of the press⁷⁹ and culminating in a third with regard to the right to strike⁸⁰.

The latter issue is of course, a very sensitive one, since it really is the only weapon in the hands of the workers. It is occasioned by a statement of the governor of the Hainaut province advocating a ruling against striking. The *Vooruit* is understandably furious and speaks about prisons, gallows, galleys, war on capitalism and the nobility, and for „state, power and capital for the workers.”⁸¹

When the *Commission du Travail* is operating in Ghent, *Vooruit* gives ample coverage to its activities, especially when Anseele and his fellow Socialists present their views⁸². In the aftermath of the hearings, *Vooruit* recommends several legal measures and reforms in a solid editorial. Leading the list of recommendations is the very practical suggestion that a law has to be introduced forbidding employers to pay their workers in food stuffs. Further, a law is needed which would penalize those capitalists who coerce their employees to buy in their own stores or those of relatives and affiliates⁸³. In the same order one has to understand *Vooruit's* appeal to take legal action against factory owners who build or buy workers' houses in the immediate neighborhood of the factory⁸⁴. *Vooruit* recommends the serious study of the cooperatives in England and hopes that the government will give substantial loans with the lowest interest rate to newly established cooperatives⁸⁵. The paper urges resolute legal action to force the employers to pay the workers their wages on a weekly basis. The editorial ends with repetition of the requested financial and legal help for the cooperatives, which is the best thing the government can do it if wants to save Belgium from a catalysm: which would be „the supremacy of the wealthy.”⁸⁶

During the hearings, several topics on the social conditions of the lower classes are discussed and to no great surprise, many of the witnesses reflect the Socialist philosophy. The distinguished members of the Commission are strong advocates of child labor, although admittedly they see the need for tight regulation so that abuses would be eliminated. M. de Ridder and Janssens, members of the committee, find that occasionally children of eight and nine years could be admitted to work⁸⁷. Another member, M. Lammens, considers twelve an adequate minimum age, while the aristocrat M. 't Kint de Roodebeke finds fault with the parents who will lie about their children's age to make a few more pennies⁸⁸.

(79) *Ibid.*, July 8, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(80) *Ibid.*, July 12, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(81) *Ibid.*, July 12, p. 1, c. 2.

(82) *Ibid.*, July 16, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3; p. 2, c. 1.

(83) This was a very common practice at the time and the Socialists were irritated by the continuation of this injustice.

(84) *Vooruit*, July 17 & 18, p. 1, c. 1.

(85) *Ibid.*

(86) *Ibid.*, July 17 & 18, p. 1, c. 2.

(87) *Ibid.*, July 19, p. 1, c. 1.

(88) *Ibid.*

The reaction of the Socialist leadership, present at this public meeting, is unanimous and firm. M. Foucaert expresses the wish to see education for children obligatory up until fourteen years and E. Anseele gives a more detailed, and definitely very interesting, projection of what the Socialists want with respect to child labor. He suggests the following: „Compulsory education until fourteen years of age; from fourteen to sixteen, a half day's work and three hours of study; from sixteen to eighteen, three quarters of the day spent on the job and one quarter devoted to vocational training; as soon as they reach eighteen, a regular workday would be a fact⁸⁹. One cannot help but be impressed by the concrete character of Anseele's proposal, which seems to imply that it was not a question of inspiration on the spur of the moment, but the result of previous constructive thinking. The Ghent Socialist leader voiced an interesting remark which had some value: that if the children worked less, their fathers would have more work opportunities⁹⁰.

The discussion of the labor of women which took place between the Socialist leaders and members of the *Commission* is stupefyingly short and superficial and lacking depth and originality. The Socialist Foucaert, Van Streydonck and Eeckhoutte repeat the same complaints: they are against women working in industries hazardous to their health⁹¹. Nothing is added to this over-simplification; not a single word is said about the duration of a workday or the conditions in the factories where the women have to work. The latter issue has been a much treated subject of *Vooruit* editorials⁹² and had angered many in the socialists ranks.

