

ANTON PANNEKOEK



READER



**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 from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...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 send
to

A.O@advalvas.be

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

welcome!!

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WORLD REVOLUTION AND COMMUNIST TACTICS (1922)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

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Theory itself becomes a material force once it takes a hold on the masses. Theory is capable of taking a hold on the masses... once it becomes radical. Karl Marx

I

The transformation of capitalism into communism is brought about by two forces, one material and the other mental, the latter having its origins in the former. The material development of the economy generates consciousness, and this activates the will to revolution. Marxist science, arising as a function of the general tendencies of capitalist development, forms first the theory of the socialist party and subsequently that of the communist party, and it endows the revolutionary movement with a profound and vigorous intellectual unity. While this theory is gradually penetrating one section of the proletariat, the masses' own experiences are bound to foster practical recognition that capitalism is no longer viable to an increasing extent. World war and rapid economic collapse now make revolution objectively necessary before the masses have grasped communism intellectually : and this contradiction is at the root of the contradictions, hesitations and setbacks which make the revolution a long and painful process. Nevertheless, theory itself now gains new momentum and rapidly takes a hold on the masses; but both these processes are inevitably held up by the practical problems which have suddenly risen up so massively.

As far as Western Europe is concerned, the development of the revolution is mainly determined by two forces : the collapse of the capitalist economy and the example of Soviet Russia. The reasons why the proletariat was able to achieve victory so quickly and with such relative ease in Russia -- the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the alliance with the peasantry, the fact that the revolution took place during the war -- need not be elaborated here. The example of a state in which working people are the rulers, where they have abolished capitalism and are engaged in building

communism, could not but make a great impression upon the proletariat of the entire world. Of course, this example would not in itself have been sufficient to spur the workers in other countries on to proletarian revolution. The human mind is most strongly influenced by the effects of its own material environment; so that if indigenous capitalism had retained all its old strength, the news from far-away Russia would have made little impression. 'Full of respectful admiration, but in a timid, petty-bourgeois way, without the courage to save themselves, Russia and humanity as a whole by taking action' this was how the masses struck Rutgers [1] upon his return to Western Europe from Russia. When the war came to an end, everyone here hoped for a rapid upturn in the economy, and a lying press depicted Russia as a place of chaos and barbarism; and so the masses bided their time. But since then, the opposite has come about : chaos has spread in the traditional home of civilisation, while the new order in Russia is showing increasing strength. Now the masses are stirring here as well.

Economic collapse is the most powerful spur to revolution. Germany and Austria are already completely shattered and pauperised economically, Italy and France are in inexorable decline. England has suffered so badly that it is doubtful whether its government's vigorous attempts at reconstruction can avert collapse, and in America the first threatening signs of crisis are appearing. And in each country, more or less in this same order, unrest is growing in the masses; they are struggling against impoverishment in great strike-movements which hit the economy even harder; these struggles are gradually developing into a conscious revolutionary struggle, and, without being communists by conviction, the masses are more and more

following the path which communism shows them, for practical necessity is driving them in that direction.

With the growth of this necessity and mood, carried by them, so to speak, the communist vanguard has been developing in these countries; this vanguard recognises the goals clearly and regroups itself in the Third International. The distinguishing feature of this developing process of revolution is a sharp separation of communism from socialism, in both ideological and organisational terms. This separation is most marked in the countries of Central Europe precipitated into economic crisis by the Treaty of Versailles, where a social-democratic regime was necessary to save the bourgeois state. The crisis is so profound and irremediable there that the mass of radical social-democratic workers, the USP, are pressing for affiliation to Moscow, although they still largely hold to the old social-democratic methods, traditions, slogans and leaders. In Italy, the entire social-democratic party has joined the Third International; a militant revolutionary mood among the masses, who are engaged in constant small-scale warfare against government and bourgeoisie, permits us to overlook the theoretical mixture of socialist, syndicalist and communist perspectives. In France, communist groups have only recently detached themselves from the social-democratic party and the trade-union movement, and are now moving towards the formation of a communist party. In England, the profound effect of the war upon the old, familiar conditions has generated a communist movement, as yet consisting of several groups and parties of different origins and new organisational formations. In America, two communist parties have detached themselves from the Social-Democratic Party, while the latter has also aligned itself with Moscow.

Soviet Russia's unexpected resilience to the onslaughts of reaction has both compelled the Entente to negotiate and also made a new and powerful impression upon the labour parties of the West. The Second International is breaking up; a general movement of the centre groups towards Moscow has set in under the impulsion of the growing revolutionary mood of the masses. These groups have adopted the new name of communists without their former perspectives having greatly altered, and they are transferring the conceptions and methods of the old social democrats into the new international. As a sign that these countries have now become more ripe for revolution, a phenomenon precisely opposite to the original one is now appearing : with their entry into the Third International or declaration in favour of its principles, as in the case of the USP mentioned above, the sharp distinction between communists and social democrats is once again fading. Whatever attempts are made to keep such parties formally outside the Third International in an effort to conserve some firmness of principle, they nevertheless insinuate themselves into the leadership of each country's revolutionary movement, maintaining their influence over the militant masses by paying lip-service to the new slogans. This is how every ruling stratum behaves : rather than allow itself to be cut off from the masses, it becomes 'revolutionary' itself, in order to deflate the revolution as far as possible by its influence. And many communists tend to see only the increased strength thus accruing to us, and not also the increase in vulnerability.

With the appearance of communism and the Russian example, the proletarian revolution seemed to have gained a simple, straightforward form. In reality, however, the various difficulties now being encountered are revealing the

forces which make it an extremely complex and arduous process.

Notes

[1] The tribunist S. J. Rutgers attended the First Congress of the Comintern and returned to Amsterdam in late 1919 to establish the Western European Auxiliary Bureau of the Third International there. He may well have been the author of the left orientated article on parliamentary and trade-union tactics in the sole issue of the Bureau's Bulletin, which resulted in its funds being abruptly frozen by Moscow. [translators note]

II

Issues and the solutions to them, programmes and tactics, do not spring from abstract principles, but are only determined by experience, by the real practice of life. The communists' conceptions of their goal and of how it is to be attained must be elaborated on the basis of previous revolutionary practice, as they always have been. The Russian revolution and the course which the German revolution has taken up to this point represent all the evidence so far available to us as to the motive forces, conditions and forms of the proletarian revolution.

The Russian revolution brought the proletariat political control in so astonishingly rapid an upturn that it took Western European observers completely by surprise at the time, and although the reasons for it are clearly identifiable,

it has come to seem more and more astonishing in view of the difficulties that we are now experiencing in Western Europe. Its initial effect was inevitably that in the first flush of enthusiasm, the difficulties facing the revolution in Western Europe were underestimated. Before the eyes of the world proletariat, the Russian revolution unveiled the principles of the new order in all the radiance and purity of their power -- the dictatorship of the proletariat, the soviet system as a new mode of democracy, the reorganisation of industry, agriculture and education. In many respects, it gave a picture of the nature and content of the proletarian revolution so simple, clear and comprehensive, so idyllic one might almost say, that nothing could seem easier than to follow this example. However, the German revolution has shown that this was not so simple, and the forces which came to the fore in Germany are by and large at work throughout the rest of Europe.

When German imperialism collapsed in November 1918, the working class was completely unprepared for the seizure of power. Shattered in mind and spirit by the four years of war and still caught up in social-democratic traditions, it was unable to achieve clear recognition of its task within the first few weeks, when governmental authority had lapsed; the intensive but brief period of communist propaganda could not compensate for this lack. The German bourgeoisie had learnt more from the Russian example than the proletariat; decking itself out in red in order to lull the workers' vigilance, it immediately began to rebuild the organs of its power. The workers' councils voluntarily surrendered their power to the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party and the democratic parliament. The workers still bearing arms as soldiers disarmed not the bourgeoisie, but themselves; the most active workers' groups were crushed by newly formed white guards, and

the bourgeoisie was formed into armed civil militias. With the connivance of the trade-union leaderships, the now defenceless workers were little by little robbed of all the improvements in working conditions won in the course of the revolution. The way to communism was thus blocked with barbed-wire entanglements to secure the survival of capitalism, to enable it to sink ever deeper into chaos, that is.

These experiences gained in the course of the German revolution cannot, of course, be automatically applied to the other countries of Western Europe; the development of the revolution will follow still other courses there. Power will not suddenly fall into the hands of the unprepared masses as a result of politico-military collapse; the proletariat will have to fight hard for it, and will thus have attained a higher degree of maturity when it is won. What happened at fever-pace in Germany after the November revolution is already taking place more quietly in other countries : the bourgeoisie is drawing the consequences of the Russian revolution, making military preparations for civil war and at the same time organising the political deception of the proletariat by means of social democracy. But in spite of these differences, the German revolution shows certain general characteristics and offers certain lessons of general significance. It has made it apparent that the revolution in Western Europe will be a slow, arduous process and revealed what forces are responsible for this. The slow tempo of revolutionary development in Western Europe, although only relative, has given rise to a clash of conflicting tactical currents. In times of rapid revolutionary development, tactical differences are quickly overcome in action, or else do not become conscious; intensive principled agitation clarifies people's minds, and at the same time the masses flood in and political action overturns

old conceptions. When a period of external stagnation sets in, however; when the masses let anything pass without protest and revolutionary slogans no longer seem able to catch the imagination; when difficulties mount up and the adversary seems to rise up more colossal with each engagement; when the Communist Party remains weak and experiences only defeats -- then perspectives diverge, new courses of action and new tactical methods are sought. There then emerge two main tendencies, which can be recognised in every country, for all the local variations. The one current seeks to revolutionise and clarify people's minds by word and deed, and to this end tries to pose the new principles in the sharpest possible contrast to the old, received conceptions. The other current attempts to draw the masses still on the sidelines into practical activity, and therefore emphasises points of agreement rather than points of difference in an attempt to avoid as far as is possible anything that might deter them. The first strives for a clear, sharp separation among the masses, the second for unity; the first current may be termed the radical tendency, the second the opportunist one. Given the current situation in Western Europe, with the revolution encountering powerful obstacles on the one hand and the Soviet Union's staunch resistance to the Entente governments' efforts to overthrow it making a powerful impression upon the masses on the other, we can expect a greater influx into the Third International of workers' groups until now undecided; and as a result, opportunism will doubtless become a powerful force in the Communist International.

Opportunism does not necessarily mean a pliant, conciliatory attitude and vocabulary, nor radicalism a more acerbic manner; on the contrary, lack of clear, principled tactics is all too often concealed in rabidly strident language; and indeed, in revolutionary situations, it is

characteristic of opportunism to suddenly set all its hopes on the great revolutionary deed. Its essence lies in always considering the immediate questions, not what lies in the future, and to fix on the superficial aspects of phenomena rather than seeing the determinant deeper bases. When the forces are not immediately adequate for the attainment of a certain goal, it tends to make for that goal by another way, by roundabout means, rather than strengthen those forces. For its goal is immediate success, and to that it sacrifices the conditions for lasting success in the future. It seeks justification in the fact that by forming alliances with other 'progressive' groups and by making concessions to outdated conceptions, it is often possible to gain power or at least split the enemy, the coalition of capitalist classes, and thus bring about conditions more favourable for the struggle. But power in such cases always turns out to be an illusion, personal power exercised by individual leaders and not the power of the proletarian class; this contradiction brings nothing but confusion, corruption and conflict in its wake. Conquest of governmental power not based upon a working class fully prepared to exercise its hegemony would be lost again, or else have to make so many concessions to reactionary forces that it would be inwardly spent. A split in the ranks of the class hostile to us -- the much vaunted slogan of reformism -- would not affect the unity of the inwardly united bourgeoisie, but would deceive, confuse and weaken the proletariat. Of course it can happen that the communist vanguard of the proletariat is obliged to take over political power before the normal conditions are met; but only what the masses thereby gain in terms of clarity, insight, solidarity and autonomy has lasting value as the foundation of further development towards communism.

The history of the Second International is full of examples of this policy of opportunism, and they are beginning to

appear in the Third. It used to consist in seeking the assistance of non-socialist workers' groups or other classes to attain the goal of socialism. This led to tactics becoming corrupted, and finally to collapse. The situation of the Third International is now fundamentally different; for that period of quiet capitalist development is over when social democracy in the best sense of the word could do nothing more than prepare for a future revolutionary epoch by fighting confusion with principled policies. Capitalism is now collapsing; the world cannot wait until our propaganda has won a majority to lucid communist insight; the masses must intervene, and as rapidly as possible, if they themselves and the world are to be saved from catastrophe. What can a small party, however principled, do when what is needed are the masses ? Is not opportunism, with its efforts to gather the broadest masses quickly, dictated by necessity ?

A revolution can no more be made by a big mass party or coalition of different parties than by a small radical party. It breaks out spontaneously among the masses; action instigated by a party can sometimes trigger it off (a rare occurrence), but the determining forces lie elsewhere, in the psychological factors deep in the unconscious of the masses and in the great events of world politics. The function of a revolutionary party lies in propagating clear understanding in advance, so that throughout the masses there will be elements who know what must be done and who are capable of judging the situation for themselves. And in the course of revolution the party has to raise the programme, slogans and directives which the spontaneously acting masses recognise as correct because they find that they express their own aims in their most adequate form and hence achieve greater clarity of purpose; it is thus that the party comes to lead the struggle. So long as the masses

remain inactive, this may appear to be an unrewarding tactic; but clarity of principle has an implicit effect on many who at first hold back, and revolution reveals its active power of giving a definite direction to the struggle. If, on the other hand, it has been attempted to assemble a large party by watering down principles, forming alliances and making concessions, then this enables confused elements to gain influence in times of revolution without the masses being able to see through their inadequacy. Conformity to traditional perspectives is an attempt to gain power without the revolution in ideas that is the precondition of doing so; its effect is therefore to hold back the course of revolution. It is also doomed to failure, for only the most radical thinking can take a hold on the masses once they engage in revolution, while moderation only satisfies them so long as the revolution has yet to be made. A revolution simultaneously involves a profound upheaval in the masses' thinking; it creates the conditions for this, and is itself conditioned by it; leadership in the revolution thus falls to the Communist Party by virtue of the world-transforming power of its unambiguous principles.

In contrast with the strong, sharp emphasis on the new principles -- soviet system and dictatorship -- which distinguish communism from social democracy, opportunism in the Third International relies as far as possible upon the forms of struggle taken over from the Second International. After the Russian revolution had replaced parliamentary activity with the soviet system and built up the trade-union movement on the basis of the factory, the first impulse in Western Europe was to follow this example. The Communist Party of Germany boycotted the elections for the National Assembly and campaigned for immediate or gradual organisational separation from the trade unions. When the revolution slackened and stagnated

in 1919, however, the Central Committee of the KPD introduced a different tactic which amounted to opting for parliamentarianism and supporting the old trade-union confederations against the industrial unions. The main argument behind this is that the Communist Party must not lose the leadership of the masses, who still think entirely in parliamentary terms, who are best reached through electoral campaigns and parliamentary speeches, and who, by entering the trade unions en masse, have increased their membership to seven million. The same thinking is to be seen in England in the attitude of the BSP : they do not want to break with the Labour Party, although it belongs to the Second International, for fear of losing contact with the mass of trade-unionists. These arguments are most sharply formulated and marshalled by our friend Karl Radek, whose *Development of the World Revolution and the Tasks of the Communist Party*, written in prison in Berlin, may be regarded as the programmatic statement of communist opportunism. [2] Here it is argued that the proletarian revolution in Western Europe will be a long drawn-out process, in which communism should use every means of propaganda, in which parliamentary activity and the trade-union movement will remain the principal weapons of the proletariat, with the gradual introduction of workers' control as a new objective.

An examination of the foundations, conditions and difficulties of the proletarian revolution in Western Europe will show how far this is correct.

Notes

[2] Pannekoek is here confusing the titles of two texts written by Radek while in prison : *The Development of the German Revolution and the Tasks of the Communist Party*,

written before the Heidelberg congress, and *The Development of the World Revolution and the Tactics of the Communist Parties in the Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, written after it. The latter is meant. [translators note]

III

It has repeatedly been emphasised that the revolution will take a long time in Western Europe because the bourgeoisie is so much more powerful here than in Russia. Let us analyse the basis of this power. Does it lie in their numbers ? The proletarian masses are much more numerous. Does it lie in the bourgeoisie's mastery over the whole of economic life ? This certainly used to be an important power-factor; but their hegemony is fading, and in Central Europe the economy is completely bankrupt. Does it lie in their control of the state, with all its means of coercion ? Certainly, it has always used the latter to hold the proletariat down, which is why the conquest of state power was the proletariat's first objective. But in November 1918, state power slipped from the nerveless grasp of the bourgeoisie in Germany and Austria, the coercive apparatus of the state was completely paralysed, the masses were in control; and the bourgeoisie was nevertheless able to build this state power up again and once more subjugate the workers. This proves that the bourgeoisie possessed another hidden source of power which had remained intact and which permitted it to re-establish its hegemony when everything seemed shattered. This hidden power is the bourgeoisie's ideological hold over the proletariat. Because the proletarian masses were still completely governed by a bourgeois mentality, they restored the hegemony of the bourgeoisie with their own hands after it had collapsed. [3]

The German experience brings us face to face with the major problem of the revolution in Western Europe. In these countries, the old bourgeois mode of production and the centuries-old civilisation which has developed with it have completely impressed themselves upon the thoughts and feelings of the popular masses. Hence, the mentality and inner character of the masses here is quite different from that in the countries of the East, who have not experienced the rule of bourgeois culture; and this is what distinguishes the different courses that the revolution has taken in the East and the West. In England, France, Holland, Italy, Germany and Scandinavia, there has been a powerful burgher class based on petty-bourgeois and primitive capitalist production since the Middle Ages; as feudalism declined, there also grew up in the countryside an equally powerful independent peasant class, in which the individual was also master in his own small business. Bourgeois sensibilities developed into a solid national culture on this foundation, particularly in the maritime countries of England and France, which took the lead in capitalist development. In the nineteenth century, the subjection of the whole economy to capital and the inclusion of the most outlying farms into the capitalist world-trade system enhanced and refined this national culture, and the psychological propaganda of press, school and church drummed it firmly into the heads of the masses, both those whom capital proletarianised and attracted into the cities and those it left on the land. This is true not only of the homelands of capitalism, but also, albeit in different forms, of America and Australia, where Europeans founded new states, and of the countries of Central Europe, Germany, Austria, Italy, which had until then stagnated, but where the new surge of capitalist development was able to connect with an old, backward, small-peasant economy and

a petty-bourgeois culture. But when capitalism pressed into the countries of Eastern Europe, it encountered very different material conditions and traditions. Here, in Russia, Poland, Hungary, even in Germany east of the Elbe, there was no strong bourgeois class which had long dominated the life of the spirit; the latter was determined by primitive agricultural conditions, with large-scale landed property, patriarchal feudalism and village communism. Here, therefore, the masses related to communism in a more primitive, simple, open way, as receptive as blank paper. Western European social democrats often expressed derisive astonishment that the 'ignorant' Russians could claim to be the vanguard of the new world of labour. Referring to these social democrats, an English delegate at the communist conference in Amsterdam [4] pointed up the difference quite correctly : the Russians may be more ignorant, but the English workers are stuffed so full of prejudices that it is harder to propagate communism among them. These 'prejudices' are only the superficial, external aspect of the bourgeois mentality which saturates the majority of the proletariat of England, Western Europe and America.

