

SYLVIA PANKHURST

COMMUNISM

VERSUS

REFORMS

- MISTAKES OF THE COMMUNIST  
PARTY OF IRELAND-



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE  
'ANARCHIVE'

**“Anarchy is Order!”**

*'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'  
(William Blake)*

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a ‘new’ kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as ‘Anarchy is order’, ‘Property is theft’,...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The ‘anarchive’ or ‘anarchist archive’ Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the **‘principles, propositions and discussions’** of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to

give anarchism a new impulse, to let the ‘new anarchism’ outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing texts from the CD (collecting all available texts at a given moment) that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts to friends and new ones to us,... Become your own anarchivist!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchivist offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*“...demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down  
here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and  
wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will-‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance.”*

(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us.  
Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be sent  
to [A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be).

A complete list and updates are available on this  
address, new texts are always

**WELCOME!!**

# COMMUNISM VERSUS REFORMS

## MISTAKES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND

SYLVIA PANKHURST

The Communist Party Of Ireland , Third International, through its organ, **The Workers' Republic**, puts forward a programme for an Irish Republic

This programme is not a Communist one: we urge the Irish Communists to withdraw it and put forward a genuine Communist programme in its place.

### NON-COMMUNIST PROGRAMME OF THE IRISH C.P. REQUIRING REVISION

- (1) Ownership and control of all the heavy industries by the state for the benefit of all the people
- (2) Complete ownership of the transport system by the state -railways, canals, shipping, etc.
- (3) State ownership of all the banks.
- (4) Confiscation of the large ranches and estates without compensation to the landed aristocracy, and the distribution of the land amongst the landless farmers and agricultural labourers. Election of joint council representative of these two classes to distribute and manage the land. Abolition of all forms of tenure and indebtedness either to private owners or the State. Cancellation of all debts and mortgages.
- (5) Establishment of all-round eight-hour working day.

6) Control of workshop conditions to be vested in a joint council representing the workers, trade unions concerned, and the State

(7) Municipalisation of all public services, trams, light, heat, water, etc, and free use by the workers.

(8) Compulsory rationing of all available housing accommodation and the abolition of all rents.

(9) Full maintenance for the unemployed at full trade union rates.

(10) Universal arming of all workers in town and country to defend their rights.

The above programme should be changed for the following:

### **Communist Programme**

(1) The abolition of Dail Eireann and the present local governing bodies.

(2) The summoning of the Soviets (Workers Councils) composed of the workers in industry, on the land, in transport and distribution and domestic work, to arrange for the practical work of carrying on and ministering to the needs of the people, by co-operative effort. The working hours will be decided by those who are doing the work in conformity with necessity and inclination.

(3) The abolition of all private property in land, and in the means of production, distribution, transport, and communication.

(4) Closing of banks and abolition of money.

(5) Free use by all of the common products and possessions according to need and desire. In case of scarcity, equal rationing of what may be scarce, the common effort being directed to overcoming the scarcity so that rationing may cease.

(6) The abolition of unemployment, parasitism, and overwork, by all members of the community joining in doing a share of the necessary work of the community.

(7) The throwing open of all educational facilities to all, and their very great extension and development.

(8) The building up of Communist ideology and ways of life, and the abolition of all forms of buying, selling, and barter of goods and services - a great task, in which the Russian effort has largely failed.

(9) The preparation of Ireland to maintain itself without intercourse with capitalist Governments and capitalist trade, and to hold out as a self-contained, self-sufficient community until the people of other countries become Communist. Such isolation is inevitable to a country which becomes Communist, since capitalism will not assist in the maintenance of a Communist community.

Encouragement of Communists in other countries to bring to Ireland such raw materials and manufactured articles as she may lack, and to give also their personal service if required.

Preparation and equipment of the Communist Commonwealth to withstand attack from without or within.