When the subject of work for men is brought up, most of the witnesses present ask for a decrease in work hours, whereupon M. Lammens replies that this measure would put the entire Belgian economy in jeopardy⁹³. All the members retort that in England and the United States, work hours have been reduced without any harmful effect upon the economy. M. Janssens, a colleague of M. Lammens, then makes the mistake of saying that the British people work faster than the Belgians. Thereupon follows an interesting dialogue:

„Foucaert (Socialist): Give us the same materials and mechanics and our people will match everyone else.

M. Janssens: Our population is slower, but more persistent; by working less hours, we would lose this advantage.

Van Beveren (Socialist): If the British workmen work harder and faster then this is to be explained by the simple fact that they are fed better.

M. Lammens (Commission): This is true.

Anseele: Which proves that they are paid better.”⁹⁴

(89) *Ibid.*

(90) *Ibid.*

(91) *Ibid.*, July 19, p. 1, c. 2.

(92) *Ibid.*, June 25, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3; June 30, p. 1, c. 2; July p. 1, c. .

(93) *Ibid.*, July 19, p. 1, c. 2.

(94) *Ibid.*

Van Beveren, who throughout the hearings has been very articulate, explains to the *Commission* that a decrease in work hours would create more job opportunities for the unemployed. He specifies about 200,000 more jobs and *Vooruit* notes, with reserved pleasure, that „all the members of the *Commission* give signs of approval and agreement.”⁹⁵

The Socialists sum up their requests with respect to worker legislation with an appeal — voiced previously and regularly in *Vooruit* — to the *Commission* to study serious international legislation, as it is tentatively initiated in Switzerland. The distinguished members do admit its desirability but dismiss, with the same phlegm, the feasibility of such legislation⁹⁶.

During the same hearing on Friday, July 16, but not reported until July 20 in the *Vooruit*, the question of drunkenness is discussed. Van Beveren demands legislation but Anseele opposes any form of legislation in this connection if it does not reach to the causes of this evil, namely, „inadequate wages, indigence, unhealthy housing, dirt over-crowded neighbourhoods, bourgeois contempt for lower classes keeping the workers virtually locked up in their neighbourhoods and bars. Give the workers meat to eat and they will no longer need liquor to be happy.”⁹⁷

The hearings end with a report on the functioning of the „Boards of Arbitration” which points to the various deficiencies in the election of the members, the timing of the meetings and the over-burdening red tape⁹⁸.

Vooruit ends the report with the expression of gratitude from the president of the *Commission* to all the witnesses and representatives who have lent their support and full cooperation to the activities of the committee. The paper cannot resist denouncing the fact that the next meeting of the *Commission* with the representatives of industry and commerce will be held behind closed doors. „Why this secrecy? It only arouses suspicion among the workers!” *Vooruit* argues⁹⁹. The paper is even more irritated when it becomes clear that similar meetings in other cities, Louvain for one, are open to the public. „Why not in Ghent?”¹⁰⁰ On the day preceding the meeting of industrialists and committee members, July 24, *Vooruit* publishes an open letter to all the members of the *Commission*. The demand is made that workers ought to be present at all the hearings for the sake of justice. Otherwise this meeting with the capitalists will prove to be completely useless¹⁰¹.

Although the paper is more interested in the progress of the *Commission's* activities in Ghent, the *Vooruit* keeps an eye on what the investigations have brought to light in other places as well. The workers' witnesses appearing before the distinguished panel in La Louvière, near Charleroi, have formulated certain demands for the miners. An impressive list which

(95) *Ibid.*

(96) *Ibid.*, July 19, p. 1, c. 3.

(97) *Ibid.*, July 20, p. 1, c. 1.

(98) *Ibid.*, July 20, p. 1, c. 2.

(99) *Ibid.*

(100) *Ibid.*, July 23, p. 1, c. 1.