The entire content of this mentality is so many-sided and complex in its opposition to the proletarian, communist worldview that it can scarcely be summarised in a few sentences. Its primary characteristic is individualism, which has its origins in earlier petty-bourgeois and peasant forms of labour and only gradually gives way to the new proletarian sense of community and of the necessity of accepting discipline -- this characteristic is probably most pronounced in the bourgeoisie and proletariat of the Anglo-Saxon countries. The individual's perspective is limited to his work-place, instead of embracing society as a whole; so absolute does the principle of the division of labour seem,

that politics itself, the government of the whole of society, is seen not as everybody's business, but as the monopoly of a ruling stratum, the specialised province of particular experts, the politicians. With its centuries of material and intellectual commerce, its literature and art, bourgeois culture has embedded itself in the proletarian masses, and generates a feeling of national solidarity, anchored deeper in the unconscious than external indifference or superficial internationalism suggest; this can potentially express itself in national class solidarity, and greatly hinders international action.

Bourgeois culture exists in the proletariat primarily as a traditional cast of thought. The masses caught up in it think in ideological instead of real terms : bourgeois thought has always been ideological. But this ideology and tradition are not integrated; the mental reflexes left over from the innumerable class struggles of former centuries have survived as political and religious systems of thought which separate the old bourgeois world, and hence the proletarians born of it, into groups, churches, sects, parties, divided according to their ideological perspectives. The bourgeois past thus also survives in the proletariat as an organisational tradition that stands in the way of the class unity necessary for the creation of the new world; in these archaic organisations the workers make up the followers and adherents of a bourgeois vanguard. It is the intelligentsia which supplies the leaders in these ideological struggles. The intelligentsia -- priests, teachers, literati, journalists, artists, politicians -- form a numerous class, the function of which is to foster, develop and propagate bourgeois culture; it passes this on to the masses, and acts as mediator between the hegemony of capital and the interests of the masses. The hegemony of capital is rooted in this group's intellectual leadership of the masses. For even though the

oppressed masses have often rebelled against capital and its agencies, they have only done so under the leadership of the intelligentsia; and the firm solidarity and discipline won in this common struggle subsequently proves to be the strongest support of the system once these leaders openly go over to the side of capitalism. Thus, the Christian ideology of the declining petty bourgeois strata, which had become a living force as an expression of their struggle against the modern capitalist state, often proved its worth subsequently as a reactionary system that bolstered up the state, as with Catholicism in Germany after the Kulturkampf. [5] Despite the value of its theoretical contribution, much the same is true of the role played by social democracy in destroying and extinguishing old ideologies in the rising work-force, as history demanded it should do : it made the proletarian masses mentally dependent upon political and other leaders, who, as specialists, the masses left to manage all the important matters of a general nature affecting the class, instead of themselves taking them in hand. The firm solidarity and discipline which developed in the often acute class struggles of half a century did not bury capitalism, for it represented the power of leadership and organisation over the masses; and in August 1914 and November 1918 these made the masses helpless tools of the bourgeoisie, of imperialism and of reaction. The ideological power of the bourgeois past over the proletariat means that in many of the countries of Western Europe, in Germany and Holland, for example, it is divided into ideologically opposed groups which stand in the way of class unity. Social democracy originally sought to realise this class unity, but partly due to its opportunist tactics, which substituted purely political policies for class politics, it was unsuccessful in this : it merely increased the number of groups by one.

In times of crisis when the masses are driven to desperation and to action, the hegemony of bourgeois ideology over the masses cannot prevent the power of this tradition temporarily flagging, as in Germany in November 1918. But then the ideology comes to the fore again, and turns temporary victory into defeat. The concrete forces which in our view make up the hegemony of bourgeois conceptions can be seen at work in the case of Germany : in reverence for abstract slogans like 'democracy'; in the power of old habits of thought and programme-points, such as the realisation of socialism through parliamentary leaders and a socialist government; in the lack of proletarian self-confidence evidenced by the effect upon the masses of the barrage of filthy lies published about Russia; in the masses' lack of faith in their own power; but above all, in their trust in the party, in the organisation and in the leaders who for decades had incarnated their struggle, their revolutionary goals, their idealism. The tremendous mental, moral and material power of the organisations, these enormous machines painstakingly created by the masses themselves with years of effort, which incarnated the tradition of the forms of struggle belonging to a period in which the labour movement was a limb of ascendant capital, now crushed all the revolutionary tendencies once more flaring up in the masses.

This example will not remain unique. The contradiction between the rapid economic collapse of capitalism and the immaturity of spirit represented by the power of bourgeois tradition over the proletariat -- a contradiction which has not come about by accident, in that the proletariat cannot achieve the maturity of spirit required for hegemony and freedom within a flourishing capitalism -- can only be resolved by the process of revolutionary development, in which spontaneous uprisings and seizures of power

alternate with setbacks. It makes it very improbable that the revolution will take a course in which the proletariat for a long time storms the fortress of capital in vain, using both the old and new means of struggle, until it eventually conquers it once and for all; and the tactics of a long drawn-out and carefully engineered siege posed in Radek's schema thus fall through. The tactical problem is not how to win power as quickly as possible if such power will be merely illusory -- this is only too easy an option for the communists -- but how the basis of lasting class power is to be developed in the proletariat. No 'resolute minority' can resolve the problems which can only be resolved by the action of the class as a whole; and if the populace allows such a seizure of power to take place over its head with apparent indifference, it is not, for all that, a genuinely passive mass, but is capable, in so far as it has not been won over to communism, of rounding upon the revolution at any moment as the active follower of reaction. And a 'coalition with the gallows on hand' would do no more than disguise an untenable party dictatorship of this kind. [6] When a tremendous uprising of the proletariat destroys the bankrupt rule of the bourgeoisie, and the Communist Party, the clearest vanguard of the proletariat, takes over political control, it has only one task -- to eradicate the sources of weakness in the proletariat by all possible means and to strengthen it so that it will be fully equal to the revolutionary struggles that the future holds in store. This means raising the masses themselves to the highest pitch of activity, whipping up their initiative, increasing their self-confidence, so that they themselves will be able to recognise the tasks thrust upon them, for it is only thus that the latter can be successfully carried out. This makes it necessary to break the domination of traditional organisational forms and of the old leaders, and in no circumstances to join them in a coalition government; to

develop the new forms, to consolidate the material power of the masses; only in this way will it be possible to reorganise both production and defence against the external assaults of capitalism, and this is the precondition of preventing counter-revolution.

Such power as the bourgeoisie still possesses in this period resides in the proletariat's lack of autonomy and independence of spirit. The process of revolutionary development consists in the proletariat emancipating itself from this dependence, from the traditions of the past -- and this is only possible through its own experience of struggle. Where capitalism is already an institution of long standing and the workers have thus already been struggling against it for several generations, the proletariat has in every period had to build up methods, forms and aids to struggle corresponding to the contemporary stage of capitalist development, and these have soon ceased to be seen as the temporary expedients that they are, and instead idolised as lasting, absolute, perfect forms; they have thus subsequently become fetters upon development which had to be broken. Whereas the class is caught up in constant upheaval and rapid development, the leaders remain at a particular stage, as the spokesmen of a particular phase, and their tremendous influence can hold back the movement; forms of action become dogmas, and organisations are raised to the status of ends in themselves, making it all the more difficult to reorientate and readapt to the changed conditions of struggle. This still applies; every stage of the development of the class struggle must overcome the traditions of previous stages if it is to be capable of recognising its own tasks clearly and carrying them out effectively -- except that development is now proceeding at a far faster pace. The revolution thus develops through the process of internal struggle. It is within the proletariat itself

that the resistances develop which it must overcome; and in overcoming them, the proletariat overcomes its own limitations and matures towards communism.

Notes

[3] The following paragraph is quoted up to 'village communism' by Gorter in his Open Letter to Comrade Lenin. [translators note]

[4] The conference in question was convened to set up the Auxiliary Bureau. [translators note]

[5] The first trade-union organisations in the late 1860s in the Ruhr were the work of Catholic priests. In the late seventies, however, Bismarck dropped his campaign against Catholicism and its political representative, the Zentrum (the forerunner of the C DU), for the sake of a united front against the Social-Democratic Party. [translators note]

[6] This expression had been used to justify the collaboration with the socialists in the Commune of Hungary which the former Hungarian Communist Party leaders controlling Kommunismus blamed for its collapse in August 1919. In 'Left Wing' Communism Lenin urges the British Communists to campaign for the Labour Party where they have no candidate of their own; they will thus 'support Henderson as the rope supports a hanged man', and the impending establishment of a government of Hendersons will hasten the latter's political demise. (Peking edition, pp.90-91.) [translators note]

IV

Parliamentary activity and the trade-union movement were the two principal forms of struggle in the time of the Second International.

The congresses of the first International Working-Men's Association laid the basis of this tactic by taking issue with primitive conceptions belonging to the pre-capitalist, petty-bourgeois period and, in accordance with Marx's social theory, defining the character of the proletarian class struggle as a continuous struggle by the proletariat against capitalism for the means of subsistence, a struggle which would lead to the conquest of political power. When the period of bourgeois revolutions and armed uprisings had come to a close, this political struggle could only be carried on within the framework of the old or newly created national states, and trade-union struggle was often subject to even tighter restrictions. The First International was therefore bound to break up; and the struggle for the new tactics, which it was itself unable to practise, burst it apart; meanwhile, the tradition of the old conceptions and methods of struggle remained alive amongst the anarchists. The new tactics were bequeathed by the International to those who would have to put them into practice, the trade unions and Social-Democratic Parties which were springing up on every hand. When the Second International arose as a loose federation of the latter, it did in fact still have to combat tradition in the form of anarchism; but the legacy of the First International already formed its undisputed tactical base. Today, every communist knows why these methods of struggle were necessary and productive at that time : when the working class is developing within ascendant capitalism, it is not yet capable of creating organs which would enable it to control and order society, nor can it even conceive the necessity of doing so. It must first orientate

itself mentally and learn to understand capitalism and its class rule. The vanguard of the proletariat, the Social-Democratic Party, must reveal the nature of the system through its propaganda and show the masses their goals by raising class demands. It was therefore necessary for its spokesmen to enter the parliaments, the centres of bourgeois rule, in order to raise their voices on the tribunes and take part in conflicts between the political parties.

Matters change when the struggle of the proletariat enters a revolutionary phase. We are not here concerned with the question of why the parliamentary system is inadequate as a system of government for the masses and why it must give way to the soviet system, but with the utilisation of parliament as a means of struggle by the proletariat. [7] As such, parliamentary activity is the paradigm of struggles in which only the leaders are actively involved and in which the masses themselves play a subordinate role. It consists in individual deputies carrying on the main battle; this is bound to arouse the illusion among the masses that others can do their fighting for them. People used to believe that leaders could obtain important reforms for the workers in parliament; and the illusion even arose that parliamentarians could carry out the transformation to socialism by acts of parliament. Now that parliamentarianism has grown more modest in its claims, one hears the argument that deputies in parliament could make an important contribution to communist propaganda. [*2] But this always means that the main emphasis falls on the leaders, and it is taken for granted that specialists will determine policy -- even if this is done under the democratic veil of debates and resolutions by congresses; the history of social democracy is a series of unsuccessful attempts to induce the members themselves to determine policy. This is all inevitable while the proletariat is carrying

on a parliamentary struggle, while the masses have yet to create organs of self-action, while the revolution has still to be made, that is; and as soon as the masses start to intervene, act and take decisions on their own behalf, the disadvantages of parliamentary struggle become overwhelming.

As we argued above, the tactical problem is how we are to eradicate the traditional bourgeois mentality which paralyses the strength of the proletarian masses; everything which lends new power to the received conceptions is harmful. The most tenacious and intractable element in this mentality is dependence upon leaders, whom the masses leave to determine general questions and to manage their class affairs. Parliamentarianism inevitably tends to inhibit the autonomous activity by the masses that is necessary for revolution. Fine speeches may be made in parliament exhorting the proletariat to revolutionary action; it is not in such words that the latter has its origins, however, but in the hard necessity of there being no other alternative.

Revolution also demands something more than the massive assault that topples a government and which, as we know, cannot be summoned up by leaders, but can only spring from the profound impulse of the masses. Revolution requires social reconstruction to be undertaken, difficult decisions made, the whole proletariat involved in creative action -- and this is only possible if first the vanguard, then a greater and greater number take matters in hand themselves, know their own responsibilities, investigate, agitate, wrestle, strive, reflect, assess, seize chances and act upon them. But all this is difficult and laborious; thus, so long as the working class thinks it sees an easier way out through others acting on its behalf leading agitation from a high platform, taking decisions, giving signals for action,

making laws -- the old habits of thought and the old weaknesses will make it hesitate and remain passive.

While on the one hand parliamentarianism has the counterrevolutionary effect of strengthening the leaders' dominance over the masses, on the other it has a tendency to corrupt these leaders themselves. When personal statesmanship has to compensate for what is lacking in the active power of the masses, petty diplomacy develops; whatever intentions the party may have started out with, it has to try and gain a legal base, a position of parliamentary power; and so finally the relationship between means and ends is reversed, and it is no longer parliament that serves as a means towards communism, but communism that stands as an advertising slogan for parliamentary politics. In the process, however, the communist party itself takes on a different character. Instead of a vanguard grouping the entire class behind it for the purpose of revolutionary action, it becomes a parliamentary party with the same legal status as the others, joining in their quarrels, a new edition of the old social democracy under new radical slogans. Whereas there can be no essential antagonism, no internal conflict between the revolutionary working class and the communist party, since the party incarnates a form of synthesis between the proletariat's most lucid class-consciousness and its growing unity, parliamentary activity shatters this unity and creates the possibility of such a conflict : instead of unifying the class, communism becomes a new party with its own party chiefs, a party which falls in with the others and thus perpetuates the political division of the class. All these tendencies will doubtless be cut short once again by the development of the economy in a revolutionary sense; but even the first beginnings of this process can only harm the revolutionary movement by inhibiting the development of lucid class-

consciousness; and when the economic situation temporarily favours counter-revolution, this policy will pave the way for a diversion of the revolution on to the terrain of reaction.

What is great and truly communist about the Russian revolution is above all the fact that it has awoken the masses' own activity and ignited the spiritual and physical energy in them to build and sustain a new society. Rousing the masses to this consciousness of their own power is something which cannot be achieved all at once, but only in stages; one stage on this way to independence is the rejection of parliamentarianism. When, in December 1918, the newly formed Communist Party of Germany resolved to boycott the National Assembly, this decision did not proceed from any immature illusion of quick, easy victory, but from the proletariat's need to emancipate itself from its psychological dependence upon parliamentary representatives -- a necessary reaction against the tradition of social democracy -- because the way to self-activity could now be seen to lie in building up the council system. However, one half of those united at that time, those who have stayed in the KPD, readopted parliamentarianism with the ebb of the revolution : with what consequences it remains to be seen, but which have in part been demonstrated already. In other countries too, opinion is divided among the communists, and many groups want to refrain from parliamentary activity even before the outbreak of revolution. The international dispute over the use of parliament as a method of struggle will thus clearly be one of the main tactical issues within the Third International over the next few years.

At any rate, everyone is agreed that parliamentary activity only forms a subsidiary feature of our tactics. The Second

International was able to develop up to the point where it had brought out and laid bare the essence of the new tactics : that the proletariat can only conquer imperialism with the weapons of mass action. The Second International itself was no longer able to employ these; it was bound to collapse when the world war put the revolutionary class struggle on to an international plane. The legacy of the earlier internationals was the natural foundation of the new international : mass action by the proletariat to the point of general strike and civil war forms the common tactical platform of the communists. In parliamentary activity the proletariat is divided into nations, and a genuinely international intervention is not possible; in mass action against international capital national divisions fall away, and every movement, to whatever countries it extends or is limited, is part of a single world struggle.

Notes

[7] The remainder of this paragraph and the two following are quoted by Gorter in the Open Letter. [translators note]

[*2] It was recently argued in Germany that communists must go into parliament to convince the workers that parliamentary struggle is useless -- but you don't take a wrong turning to show other people that it is wrong, you go the right way from the outset !

V

Just as parliamentary activity incarnates the leaders' psychological hold over the working masses, so the trade-union movement incarnates their material authority. Under capitalism, the trade unions form the natural organisations

for the regroupment of the proletariat; and Marx emphasised their significance as such from the first. In developed capitalism, and even more in the epoch of imperialism, the trade unions have become enormous confederations which manifest the same developmental tendencies as the bourgeois state in an earlier period. There has grown up within them a class of officials, a bureaucracy, which controls all the organisation's resources -- funds, press, the appointment of officials; often they have even more far-reaching powers, so that they have changed from being the servants of the collectivity to become its masters, and have identified themselves with the organisation. And the trade unions also resemble the state and its bureaucracy in that, democratic forms notwithstanding, the will of the members is unable to prevail against the bureaucracy; every revolt breaks on the carefully constructed apparatus of orders of business and statutes before it can shake the hierarchy. It is only after years of stubborn persistence that an opposition can sometimes register a limited success, and usually this only amounts to a change in personnel. In the last few years, before and since the war, this situation has therefore often given rise to rebellions by the membership in England, Germany and America; they have struck on their own initiative, against the will of the leadership or the decisions of the union itself. That this should seem natural and be taken as such is an expression of the fact that the organisation is not simply a collective organ of the members, but as it were something alien to them; that the workers do not control their union, but that it stands over them as an external force against which they can rebel, although they themselves are the source of its strength -- once again like the state itself. If the revolt dies down, the old order is established once again; it knows how to assert itself in spite of the hatred and impotent bitterness of the

masses, for it relies upon these masses' indifference and their lack of clear insight and united, persistent purpose, and is sustained by the inner necessity of trade-union organisation as the only means of finding strength in numbers against capital.

It was by combating capital, combating its tendencies to absolute impoverisation, setting limits to the latter and thus making the existence of the working class possible, that the trade-union movement fulfilled its role in capitalism, and this made it a limb of capitalist society itself. But once the proletariat ceases to be a member of capitalist society and, with the advent of revolution, becomes its destroyer, the trade union enters into conflict with the proletariat.

It becomes legal, an open supporter of the state and recognised by the latter, it makes 'expansion of the economy before the revolution' its slogan, in other words, the maintenance of capitalism. In Germany today millions of proletarians, until now intimidated by the terrorism of the ruling class, are streaming into the unions out of a mixture of timidity and incipient militancy. The resemblance of the trade-union confederations, which now embrace almost the entire working class, to the state structure is becoming even closer. The trade-union officials collaborate with the state bureaucracy not only in using their power to hold down the working class on behalf of capital, but also in the fact that their 'policy' increasingly amounts to deceiving the masses by demagogic means and securing their consent to the bargains that the unions have made with the capitalists. And even the methods employed vary according to the conditions : rough and brutal in Germany, where the trade-union leaders have landed the workers with piece-work and longer working hours by means of coercion and cunning deception, subtle and

refined in England, where the trade-union mandarins, like the government, give the appearance of allowing themselves to be reluctantly pushed on by the workers, while in reality they are sabotaging the latter's demands.