## **Where the CPI Programme is unsound**

In demonstrating the unsoundness of C.P.I.'s programme for an Irish Republic ( a Workers Republic even the C.P.I. surely cannot call it), it should first be pointed out that the programme does not include the abolition of capitalism and private property in land, although all Communists are agreed that the workers cannot be emancipated within the capitalist system. The programme is, therefore, purely a reformist one, not differing widely from that of the British Labour Party

**Is It a Moscow Programme?**It should be observed that the C.P.I. is working in close conjunction with the CPGB, premises at Covent Garden, The question therefore arises as to whether this unsound reformist programme is a hastily-drafted, ill-considered production of the Irish Party or whether it is a Moscow product, framed with the deliberate purpose of falling into line with the Reformist parties at any price. Any steadfast and well-informed Communists still remaining within the Third International should give their serious attention to this problem..

**A Fabian Scheme?**The proposals for the ownership and management of industry are on truly Fabian lines. They appear in clauses 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9. It should be observed that under this scheme the State would remain, as at present, and would own ‘ the heavy industries and railways, canals, shipping and other means of transport. The municipality would own the trains, light, heat, water etc. ‘ As it is specifically stated that there would be free use of these services we take it that these services, but not other services are to be supplied without payment.

Is it intended the payment for the "freely used" municipal services should go through the rates, in truly Fabian style? Most probably that is so, for money would



remain – note the provision for State ownership of all banks in clause 3, and trade union rates of wages, clause 9.

Housing, apparently, would pass into State or municipal hands, because clause 8 says: Compulsory Rationing of all available housing accommodation and the abolition of all rents'

Immediate building of free housing accommodation to meet the needs and in accordance with the desires of the people ought certainly to be added to any catalogue of slogans; for the rationing' of existing property could never produce satisfactory results.

**Private Enterprise Remains** Certainly the supply of food, the first essential need of mankind, and apparently the supply also of clothing and many other necessaries, would remain a source of private money making under this vague programme of half-measures,

Thus in this C.P.I. Republic we should have as at present, private enterprise catering for certain needs, the state catering for others, and the municipality catering for others. Some of these services would be supplied without direct payment, like upkeep of the roads, the lighting of the streets, and the assistance of the Fire Brigade today and like the water, for which people whose rates are included in their rents, do not realise that a separate rate is paid, a rate which, by the way, is rising considerably.

Under the C.P.I. plan the State and the municipality might provide more services than at present, but private capitalism would remain, and with it the social classes and social inequalities of today.

## FALLACY OF WORKERS' CONTROL UNDER CAPITALIST OR STATE OWNERSHIP

Clause 6 stipulates that there should be control of workshop conditions vested in joint councils of the workers, the trade unions concerned, and the State.

This is a hotch-potch borrowed from the Russian 'compromise' and a host of tinkering reformist programmes. It recognises the conflict of interest of the workers versus the state, and versus also the trade unions. How can the existence of the trade unions be justified if they do not adequately represent the workers? What need of other representation would the workers have if they formed the trade unions, and if the unions adequately represented them? What is meant here by the term worker? We presume the actual workers in the shops gathered together in shop councils on Soviet lines are here indicated. Such Soviets or councils, linked industrially and nationally, should replace both the trade unions and the State, in our opinion.

The system of workshop control, by workers, State, and Trade Union representatives, in state owned industries would give the actual workers no more freedom, no more real control than do the Whitley Joint Industrial Councils of employers and employed.

In the last analysis, whatever promises may be given in regard to workers' control of industry are worthless, so long as the actual ownership and control of the purse are in the hands of the private employer or the State, in this case it is only control of the workshop conditions that is suggested. To control workshop conditions while an employer controls wages and finance is a practical impossibility. The Italian workers who accepted such a worthless compromise as the price of evacuating the metal factories found to their cost that workshop control under an employer is not worth accepting.

The war time production committees and Whitley Councils should surely have taught this lesson.

### THE WAGE SYSTEM MAINTAINED

The existence of money and the wage system, which is to be retained (see Clause 9), inevitably mean unequal wages, a grading according to existing bourgeois standards, and the lower remuneration of the manual worker and the so-called unskilled.

The co-existence of capitalist industry and its ramifications dictates within narrow limits the remuneration and status of the wage--worker who IS employed in State and municipal enterprises . Everyone knows that the man whose wages are paid by a private employer protests with the taxpayer and ratepayer against any considerable raising of the wages of those who are employed in State and municipal services,

The standard aimed at by the drafters of the C.P.I. programme may be judged from the demand for an eight-hour day in clause 5, and that in clause 9, "for full maintenance for the unemployed at full trade union rates;" Things would be little changed if these proposals were put into effect.