(101) *Ibid.* The editors suggest that the *Commission du Travail* would request the government to look into the question.

includes the nine hours day; no women or children under fourteen in the mines; formation of councils of arbitration, partly elected by the workers; medi-care and pension funds; legal recognition of the workers' association; minimum wages, internationally recognized; wash rooms in the factories; and universal suffrage¹⁰². The list and the tone of the demands indicate a strong Socialist influence, even though *Vooruit* does not mention it. Perhaps one may venture to say that since there is no officially organized party or union in La Louvière, the paper is not likely to admit or claim any Socialist inspiration.

Vooruit is not hesitant to talk about Socialist influence wherever there seems to be any popular turmoil, as in the case of the troubles in Amsterdam at the end of July. Although the paper rejects bitterly accusation of the bourgeois press which blame the Socialists for the violence, the Socialist mouthpiece proudly admits in the same paragraph the tremendous growth of the Socialist ranks in that area. Besides making the expected comparisons with the upheaval of March in Charleroi, the *Vooruit* endeavors to make the Dutch Socialists appear as the true victims of police brutality and bourgeois ignorance¹⁰³. It is clearly proven that *Vooruit* is interested in the events in Amsterdam by the simple fact that the paper sends a special reporter to the Dutch capital to provide full coverage of the „great events.”¹⁰⁴ The reporter does give an extensive review in a melodramatic style and with outspoken sympathy for the „poor suppressed people” who are systematically subjected to „police stupidity and arrogance”. The latter is the „immediate cause” which brought about the flare-up in violence but the „remote and most fundamental cause lies, of course, in the social inequalities.”¹⁰⁵

Vooruit is over-joyed by the tremendous expansion of Socialism because of all this turmoil, but with the same token the paper resents the persecution the Socialist press has to undergo from the capitalists¹⁰⁶. This persecution is a true injustice according to *Vooruit* since it defies all the freedom of dissent and since it is contrary to the law¹⁰⁷. The only way to stop this continuous insult to the workers, their organization and to the Socialist party in particular, the *Vooruit* pontificates, is the road to the immediate introduction of universal suffrage¹⁰⁸. This request has been voiced so frequently at the occasion of the hearings of the *Commission* at the end of July that the *Vooruit* is furious about the cool reception of this proposal by the committee. Indeed, many members dismiss the idea completely as utopian or at least as non-remedial for the social conditions in the country¹⁰⁹. Yet, *Vooruit* believes that universal suffrage is a „means, a road, a tool to realize great ideals. It is the vehicle of progress and it will

(102) *Vooruit*, July 28, p. 3, c. 2.

(103) *Ibid.*, July 29, p. 4, c. 1, 2.

(104) *Ibid.*, July 31, August 1, p. 2, c. 3.

(105) *Ibid.*, Aug. 2, p. 1, c. 2, 3; p. 2, c. 1.

(106) *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, p. 1, c. 1.

(107) *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 7 & 8, p. 1, c. 2, 3; Aug. 9, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(108) *Ibid.*, Aug. 10, p. 1, c. 1, 2; „Why do We Want Universal Suffrage?”

(109) *Ibid.*, Aug. 2, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 4, p. 1, c. 3.

prevent violence and bloodshed which will be the only remaining alternative to bring about social changes and inescapable reforms.”¹¹⁰ It is not surprising that the Socialist paper devotes most of the editorials to this great dream during the week preceding the march on Brussels on August 15 which plans to dramatize the workers demand for franchise. The editors appeal fervently to the workers to make the march a quiet, peaceful and respectable event¹¹¹. The desire to make the Socialist demonstration an impressive show of popular strength is only equalled by the *Vooruit*'s annoyance because of the many precautions taken by the authorities. The paper is infuriated by the concentration of military units around the capital which can be called upon if needed to maintain law and order¹¹². When the memorable day has gone by in calm serenity, the Ghent paper is jubilant: „The 15th of August demonstration is the most beautiful day in the annals of the Workers' movement in Belgium since its very beginnings. The demonstration is a solemn occasion which has proven the strength of the party and the calm respectability of its members. The manifestation has made a deep and lasting impression upon the onlookers and has created respect and sympathy in all of them.”¹¹³ The demonstration gets ample coverage in the next couple of days¹¹⁴ but is soon diffused in several minor polemics with other papers. One of these centers around the number of demonstrators, which was originally estimated by *Vooruit* at 70,000¹¹⁵ but retracted the following day and reduced to 30,000 with the excuse that there had been a mistake in the printing but that „there could have been 70,000 were it not for the immense misery which kept so many home!”¹¹⁶.