Marx' and Lenin's insistence that the way in which the state is organised precludes its use as an instrument of proletarian revolution, notwithstanding its democratic forms, must therefore also apply to the trade-union organisations. Their counterrevolutionary potential cannot be destroyed or diminished by a change of personnel, by the substitution of radical or 'revolutionary' leaders for reactionary ones. It is the form of the organisation that renders the masses all but impotent and prevents them making the trade union an organ of their will. The revolution can only be successful by destroying this organisation, that is to say so completely revolutionising its organisational structure that it becomes something completely different. The soviet system, constructed from within, is not only capable of uprooting and abolishing the state bureaucracy, but the trade-union bureaucracy as well; it will form not only the new political organs to replace parliament, but also the basis of the new trade unions. The idea that a particular organisational form is revolutionary has been held up to scorn in the party disputes in Germany on the grounds that what counts is the revolutionary mentality of the members. But if the most important element of the revolution consists in the masses taking their own affairs -- the management of society and production -- in hand themselves, then any form of organisation which does not permit control and direction by the masses themselves is counterrevolutionary and harmful; and it should therefore be replaced by another form that is revolutionary in that it enables the workers themselves to determine everything actively. This is not to say that this

form is to be set up within a still passive work-force in readiness for the revolutionary feeling of the workers to function within it in time to come : this new form of organisation can itself only be set up in the process of revolution, by workers making a revolutionary intervention. But recognition of the role played by the current form of organisation determines the attitude which the communists have to take with regard to the attempts already being made to weaken or burst this form.

Efforts to keep the bureaucratic apparatus as small as possible and to look to the activity of the masses for effectiveness have been particularly marked in the syndicalist movement, and even more so in the 'industrial' union movement. This is why so many communists have spoken out for support of these organisations against the central confederations. So long as capitalism remains intact, however, these new formations cannot take on any comprehensive role -- the importance of the American IWW derives from particular circumstances, namely the existence of a numerous, unskilled proletariat largely of foreign extraction outside the old confederations. The Shop Committees movement and Shop Stewards movement in England are much closer to the soviet system, in that they are mass organs formed in opposition to the bureaucracy in the course of struggle. The 'unions' in Germany are even more deliberately modelled on the idea of the soviet, but the stagnation of the revolution has left them weak. Every new formation of this type that weakens the central confederations and their inner cohesion removes an impediment to revolution and weakens the counterrevolutionary potential of the trade-union bureaucracy. The notion of keeping all oppositional and revolutionary forces together within the confederations in order for them eventually to take these organisations over

as a majority and revolutionise them is certainly tempting. But in the first place, this is a vain hope, as fanciful as the related notion of taking over the Social-Democratic party, because the bureaucracy already knows how to deal with an opposition before it becomes too dangerous. And secondly, revolution does not proceed according to a smooth programme, but elemental outbreaks on the part of passionately active groups always play a particular role within it as a force driving it forward. If the communists were to defend the central confederations against such initiatives out of opportunistic considerations of temporary gain, they would reinforce the inhibitions which will later be their most formidable obstacle.

The formation by the workers of the soviets, their own organs of power and action, in itself signifies the disintegration and dissolution of the state. As a much more recent form of organisation and one created by the proletariat itself, the trade union will survive much longer, because it has its roots in a much more living tradition of personal experience, and once it has shaken off state-democratic illusions, will therefore claim a place in the conceptual world of the proletariat. But since the trade unions have emerged from the proletariat itself, as products of its own creative activity, it is in this field that we shall see the most new formations as continual attempts to adapt to new conditions; following the process of revolution, new forms of struggle and organisation will be built on the model of the soviets in a process of constant transformation and development.

VI

The conception that revolution in Western Europe will take the form of an orderly siege of the fortress of capital which the proletariat, organised by the Communist Party into a disciplined army and using time-proven weapons, will repeatedly assault until the enemy surrenders is a neo-reformist perspective that certainly does not correspond to the conditions of struggle in the old capitalist countries. Here there may occur revolutions and conquests of power that quickly turn into defeat; the bourgeoisie will be able to reassert its domination, but this will result in even greater dislocation of the economy; transitional forms may arise which, because of their inadequacy, only prolong the chaos. Certain conditions must be fulfilled in any society for the social process of production and collective existence to be possible, and these relations acquire the firm hold of spontaneous habits and moral norms -- sense of duty, industriousness, discipline : in the first instance, the process of revolution consists in a loosening of these old relations. Their decay is a necessary by-product of the dissolution of capitalism, while the new bonds corresponding to the communist reorganisation of work and society, the development of which we have witnessed in Russia, have yet to grow sufficiently strong. Thus, a transitional period of social and political chaos becomes inevitable. Where the proletariat is able to seize power rapidly and keep a firm hold upon it, as in Russia, the transitional period can be short and can be brought rapidly to a close by positive construction. But in Western Europe, the process of destruction will be much more drawn out. In Germany we see the working class split into groups in which this process has reached different stages, and which therefore cannot yet achieve unity in action. The symptoms of recent revolutionary movements indicate that the entire nation, and indeed, Central Europe as a whole, is dissolving, that the popular masses are fragmenting into separate strata and

regions, with each acting on its own account : here the masses manage to arm themselves and more or less gain political power; elsewhere they paralyse the power of the bourgeoisie in strike movements; in a third place they shut themselves off as a peasant republic, and somewhere else they support white guards, or perhaps toss aside the remnants of feudalism in primitive agrarian revolts -- the destruction must obviously be thorough-going before we can begin to think of the real construction of communism. It cannot be the task of the Communist Party to act the schoolmaster in this upheaval and make vain attempts to truss it in a straitjacket of traditional forms; its task is to support the forces of the proletarian movement everywhere, to connect the spontaneous actions together, to give them a broad idea of how they are related to one another, and thereby prepare the unification of the disparate actions and thus put itself at the head of the movement as a whole.

The first phase of the dissolution of capitalism is to be seen in those countries of the Entente where its hegemony is as yet unshaken; in an irresistible decline in production and in the value of their currencies, an increase in the frequency of strikes and a strong aversion to work among the proletariat. The second phase, the period of counter-revolution, i.e. the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the epoch of revolution, means complete economic collapse; we can study this best in Germany and the remainder of Central Europe. If a communist system had arisen immediately after the political revolution, organised reconstruction could have begun in spite of the Versailles and St Germain peace treaties, in spite of the poverty and the exhaustion. But the Ebert-Noske regime no more thought of organised reconstruction than did Renner and Bauer; [8] they gave the bourgeoisie a free hand, and saw their duty as consisting solely in the suppression of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie,

or rather each individual bourgeois, acted in a characteristically bourgeois manner; each of them thought only of making as much profit as possible and of rescuing for his personal use whatever could be saved from the cataclysm. It is true that there was talk in newspapers and manifestoes of the need to rebuild economic life by organised effort, but this was simply for the workers' consumption, fine phrases to conceal the fact that despite their exhaustion, they were under rigorous compulsion to work in the most intensive conditions possible. In reality, of course, not a single bourgeois concerned himself one jot with the general national interest, but only with his personal gain. At first, trade became the principal means of self-enrichment, as it used to be in the old days; the depreciation of the currency provided the opportunity to export everything that was needed for economic expansion or even for the mere survival of the masses -- raw materials, food, finished products, means of production, and after that, factories themselves and property. Racketeering reigned everywhere among the bourgeois strata, supported by unbridled corruption on the part of officialdom. And so all their former possessions and everything that was not to be surrendered as war reparations was packed off abroad by the 'leaders of production'. Likewise in the domain of production, the private pursuit of profit intervened to wreck economic life by its total indifference towards the common welfare. In order to force piecework and longer working hours upon proletarians or to get rid of rebellious elements among them, they were locked out and the factories set at a standstill, regardless of the stagnation caused throughout the rest of the industry as a consequence. On top of that came the incompetence of the bureaucratic management in the state enterprises, which degenerated into utter vacillation when the powerful hand of the government was missing. Restriction of production, the most primitive

method of raising prices and one which competition would render impossible in a healthy capitalist economy, became respectable once more. In the stock-market reports capitalism seems to be flourishing again, but the high dividends are consuming the last remaining property and are themselves being frittered away on luxuries. What we have witnessed in Germany over the last year is not something out of the ordinary, but the functioning of the general class character of the bourgeoisie. Their only aim is, and always has been, personal profit, which in normal capitalism sustains production, but which brings about the total destruction of the economy as capitalism degenerates. And things will go the same way in other countries; once production has been dislocated beyond a certain point and the currency has depreciated sharply, then the complete collapse of the economy will result if the pursuit of private profit by the bourgeoisie is given free reign -- and this is what the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie amounts to, whatever non-communist party it may hide behind.

The difficulties of the reconstruction facing the proletariat of Western Europe in these circumstances are far greater than they were in Russia -- the subsequent destruction of industrial productive forces by Kolchak and Denikin is a pale shadow by comparison. Reconstruction cannot wait for a new political order to be set up, it must be begun in the very process of revolution by the proletariat taking over the organisation of production and abolishing the bourgeoisie's control over the material essentials of life wherever the proletariat gains power. Works councils can serve to keep an eye on the use of goods in the factories; but it is clear that this cannot prevent all the anti-social racketeering of the bourgeoisie. To do so, the most resolute utilisation of armed political power is necessary. Where the profiteers recklessly squander the national wealth without heed for the

common good, where armed reaction blindly murders and destroys, the proletariat must intervene and fight with no half-measures in order to protect the common good and the life of the people.

The difficulties of reorganising a society that has been completely destroyed are so great that they appear insuperable before the event, and this makes it impossible to set up a programme for reconstruction in advance. But they must be overcome, and the proletariat will overcome them by the infinite self-sacrifice and commitment, the boundless power of soul and spirit and the tremendous psychological and moral energies which the revolution is able to awaken in its weakened and tortured frame.

At this point, a few problems may be touched on in passing. The question of technical cadres in industry will only give temporary difficulties : although their thinking is bourgeois through and through and they are deeply hostile to proletarian rule, they will nevertheless conform in the end. Getting commerce and industry moving will above all be a question of supplying raw materials; and this question coincides with that of food-stuffs. The question of food-supplies is central to the revolution in Western Europe, since the highly industrialised population cannot get by even under capitalism without imports from abroad. For the revolution, however, the question of food-supplies is intimately bound up with the whole agrarian question, and the principles of communist regulation of agriculture must influence measures taken to deal with hunger even during the revolution. Junker estates and large-scale landed property are ripe for expropriation and collective exploitation; the small farmers will be freed from all capitalist oppression and encouraged to adopt methods of intensive cultivation through support and assistance of

every kind from the state and co-operative arrangements; medium-scale farmers -- who own half the land in Western and South-Western Germany, for example -- have a strongly individualistic and hence anti-communist mentality, but their economic position is as yet unassailable : they cannot therefore be expropriated, and will have to be integrated into the sphere of the economic process as a whole through the exchange of products and the development of productivity, for it is only with communism that maximum productivity can be developed in agriculture and the individual enterprise introduced by capitalism transcended. It follows that the workers will see in the landowners a hostile class and in the rural workers and small farmers allies in the revolution, while they have no cause for making enemies of the middle farming strata, even though the latter may be of a hostile disposition towards them. This means that during the first period of chaos preceding the establishment of a system of exchanging products, requisitions must be carried out only as an emergency measure among these strata, as an absolutely unavoidable balancing operation between famine in the towns and in the country. The struggle against hunger will have to be dealt with primarily by imports from abroad. Soviet Russia, with her rich stocks of foodstuffs and raw materials, will thus save and provide for the revolution in Western Europe. The Western European working class thus has the highest and most personal interest in the defence and support of Soviet Russia.

The reconstruction of the economy, inordinately difficult as it will be, is not the main problem for the Communist Party. When the proletarian masses develop their intellectual and moral potential to the full, they will resolve it themselves. The prime duty of the Communist Party is to arouse and foster this potential. It must eradicate all the received ideas

which leave the proletariat timid and unsure of itself, set itself against everything that breeds illusions among the workers about easier courses and restrains them from the most radical measures, energetically oppose all the tendencies which stop short at half-measures or compromises. And there are still many such tendencies.

Notes

[8] Karl Renner was the leader of the revisionist wing of the Austrian Social Democratic Party; Otto Bauer was Austrian Foreign Secretary from November 1918 to July 1919. [translators note]

VII

The transition from capitalism to communism will not proceed according to a simple schema of conquering political power, introducing the council system and then abolishing private commerce, even though this represents the broad outline of development. That would only be possible if one could undertake reconstruction in some sort of void. But out of capitalism there have grown forms of production and organisation which have firm roots in the consciousness of the masses, and which can themselves only be overthrown in a process of political and economic revolution. We have already mentioned the agrarian forms of production, which will have to follow a particular course of development. There have grown up in the working class under capitalism forms of organisation, different in detail from country to country, which represent a powerful force, which cannot immediately be abolished and which will thus play an important role in the course of the revolution.

This applies in the first instance to political parties. The role of social democracy in the present crisis of capitalism is sufficiently well known, but in Central Europe it has practically played itself out. Even its most radical sections, such as the USP in Germany, exercise a harmful influence, not only by splitting the proletariat, but above all by confusing the masses and restraining them from action with their social-democratic notions of political leaders directing the fate of the people by their deeds and dealings. And if the Communist Party constitutes itself into a parliamentary party which, instead of attempting to assert the dictatorship of the class, attempts to establish that of the party -- that is to say the party leadership -- then it too may become a hindrance to development. The attitude of the Communist Party of Germany during the revolutionary March movement, when it announced that the proletariat was not yet ripe for dictatorship and that it would therefore encounter any 'genuinely socialist government' that might be formed as a 'loyal opposition', in other words restrain the proletariat from waging the fiercest revolutionary struggle against such a government, was itself criticised from many quarters. [*3]

A government of socialist party leaders may arise in the course of the revolution as a transitional form; this will be expressing a temporary balance between the revolutionary and bourgeois forces, and it will tend to freeze and perpetuate the temporary balance between the destruction of the old and the development of the new. It would be something like a more radical version of the Ebert-Haase-Dittmann regime; [9] and its basis shows what can be expected of it : a seeming balance of hostile classes, but under the preponderance of the bourgeoisie, a mixture of parliamentary democracy and a kind of council system for the workers, socialisation subject to the veto of the Entente

powers' imperialism with the profits of capital being maintained, futile attempts to prevent classes clashing violently. It is always the workers who take a beating in such circumstances. Not only can a regime of this sort achieve nothing in terms of reconstruction, it does not even attempt to do so, since its only aim is to halt the revolution in mid-course. Since it attempts both to prevent the further disintegration of capitalism and also the development of the full political power of the proletariat, its effects are directly counter-revolutionary. Communists have no choice but to fight such regimes in the most uncompromising manner.

Just as in Germany the Social-Democratic Party was formerly the leading organisation of the proletariat, so in England the trade-union movement, in the course of almost a century of history, has put down the deepest roots in the working class. Here it has long been the ideal of the younger radical trade-union leaders -- Robert Smillie is a typical example -- for the working class to govern society by means of the trade-union organisation. Even the revolutionary syndicalists and the spokesmen of the IWW in America, although affiliated to the Third International, imagine the future rule of the proletariat primarily along these lines. Radical trade-unionists see the soviet system not as the purest form of proletarian dictatorship, but rather as a regime of politicians and intellectuals built up on a base of working-class organisations. They see the trade union movement, on the other hand, as the natural organisation of the proletariat, created by the proletariat, which governs itself within it and which will go on to govern the whole of the work-process. Once the old ideal of 'industrial democracy' has been realised and the trade union is master in the factory, its collective organ, the trade-union congress, will take over the function of guiding and managing the economy as a whole. It will then be the real

'parliament of labour' and replace the old bourgeois parliament of parties. These circles often shrink from a one-sided and 'unfair' class dictatorship as an infringement of democracy, however; labour is to rule, but others are not to be without rights. Therefore, in addition to the labour parliament, which governs work, the basis of life, a second house could be elected by universal suffrage to represent the whole nation and exercise its influence on public and cultural matters and questions of general political concern.

This conception of government by the trade unions should not be confused with 'labourism', the politics of the 'Labour Party', which is currently led by trade-unionists. This latter stands for the penetration of the bourgeois parliament of today by the trade unions, who will build a 'workers' party' on the same footing as other parties with the objective of becoming the party of government in their place. This party is completely bourgeois, and there is little to choose between Henderson and Ebert. It will give the English bourgeoisie the opportunity to continue its old policies on a broader basis as soon as the threat of pressure from below makes this necessary, and hence weaken and confuse the workers by taking their leaders into the government. A government of the workers' party, something which seemed imminent a year ago when the masses were in so revolutionary a mood, but which the leaders themselves have put back into the distant future by holding the radical current down, would, like the Ebert regime in Germany, have been nothing but government on behalf of the bourgeoisie. But it remains to be seen whether the far-sighted, subtle English bourgeoisie does not trust itself to stultify and suppress the masses more effectively than these working-class bureaucrats.

A genuine trade-union government as conceived by the radicals is as unlike this workers' party politics, this 'labourism', as revolution is unlike reform. Only a real revolution in political relationships -- whether violent or in keeping with the old English models -- could bring it about; and in the eyes of the broad masses, it would represent the conquest of power by the proletariat. But it is nevertheless quite different from the goal of communism. It is based on the limited ideology which develops in trade-union struggles, where one does not confront world capital as a whole in all its interwoven forms -- finance capital, bank capital, agricultural capital, colonial capital -- but only its industrial form. It is based on marxist economics, now being eagerly studied in the English working class, which show production to be a mechanism of exploitation, but without the deeper marxist social theory, historical materialism. It recognises that work constitutes the basis of the world and thus wants labour to rule the world; but it does not see that all the abstract spheres of political and intellectual life are determined by the mode of production, and it is therefore disposed to leave them to the bourgeois intelligentsia, provided that the latter recognises the primacy of labour. Such a workers' regime would in reality be a government of the trade-union bureaucracy complemented by the radical section of the old state bureaucracy, which it would leave in charge of the specialist fields of culture, politics and suchlike on the grounds of their special competence in these matters. It is obvious that its economic programme will not coincide with communist expropriation, but will only go so far as the expropriation of big capital, while the 'honest' profits of the smaller entrepreneur, hitherto fleeced and kept in subjection by this big capital, will be spared. It is even open to doubt whether they will take up the standpoint of complete freedom for India, an integral element of the communist

programme, on the colonial question, this life-nerve of the ruling class of England.

It cannot be predicted in what manner, to what degree and with what purity a political form of this kind will be realised. The English bourgeoisie has always understood the art of using well-timed concessions to check movement towards revolutionary objectives; how far it is able to continue this tactic in the future will depend primarily on the depth of the economic crisis. If trade-union discipline is eroded from below by uncontrollable industrial revolts and communism simultaneously gains a hold on the masses, then the radical and reformist trade-unionists will agree on a common line; if the struggle goes sharply against the old reformist politics of the leaders, the radical trade-unionists and the communists will go hand in hand.

These tendencies are not confined to England. The trade unions are the most powerful workers' organisations in every country; as soon as a political clash topples the old state power, it will inevitably fall into the hands of the best organised and most influential force on hand. In Germany in November 1918, the trade-union executives formed the counter-revolutionary guard behind Ebert; and in the recent March crisis, they entered the political arena in an attempt to gain direct influence upon the composition of the government. The only purpose of this support for the Ebert regime was to deceive the proletariat the more subtly with the fraud of a 'government under the control of the workers' organisations'. But it shows that the same tendency exists here as in England. And even if the Legiens and Bauers [10] are too tainted by counter-revolution, new radical trade-unionists from the USP tendency will take their place just as last year the Independents under Dissmann won the leadership of the great metalworkers' federation. If a

revolutionary movement overthrows the Ebert regime, this tightly organised force of seven million will doubtless be ready to seize power, in conjunction with the C P or in opposition to it.

