

brought Mehring out of the "Berliner Volkszeitung" into the ranks of the Socialist movement.

He became a regular contributor to the scientific Socialist organ, "Neue Zeit," and in this capacity he has for many years done some of his most valuable work for the German and the International Socialist movement.

Mehring's literary works, his famous "Lessing Legende," and later his books on Schiller and Heine are an application of the materialistic conception of history of Marx and Engels to the works and views of Germany's most famous poets. His greatest political economic works are an enlarged and thoroughly revised edition of the "History of the German Social-Democracy" and the major portion of the work of editing and publishing the correspondence between Marx and Engels, as well as the letters written by Lassalle to Marx. He wrote, too, numberless smaller brochures and pamphlets on the most diversified political and literary subjects. Mehring was not only one of the most brilliant, but also one of the most thorough and most productive writers of the Socialist movement.

Like most thinkers in the Socialist movement, Mehring's position underwent a series of changes and reorientations during his membership in the party. At first an enthusiastic follower of Karl Kautsky, he later became his sharpest critic and opponent. With the typical virility and energy that characterized his every action, Mehring was unsparing in his criticism of those with whom he disagreed. His attacks were masterpieces of argumentation, his philippicas always hit the mark, the arrows of his satire always afforded intense amusement to those who understood the personal references that so often stood behind them, but they left a deep hurt in those against whom they were directed.

It is now about nine years ago since the Socialist movement of Germany broke definitely with the revisionism of Bernstein only to adopt a policy of opportunism that so completely dominated the activity of the German Socialist movement before and during the years of the war. This was the origin of the division between Kautsky and Haase, on one side, and Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Zetkin and Mehring on the other. Kautsky pursued

a policy of concessions and compromises. He was unwilling to alienate the sympathies of the Davids, Suedekums and Kolbs, who were steering a direct course toward governmental participation and governmental responsibility of the Socialist movement. In their attempts to bridge over the growing conflict between revolutionary Marxism and government reform-socialist, Kautsky and Haase were forced further and further to the right while Rosa Luxemburg, Klara Zetkin and Mehring, who had still been looked upon as regulars, became more and more firmly allied with the "irresponsible" Karl Liebknecht. In short, the division between the Majority, Independent and Spartacus groups existed within the German Social-Democratic Party years before the war made it an actual fact.

We need not here describe the work done by Mehring since the war began. It is too well known to the readers of the "Class Struggle" to need repetition. Franz Mehring has fought a splendid fight. He, who by birth, training and personal preference would have chosen the path of the literary man who stands aloof from great political conflicts, took his place with the small rebellious group of staunch revolutionists. Franz Mehring's last fight was well fought, was the crowning achievement of a fruitful life.

L.

The Constitutional National Assembly

Elsewhere in this issue we have published an article by Karl Kautsky that is interesting for the arguments it leaves out as well as for those that are presented in favor of the speedy convocation of a Constituent National Assembly in Germany. It is worthy of note that not even Karl Kautsky, by far the most conservative of all the Independent supporters of a National Assembly, regards the calling of a National Assembly as a "democratic" necessity. As a matter of fact his article is a frank admission of the fact that Kautsky's support of the Assembly is not based upon principle, but that he has adopted the position he holds for purely tactical reasons of the most opportunistic character.

Kautsky's strongest argument is based upon his conviction that the combined Socialist parties have gained such a strong hold