In order to make an end to this misery of the lower classes, in order to make an end to the grave injustices in the country existing since its beginnings in 1830, and in order to appease the intoxicated mood of the populace and to reduce the heat of violence, there is only one remedy: universal suffrage. This is the core of the message sent to the Prime Minister Beernaert by the Workers' Party on the occasion of the demonstration of August 15. „To refuse to satisfy this desire of the large majority of the people of our country is to demand a crisis which may cause terrible consequences.”¹¹⁷

In the aftermath of the march, *Vooruit* editorializes several times on the need to organize, on the fear of the bourgeoisie, justice for the workers, the meaning of the „red flags” and the international character of Socialism. Certainly with the latter in mind, the Ghent paper reports regularly

(110) *Ibid.*, Aug. 10, p. 1, c. 2.

(111) *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, p. 1, c. 1; Aug. 12, p. 1, c. 2; p. 3, c. 3; Aug. 13, p. 1, c. 1, 2; Aug. 14 & 15, p. 1, 2.

(112) *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, p. 1, c. 2.

(113) *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, p. 1, c. 1.

(114) *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, p. 1, c. 2, 3; p. 2, c. 1, 2, 3; p. 3, c. 1; Aug. 17, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3; p. 2, c. 1, 2, 3.

(115) *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, p. 2, c. 2.

(116) *Ibid.*, Aug. 17, p. 2, c. 2.

(117) *Ibid.*, Aug. 16, p. 2, c. 3; p. 3, c. 1.

on Socialist activities abroad. When the International Conference of Socialist Organizations convenes in Paris on August 26, 27 and 28, *Vooruit* proudly elaborates on the contribution of the Belgian comrades. Dr. de Paepe discusses the legislation on health regulations in the industry¹¹⁸ and E. Anseele appeals for more international cooperation on the practical level. The Ghent Socialist leader receives a standing ovation when it is announced that he has to leave the gathering early to go to jail in Ghent on September 1¹¹⁹. On September 3, *Vooruit* publishes a letter of Anseele on the front page — very bombastic and emotional — in which the leader strongly pleads for closer cooperation among the Socialists, for more meetings, for universal suffrage and an appeal not to wait his return from jail to start the great work of Socialism¹²⁰.

On the same day, the paper gives the summary of the suggestions proposed and unanimously adopted by the International Convention in Paris, on Saturday, August 28. The list of priorities is headed by the demand of „prohibition of work for children under fourteen years”, followed by the urgent request for special protection for children and women in the factories, the eight hour workday, work regulations, medical assistance and minimum wages¹²¹.

On September 5, *Vooruit* appeared with black mourning borders on the occasion of Anseele's entry into jail¹²². This is kept up for six months, with the exception from October 21 until November 2 when the Socialist leader leaves jail to defend his candidacy in parliamentary elections in Brussels¹²³. The latter turn out to be rather discouraging for the Ghent hero who tried hard for the Brussels seat in Parliament as a representative of the Workers' Party¹²⁴. *Vooruit* does not hide its great disappointment at the electoral defeat, and more so since it also entails the candidate's return to jail, cited as another example of the „obstinate intolerance of the Jesuit government.”¹²⁵

The entire hectic episode of Anseele's commuting between freedom and jail gives the Socialist press a unique tool for propaganda. This is the prime concern! The best means is the *Vooruit* itself and therefore, a massive campaign has to be launched to spread the daily. Furthermore, more members

(118) *Ibid.*, Aug. 30, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(119) *Ibid.*, Aug. 31, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(120) *Vooruit*, Sept. 3, p. 1, c. 1, 2: „Behind Bars”.