A 'government of the working class' along these lines by the trade unions cannot be stable; although it may be able to hold its own for a long time during a slow process of economic decline, in an acute revolutionary crisis it will only be able to survive as a tottering transitional phenomenon. Its programme, as we have outlined above, cannot be radical. But a current which will sanction such measures not, like communism, as a temporary transitional form at most to be deliberately utilised for the purpose of building up a communist organisation, but as a definitive programme, must necessarily come into conflict with and antagonism towards the masses. Firstly, because it does not render bourgeois elements completely powerless, but grants them a certain position of power in the bureaucracy and perhaps in parliament, from which they can continue to wage the class struggle. The bourgeoisie will endeavour to consolidate these positions of strength, while the proletariat, because it cannot annihilate the hostile class under these conditions, must attempt to establish a straightforward soviet system as the organ of its dictatorship; in this battle between two mighty opponents, economic reconstruction will be impossible. [*4] And secondly, because a government of trade-union leaders of this kind cannot resolve the problems which society is posing; for the latter can only be resolved through the proletarian masses' own initiative and activity, fuelled by the self-sacrificing and unbounded enthusiasm which only communism, with all its perspectives of total freedom and supreme intellectual and moral elevation, can command. A current which seeks to abolish material poverty and exploitation, but deliberately

confines itself to this goal, which leaves the bourgeois superstructure intact and at the same time holds back from revolutionising the mental outlook and ideology of the proletariat, cannot release these great energies in the masses; and so it will be incapable of resolving the material problems of initiating economic expansion and ending the chaos.

The trade-union regime will attempt to consolidate and stabilise the prevailing level of the revolutionary process, just like the 'genuinely socialist' regime -- except that it will do so at a much more developed stage, when the primacy of the bourgeoisie has been destroyed and a certain balance of class power has arisen with the proletariat predominant; when the entire profit of capital can no longer be saved, but only its less repellent petty-capitalist form; when it is no longer bourgeois but socialist expansion that is being attempted, albeit with insufficient resources. It thus signifies the last stand of the bourgeois class : when the bourgeoisie can no longer withstand the assault of the masses on the Scheidemann-Henderson-Renaudel line, it falls back to its last line of defence, the Smillie-Dissman-Merrheim line. [11] When it is no longer able to deceive the proletariat by having 'workers' in a bourgeois or socialist regime, it can only attempt to keep the proletariat from its ultimate radical goals by a 'government of workers' organisations' and thus in part retain its privileged position. Such a government is counterrevolutionary in nature, in so far as it seeks to arrest the necessary development of the revolution towards the total destruction of the bourgeois world and prevent total communism from attaining its greatest and clearest objectives. The struggle of the communists may at present often run parallel with that of the radical trade-unionists; but it would be dangerous tactics not to clearly identify the differences of principle

and objective when this happens. And these considerations also bear upon the attitude of the communists towards the trade-union confederations of today; everything which consolidates their unity and strength consolidates the force which will one day put itself in the way of the onward march of the revolution.

When communism conducts a strong and principled struggle against this transitional political form, it represents the living revolutionary tendencies in the proletariat. The same revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat which prepares the way for the rule of a worker-bureaucracy by smashing the apparatus of bourgeois power simultaneously drives the masses on to form their own organs, the councils, which immediately undermine the basis of the bureaucratic trade unions' machinery. The development of the soviet system is at the same time the struggle of the proletariat to replace the incomplete form of its dictatorship by complete dictatorship. But with the intensive labour which all the never-ending attempts to 'reorganise' the economy will demand, a leadership bureaucracy will be able to retain great power for a long time, and the masses' capacity to get rid of it will only develop slowly. These various forms and phases of the process of development do not, moreover, follow on in the abstract, logical succession in which we have set them down as degrees of maturation : they all occur at the same time, become entangled and coexist in a chaos of tendencies that complement each other, combat each other and dissolve each other, and it is through this struggle that the general development of the revolution proceeds. As Marx himself put it :

Proletarian revolutions constantly criticise themselves, continually interrupt themselves in the course of their own

development, come back to the seemingly complete in order to start it all over again, treat the inadequacies of their own first attempts with cruelly radical contempt, seem only to throw their adversaries down to enable them to draw new strength from the earth and rise up again to face them all the more gigantic.

The resistances which issue from the proletariat itself as expressions of weakness must be overcome in order for it to develop its full strength; and this process of development is generated by conflict, it proceeds from crisis to crisis, driven on by struggle. In the beginning was the deed, but it was only the beginning. It demands an instant of united purpose to overthrow a ruling class, but only the lasting unity conferred by clear insight can keep a firm grasp upon victory. Otherwise there comes the reverse which is not a return to the old rulers, but a new hegemony in a new form, with new personnel and new illusions. Each new phase of the revolution brings a new layer of as yet unused leaders to the surface as the representatives of particular forms of organisation, and the overthrow of each of these in turn represents a higher stage in the proletariat's self-emancipation. The strength of the proletariat is not merely the raw power of the single violent act which throws the enemy down, but also the strength of mind which breaks the old mental dependence and thus succeeds in keeping a tight hold on what has been seized by storm. The growth of this strength in the ebb and flow of revolution is the growth of proletarian freedom.

Notes

[*3] See, for example, the penetrating criticisms of Comrade Koloszvary in the Viennese weekly *Kommunismus*.

[*4] The absence of obvious and intimidating methods of coercion in the hands of the bourgeoisie in England also inspires the pacifist illusion that violent revolution is not necessary there and that peaceful construction from below, as in the Guild movement and the Shop Committees, will take care of everything. It is certainly true that the most potent weapon of the English bourgeoisie has until now been subtle deception rather than armed force; but if put to it, this world-dominating class will not fail to summon up terrible means to enforce its rule.

[9] Ebert, Haase and Dittmann were members of the Council of People's Commissioners given supreme authority by the November revolution. [translators note]

[10] Karl Legien was President of the General Commission of Trade Unions from 1890 and of its successor, the ADGB (Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), from its formation in 1919; Gustav Bauer, another trade-union leader, became Minister of Labour in 1919 and subsequently Chancellor. [translators note]

[11] Respectively socialist and trade union leaders. [translators note]

VIII

In Western Europe, capitalism is in a state of progressive collapse; yet in Russia, despite the terrible difficulties, production is being built up under a new order. The hegemony of communism does not mean that production is completely based on a communist order -- this latter is only possible after a relatively lengthy process of development --

but that the working class is consciously developing the system of production towards communism. [*5] This development cannot at any point go beyond what the prevailing technical and social foundations permit, and therefore it inevitably manifests transitional forms in which vestiges of the old bourgeois world appear. According to what we have heard of the situation in Russia here in Western Europe, such vestiges do indeed exist there.

Russia is an enormous peasant land; industry there has not developed to the unnatural extent of a 'workshop' of the world as it has in Western Europe, making export and expansion a question of life and death, but just sufficiently for the formation of a working class able to take over the government of society as a developed class. Agriculture is the occupation of the popular masses, and modern, large-scale farms are in a minority, although they play a valuable role in the development of communism. It is the small units that make up the majority : not the wretched, exploited little properties of Western Europe, but farms which secure the welfare of the peasants and which the soviet regime is seeking to integrate more and more closely into the system as a whole by means of material assistance in the form of extra equipment and tools and by intensive cultural and specialist education. It is nevertheless natural that this form of enterprise generates a certain spirit of individualism alien to communism, which, among the 'rich peasants', has become a hostile, resolutely anti-communist frame of mind. The Entente has doubtless speculated on this in its proposals to trade with co-operatives, intending to initiate a bourgeois counter-movement by drawing these strata into bourgeois pursuit of profit. But because fear of feudal reaction binds them to the present regime as their major interest, such efforts must come to nothing, and when

Western European imperialism collapses this danger will disappear completely.

Industry is predominantly a centrally organised, exploitation-free system of production; it is the heart of the new order, and the leadership of the state is based on the industrial proletariat. But even this system of production is in a transitional phase; the technical and administrative cadres in the factories and in the state apparatus exercise greater authority than is commensurate with developed communism. The need to increase production quickly and the even more urgent need to create an efficient army to fend off the attacks of reaction made it imperative to make good the lack of reliable leaders in the shortest possible time; the threat of famine and the assaults of the enemy did not permit all resources to be directed towards a more gradual raising of the general level of competence and to the development of all as the basis of a collective communist system. Thus a new bureaucracy inevitably arose from the new leaders and functionaries, absorbing the old bureaucracy into itself. This is at times regarded with some anxiety as a peril to the new order, and it can only be removed by a broad development of the masses. Although the latter is being undertaken with the utmost energy, only the communist surplus by which man ceases to be the slave of his labour will form a lasting foundation for it. Only surplus creates the material conditions for freedom and equality; so long as the struggle against nature and against the forces of capital remains intense, an inordinate degree of specialisation will remain necessary.

It is worth noting that although our analysis predicts that development in Western Europe will take a different direction from that of Russia insofar as we can foresee the course which it will follow as the revolution progresses,

both manifest the same politico-economic structure : industry run according to communist principles with workers' councils forming the element of self-management under the technical direction and political hegemony of a worker-bureaucracy, while agriculture retains an individualistic, petty-bourgeois character in the dominant small and medium-scale sectors. But this coincidence is not so extraordinary for all that, in that this kind of social structure is determined not by previous political history, but by basic technico-economic conditions -- the level of development attained by industrial and agricultural technology and the formation of the proletarian masses -- which are in both cases the same. [*6] But despite this coincidence, there is a great difference in significance and goal. In Western Europe this politico-economic structure forms a transitional stage at which the bourgeoisie is ultimately able to arrest its decline, whereas in Russia the attempt is consciously being made to pursue development further in a communist direction. In Western Europe, it forms a phase in the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in Russia a phase in the new economic expansion. With the same external forms, Western Europe is on the downward path of a declining culture, Russia on the rising movement of a new culture.

While the Russian revolution was still young and weak and was looking to an imminent outbreak of revolution in Europe to save it, a different conception of its significance reigned. Russia, it was then maintained, was only an outpost of the revolution where favourable circumstances had enabled the proletariat to seize power so early; but this proletariat was weak and unformed and almost swallowed up in the infinite masses of the peasantry. The proletariat of economically backward Russia could only make temporary advances; as soon as the great masses of the fully-fledged

Western European proletariat came to power in the most developed industrial countries, with all their technical and organisational experience and their ancient wealth of culture, then we should see communism flourish to an extent that would make the Russian contribution, welcome as it was, seem weak and inadequate by comparison. The heart and strength of the new communist world lay where capitalism had reached the height of its power, in England, in Germany, in America, and laid the basis for the new mode of production.

This conception takes no account of the difficulties facing the revolution in Western Europe. Where the proletariat only slowly gains firm control and the bourgeoisie is upon occasion able to win back power in part or in whole, nothing can come of economic reconstruction. Capitalist expansion is impossible; every time the bourgeoisie obtains a free hand, it creates new chaos and destroys the bases which could have served for the construction of communist production. Again and again it prevents the consolidation of the new proletarian order by bloody reaction and destruction. This occurred even in Russia : the destruction of industrial installations and mines in the Urals and the Donetz basin by Kolchak and Denikin, as well as the need to deploy the best workers and the greater part of the productive forces against them, was a serious blow to the economy and damaged and delayed communist expansion - - and even though the initiation of trade relations with America and the West may considerably favour a new upturn, the greatest, most self-sacrificing effort will be needed on the part of the masses in Russia to achieve complete recovery from this damage. But -- and herein lies the difference -- the soviet republic has remained intact in Russia as an organised centre of communist power which has already developed tremendous internal stability. In

Western Europe there will be just as much destruction and murder, here too the best forces of the proletariat will be wiped out in the course of the struggle, but here we lack an already consolidated, organised soviet state that could serve as a source of strength. The classes are wearing each other out in a devastating civil war, and so long as construction comes to nothing, chaos and misery will continue to rule. This will be the lot of countries where the proletariat does not immediately recognise its task with clear insight and united purpose, that is to say where bourgeois traditions weaken and split the workers, dim their eyes and subdue their hearts. It will take decades to overcome the infectious, paralysing influence of bourgeois culture upon the proletariat in the old capitalist countries. And meanwhile, production lies in ruins and the country degenerates into an economic desert.

At the same time as Western Europe, stagnating economically, painfully struggles with its bourgeois past, in the East, in Russia, the economy is flourishing under a communist order. What used to distinguish the developed capitalist countries from the backward East was the tremendous sophistication of their material and mental means of production -- a dense network of railways, factories, ships, and a dense, technically skilled population. But during the collapse of capitalism, in the long civil war, in the period of stagnation when too little is being produced, this heritage is being dissipated, used up or destroyed. The indestructible forces of production, science, technical capabilities, are not tied to these countries; their bearers will find a new homeland in Russia, where trade will also provide a sanctuary for part of Europe's material and technical riches. Soviet Russia's trade agreement with Western Europe and America will, if taken seriously and operated with a will, tend to accentuate this contradiction,

because it furthers the economic expansion of Russia while delaying collapse in Western Europe, thus giving capitalism a breathing space and paralysing the revolutionary potential of the masses -- for how long and to what extent remains to be seen. Politically, this will be expressed in an apparent stabilisation of a bourgeois regime or one of the other types discussed above and in a simultaneous rise to power of opportunist tendencies within communism; by recognising the old methods of struggle and engaging in parliamentary activity and loyal opposition within the old trade unions, the communist parties in Western Europe will acquire a legal status, like social-democracy before them, and in the face of this, the radical, revolutionary current will see itself forced into a minority. However, it is entirely improbable that capitalism will enjoy a real new flowering; the private interests of the capitalists trading with Russia will not defer to the economy as a whole, and for the sake of profit they will ship off essential basic elements of production to Russia; nor can the proletariat again be brought into a state of dependence. Thus the crisis will drag on; lasting improvement is impossible and will continually be arrested; the process of revolution and civil war will be delayed and drawn out, the complete rule of communism and the beginning of new growth put off into the distant future. Meanwhile, in the East, the economy will develop untrammelled in a powerful upsurge, and new paths will be opened up on the basis of the most advanced natural science -- which the West is incapable of exploiting -- together with the new social science, humanity's newly won control over its own social forces. And these forces, increased a hundredfold by the new energies flowing from freedom and equality, will make Russia the centre of the new communist world order.

This will not be the first time in world history that the centre of the civilised world has shifted in the transition to a new mode of production or one of its phases. In antiquity, it moved from the Middle East to Southern Europe, in the Middle Ages, from Southern to Western Europe; with the rise of colonial and merchant capital, first Spain, then Holland and England became the leading nation, and with the rise of industry England. The cause of these shifts can in fact be embraced in a general historical principle : where the earlier economic form reached its highest development, the material and mental forces, the politico-juridical institutions which secured its existence and which were necessary for its full development, were so strongly constructed that they offered almost insuperable resistance to the development of new forms. Thus, the institution of slavery inhibited the development of feudalism at the twilight of antiquity; thus, the guild laws applying in the great wealthy cities of medieval times meant that later capitalist manufacturing could only develop in other centres hitherto insignificant; thus in the late eighteenth century, the political order of French absolutism which had fostered industry under Colbert obstructed the introduction of the large-scale industry that made England a manufacturing nation. There even exists a corresponding law in organic nature, a corollary to Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' known as the law of the 'survival of the unfitted' : when a species of animal has become specialised and differentiated into a wealth of forms all perfectly adapted to particular conditions of life in that period -- like the Saurians in the Secondary Era -- it becomes incapable of evolving into a new species; all the various options for adaptation and development have been lost and cannot be retrieved. The development of a new species proceeds from primitive forms which, because they have remained undifferentiated, have retained all their potential for development, and the

old species which is incapable of further adaptation dies out. The phenomenon whereby leadership in economic, political and cultural development continually shifts from one people or nation to another in the course of human history -- explained away by bourgeois science with the fantasy of a nation or race having 'exhausted its life force' -- is a particular incidence of this organic rule.

We now see why it is that the primacy of Western Europe and America -- which the bourgeoisie is pleased to attribute to the intellectual and moral superiority of their race -- will evaporate, and where we can foresee it shifting to. New countries, where the masses are not poisoned by the fug of a bourgeois ideology, where the beginnings of industrial development have raised the mind from its former slumber and a communist sense of solidarity has awoken, where the raw materials are available to use the most advanced technology inherited from capitalism for a renewal of the traditional forms of production, where oppression elicits the development of the qualities fostered by struggle, but where no over-powerful bourgeoisie can obstruct this process of regeneration -- it is such countries that will be the centres of the new communist world. Russia, itself half a continent when taken in conjunction with Siberia, already stands first in line. But these conditions are also present to a greater or lesser extent in other countries of the East, in India, in China. Although there may be other sources of immaturity, these Asian countries must not be overlooked in considering the communist world revolution.

This world revolution is not seen in its full universal significance if considered only from the Western European perspective. Russia not only forms the eastern part of Europe, it is much more the western part of Asia, and not only in a geographical, but also in a politico-economic

sense. The old Russia had little in common with Europe : it was the westernmost of those politico-economic structures which Marx termed 'oriental despotic powers', and which included all the great empires of ancient and modern Asia. Based on the village communism of a largely homogeneous peasantry, there evolved within these an absolute rule by princes and the nobility, which also drew support from relatively small-scale but nevertheless important trade in craft goods. Into this mode of production, which, despite superficial changes of ruler, had gone on reproducing itself in the same way for thousands of years, Western European capital penetrated from all sides, dissolving, fermenting, undermining, exploiting, impoverishing; by trade, by direct subjection and plunder, by exploitation of natural riches, by the construction of railways and factories, by state loans to the princes, by the export of food and raw materials -- all of which is encompassed in the term 'colonial policy'. Whereas India, with its enormous riches, was conquered early, plundered and then proletarianised and industrialised, it was only later, through modern colonial policy, that other countries fell prey to developed capital. Although on the surface Russia had played the role of a great European power since 1700, it too became a colony of European capital; due to direct military contact with Europe it went earlier and more precipitately the way that Persia and China were subsequently to go. Before the last world war 70 per cent of the iron industry, the greater part of the railways, 90 per cent of platinum production and 75 per cent of the naphtha industry were in the hands of European capitalists, and through the enormous national debts of tsarism, the latter also exploited the Russian peasantry past the point of starvation. While the working class in Russia worked under the same conditions as those of Western Europe, with the result that a body of revolutionary marxist views developed,

Russia's entire economic situation nevertheless made it the westernmost of the Asiatic empires.

The Russian revolution is the beginning of the great revolt by Asia against the Western European capital concentrated in England. As a rule, we in Western Europe only consider the effects which it has here, where the advanced theoretical development of the Russian revolutionaries has made them the teachers of the proletariat as it reaches towards communism. But its workings in the East are more important still; and Asian questions therefore influence the policies of the soviet republic almost more than European questions. The call for freedom and for the self-determination of all peoples and for struggle against European capital throughout Asia is going out from Moscow, where delegations from Asiatic tribes are arriving one after another. [*7] The threads lead from the soviet republic of Turan to India and the Moslem countries; in Southern China the revolutionaries have sought to follow the example of government by soviets; the pan-Islamic movement developing in the Middle East under the leadership of Turkey is trying to connect with Russia. This is where the significance of the world struggle between Russia and England as the exponents of two social systems lies; and this struggle cannot therefore end in real peace, despite temporary pauses, for the process of ferment in Asia is continuing. English politicians who look a little further ahead than the petty-bourgeois demagogue Lloyd George clearly see the danger here threatening English domination of the world, and with it the whole of capitalism; they rightly say that Russia is more dangerous than Germany ever was. But they cannot act forcefully, for the beginnings of revolutionary development in the English proletariat do not permit any regime other than one of bourgeois demagogy.