### THE PEASANTS AND THE LAND.

The position of the land workers is dealt with in clause 4: "(4) Confiscation of the large ranches and estates without compensation to the landed aristocracy, and the distribution of the land amongst the landless farmers and agricultural labourers. Election of joint council representative of these two classes to distribute and

manage the land. Abolition of all forms of tenure and indebtedness either to private owners or the State. Cancellation of all debts and mortgages."

This clause shows a slavish imitation of the Russian method, but the result of the practice in Ireland must of necessity be less satisfying than it has been in Russia. The cutting up of all the land of Ireland would still leave Irish land hunger unappeased. Rosa Luxemburg was, perhaps, the first of their actual supporters to make a definite attack upon the land policy of the Bolsheviki at the time of their seizure of power in October 1917. It was during the summer of 1918 that Rosa Luxemburg wrote the critique of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik policy therein, which was recently socialised in the Workers' Dreadnought and will be shortly published by us in book form. Rosa Luxemburg there expressed the view that the policy of cutting up the land of Russia into small peasant holdings, the produce of which each man would privately own and privately sell, would be disastrous to the Revolution and would create for Communism, instead of a few large opponents 1 millions of small ones.

The facts have justified Rosa Luxemburg's opposition to the project in a thousand directions.

Ossinski, Russian Commissar of Agriculture, reported as follows to the ninth All-Russian Congress of Soviets in 1921 : "Our peasants," he said, "are making everywhere the most colossal efforts to clarify their relations to the land and to their neighbours, to do away with the confusion which we must be frank about it - the Revolution has not decreased but increased, because our redistributions in 1918-19 did not establish any regular land arrangements. To do so was beyond our means, and as a result we still have a dreadful scattering of strips, a

narrowing of strips, continuous divisions and redevisions and complete instability of land relationships."

Professor Max Sering, of Berlin University, observes that the 1917 Revolution actually served to hasten the transition which was taking place in Russia from the common ownership of peasant land to private ownership of the land, The Czarist Stolypin legislation of 1906 and 1910 had already undermined common ownership through the village commune: the first land law of the Revolution, though it declared for socialisation of the land, in fact established small peasant ownership. It is true that the Revolution hastened the break-up of the large estates and extended the land in peasant hands. In thirty-six provinces for which statistics are available the peasants possessed 80% of the usable land; they now possess 96.8 per cent.

In 29 provinces for which figures are available the land per head in the hands of the peasants has increased from 1.87 dessiatin to 2.26 dessiatins since the Revolution.

It should be observed that it is not only in Russia, that since the War and the Russian Revolution, land has been passing from great estate owners to small peasant proprietors. An agrarian revolution of unprecedented extent has passed over the whole of Eastern and intermediate Europe, with the exception of Old Serbia and German Austria. At the outbreak of war 10 to 20% of the sown area of Russia was worked in large properties, but in Old Rumania 47% of the land was worked by large estates before the war, and now only 8% is so worked.

Wherever the small holding has replaced the large estate production has decreased, and especially in grain and in crops which are used for manufacturing purposes, such as sugar-beet, cotton, hemp, flax, and oil-bearing plants

The table-land of the former Russian Empire, and the lands through which the Danube passes were until the War the granaries of Europe. The export of bread-stuffs, flour, barley, oats and maize from Serbia and Austria-Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria amounted in 1912, after deducting small imports to 104.7 million metric centners, 71.7 million centners going to the industrial centres of Great Britain, Holland, Germany and Belgium. The exports from Eastern Europe in 1921 were only one twentieth of the pre-war- namely 5.4 million centners. This exportable surplus was drawn from the Danube countries : it consists entirely of maize, oats, and barley As regards bread-stuffs (wheat, wheaten flour and rye), Eastern Europe now has to buy more than it sells Estonia and Latvia, once exporting have become importing countries. Poland also imports, though it has incorporated the two former German surplus producing territories of East Prussia and Posen The balance of grain trade is also against Austria and Hungary, Jugoslavia and Rumania are the only countries with exports worth mentioning, and the export from all these has been much reduced. The Greater Rumanian wheat export of 1921 was 0.76 million centners only half that of Old Rumania (1.37 million centner) though Old Rumania was only two thirds the size of Greater Rumania, War and drought have been largely responsible for reduced harvests, but they only partially explain the shrinkage which is great even in areas which have not been visited by war and drought, but have passed into small peasants holding.

