

## The Divine Right of the Hohenzollern

By KARL MARX

Europe, just now, is interested in only one great question—that of Neuenburg. That is to say, if we are to credit the Prussian newspapers. The principality of Neuenburg, even if we include the county of Valangin, covers the modest area of about 220 square miles, but the royal philosophers of Berlin maintain that not quantity but quality is the determining factor in the greatness and smallness of things, which stamps them as sublime or ridiculous.

The Neuenburg question, to them, embodies the eternal dispute between Revolution and Divine Right, and this antagonism is influenced by geographical dimensions as little as the law of gravitation by the difference between the sun and a tennis-ball.

Let us see of what the Divine Right consists to which the Hohenzollern dynasty lays claim. It is based, in the case before us, on a London protocol under date of May 24, 1852, in which the plenipotentiaries of France, Great Britain and Russia "recognize the rights over the principality of Neuenburg and the county of Valangin belonging to the King of Prussia according to the stipulations of Articles 22 and 76 of the Vienna agreement, and which from 1815 to 1848 existed simultaneously with those rights which are allowed to Switzerland by Article 73 of the same agreement.

By this "diplomatic intervention" the divine right of the kings of Prussia is determined within the limits of the Vienna treaty. This treaty, however, refers back to the claims which Prussia acquired in 1707. What was the situation in 1707? The principality of Neuenburg and the county of Valangin, which in the middle ages belonged to the Kingdom of Burgundy, became members of the Swiss Confederation after the defeat of Charles the Bold, and continued in that capacity under the direct protectorate of Berne, even in the course of

subsequent changes that occurred in its feudal "sovereignty" up to the time of the Vienna agreement which made it sovereign member of the Confederacy. The sovereignty over Neuenburg was conveyed first to the house of Chalons-Orange, then through the mediation of Switzerland to the house of Longueville, and finally, at the extinction of this line, to the widowed sister of the Prince, the Countess of Nemours. When she tried to assume power, William III., King of England and Duke of Nassau-Orange, entered a protest and conveyed his right and title to Neuenburg and Valangin to his cousin Frederick I. of Prussia; this agreement was hardly given any notice during the lifetime of William III. But upon the death of the Duchess Marie of Nemours, Frederick set up his claim. As fourteen other candidates came forward, however, to assert their claims, he, with wise moderation, submitted his claim to the local nobility, not, however, without first having assured himself of the support of the judges by bribery. Thus by bribery the King of Prussia became Prince of Neuenburg and Count of Valangin.

The French Revolution annulled these titles, the treaty of Vienna restored them, and the Revolution of 1848 removed them again. Over against the revolutionary right of the people the King of Prussia set up his Divine Right of the Hohenzollern, amounting to nothing more than the divine right of bribery.

All feudal conflicts are characterized by pettiness. In spite of this there are distinctions among them. History is always willing to occupy itself with the innumerable petty intrigues, quarrels and betrayals by means of which the Kings of France managed to overcome their feudal vassals, for they enable us to study the origin and development of a great nation. This is not the case in Germany. On the contrary, it is most tiresome and monotonous to trace how one vassal after another managed to gobble up greater or smaller portions of the German Empire for private gain. Unless some particular set of circumstances happen to enliven the scene, as is the case for