The interests of Asia are in essence the interests of the human race. Eight hundred million people live in Russia, China and India, in the Sibero-Russian plain and the fertile valleys of the Ganges and the Yangtse Kiang, more than half the population of the earth and almost three times as many as in the part of Europe under capitalist domination. And the seeds of revolution have appeared everywhere, besides Russia; on the one hand, powerful strike-movements flaring up where industrial proletarians are huddled together, as in Bombay and Hankow; on the other, nationalist movements under the leadership of the rising national intelligentsia. As far as can be judged from the reticent English press, the world war was a powerful stimulus to national movements, but then suppressed them forcefully, while industry is in such an upsurge that gold is flowing in torrents from America to East Asia. When the wave of economic crisis hits these countries -- it seems to have overtaken Japan already -- new struggles can be expected. The question may be raised as to whether purely nationalist movements seeking a national capitalist order in Asia should be supported, since they will be hostile to their own proletarian liberation movements; but development will clearly not take this course. It is true that until now the rising intelligentsia has orientated itself in terms of European nationalism and, as the ideologues of the developing indigenous bourgeoisie, advocated a national bourgeois government on Western lines; but this idea is paling with the decline of Europe, and they will doubtless come strongly under the intellectual sway of Russian bolshevism and find in it the means to fuse with the proletarian strike-movements and uprisings. Thus, the national liberation movements of Asia will perhaps adopt a communist world view and a communist programme on the firm material ground of the workers' and peasants' class

struggle against the barbaric oppression of world capital sooner than external appearances might lead us to believe.

The fact that these peoples are predominantly agrarian need be no more of an obstacle than it was in Russia : communist communities will not consist of tightly-packed huddles of factory towns, for the capitalist division between industrial and agricultural nations will cease to exist; agriculture will have to take up a great deal of space within them. The predominant agricultural character will nevertheless render the revolution more difficult, since the mental disposition is less favourable under such conditions. Doubtless a prolonged period of intellectual and political upheaval will also be necessary in these countries. The difficulties here are different from those in Europe, less of an active than of a passive nature : they lie less in the strength of the resistance than in the slow pace at which activity is awakening, not in overcoming internal chaos, but in developing the unity to drive out the foreign exploiter. We will not go into the particulars of these difficulties here -- the religious and national fragmentation of India, the petty-bourgeois character of China. However the political and economic forms continue to develop, the central problem which must first be overcome is to destroy the hegemony of European and American capital.

The hard struggle for the annihilation of capitalism is the common task which the workers of Western Europe and the USA have to accomplish hand-in-hand with the vast populations of Asia. We are at present only at the beginning of this process. When the German revolution takes a decisive turn and connects with Russia, when revolutionary mass struggles break out in England and America, when revolt flares up in India, when communism pushes its frontiers forward to the Rhine and the Indian Ocean, then

the world revolution will enter into its next mighty phase. With its vassals in the League of Nations and its American and Japanese allies, the world-ruling English bourgeoisie, assaulted from within and without, its world power threatened by colonial rebellions and wars of liberation, paralysed internally by strikes and civil war, will have to exert all its strength and raise mercenary armies against both enemies. When the English working class, backed up by the rest of the European proletariat, attacks its bourgeoisie, it will fight doubly for communism, clearing the way for communism in England and helping to free Asia. And conversely, it will be able to count on the support of the main communist forces when armed hirelings of the bourgeoisie seek to drown its struggle in blood -- for Western Europe and the islands off its coast are only a peninsula projecting from the great Russo-Asian complex of lands. The common struggle against capital will unite the proletarian masses of the whole world. And when finally, at the end of the arduous struggle, the European workers, deeply exhausted, stand in the clear morning light of freedom, they will greet the liberated peoples of Asia in the East and shake hands in Moscow, the capital of the new humanity.

Notes

[*5] This conception of the gradual transformation of the mode of production stands in sharp contrast to the social-democratic conception, which seeks to abolish capitalism and exploitation gradually by a slow process of reform. The direct abolition of all profit on capital and of all exploitation by the victorious proletariat is the precondition of the mode of production being able to move towards communism.

[*6] A prominent example of this kind of convergent development is to be found in the social structure at the end of ancient times and the beginning of the Middle Ages; cf. Engels, *Origins of the Family*, Ch. 8.

[*7] This is the basis of the stand taken by Lenin in 1916 at the time of Zimmerwald against Radek, who was representing the view of Western European communists. The latter insisted that the slogan of the right of all peoples to self-determination, which the social patriots had taken up along with Wilson, was merely a deception, since this right can only ever be an appearance and illusion under imperialism, and that we should therefore oppose this slogan. Lenin saw in this standpoint the tendency of Western European socialists to reject the Asiatic peoples' wars of national liberation, thus avoiding radical struggle against the colonial policies of their governments.

Afterword to World Revolution and Communist Tactics

The above theses were written in April and sent off to Russia to be available for consideration by the executive committee and the congress in making their tactical decisions. The situation has meanwhile altered, in that the executive committee in Moscow and the leading comrades in Russia have come down completely on the side of opportunism, with the result that this tendency prevailed at the Second Congress of the Communist International.

The policy in question first made its appearance in Germany, when Radek, using all the ideological and material influence that he and the KPD leadership could muster, attempted to impose his tactics of parliamentarianism and support for the central confederations upon the German communists, thereby

splitting and weakening the communist movement. Since Radek was made secretary of the executive committee this policy has become that of the entire executive committee. The previously unsuccessful efforts to secure the affiliation of the German Independents to Moscow have been redoubled, while the anti-parliamentarian communists of the KAPD, who, it can hardly be denied, by rights belong to the CI, have received frosty treatment : they had opposed the Third International on every issue of importance, it was maintained, and could only be admitted upon special conditions. The Amsterdam Auxiliary Bureau, which had accepted them and treated them as equals, was closed down. Lenin told the English communists that they should not only participate in parliamentary elections, but even join the Labour Party, a political organisation consisting largely of reactionary trade-union leaders and a member of the Second International. All these stands manifest the desire of the leading Russian comrades to establish contact with the big workers' organisations of Western Europe that have yet to turn communist. While radical communists seek to further the revolutionary development of the working masses by means of rigorous, principled struggle against all bourgeois, social-patriotic and vacillating tendencies and their representatives, the leadership of the International is attempting to gain the adherence of the latter to Moscow in droves without their having first to cast off their old perspectives.

The antagonistic stance which the Bolsheviks, whose deeds made them exponents of radical tactics in the past, have taken up towards the radical communists of Western Europe comes out clearly in Lenin's recently-published pamphlet 'Left-Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder. Its significance lies not in its content, but in the person of the author, for the arguments are scarcely original and have

for the most part already been used by others. What is new is that it is Lenin who is now taking them up. The point is therefore not to combat them -- their fallacy resides mainly in the equation of the conditions, parties, organisations and parliamentary practice of Western Europe with their Russian counterparts -- and oppose other arguments to them, but to grasp the fact of their appearance in this conjuncture as the product of specific policies.

The basis of these policies can readily be identified in the needs of the Soviet republic. The reactionary insurgents Kolchak and Denikin have destroyed the foundations of the Russian iron industry, and the war effort has forestalled a powerful upsurge in production. Russia urgently needs machines, locomotives and tools for economic reconstruction, and only the undamaged industry of the capitalist countries can provide these. It therefore needs peaceful trade with the rest of the world, and in particular with the nations of the Entente; they in their turn need raw materials and foodstuffs from Russia to stave off the collapse of capitalism. The sluggish pace of revolutionary development in Western Europe thus compels the Soviet republic to seek a modus vivendi with the capitalist world, to surrender a portion of its natural wealth as the price of doing so, and to renounce direct support for revolution in other countries. In itself there can be no objection to an arrangement of this kind, which both parties recognise to be necessary; but it would hardly be surprising if the sense of constraint and the initiation of a policy of compromise with the bourgeois world were to foster a mental disposition towards more moderate perspectives. The Third International, as the association of communist parties preparing proletarian revolution in every country, is not formally bound by the policies of the Russian government, and it is supposed to pursue its own tasks completely

independent of the latter. In practice, however, this separation does not exist; just as the CP is the backbone of the Soviet republic, the executive committee is intimately connected with the Praesidium of the Soviet republic through the persons of its members, thus forming an instrument whereby this Praesidium intervenes in the politics of Western Europe. We can now see why the tactics of the Third International, laid down by Congress to apply homogeneously to all capitalist countries and to be directed from the centre, are determined not only by the needs of communist agitation in those countries, but also by the political needs of Soviet Russia.

Now, it is true that England and Russia, the hostile world powers respectively representing capital and labour, both need peaceful trade in order to build up their economies. However, it is not only immediate economic needs which determine their policies, but also the deeper economic antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the question of the future, expressed in the fact that powerful capitalist groups, rightly hostile to the Soviet republic, are attempting to prevent any compromise as a matter of principle. The Soviet government knows that it cannot rely upon the insight of Lloyd George and England's need for peace; they had to bow to the insuperable might of the Red Army on the one hand and to the pressure which English workers and soldiers were exerting upon their government on the other. The Soviet government knows that the menace of the Entente proletariat is one of the most important of its weapons in paralysing the imperialist governments and compelling them to negotiate. It must therefore render this weapon as powerful as possible. What this requires is not a radical communist party preparing a root-and-branch revolution for the future, but a great organised proletarian force which will take the part of Russia and oblige its own

government to pay it heed. The Soviet government needs the masses now, even if they are not fully communist. If it can gain them for itself, their adhesion to Moscow will be a sign to world capital that wars of annihilation against Russia are no longer possible, and that there is therefore no alternative to peace and trade relations.

Moscow must therefore press for communist tactics in Western Europe which do not conflict sharply with the traditional perspectives and methods of the big labour organisations, the influence of which is decisive. Similarly, efforts had to be made to replace the Ebert regime in Germany with one oriented towards the East, since it had shown itself to be a tool of the Entente against Russia; and as the CP was itself too weak, only the Independents could serve this purpose. A revolution in Germany would enormously strengthen the position of Soviet Russia vis-à-vis the Entente. The development of such a revolution, however, might ultimately be highly incommodious as far as the policy of peace and compromise with the Entente was concerned, for a radical proletarian revolution would tear up the Versailles Treaty and renew the war -- the Hamburg communists wanted to make active preparations for this war in advance. Russia would then itself be drawn into this war, and even though it would be strengthened externally in the process, economic reconstruction and the abolition of poverty would be still further delayed. These consequences could be avoided if the German revolution could be kept within bounds such that although the strength of the workers' governments allied against Entente capital was greatly increased, the latter was not put in the position of having to go to war. This would demand not the radical tactics of the KAPD, but government by the Independents, KPD and trade unions in the form of a council organisation on the Russian model.

This policy does have perspectives beyond merely securing a more favourable position for the current negotiations with the Entente : its goal is world revolution. It is nevertheless apparent that a particular conception of world revolution must be implicit in the particular character of these politics. The revolution which is now advancing across the world and which will shortly overtake Central Europe and then Western Europe is driven on by the economic collapse of capitalism; if capital is unable to bring about an upturn in production, the masses will be obliged to turn to revolution as the only alternative to going under without a struggle. But although compelled to turn to revolution, the masses are by and large still in a state of mental servitude to the old perspectives, the old organisations and leaders, and it is the latter who will obtain power in the first instance. A distinction must therefore be made between the external revolution which destroys the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and renders capitalism impossible, and the communist revolution, a longer process which revolutionises the masses internally and in which the working class, emancipating itself from all its bonds, takes the construction of communism firmly in hand. It is the task of communism to identify the forces and tendencies which will halt the revolution half-way, to show the masses the way forward, and by the bitterest struggle for the most distant goals, for total power, against these tendencies, to awaken in the proletariat the capacity to impel the revolution onward. This it can only do by even now taking up the struggle against the inhibiting leadership tendencies and the power of its leaders. Opportunism seeks to ally itself with the leaders and share in a new hegemony; believing it can sway them on to the path of communism, it will be compromised by them. By declaring this to be the official tactics of communism, the Third International is

setting the seal of 'communist revolution' on the seizure of power by the old organisations and their leaders, consolidating the hegemony of these leaders and obstructing the further progress of the revolution.

From the point of view of safeguarding Soviet Russia there can be no objection to this conception of the goal of world revolution. If a political system similar to that of Russia existed in the other countries of Europe -- control by a workers' bureaucracy based on a council system -- the power of world imperialism would be broken and contained, at least in Europe. Economic build-up towards communism could then go ahead without fear of reactionary wars of intervention in a Russia surrounded by friendly workers' republics. It is therefore comprehensible that what we regard as a temporary, inadequate, transitional form to be combated with all our might is for Moscow the achievement of proletarian revolution, the goal of communist policy.

This leads us to the critical considerations to be raised against these policies from the point of view of communism. They relate firstly to its reciprocal ideological effect upon Russia itself. If the stratum in power in Russia fraternises with the workers' bureaucracy of Western Europe and adopts the attitudes of the latter, corrupted as it is by its position, its antagonism towards the masses and its adaptation to the bourgeois world, then the momentum which must carry Russia further on the path of communism is liable to be dissipated; if it bases itself upon the land-owning peasantry over and against the workers, a diversion of development towards bourgeois agrarian forms could not be ruled out, and this would lead to stagnation in the world revolution. There is the further consideration that the political system which arose in Russia as an expedient

transitional form towards the realisation of communism -- and which could only ossify into a bureaucracy under particular conditions -- would from the outset represent a reactionary impediment to revolution in Western Europe. We have already pointed out that a 'workers' government' of this kind would not be able to unleash the forces of communist reconstruction; and since after this revolution the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois masses, together with the peasantry, would, unlike the case of Russia after the October revolution, still represent a tremendous force, the failure of reconstruction would only too easily bring reaction back into the saddle, and the proletarian masses would have to renew their exertions to abolish the system.

It is even a matter of doubt whether this policy of attenuated world revolution can achieve its aim, rather than reinforce the bourgeoisie like any other politics of opportunism. It is not the way forward for the most radical opposition to form a prior alliance with the moderates with a view to sharing power, instead of driving the revolution on by uncompromising struggle; it so weakens the overall fighting strength of the masses that the overthrow of the prevailing system is delayed and made harder.

The real forces of revolution lie elsewhere than in the tactics of parties and the policies of governments. For all the negotiations, there can be no real peace between the world of imperialism and that of communism : while Krassin was negotiating in London, the Red Armies were smashing the might of Poland and reaching the frontiers of Germany and Hungary. This has brought the war to Central Europe; and the class contradictions which have reached an intolerable level here, the total internal economic collapse which renders revolution inevitable, the misery of the masses, the fury of armed reaction, will all make civil war

flare up in these countries. But when the masses are set in motion here, their revolution will not allow itself to be channelled within the limits prescribed for it by the opportunistic politics of clever leaders; it must be more radical and more profound than in Russia, because the resistance to be overcome is much greater. The decisions of the Moscow congress are of less moment than the wild, chaotic, elemental forces which will surge up from the hearts of three ravaged peoples and lend new impetus to the world revolution.

DESTRUCTION AS A MEAN OF STRUGGLE(1933)

ANTON PANNEKOEK -

<http://kurasje.tripod.com/index.html>

The assessment of the burning of the Reichstag in the left communist press once again leads us to raise other questions. Can destruction be a means of struggle for workers ?

First of all, it must be said that no one will cry over the disappearance of the Reichstag. It was one of the ugliest buildings in modern Germany, a pompous image of the Empire of 1871. But there are other more beautiful buildings, and museums filled with artistic treasures. When a desperate proletarian destroys something precious in order to take vengeance for capitalist domination, how should we assess this ?

From a revolutionary point of view, his gesture appears valueless and from different points of view one could speak of a negative gesture. The bourgeoisie is not the least bit touched by it since it has already continually destroyed so many things where it was a matter of its profits, and it places money-value above all else. Such a gesture especially touches the more limited social strata of artists, amateurs of beautiful things, the best of whom often have anti-capitalist feelings, and some of whom (like William Morris and Herman Gorter) fought at the side of the workers. But in any case, is there any reason to take vengeance on the bourgeoisie ? Does the bourgeoisie have the task of bringing socialism instead of capitalism ?

It is its role to maintain all the forces of capitalism in place; the destruction of all that is the task of proletarians. It follows that if anybody can be held responsible for the

maintenance of capitalism, it is as much the working class itself which has neglected the struggle too much. Lastly, from whom does one remove something by its destruction ? From the victorious proletarians who one day will be masters of all of it.

Of course, all revolutionary class struggle, when it takes the form of civil war, will always provoke destruction. In any war it is necessary to destroy the points of support of the enemy. Even if the winner tries to avoid too much destruction, the loser will be tempted to cause useless destruction through pure spite. It is to be expected that towards the end of the fight the decadent bourgeoisie destroys a great deal. On the other hand, for the working class, the class which will slowly take over, destruction will no longer be a means of struggle. On the contrary it will try to pass on a world as rich and intact as possible to its descendents, to future humanity. This is not only the case for the technical means which it can improve and perfect, but especially for the monuments and memories of past generations which cannot be rebuilt.

One might object that a new humanity, the bearers of an unequalled liberty and fraternity, will create things much more beautiful and imposing than those of past centuries. And moreover that newly liberated humanity will wish to cause the remainders of the past, which represented its former state of slavery, to disappear. This is also what the revolutionary bourgeoisie did - or tried to do. For them, all of past history was nothing but the darkness of ignorance and slavery, whereas the revolution was dedicated to reason, knowledge, virtue and freedom. The proletariat, by contrast, considers the history of its forebears quite differently. On the basis of marxism which sees the development of society as a succession of forms of production, it sees a long and hard annexation of humanity on the basis of the development of labour, of tools and of

forms of labour towards an ever increasing productivity, first through simple primitive society, then through class societies with their class struggle, until the moment when through communism man becomes the master of his own fate. And in each period of development, the proletariat finds characteristics which are related to its own nature.

In barbarian prehistory : the sentiments of fraternity and the morality of solidarity of primitive communism. In petty-bourgeois manual work : the love of work which was expressed in the beauty of the buildings and the utensils for everyday use which their descendants regard as incomparable masterworks. In the ascendant bourgeoisie : the proud feeling of liberty which proclaimed the rights of man and was expressed in the greatest works of world literature. In capitalism : the knowledge of nature, the priceless development of natural science which allowed man, through technology, to dominate nature and its own fate.

In the work of all of these periods, these imposing character traits were more or less closely allied to cruelty, superstition and selfishness. It is exactly these vices which we fight, which are an obstacle to us and which we therefore hate. Our conception of history teaches us that these imperfections must be understood as natural stages of growth, as the expression of a struggle for life by men not yet fully human, in an all powerful nature and in a society of which the understanding escaped them.

For liberated humanity the imposing things which they created in spite of everything will remain a symbol of their weakness, but also a memorial of their strength, and worthy of being carefully preserved. Today, it is the bourgeoisie which possesses all of it, but for us it is the property of the collectivity which we will set free to hand on to future generations as intact as possible.