(121) *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, p. 1, c. 2, 3.

(122) *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, p. 1, c. 1: A short notice to the public explains that „out of respect for our beloved spokesman and writer, Edw. Anseele, who has to spend six months in jail for his love of the people, our paper will appear in black mourning border till our friend will return to our midst to work and fight.”

(123) *Vooruit*, October 21, p. 1. Under the heavy headline „Anseele out of Jail”, the editorial explains that the Minister of Justice has granted permission to the Socialist leader to defend his candidacy in the forthcoming elections.

(124) *Ibid.*, October 29, p. 1, c. 1. The results of the legislative elections in Brussels of October 28, 1886, showed the following results: Registered voters: 21,568; voters: 5,257; invalid ballots: 181; Results: Guillery: 4,062 and Anseele: 1,014.

(125) *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, p. 1: „Back to Jail”.

are needed for the bakery cooperative, more funds for the sick and the strikers, and last but not least, more meetings have to be organized ¹²⁶.

The *Vooruit* editorializes on the communal elections of 1887 with great enthusiasm since the „only legal way to become masters of the state is through elections.” ¹²⁷ The electoral platform lists as its first goal universal suffrage, followed by a request for separation of Church and State ¹²⁸; then obligatory, free and secular education for all ¹²⁹; nationalization of railroads and communications and the expropriation of the coal mines and factories ¹³⁰. The electoral campaign is not only directed to this program but is simultaneously geared „against the detestable clericals and the sleepy Liberals” ¹³¹. This feature of the campaign will cause many bitter polemics with the Liberal and clerical press in Ghent. The *Vooruit* does not wait till the election time of the following year to attack both Catholic and Liberal parties and individuals in Ghent ¹³².

The anticlerical sentiment of the Socialist paper is especially manifest on the occasion of the Catholic Social Congres of Liège and the entire event is reported in this colored perspective ¹³³. „The convention of the clerical comedians has made the ridiculous statement that the workers are exploited in a scandalous manner. They finally recognize what we have been telling them for years.” ¹³⁴ The arrogant tone prevails throughout the report and shows a great deal of resentment and hatred against the Church and the clergy ¹³⁵.

The anticlericalism of the *Vooruit* is only equalled by the paper's anti-royalism. The speech from the throne by Leopold II is ridiculed in the Socialist weekly *Toekomst* ¹³⁶ and repeatedly denounced in *Vooruit* itself ¹³⁷. The King has been the target of Socialist anger throughout the year and many allusions are made at his person at a variety of occasions

(126) *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, p. 1, c. 2.

(127) *Ibid.*, Sept. 7, p. 1, c. 2.

(128) The education of the children is partly discussed in an emotional editorial of *Vooruit*, Sept. 20, p. 1, c. 1, 2: „The Work of Children in the Factories”.

(129) This particular demand is further explained in a long article on Sept. 13, p. 1, c. 1, 2; „The Mines for the Miners” (unsigned) Also, Oct. 6, p. 1, c. 2, 3.

(130) *Vooruit*, Sept. 25 & 26, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(131) *Ibid.*, Sept. 7, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(132) *Ibid.*, Sept. 10, p. 1, c. 2 (against the Catholic industrialist P. de Hemp-tinne); Sept. 21, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (against the rich); Sept. 23, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (against the Ghent industrialists); Sept. 24, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (against the bourgeois parties; Sept. 28, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (against the followers of Christ); Oct. 10, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (the bilan of the clerical government); Oct. 13, p. 1, c. 1, 2 (against army and police); Dec. 2, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3 (on Christian charity); Dec. 24, p. 1, c. 1, 2; „Christmas”, (a bitter attack on the Church and the clergy who are fighting „the Socialists, who are the only true followers of Christ”).