Wherever the small peasant holding arises, the tendency is for the peasants to produce a variety of small products for his own use, which will make him as far as possible self-supporting; without regard to the outer world. Such a tendency must necessarily be accentuated in these days

of fluctuating currencies. Mr Ernest Spitz, director of the Czecho-Slovak Sugar Export Co., of Prague, says:

"The agrarian reform on which we have embarked, and which in the end will result in the breaking up of the big, landed estates, gives rise to fears that even the present reduced area under sugar-beet will not be maintained in future. The breaking up of the big landed estates is more likely to result in a diminution than in the expected increase of agricultural production. The peasant is inclined to cultivate crops other than beet-root, as this requires an excessive amount of labour. The big land-owners used to grow it because they themselves partially owned the sugar factories."

The great land-owner does not perform the excessive amount of labour, he pays labourers to do the work. The smallholder has only himself and his children to turn to: it is natural that he should refuse, "an excessive amount of labour", when an easier method of maintaining himself are possible.

The peasants on his tiny holding cannot afford the labour saving devices which are owned by large-scale producers: he cannot afford the drainage and other improvement that are required.

A Polish authority states:

"Throughout Poland the small farms produce 10 to 15 per cent, less than the large estates..... In the eastern borderlands the difference is still greater....."

"The difficulty of importing the necessary stock and implements for the creation of many thousand new farms is very great at present, and has undoubtedly checked the demand of the peasants for the immediate redistribution of the whole land fund in accordance with the original scheme."

Though the Russian peasants are said have secured 80 per cent of farm equipment when the great estates were

broken up, that equipment of course, lost much of its adequacy when it came to be distributed amongst a large number of small holders, even though they might lend it out to each other. In 1921 the minimum need of the Russian villages was for three million new ploughs and the repair of as many more, for over a million sowers and hundred of thousands of harrows, rakes and other implements not 20 per cent of that need has been met,

But let us turn to France, where small proprietorship is of long standing. On November 3rd, 1913, there were in the whole of France excluding Alsace-Lorraine, 7,520,922 owners of 13,444,226 landed properties; 33.09% of the cultivators were working owners. 45.77% wage-earners, and 21.74% non-earning farmers. Compteur Morel, formerly High Commissioner for Agriculture, wrote in the Manchester Guardian Reconstruction survey

"Our agricultural production has remained stationary for thirty years, while in the same period it has about doubled in Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, and Germany .....

"Our grain crops average 12.5 quintals to the hectare; Germany's, 21.6, Denmark's 22.9; and Belgium's 25.2. The disproportion is even greater in the case of potatoes: France, 80.6 quintals to the hectare; Hungary, 272; Denmark, 296; Holland, 307; Germany 307.4; Belgium 514.1."

If the desire of humanity is to farm in separate little patches, instead of on large co-operative farms, well and good; society must meet that need. Let it not be thought, however, that to cut the land up into small holdings, privately owned, privately worked, with their produce privately sold in competition, is an easier and more practical solution than that of common ownership of the land and the working of it in groups, with the aid of all



the resources of the community for any development requiring a special effort.

So long as the produce of the land is to be bought and sold, there can be no Communism, not even State Socialism. So long as money is in circulation and profits can be made by trading, the evils of capitalism will remain, and must go on growing. Have we not seen the return to Russia of the old barbarous customs - inheritance, patent law, rent interest, and profit, and all the other capitalist methods of mis-managing production and distribution, and of surrounding it by useless toil ?

### PARLIAMENT OR THE SOVIETS?

Observe further that the State referred to in the C.P.I. programme, which would own the heavy industries and give a share of workshop control to the workers, would remain the capitalist State. It would remain the capitalist State, because capitalism would remain, and because it would be organised just as the capitalist State is organised to-day - through Parliament, under the special Irish name, Dail Eireann.

Observe that the C.P.I. programme makes no mention of Soviets, which were considered one of the crucial points in the Third International programme when the Third International emerged.

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