PARTY AND CLASS(1936)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

<http://kurasje.tripod.com/index.html>

The old labor movement is organized in parties. The belief in parties is the main reason for the impotence of the working class; therefore we avoid forming a new party - not because we are too few, but because a party is an organization that aims to lead and control the working class. In opposition to this, we maintain that the working class can rise to victory only when it independently attacks its problems and decides its own fate. The workers should not blindly accept the slogans of others, nor of our own groups but must think, act, and decide for themselves. This conception is on sharp contradiction to the tradition of the party as the most important means of educating the proletariat. Therefore many, though repudiating the Socialist and Communist parties, resist and oppose us. This is partly due to their traditional concepts; after viewing the class struggle as a struggle of parties, it becomes difficult to consider it as purely the struggle of the working class, as a class struggle. But partly this concept is based on the idea that the party nevertheless plays an essential and important part in the struggle of the proletariat. Let us investigate this latter idea more closely.

Essentially the party is a grouping according to views, conceptions; the classes are groupings according to economic interests. Class membership is determined by one's part in the process of production; party membership is the joining of persons who agree in their conceptions of the social problems. Formerly it was thought that this contradiction would disappear in the class party, the "workers" party. During the rise of Social Democracy it

seemed that it would gradually embrace the whole working class, partly as members, partly as supporters. because Marxian theory declared that similar interests beget similar viewpoints and aims, the contradiction between party and class was expected gradually to disappear. History proved otherwise. Social Democracy remained a minority, other working class groups organized against it, sections split away from it, and its own character changed. Its own program was revised or reinterpreted. The evolution of society does not proceed along a smooth, even line, but in conflicts and contradictions.

With the intensification of the workers' struggle, the might of the enemy also increases and besets the workers with renewed doubts and fears as to which road is best. And every doubt brings on splits, contradictions, and fractional battles within the labor movement. It is futile to bewail these conflicts and splits as harmful in dividing and weakening the working class. The working class is not weak because it is split up -it is split up because it is weak. Because the enemy is powerful and the old methods of warfare prove unavailing, the working class must seek new methods. Its task will not become clear as the result of enlightenment from above; it must discover its tasks through hard work, through thought and conflict of opinions. It must find its own way; therefore, the internal struggle. It must relinquish old ideas and illusions and adopt new ones, and because this is difficult, therefore the magnitude and severity of the splits.

Nor can we delude ourselves into believing that this period of party and ideological strife is only temporary and will make way to renewed harmony. True, in the course of the class struggle there are occasions when all forces unite in a great achievable objective and the revolution is carried on with the might of a united working class. But after that, as after every victory, come differences on the question: what

next? And even if the working class is victorious, it is always confronted by the most difficult task of subduing the enemy further, of reorganizing production, creating new order. It is impossible that all workers, all strata and groups, with their often still diverse interests should, at this stage, agree on all matters and be ready for united and decisive further action. They will find the true course only after the sharpest controversies and conflicts and only thus achieve clarity.

If, in this situation, persons with the same fundamental conceptions unite for the discussion of practical steps and seek clarification through discussions and propagandize their conclusions, such groups might be called parties, but they would be parties in an entirely different sense from those of today. Action, the actual class struggle, is the task of the working masses themselves, in their entirety, in their real groupings as factory and millhands, or other productive groups, because history and economy have placed them in the position where they must and can fight the working class struggle. It would be insane if the supporters of one party were to go on strike while those of another continue to work. But both tendencies will defend their positions on strike or no strike in the factory meetings, thus affording an opportunity to arrive at a well founded decision. The struggle is so great, the enemy so powerful that only the masses as a whole can achieve a victory - the result of the material and moral power of action, unity and enthusiasm, but also the result of the mental force of thought, of clarity. In this lies the great importance of such parties or groups based on opinions: that they bring clarity in their conflicts, discussions and propaganda. They are the organs of the self-enlightenment of the working class by means of which the workers find their way to freedom.

Of course such parties are not static and unchangeable. Every new situation, every new problem will find minds

diverging and uniting in new groups with new programs. They have a fluctuating character and constantly readjust themselves to new situations.

Compared to such groups, the present workers' parties have an entirely different character, for they have a different objective: they want to seize power for themselves. They aim not at being an aid to the working class in its struggle for emancipation but to rule it themselves and proclaim that this constitutes the emancipation of the proletariat. The Social- Democracy which arose in the era of parliamentarism conceived of this rule as a parliamentary government. The Communist Party carried the idea of part rule through to its fullest extreme in the party dictatorship.

Such parties, in distinction to the groups described above, must be rigid structures with clear lines of demarcation through membership cards, statutes, party discipline and admission and expulsion procedures. For they are instruments of power - they fight for power, bridle their members by force and constantly seek to extend the scope of their power. It is not their task to develop the initiative of the workers; rather do they aim at training loyal and unquestioning members of their faith. While the working class in its struggle for power and victory needs unlimited intellectual freedom, the party rule must suppress all opinions except its own. In "democratic" parties, the suppression is veiled; in the dictatorship parties, it is open, brutal suppression.

Many workers already realize that the rule of the Socialist or Communist party will be only the concealed form of the rule of the bourgeois class in which the exploitation and suppression of the working class remains. Instead of these parties, they urge the formation of a "revolutionary party" that will really aim at the rule of the workers and the realization of communism. Not a party in the new sense as described above, but a party like those of today, that fight

for power as the "vanguard" of the class, as the organization of conscious, revolutionary minorities, that seize power in order to use it for the emancipation of the class.

We claim that there is an internal contradiction in the term: "revolutionary party." Such a party cannot be revolutionary. It is no more revolutionary than were the creators of the Third Reich. When we speak of revolution, we speak of the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the working class itself.

The "revolutionary party" is based on the idea that the working class needs a new group of leaders who vanquish the bourgeoisie for the workers and construct a new government - (note that the working class is not yet considered fit to reorganize and regulate production.) But is not this as it should be? As the working class does not seem capable of revolution, is it not necessary that the revolutionary vanguard, the party, make the revolution for it? And is this not true as long as the masses willingly endure capitalism?

Against this, we raise the question: what force can such a party raise for the revolution? How is it able to defeat the capitalist class? Only if the masses stand behind it. Only if the masses rise and through mass attacks, mass struggle, and mass strikes, overthrow the old regime. Without the action of the masses, there can be no revolution.

Two things can follow. The masses remain in action: they do not go home and leave the government to the new party. They organize their power in factory and workshop and prepare for further conflict in order to defeat capital; through the workers' councils they establish a form union to take over the complete direction of all society - in other words, they prove, they are not as incapable of revolution as it seemed. Of necessity then, conflict will arise with the party which itself wants to take control and which sees only disorder and anarchy in the self-action of the working class.

Possibly the workers will develop their movement and sweep out the party. Or, the party, with the help of bourgeois elements defeats the workers. In either case, the party is an obstacle to the revolution because it wants to be more than a means of propaganda and enlightenment; because it feels itself called upon to lead and rule as a party. On the other hand the masses may follow the party faith and leave it to the full direction of affairs. They follow the slogans from above, have confidence in the new government (as in Germany and Russia) that is to realize communism - and go back home and to work. Immediately the bourgeoisie exerts its whole class power the roots of which are unbroken; its financial forces, its great intellectual resources, and its economic power in factories and great enterprises. Against this the government party is too weak. Only through moderation, concessions and yielding can it maintain that it is insanity for the workers to try to force impossible demands. Thus the party deprived of class power becomes the instrument for maintaining bourgeois power.

We said before that the term "revolutionary party" was contradictory from a proletarian point of view. We can state it otherwise: in the term "revolutionary party," "revolutionary" always means a bourgeois revolution. Always, when the masses overthrow a government and then allow a new party to take power, we have a bourgeois revolution - the substitution of a ruling caste by a new ruling caste. It was so in Paris in 1830 when the finance bourgeoisie supplanted the landed proprietors, in 1848 when the industrial bourgeoisie took over the reins.

In the Russian revolution the party bureaucracy came to power as the ruling caste. But in Western Europe and America the bourgeoisie is much more powerfully entrenched in plants and banks, so that a party bureaucracy cannot push them aside as easily. The bourgeoisie in these

countries can be vanquished only by repeated and united action of the masses in which they seize the mills and factories and build up their council organizations.

Those who speak of "revolutionary parties" draw incomplete, limited conclusions from history. When the Socialist and Communist parties became organs of bourgeois rule for the perpetuation of exploitation, these well-meaning people merely concluded that they would have to do better. They cannot realize that the failure of these parties is due to the fundamental conflict between the self-emancipation of the working class through its own power and the pacifying of the revolution through a new sympathetic ruling clique. They think they are the revolutionary vanguard because they see the masses indifferent and inactive. But the masses are inactive only because they cannot yet comprehend the course of the struggle and the unity of class interests, although they instinctively sense the great power of the enemy and the immenseness of their task. Once conditions force them into action they will attack the task of self-organization and the conquest of the economic power of capital.

PARTY AND WORKING CLASS(1936)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

<http://kurasje.tripod.com/index.html>

We are only at the very earliest stages of a new workers' movement. The old movement was embodied in parties, and today belief in the party constitutes the most powerful check on the working class' capacity for action. That is why we are not trying to create a new party. This is so, not because our numbers are small -- a party of any kind begins with a few people -- but because, in our day, a party cannot be other than an organization aimed at directing and dominating the proletariat. To this type of organization we oppose the principle that the working class can effectively come into its own and prevail only by taking its destiny into its own hands. The workers are not to adopt the slogans of any group whatsoever, not even our own groups; they are to think, decide and act for themselves. Therefore, in this transitional period, the natural organs of education and enlightenment are, in our view, work groups, study and discussion circles, which have formed of their own accord and are seeking their own way.

This view directly contradicts the traditional ideas about the role of the party as an essential educational organ of the proletariat. Hence it is resisted in many quarters where, however, there is no further desire to have dealings either with the Socialist Party or the Communist Party. This, no doubt, is to be partly explained by the strength of tradition: when one has always regarded the class war as a party war and a war between parties, it is very difficult to adopt the exclusive viewpoint of class and of the class war. But partly, too, one is faced with the clear idea that, after all, it is incumbent on the party to play a role of the first

importance in the proletarian struggle for freedom. It is this idea we shall now examine more closely.

The whole question pivots, in short, on the following distinction: a party is a group based on certain ideas held in common, whereas a class is a group united on the basis of common interests. Membership in a class is determined by function in the production process, a function that creates definite interests. Membership in a party means being one of a group having identical views about the major social questions.

In recent times, it was supposed for theoretical and practical reasons that this fundamental difference would disappear within a class party, the 'workers' party.' During the period when Social Democracy was in full growth, the current impression was that this party would gradually unite all the workers, some as militants, others as sympathizers. And since the theory was that identical interests would necessarily engender identical ideas and aims, the distinction between class and party was bound, it was believed, to disappear. Social Democracy remained a minority group, and moreover became the target of attack by new workers' groups. Splits occurred within it, while its own character underwent radical change and certain articles of its program were either revised or interpreted in a totally different sense. Society does not develop in a continuous way, free from setbacks, but through conflicts and antagonisms. While the working class battle is widening in scope, the enemy's strength is increasing. Uncertainty about the way to be followed constantly and repeatedly troubles the minds of the combatants; and doubt is a factor in division, of internal quarrels and conflicts within the workers' movement.

It is useless to deplore these conflicts as creating a pernicious situation that should not exist and which is making the workers powerless. As has often been pointed

out, the working class is not weak because it is divided; on the contrary, it is divided because it is weak. And the reason why the proletariat ought to seek new ways is that the enemy has strength of such a kind that the old methods are ineffectual. The working class will not secure these ways by magic, but through a great effort, deep reflection, through the clash of divergent opinions and the conflict of impassioned ideas. It is incumbent upon it to find its own way, and precisely therein is the *raison d'être* of the internal differences and conflicts. It is forced to renounce outmoded ideas and old chimeras, and it is indeed the difficulty of this task that engenders such big divisions.

Nor should the illusion be nursed that such impassioned party conflicts and opinion clashes belong only to a transitional period such as the present one, and that they will in due course disappear, leaving a unity stronger than ever. Certainly, in the evolution of the class struggle, it sometimes happens that all the various elements of strength are merged in order to snatch some great victory, and that revolution is the fruit of this unity. But in this case, as after every victory, divergences appear immediately when it comes to deciding on new objectives. The proletariat then finds itself faced with the most arduous tasks: to crush the enemy, and more, to organize production, to create a new order. It is out of the question that all the workers, all categories and all groups, whose interests are still far from being homogeneous, should think and feel in the same way, and should reach spontaneous and immediate agreement about what should be done next. It is precisely because they are committed to finding for themselves their own way ahead that the liveliest differences occur, that there are clashes among them, and that finally, through such conflict, they succeed in clarifying their ideas.

No doubt, if certain people holding the same ideas get together to discuss the prospects for action, to hammer out

ideas by discussion, to indulge in propaganda for these attitudes, then it is possible to describe such groups as parties. The name matters little, provided that these parties adopt a role distinct from that which existing parties seek to fulfil. Practical action, that is, concrete class struggle, is a matter for the masses themselves, acting as a whole, within their natural groups, notably the work gangs, which constitute the units of effective combat. It would be wrong to find the militants of one tendency going on strike, while those of another tendency continued to work. In that case, the militants of each tendency should present their viewpoints to the factory floor, so that the workers as a whole are able to reach a decision based on knowledge and facts. Since the war is immense and the enemy's strength enormous, victory must be attained by merging all the forces at the masses' disposal -- not only material and moral force with a view to action, unity and enthusiasm, but also the spiritual force born of mental clarity. The importance of these parties or groups resides in the fact that they help to secure this mental clarity through their mutual conflicts, their discussions, their propaganda. It is by means of these organs of self-clarification that the working class can succeed in tracing for itself the road to freedom.

That is why parties in this sense (and also their ideas) do not need firm and fixed structures. Faced with any change of situation, with new tasks, people become divided in their views, but only to reunite in new agreement; while others come up with other programs. Given their fluctuating quality, they are always ready to adapt themselves to the new.

The present workers' parties are of an absolutely different character. Besides, they have a different objective: to seize power and to exercise it for their sole benefit. Far from attempting to contribute to the emancipation of the working class, they mean to govern for themselves, and they cover

this intention under the pretence of freeing the proletariat. Social Democracy, whose ascendant period goes back to the great parliamentary epoch, sees this power as government based on a parliamentary majority. For its part, the Communist Party carries its power politics to its extreme consequences: party dictatorship.

Unlike the parties described above, these parties are bound to have formations with rigid structures, whose cohesion is assured by means of statutes, disciplinary measures, admission and dismissal procedures. Designed to dominate, they fight for power by orienting the militants toward the instruments of power that they possess and by striving constantly to increase their sphere of influence. They do not see their task as that of educating the workers to think for themselves; on the contrary, they aim at drilling them, at turning them into faithful and devoted adherents of their doctrines. While the working class needs unlimited freedom of spiritual development to increase its strength and to conquer, the basis of party power is the repression of all opinions that do not conform to the party line. In 'democratic' parties, this result is secured by methods that pay lip service to freedom; in the dictatorial parties, by brutal and avowed repression.

A number of workers are already aware that domination by the Socialist Party or the Communist Party would simply be a camouflaged supremacy of the bourgeois class, and would thus perpetuate exploitation and servitude. But, according to these workers, what should take its place is a 'revolutionary party' that would really aim at creating proletarian power and communist society. There is no question here of a party in the sense we defined above, i.e., of a group whose sole objective is to educate and enlighten, but of a party in the current sense, i.e., a party fighting to secure power and to exercise it with a view to the liberation

of the working class, and all this as a vanguard, as an organization of the enlightened revolutionary minority.

The very expression 'revolutionary party' is a contradiction in terms, for a party of this kind could not be revolutionary. If it were, it could only be so in the sense in which we describe revolutionary as a change of government resulting from somewhat violent pressures, e.g., the birth of the Third Reich. When we use the word 'revolution,' we clearly mean the proletarian revolution, the conquest of power by the working class.

The basic theoretical idea of the 'revolutionary party' is that the working class could not do without a group of leaders capable of defeating the bourgeoisie for them and of forming a new government, in other words, the conviction that the working class is itself incapable of creating the revolution. According to this theory, the leaders will create the communist society by means of decrees; in other words, the working class is still incapable of administering and organizing for itself its work and production.

Is there not a certain justification for this thesis, at least provisionally? Given that at the present time the working class as a mass is showing itself to be unable to create a revolution, is it not necessary that the revolutionary vanguard, the party, should make the revolution on the working class' behalf? And is not this valid so long as the masses passively submit to capitalism?

This attitude immediately raises two questions. What type of power will such a party establish through the revolution? What will occur to conquer the capitalist class? The answer is self-evident: an uprising of the masses. In effect, only mass attacks and mass strikes lead to the overthrow of the old domination. Therefore, the 'revolutionary party' will get nowhere without the intervention of the masses. Hence, one of two things must occur.

The first is that the masses persist in action. Far from abandoning the fight in order to allow the new party to govern, they organize their power in the factories and workshops and prepare for new battles, this time with a view to the final defeat of capitalism. By means of workers' councils, they form a community that is increasingly close-knit, and therefore capable of taking on the administration of society as a whole. In a word, the masses prove that they are not as incapable of creating the revolution as was supposed. From this moment, conflict inevitably arises between the masses and the new party, the latter seeking to be the only body to exercise power and convinced that the party should lead the working class, that self-activity among the masses is only a factor of disorder and anarchy. At this point, either the class movement has become strong enough to ignore the party or the party, allied with bourgeois elements, crushes the workers. In either case, the party is shown to be an obstacle to the revolution, because the party seeks to be something other than an organ of propaganda and of enlightenment, and because it adopts as its specific mission the leadership and government of the masses.

The second possibility is that the working masses conform to the doctrine of the party and turn over to it control of affairs. They follow directives from above and, persuaded (as in Germany in 1918) that the new government will establish socialism or communism, they get on with their day-to-day work. Immediately, the bourgeoisie mobilizes all its forces: its financial power, its enormous spiritual power, its economic supremacy in the factories and the large enterprises. The reigning party, too weak to withstand such an offensive, can maintain itself in power only by multiplying concessions and withdrawals as proof of its moderation. Then the idea becomes current that for the moment this is all that can be done, and that it would be

foolish for the workers to attempt a violent imposition of utopian demands. In this way, the party, deprived of the mass power of a revolutionary class, is transformed into an instrument for the conservation of bourgeois power.

We have just said that, in relation to the proletarian revolution, a 'revolutionary party' is a contradiction in terms. This could also be expressed by saying that the term 'revolutionary' in the expression 'revolutionary party' necessarily designates a bourgeois revolution. On every occasion, indeed, that the masses have intervened to overthrow a government and have then handed power to a new party, it was a bourgeois revolution that took place -- a substitution of a new dominant category for an old one. So it was in Paris when, in 1830, the commercial bourgeoisie took over from the big landed proprietors; and again, in 1848, when the industrial bourgeoisie succeeded the financial bourgeoisie; and again in 1871 when the whole body of the bourgeoisie came to power. So it was during the Russian Revolution, when the party bureaucracy monopolized power in its capacity as a governmental category. But in our day, both in Western Europe and in America, the bourgeoisie is too deeply and too solidly rooted in the factories and the banks to be removed by a party bureaucracy. Now as always, the only means of conquering the bourgeoisie is to appeal to the masses, the latter taking over the factories and forming their own complex of councils. In this case, however, it seems that the real strength is in the masses who destroy the domination of capital in proportion as their own action widens and deepens.