(133) *Vooruit*, Sept. 28, p. 4, c. 2; Sept. 30, p. 1, c. 3; p. 2, c. 1, 2.

(134) *Ibid.*, Sept. 30, p. 1, c. 3.

(135) *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, p. 1, c. 1, 2. The editorial is a fantastic example of the ridiculing of Church and religion. Also in the same line, Oct. 10, p. 1, c. 1, 2.

(136) *Toekomst*, n. 29, Nov. 14, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3, 4.

(137) *Vooruit*, Nov. 13, p. 1, c. 1, 2;

— meetings, demonstrations, strikes and Anseele's trial¹³⁸.

The last weeks of 1886 are filled with irregular disputes in the press about military service and its probable and necessary re-organization. *Vooruit* engages in the debate¹³⁹ and shows an obvious preference for what they label „the Swiss model”, a true people's army and compulsory service for all for a limited time¹⁴⁰.

December is rather quiet and *Vooruit* ends this „fruitful year of 1886” with an appeal for a stronger and more elaborate propaganda. „1886 was a good year, notwithstanding the terrible persecutions and jail sentences inflicted upon us by class justice. The many demonstrations of Socialist strength were eminently successful and the movement has grown in the country.”¹⁴¹ Satisfaction and pride in past achievements is eloquently expressed in the *Toekomst*¹⁴², in a survey of the year. Referring to the disastrous events of March, the Socialist weekly points to the unjust accusations of the ruling classes who have tried, in vain, to blame Socialism and the Socialist organizations for the bloody insurrection of the impoverished workers. „But in vain! The flames of the hunger revolt of Charleroi and the murderous fire which killed the poor gave an electrical shock to the hearts of thousands who were until now indifferent.”¹⁴³ Never before and nowhere else in Europe has there been such an immense Socialist propaganda and never have Socialists lived through glorious days as we did here.”¹⁴⁴ The weekly is elated about the great initiative of the *Vooruit* in Socialist leadership and is convinced that the sad imprisonment of Anseele and Constant de Witte¹⁴⁵ will enlarge Socialist pride and will be the best guarantee for a better and stronger propaganda in 1887¹⁴⁶.

Thus ends the troubled year of 1886. The anger of Socialists merges into a growing hope and enthusiasm for the future. The conviction that history ultimately will do justice to their cause gives the Socialist leadership all the confidence they need to spread their gospel successfully among the lower classes. In this drive, the *Vooruit* takes a substantial part and deserves great credit for effective propaganda.

(138) A prime example of vicious mockery with respect to the person of the King is the article „Leopold without Fear”, *Toekomst*, n. 30, Nov. 21, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3, 4.

(139) *Vooruit*, Nov. 12, p. 1, c. 1, 2: „Soldiers and Workers”; Nov. 20, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3: „Everyone Soldier - Also the Priests”; *Toekomst*, Nov. 21, p. 1, c. 4; and *Toekomst* n. 42, Feb. 13, 1887, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3: „A Socialist Army Organization”.

(140) *Toekomst*, Feb. 13, 1887, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(141) *Vooruit*, Dec. 31, p. 1, c. 1, 2: „New Year”.

(142) *Toekomst*, n. 36, Jan. 2, 1887, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3, 4; p. 2, c. 1: „The Socialist Movement in 1886”.

(143) *Toekomst*, Jan. 2, p. 1, c. 2.

(144) *Ibid.*, p. 1, c. 4.

(145) Constant de Witte was the president of the *Vooruit Cooperative* and was sent to jail on Nov. 15, 1886. This incident deeply stirred the emotions of the Socialists in Ghent. The full story dramatized, appeared in *Vooruit*, Nov. 16, p. 1, c. 1, 2, 3.

(146) *Toekomst*, Jan. 2, 1887, p. 2, c. 1.