Therefore, those who contemplate a 'revolutionary party' are learning only a part of the lessons of the past. Not unaware that the workers' parties -- the Socialist Party and Communist Party -- have become organs of domination serving to perpetuate exploitation, they merely conclude

from this that it is only necessary to improve the situation. This is to ignore the fact that the failure of the different parties is traceable to a much more general cause -- namely, the basic contradiction between the emancipation of the class, as a body and by their own efforts, and the reduction of the activity of the masses to powerlessness by a new pro-workers' power. Faced with the passivity and indifference of the masses, they come to regard themselves as a revolutionary vanguard. But, if the masses remain inactive, it is because, while instinctively sensing both the colossal power of the enemy and the sheer magnitude of the task to be undertaken, they have not yet discerned the mode of combat, the way of class unity. However, when circumstances have pushed them into action, they must undertake this task by organizing themselves autonomously, by taking into their own hands the means of production, and by initiating the attack against the economic power of capital. And once again, every self-styled vanguard seeking to direct and to dominate the masses by means of a 'revolutionary party' will stand revealed as a reactionary factor by reason of this very conception.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE QUESTION OF ORGANISATION(1938)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

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Organisation is the chief principle in the working class fight for emancipation. Hence the forms of this organisation constitute the most important problem in the practice of the working class movement. It is clear that these forms depend on the conditions of society and the aims of the fight. They cannot be the invention of theory, but have to be built up spontaneously by the working class itself, guided by its immediate necessities.

With expanding capitalism the workers first built their trade unions. The isolated worker was powerless against the capitalist; so he had to unite with his fellows in bargaining and fighting over the price of his labour-power and the hours of labour. Capitalists and workers have opposite interests in capitalistic production; their class struggle is over the division of the total product between them. In normal capitalism, the workers' share is the value of their labour power, i.e., what is necessary to sustain and restore continually their capacities to work. The remaining part of the product is the surplus value, the share of the capitalist class. The capitalists, in order to increase their profit, try to lower wages and increase the hours of labour. Where the workers were powerless, wages were depressed below the existence minimum; the hours of labour were lengthened until the bodily and mental health of the working class deteriorated so as to endanger the future of society. The formation of unions and of laws regulating working conditions -- features rising out of the bitter fight of workers for their very lives -- were necessary to restore

normal conditions of work in capitalism. The capitalist class itself recognised that trade unions are necessary to direct the revolt of the workers into regular channels to prevent them from breaking out in sudden explosions.

Similarly, political organisations have grown up, though not everywhere in exactly the same way, because the political conditions are different in different countries. In America, where a population of farmers, artisans and merchants free from feudal bonds could expand over a continent with endless possibilities, conquering the natural resources, the workers did not feel themselves a separate class. They were imbued, as were the whole of the people, with the bourgeois spirit of individual and collective fight for personal welfare, and the conditions made it possible to succeed to a certain extent. Except at rare moments or among recent immigrant groups, no need was seen for a separate working class party. In the European countries, on the other hand, the workers were dragged into the political struggle by the fight of the rising bourgeoisie against feudalism. They soon had to form working class parties and, together with part of the bourgeoisie, had to fight for political rights: for the right to form unions, for free press and speech, for universal suffrage, for democratic institutions. A political party needs general principles for its propaganda; for its fight with other parties it wants a theory having definite views about the future of society. The European working class, in which communistic ideas had already developed, found its theory in the scientific work of Marx and Engels, explaining the development of society through capitalism toward communism by means of the class struggle. This theory was accepted in the programs of the Social Democratic Parties of most European countries; in England, the Labour Party formed by the trade unions, professed analogous but vaguer ideas about a kind of socialist commonwealth as the aim of the workers.

In their program and propaganda, the proletarian revolution was the final result of the class struggle; the victory of the working class over its oppressors was to be the beginning of a communistic or socialist system of production. But so long as capitalism lasted, the practical fight had to centre on immediate needs and the preservation of standards in capitalism. Under parliamentary government parliament is the battlefield where the interests of the different classes of society meet; big and small capitalists, land owners, farmers, artisans, merchants, industrialists, workers, all have their special interests that are defended by their spokesmen in parliament, all participate in the struggle for power and for their part in the total product. The workers have to take part in this struggle. Socialist or labour parties have the special task of fighting by political means for the immediate needs and interests of the workers within capitalism. In this way they get the votes of the workers and grow in political influence.

With the modern development of capitalism, conditions have changed. The small workshops have been superseded by large factories and plants with thousands and tens of thousands of workers. With this growth of capitalism and of the working class, its organisations also had to expand. From local groups the trade unions grew to national federations with hundreds of thousands of members. They had to collect large funds for support in big strikes, and still larger ones for social insurance. A large staff of managers, administrators, presidents, secretaries, editors of their papers, an entire bureaucracy of organisation leaders developed. They had to haggle and bargain with the bosses; they became the specialists acquainted with methods and circumstances. Eventually they became the real leaders, the masters of the organisations, masters of the money as well as of the press, while the members themselves lost much of their power. This development of the organisations of the

workers into instruments of power over them has many examples in history; when organisations grow too large, the masses lose control of them.

The same change takes place in the political organisations, when from small propaganda groups they grow into big political parties. The parliamentary representatives are the leading politicians of the party. They have to do the real fighting in the representative bodies; they are the specialists in that field; they make up the editorial, propaganda, and executive personnel: their influence determines the politics and tactical line of the party. The members may send delegates to debate at party congresses, but their power is nominal and illusory. The character of the organisation resembles that of the other political parties -- organisations of politicians who try to win votes for their slogans and power for themselves. Once a socialist party has a large number of delegates in parliament it allies with others against reactionary parties to form a working majority. Soon socialists become ministers, state officials, mayors and aldermen. Of course, in this position they cannot act as delegates of the working class, governing for the workers against the capitalist class. The real political power and even the parliamentary majority remain in the hands of the capitalist class. Socialist ministers have to represent the interests of the present capitalist society, i.e., of the capitalist class. They can attempt to initiate measures for the immediate interests of the workers and try to induce the capitalist parties to acquiesce. They become middlemen, mediators pleading with the capitalist class to consent to small reforms in the interests of the workers, and then try to convince the workers that these are important reforms that they should accept. And then the Socialist Party, as an instrument in the hands of these leaders, has to support them and also, instead of calling upon the workers to fight

for their interests, seeks to pacify them, deflect them from the class struggle.

Indeed, fighting conditions have grown worse for the workers. The power of the capitalist class has increased enormously with its capital. The concentration of capital in the hands of a few captains of finance and industry, the coalition of the bosses themselves, confronts the trade unions with a much stronger and often nearly unassailable power. The fierce competition of the capitalists of all countries over markets, raw materials and world power, the necessity of using increasing parts of the surplus value for this competition, for armaments and welfare, the falling rate of profit, compel the capitalists to increase the rate of exploitation, i.e., to lower the working conditions for the workers. Thus the trade unions meet increasing resistance, the old methods of struggle grow useless. In their bargaining with the bosses the leaders of the organisation have less success; because they know the power of the capitalists, and because they themselves do not want to fight -- since in such fights the funds and the whole existence of the organisation might be lost -- they must accept what the bosses offer. So their chief task is to assuage the workers' discontent and to defend the proposals of the bosses as important gains. Here also the leaders of the workers' organisations become mediators between the opposing classes. And when the workers do not accept the conditions and strike, the leaders either must oppose them or allow a sham fight, to be broken off as soon as possible. The fight itself, however, cannot be stopped or minimised; the class antagonism and the depressing forces of capitalism are increasing, so that the class struggle must go on, the workers must fight. Time and again they break loose spontaneously without asking the union and often against their decisions. Sometimes the union leaders succeed in regaining control of these actions. This means that the fight

will be gradually smothered in some new arrangement between the capitalists and labour leaders. This does not mean that without this interference such wildcat strikes would be won. They are too restricted. Only indirectly does the fear of such explosions tend to foster caution by the capitalists. But these strikes prove that the class fight between capital and labour cannot cease, and that when the old forms are not practicable any more, the workers spontaneously try out and develop new forms of action. In these actions revolt against capital is also revolt against the old organisational forms.

The aim and task of the working class is the abolition of capitalism. Capitalism in its highest development, with its ever deeper economic crises, its imperialism, its armaments, its world wars, threatens the workers with misery and destruction. The proletarian class fight, the resistance and revolt against these conditions, must go on until capitalist domination is overthrown and capitalism is destroyed.

Capitalism means that the productive apparatus is in the hands of the capitalists. Because they are the masters of the means of production, and hence of the products, they can seize the surplus value and exploit the working class. Only when the working class itself is master of the means of production does exploitation cease. Then the workers control entirely their conditions of life. The production of everything necessary for life is the common task of the community of workers, which is then the community of mankind. This production is a collective process. First each factory, each large plant, is a collective of workers, combining their efforts in an organised way. Moreover, the totality of world production is a collective process; all the separate factories have to be combined into a totality of production. Hence, when the working class takes

possession of the means of production, it has at the same time to create an organisation of production.

There are many who think of the proletarian revolution in terms of the former revolutions of the middle class, as a series of consecutive phases: first, conquest of government and instalment of a new government, then expropriation of the capitalist class by law, and then a new organisation of the process of production. But such events could lead only to some kind of state capitalism. As the proletariat rises to dominance it develops simultaneously its own organisation and the forms of the new economic order. These two developments are inseparable and form the process of social revolution. Working class organisation into a strong body capable of united mass actions already means revolution, because capitalism can rule only unorganised individuals. When these organised masses stand up in mass fights and revolutionary actions, and the existing powers are paralysed and disintegrated, then simultaneously the leading and regulating functions of former governments fall to the workers' organisations. And the immediate task is to carry on production, to continue the basic process of social life. Since the revolutionary class fight against the bourgeoisie and its organs is inseparable from the seizure of the productive apparatus by the workers and its application to production, the same organisation that unites the class for its fight also acts as the organisation of the new productive process.

It is clear that the organisational forms of trade union and political party, inherited from the period of expanding capitalism, are useless here. They developed into instruments in the hands of leaders unable and unwilling to engage in revolutionary fight. Leaders cannot make revolutions: labour leaders abhor a proletarian revolution. For the revolutionary fights the workers need new forms of organisation in which they keep the powers of action in

their own hands. It is pointless to try to construct or to imagine these new forms; they can originate only in the practical fight of the workers themselves. They have already originated there; we have only to look into practice to find its beginnings everywhere that the workers are rebelling against the old powers.

In a wildcat strike, the workers decide all matters themselves through regular meetings. They choose strike committees as central bodies, but the members of these committees can be recalled and replaced at any moment. If the strike extends over a large number of shops, they achieve unity of action by larger committees consisting of delegates of all the separate shops. Such committees are not bodies to make decisions according to their own opinion, and over the workers; they are simply messengers, communicating the opinions and wishes of the groups they represent, and conversely, bringing to the shop meetings, for discussion and decision, the opinion and arguments of the other groups. They cannot play the roles of leaders, because they can be momentarily replaced by others. The workers themselves must choose their way, decide their actions; they keep the entire action, with all its difficulties, its risks, its responsibilities, in their own hands. And when the strike is over, the committees disappear.

The only examples of a modern industrial working class as the moving force of a political revolution were the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Here the workers of each factory chose delegates, and the delegates of all the factories together formed the 'soviet,' the council where the political situation and necessary actions were discussed. Here the opinions of the factories were collected, their desires harmonised, their decisions formulated. But the councils, though a strong directing influence for revolutionary education through action, were not commanding bodies. Sometimes a whole council was

arrested and reorganised with new delegates; at times, when the authorities were paralysed by a general strike, the soviets acted as a local government, and delegates of free professions joined them to represent their field of work. Here we have the organisation of the workers in revolutionary action, though of course only imperfectly, groping and trying for new methods. This is possible only when all the workers with all their forces participate in the action, when their very existence is at stake, when they actually take part in the decisions and are entirely devoted to the revolutionary fight.

After the revolution this council organisation disappeared. The proletarian centres of big industry were small islands in an ocean of primitive agricultural society where capitalist development had not yet begun. The task of initiating capitalism fell to the Communist Party. Simultaneously, political power centred in its hands and the soviets were reduced to subordinate organs with only nominal powers.

The old forms of organisation, the trade union and political party and the new form of councils (soviets), belong to different phases in the development of society and have different functions. The first has to secure the position of the working class among the other classes within capitalism and belongs to the period of expanding capitalism. The latter has to secure complete dominance for the workers, to destroy capitalism and its class divisions, and belongs to the period of declining capitalism. In a rising and prosperous capitalism, council organisation is impossible because the workers are entirely occupied in ameliorating their conditions, which is possible at that time through trade unions and political action. In a decaying crisis-ridden capitalism, these efforts are useless and faith in them can only hamper the increase of self-action by the masses. In such times of heavy tension and growing revolt against misery, when strike movements spread over whole

countries and hit at the roots of capitalist power, or when, following wars or political catastrophes, the government authority crumbles and the masses act, the old organisational forms fail against the new forms of self-activity of the masses.

Spokesmen for socialist or communist parties often admit that, in revolution, organs of self-action by the masses are useful in destroying the old domination; but then they say these have to yield to parliamentary democracy to organise the new society. Let us compare the basic principles of both forms of political organisation of society.

Original democracy in small towns and districts was exercised by the assembly of all the citizens. With the big population of modern towns and countries this is impossible. The people can express their will only by choosing delegates to some central body that represents them all. The delegates for parliamentary bodies are free to act, to decide, to vote, to govern after their own opinion by 'honour and conscience,' as it is often called in solemn terms.

The council delegates, however, are bound by mandate; they are sent simply to express the opinions of the workers' groups who sent them. They may be called back and replaced at any moment. Thus the workers who gave them the mandate keep the power in their own hands.

On the other hand, members of parliament are chosen for a fixed number of years; only at the polls are the citizens masters -- on this one day when they choose their delegates. Once this day has passed, their power has gone and the delegates are independent, free to act for a term of years according to their own 'conscience,' restricted only by the knowledge that after this period they have to face the voters anew; but then they count on catching their votes in a noisy election campaign, bombing the confused voters with slogans and demagogic phrases. Thus not the voters but the

parliamentarians are the real masters who decide politics. And the voters do not even send persons of their own choice as delegates; they are presented to them by the political parties. And then, if we suppose that people could select and send persons of their own choice, these persons would not form the government; in parliamentary democracy the legislative and the executive powers are separated. The real government dominating the people is formed by a bureaucracy of officials so far removed from the people's vote as to be practically independent. That is how it is possible that capitalistic dominance is maintained through general suffrage and parliamentary democracy. This is why in capitalistic countries, where the majority of the people belongs to the working class, this democracy cannot lead to a conquest of political power. For the working class, parliamentary democracy is a sham democracy, whereas council representation is real democracy: the direct rule of the workers over their own affairs.

Parliamentary democracy is the political form in which the different important interests in a capitalist society exert their influence upon government. The delegates represent certain classes: farmers, merchants, industrialists, workers; but they do not represent the common will of their voters. Indeed, the voters of a district have no common will; they are an assembly of individuals, capitalists, workers, shopkeepers, by chance living at the same place, having partly opposing interests.

Council delegates, on the other hand, are sent out by a homogeneous group to express its common will. Councils are not only made up of workers, having common class interests; they are a natural group, working together as the personnel of one factory or section of a large plant, and are in close daily contact with each other, having the same adversary, having to decide their common actions as fellow

workers in which they have to act in united fashion; not only on the questions of strike and fight, but also in the new organisation of production. Council representation is not founded upon the meaningless grouping of adjacent villages or districts, but upon the natural groupings of workers in the process of production, the real basis of society.

However, councils must not be confused with the so-called corporative representation propagated in fascist countries. This is a representation of the different professions or trades (masters and workers combined), considered as fixed constituents of society. This form belongs to a medieval society with fixed classes and guilds, and in its tendency to petrify interest groups it is even worse than parliamentarism, where new groups and new interests rising up in the development of capitalism soon find their expression in parliament and government.

Council representation is entirely different because it is the representation of a class engaged in revolutionary struggle. It represents working class interests only, and prevents capitalist delegates and capitalist interests from participation. It denies the right of existence to the capitalist class in society and tries to eliminate capitalists by taking the means of production away from them. When in the progress of revolution the workers must take up the functions of organising society, the same council organisation is their instrument. This means that the workers' councils then are the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship of the proletariat is not a shrewdly devised voting system artificially excluding capitalists and the bourgeoisie from the polls. It is the exercise of power in society by the natural organs of the workers, building up the productive apparatus as the basis of society. In these organs of the workers, consisting of delegates of their various branches in the process of production, there is no place for robbers or exploiters

standing outside productive work. Thus the dictatorship of the working class is at the same time the most perfect democracy, the real workers' democracy, excluding the vanishing class of exploiters.

The adherents of the old forms of organisation exalt democracy as the only right and just political form, as against dictatorship, an unjust form. Marxism knows nothing of abstract right or justice; it explains the political forms in which mankind expresses its feelings of political right, as consequences of the economic structure of society. In Marxian theory we can find also the basis of the difference between parliamentary democracy and council organisation. As bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy respectively they reflect the different character of these two classes and their economic systems.

Bourgeois democracy is founded upon a society consisting of a large number of independent small producers. They want a government to take care of their common interests: public security and order, protection of commerce, uniform systems of weight and money, administering of law and justice. All these things are necessary in order that everybody can do his business in his own way. Private business takes the whole attention, forms the life interests of everybody, and those political factors are, though necessary, only secondary and demand only a small part of their attention. The chief content of social life, the basis of existence of society, the production of all the goods necessary for life, is divided up into private business of the separate citizens, hence it is natural that it takes nearly all their time, and that politics, their collective affair, is a subordinate matter, providing only for auxiliary conditions. Only in bourgeois revolutionary movements do people take to the streets. But in ordinary times politics are left to a small group of specialists, politicians, whose work consists

just of taking care of these general, political conditions of bourgeois business.

The same holds true for the workers, as long as they think only of their direct interests. In capitalism they work long hours, all their energy is exhausted in the process of exploitation, and little mental power and fresh thought is left them. Earning their wage is the most immediate necessity of life; their political interests, their common interest in safeguarding their interests as wage earners may be important, but are still secondary. So they leave this part of their interests also to specialists, to their party politicians and their trade union leaders. By voting as citizens or members the workers may give some general directions, just as middle-class voters may influence their politicians, but only partially, because their chief attention must remain concentrated upon their work.

Proletarian democracy under communism depends upon just the opposite economic conditions. It is founded not on private but on collective production. Production of the necessities of life is no longer a personal business, but a collective affair. The collective affairs, formerly called political affairs, are no longer secondary, but the chief object of thought and action for everybody. What was called politics in the former society -- a domain for specialists -- has become the vital interest of every worker. It is not the securing of some necessary conditions of production, it is the process and the regulation of production itself. The separation of private and collective affairs and interests has ceased. A separate group or class of specialists taking care of the collective affairs is no longer necessary. Through their council delegates, which link them together, the producers themselves are managing their own productive work.

The two forms of organisation are not distinguished in that the one is founded upon a traditional and ideological basis,

and the other on the material productive basis of society. Both are founded upon the material basis of the system of production, one on the declining system of the past, the other on the growing system of the future. Right now we are in the period of transition, the time of big capitalism and the beginnings of the proletarian revolution. In big capitalism the old system of production has already been destroyed in its foundations; the large class of independent producers has disappeared. The main part of production is collective work of large groups of workers; but the control and ownership have remained in a few private hands. This contradictory state is maintained by the strong power factors of the capitalists, especially the state power exerted by the governments. The task of the proletarian revolution is to destroy this state power; its real content is the seizure of the means of production by the workers. The process of revolution is an alternation of actions and defeats that builds up the organisation of the proletarian dictatorship, which at the same time is the dissolution, step by step, of the capitalist state power. Hence it is the process of the replacement of the organisation system of the past by the organisation system of the future.

We are only in the beginnings of this revolution. The century of class struggle behind us cannot be considered a beginning as such, but only a preamble. It developed invaluable theoretical knowledge, it found gallant revolutionary words in defiance of the capitalist claim of being a final social system; it awakened the workers from the hopelessness of misery. But its actual fight remained bound within the confines of capitalism, it was action through the medium of leaders and sought only to set easy masters in the place of hard ones. Only a sudden flickering of revolt, such as political or mass strikes breaking out against the will of the politicians, now and then announced the future of self-determined mass action. Every wildcat

strike, not taking its leaders and catchwords from the offices of parties and unions, is an indication of this development, and at the same time a small step in its direction. All the existing powers in the proletarian movement, the socialist and communist parties, the trade unions, all the leaders whose activity is bound to the bourgeois democracy of the past, denounce these mass actions as anarchistic disturbances. Because their field of vision is limited to their old forms of organisation, they cannot see that the spontaneous actions of the workers bear in them the germs of higher forms of organisation. In fascist countries, where bourgeois democracy has been destroyed, such spontaneous mass actions will be the only form of future proletarian revolt. Their tendency will not be a restoration of the former middle class democracy but an advance in the direction of the proletarian democracy, i.e., the dictatorship of the working class.

WHY PAST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS HAVE FAILED(1940)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

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Thirty years ago every socialist was convinced that the approaching war of the great capitalist powers would mean the final catastrophe of capitalism and would be succeeded by the proletarian revolution. Even when the war did break out and the socialist and labor movement collapsed as a revolutionary factor, the hopes of the revolutionary workers ran high. Even then they were sure that the world revolution would follow in the wake of the world war. And indeed it came. Like a bright meteor the Russian revolution flared up and shone all over the earth, and in all the countries the workers rose and began to move.

Only a few years alter it became clear that the revolution was decaying, that social convulsions were decreasing, that the capitalist order was gradually being restored. Today the revolutionary workers' movement is at its lowest ebb and capitalism is more powerful than ever. Once again a great war has come, and again the thoughts of workers and communists turn to the question: will it affect the capitalistic system to such a degree that a workers revolution will arise out of it? Will the hope of a successful struggle for freedom of the working class come true this time?

It is clear that we cannot hope to get an answer to this question so long as we do not understand why the revolutionary movements after 1918 failed. Only by investigating all the forces that were then at work can we get a clear insight into the causes of that failure. So we must

turn our attention to what happened twenty years ago in the workers' movement of the world.

II.

The growth of the workers movement was not the only important nor even the most important fact in the history of the past century. Of primary importance was the growth of capitalism itself. It grew not only in intensity—through concentration of capital, the increasing perfection of industrial tecnics, the increase of productivity—but also in extensity. From the first centers of industry and commerce—England, France, America and Germany—capitalism began to invade foreign countries, and now is conquering the whole earth. In former centuries foreign continents were subdued to be exploited as colonies. But at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries we see a higher form of conquest. These continents were assimilated by capitalism; they became themselves capitalistic. This most important process, that went on with increasing rapidity in the last century, meant a fundamental change in their economic structure. In short, there was the basis of a series of world-wide revolutions.

The central countries of developed capitalism, with the middle class—the bourgeoisie—as the ruling class, were formerly surrounded by a fringe of other, less developed countries. Here the social structure was still entirely agrarian and more-or-less feudal; the large plains were cultivated by farmers who were exploited by landowners and stood in continuous, more-or-less open struggle against them and the reigning autocrats. In the case of the colonies this internal pressure was intensified through exploitation by European colonial capital that made the landowners and kings its agents. In other cases this stronger exploitation by European capital was brought about by financial loans of governments, which laid heavy taxes upon the farmers. Railways, introducing the factory products that destroyed

the old home industries and carried away raw material and food, were built. this gradually drew the farmers into world commerce and aroused in them the desire to become free producers for the market. Factories were constructed; a class of business men and dealers developed in the towns who felt the necessity of better government for their interest. Young people, studying at western universities, became the revolutionary spokesmen of these tendencies. they formulated these tendencies in theoretical programs, advocating chiefly national freedom and independence, a responsible democratic government, civil rights and liberties, in order that they may find their useful place as officials and politicians in a modern state.

This development in the capitalistic world proper took place simultaneously with the development of the workers' movement within the central countries of big capitalism. Here then were two revolutionary movements, not only parallel and simultaneous, but also with many points of contact. they had a common foe, capitalism, that in the form of industrial capitalism exploited the workers, and in the form of colonial and financial capitalism exploited the farmers in the Eastern and colonial countries and sustained these despotic rulers. the revolutionary groups from these countries found understanding and assistance only from the socialist workers of western Europe. So they called themselves socialists too. the old illusions that middle class revolutions would bring freedom and equality to the entire population were reborn,

In reality there was a deep and fundamental difference between these two kinds of revolutionary aims, the so-called Western and eastern. The proletarian revolution can be the result only of the highest development of capitalism. It puts an end to capitalism. the revolutions in the eastern countries were the consequences of the beginning of capitalism in these countries. Viewed thus, they resemble

the middle class revolutions in the Western countries and—with due consideration for the fact that their special character must somewhat differ in different countries—they must be regarded as middle class revolutions. Though there was not such a numerous middle class of artisans, petty bourgeois and wealthy peasants as there was in the French and the English revolutions (because in the East, capitalism came suddenly, with a smaller number of big factories) still the general character is analogous. Here also we have the awakening out of the provincial view of an agrarian village to the consciousness of a nation-wide community and to interest in the whole world; the rising of individualism that frees itself from the old group bonds; the growth of energy to win personal power and wealth; the liberation of the mind from old superstitions, and the desire for knowledge as a means of progress. All this is the mental equipment necessary to bring mankind from the slow life of pre-capitalist conditions into the rapid industrial and economic progress that later on will open the way for communism.

The general character of a proletarian revolution must be quite different. Instead of reckless fighting for personal interests there must be a common action for the interests of the class community. A worker, a single person, is powerless; only as part of his class, as a member of a strongly connected economic group can he get power. Workers individualities are disciplined into line by their habit of working and fighting together. Their minds must be freed from social superstitions and they must see as a commonplace truth that once they are strongly united that they can produce abundance and liberate society from misery and want. This is part of the mental equipment necessary to bring mankind from class exploitation, the misery, the mutual destruction of capitalism into communism itself.

Thus the two kinds of revolution are as widely different as are the beginning and end of capitalism. We can see this clearly now, thirty years later. we can understand too, how at the time they could be considered not only as allies, but were thrown together as two sides of the same great world-revolution. The great day was supposed to be near; the working class, with its large socialist parties and still larger unions, would soon conquer power. And then at the same time, with the power of western capitalism breaking down, all the colonies and eastern countries would be freed from western domination and take up their own national life.

Another reason for confusing these different social aims was that at that time the minds of the western workers were entirely occupied by reformist ideas about reforming capitalism into the democratic forms of its beginning and only a few among them realized the meaning of a proletarian revolution.

III.

The world war of 1914-18, with it's utter destruction of productive forces, cut deep furrows through the social structure, especially of central and eastern Europe. emperors disappeared, old out-moded governments were overthrown, social forces from below were loosened, different classes of different peoples, in a series of revolutionary movements, tried to win power and to realize their class aims.

In the highly industrialized countries the class struggle of the workers was already the dominating factor of history. Now these workers had gone through a world war. They learned that capitalism not only lays claim on their working power, but upon their lives too; completely, body and soul, they are owned by capital. The destruction and impoverishment of the productive apparatus, the misery and privation suffered during the war, the disappointment and distress after the peace brought waves of unrest and

rebelliousness over all participating countries. Because Germany had lost, the rebellion here of the workers was greatest. In the place of pre-war conservatism, there arose a new spirit in the German workers, compounded of courage, energy, yearnings for freedom and for revolutionary struggle against capitalism. It was only a beginning but it was the first beginning of a proletarian revolution.

In the eastern countries of Europe the class struggle had a different composition. the land owning nobility was dispossessed; the farmers seized the land; a class of small or middle-sized free landowners arose. Former revolutionary conspirators became leaders and ministers and generals in the new national states. These revolutions were middle-class revolutions and as such indicated the beginning of an unlimited development of capitalism and industry.

In Russia this revolution went deeper than anywhere else. Because it destroyed the Czarist world power which for a century had been a dominating power in Europe and the most hated enemy of all democracy and socialism, the Russian revolution led all the revolutionary movements in Europe. It's leader had been associated for many years with the socialist leaders of Western Europe just as the Czar had been the ally of the English and French governments. It is true that the chief social contents of the Russian Revolution—the land seizures by the peasants and the smashing of the autocracy and nobility—show it to be a middle-class revolution and the Bolsheviki themselves accentuated this character by often comparing themselves with the jacobins of the French Revolution.

But the workers in the west, themselves full of traditions of petty bourgeois freedom, did not consider this foreign to them. And the Russian revolution did more than simply rouse their admiration; it showed them an example in methods of action. It's power in decisive moments was the

power of spontaneous mass action of the industrial workers in the big towns. Out of these actions the Russian workers also built up that form of organization most appropriate to independent action—the soviets or councils. Thus they became the guides and teachers of the workers in other countries.

When a year later, November 1918, the German empire collapsed, the appeal to world revolution issued by the Russian Bolsheviks was hailed and welcomed by the foremost revolutionary groups in Western Europe. These groups, calling themselves communists, were so strongly impressed by the proletarian character of the revolutionary struggle in Russia that they overlooked the fact that, economically, Russia stood only at the threshold of capitalism, and that the proletarian centers were only small islands in the ocean of primitive peasantry. Moreover they reasoned that when a world revolution came, Russia would be only a world-province—the place where the struggle started—whereas the more advanced countries of big capitalism would soon take the lead and determine the world's real course.

But the first rebellious movement among the German workers was beaten down. It was only an advanced minority that took part; the great mass held aloof, nursing the illusion that quiet and peace were now possible. Against these rebels stood a coalition of the Social-Democratic party, whose leaders occupied the government seats, and the old governing classes, bourgeoisie and army officers. While the former lulled the masses into inactivity, the latter organized armed bands that crushed the rebellious movement and murdered the revolutionary leaders, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

The Russian revolution, through fear, had aroused the bourgeoisie to greater energy than it had aroused the proletariat through hope. Though, for the moment, the

political organization of the bourgeoisie had collapsed, its real material and spiritual power was enormous. The socialist leadership did nothing to weaken this power; they feared the proletarian revolution no less than the bourgeoisie did. They did everything to restore the capitalist order, in which, for the moment, they were ministers and presidents.

This did not mean that the proletarian revolution in Germany was a complete failure. Only the first attack, the first rebellion had failed. The military collapse had not led directly to proletarian rule. The real power of the working class—clear consciousness on the part of the masses of their social position and the necessity for fighting, eager activity in all these hundreds of thousands, enthusiasm, solidarity and strong unity in action, awareness of the supreme aim: to take the means of production in their own hands—had to come up and grow gradually in any case. So much misery and crisis was threatening in the exhausted, shattered and impoverished post-war society that new fights were bound to come.

In all capitalist countries, in England, France, America as well as Germany, revolutionary groups arose among the workers in 1919. They published papers and pamphlets, they showed their fellow workers new facts, new conditions and new methods of fighting, and they found a good hearing among the alarmed masses. They pointed to the Russian revolution as their great example, its methods of mass action and its soviet or council form of organization. They organized into communist parties and groups, associating themselves with the Bolshevik, the Russian Communist party. Thus the campaign for world revolution was launched.

IV.

Soon, however, these groups became aware with increasingly painful surprise that under the name of

communism other principles and ideas than their own were being propagated from Moscow. they pointed to the Russian Soviets as the worker's new organs for self-rule in production. But gradually it became known that the Russian factories were again ruled by directors appointed from above, and that, the important political position had been seized by the Communist Party. These Western groups promulgated the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in opposition to the parliamentary democracy embodied the principle of self-rule of the working class as the political form of the proletarian revolution.

But the spokesmen and leaders which Moscow sent to Germany and Western Europe proclaimed that the dictatorship of the proletariat was embodied in the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

The Western Communists saw as their chief task the enlightening of workers concerning the role of the socialist party and the u unions. They pointed out that in these organizations the actions and decisions of the leaders were substituted for actions and decisions of the workers, and that the leaders were never able to wage a revolutionary fight because a revolution consists in this very self-action of the workers; that the trade union actions and parliamentary practice are good in a young and quiet capitalist world, but are entirely unfit for revolutionary times, where, by diverting the attention of the workers from important aims and goals and directing them to unreal reforms, they work as hostile, reactionary forces; that all the power of these organizations, in the hands of leaders, is used against the revolution. Moscow, however, demanded that communist parties should take part in parliamentary elections as well as in all union work. The Western communists preached independence, development of initiative, self-reliance, the ejection of dependence on and belief in leaders. But

Moscow preached, in ever stronger terms that obedience to the leaders was the chief virtue of the true communist.

Western communists did not immediately realize how fundamental was the contradiction. They saw that Russia, attacked from all sides by counter-revolutionary armies, which were supported by the English and French governments, needed sympathy and assistance from the western working classes; not from small groups that fiercely attacked the old organizations, but from the old mass organizations themselves. They tried to convince Lenin and the Russian leaders that they were ill-informed about the real conditions and the future of the proletarian movement in the West. In vain, of course. They did not see, at the time, that in reality it was the conflict of two concepts of revolution, the middle class revolution and the proletarian revolution.

It was only natural that Lenin and his comrades were utterly unable to see that the impending proletarian revolution of the West was quite a different thing from their Russian revolution. Lenin did not know capitalism from within, at its highest development, as a world of enlarging proletarian masses, moving up to the time when they could seize power to lay hands on a potentially perfect production apparatus. Lenin knew capitalism only from without, as a foreign, robbing, devastating usurer, such as the western financial and colonial capital must have appeared to him in Russia and other Asiatic countries. His idea was that in order to conquer, the Western masses had only to join the anti-capitalistic power established in Russia; they should not obstinately try to seek other ways but were to follow the Russian example. Hence flexible tactics were needed in the west to win the great masses of socialist and union members as soon as possible, to induce them to leave their own leaders and parties that were bound to their national governments, and to join the communist parties, without the

necessity of changing their own ideas and convictions. So Moscow tactics followed logically from the basic misunderstanding.

And what had Moscow propagated had by far the greatest weight. It had the authority of a victor against a defeated (German) revolution. Will you be wiser than your teachers? The moral authority of Russian Communism was so undisputed that even a year later the excluded German opposition asked to be admitted as a 'sympathizing' adherent to the Third International. But besides moral authority, the Russians had the material authority of money behind them. An enormous amount of literature, easily paid for by Moscow subsidies, flooded the western countries: weekly papers, pamphlets, exciting news about successes in Russia, scientific reviews, all explaining Moscow's views. Against this overwhelming offensive of noisy propaganda, the small groups of Western communists, with their lack of financial means, had no chance. So the new and sprouting recognition of the conditions necessary for revolution were beaten down and strangled by Moscow's powerful weapons. Moreover Russian subsidies were used to support a number of salaried party secretaries, who, under threat of being fired, naturally turned into defenders of Russian tactics.

When it became apparent that even all this was not sufficient, Lenin himself wrote his well known pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism _ An Infantile Disorder." Though his arguments showed only his lack of understanding of western conditions, the fact that Lenin, with his still unbroken authority, so openly took sides in the internal differences, had a great influence on a number of western communists. And yet, notwithstanding all this, the majority of the German communist party stuck to the knowledge they had gained through their experience of proletarian struggles. So at their next congress at Heidelberg, Dr. Levi,

by some dirty tricks, had first to divide the majority—to excluded one part, and then to outvote the other part—in order to win a formal and apparent victory for the Moscow tactics.

The excluded groups went on for some years disseminating their ideas. But their views were drowned out by the enormous noise of Moscow propaganda, they had no appreciable influence on the political events of the next years. They could only maintain and further develop, by mutual theoretical discussions and some publications, their understanding of the conditions of proletarian revolution and keep them alive for times to come.

The beginnings of a proletarian revolution in the West had been killed by the powerful middle class revolution of the East.

V.

Is it correct to call this Russian revolution that destroyed the bourgeoisie and introduced socialism a middle class revolution?

Some years afterwards in the big towns of poverty-stricken Russia special shops with plate glass fronts and exquisite, expensive delicacies appeared, especially for the rich, and luxurious night clubs were opened, frequented by gentlemen and ladies in evening dress—chiefs of departments, high officials, directors of factories and committees. they were stared at in surprise by the poor in the streets, and the disillusioned communists said: “There go the new bourgeoisie.” They were wrong. It was not a new bourgeoisie; but it was a new ruling class. When a new ruling class comes up, disappointed revolutionaries always call it by the name of the former ruling class. In the French revolution, the rising capitalists were called “the new aristocracy.” Here in Russia the new class firmly seated in the saddle as masters of the production apparatus was the bureaucracy. It had to play in Russia the same role that in

the West the middle class, the bourgeoisie, had played: to develop the country by industrialization from primitive conditions to high productivity.

Just as in Western Europe the bourgeoisie had risen out of the common people of artisans and peasants, including some aristocrats, by ability, luck and cunning, so the Russian ruling bureaucracy had risen from the working class and the peasants (including former officials) by ability, luck and cunning. The difference is that in the USSR they did not own the means of production individually but collectively; so their mutual competition, too, must go on in other forms. This means a fundamental difference in the economic system; collective, planned production and exploitation instead of individual haphazard production and exploitation; state capitalism instead of private capitalism. For the working masses, however, the difference is slight, not fundamental; once more they are exploited by a middle class. But now this exploitation is intensified by the dictatorial form of government, by the total lack of all those liberties which in the West render fighting against the bourgeoisie possible.

This character of modern Russia determined the character of the fight of the Third International. Alternating red-hot utterances with the flattest parliamentary opportunism, or combining both, the 3rd International tried to win the adherence of the working masses of the West. It exploited the class antagonism of the workers against capitalism to win power for the Party. It caught up all the revolutionary enthusiasm of youth and all the rebellious impulses of the masses, prevented them from developing into a growing proletarian power, and wasted them in worthless political adventures. It hoped thus to get power over the Western bourgeoisie; but it was not able to do so, because understanding of the inner-most character of big capitalism was totally lacking. This capitalism cannot be conquered by

an outside force; it can be destroyed only from within, by the proletarian revolution. Class domination can be destroyed only by the initiative and insight of a self-reliant proletarian class: party discipline and obedience of the masses to their leaders can only lead to a new class domination. Indeed in Italy and Germany this activity of the Communist Party prepared the way for fascism.

The Communist Parties that belong to the Third International are entirely—materially and mentally—dependent on Russia, are the obedient servants of the rulers of Russia. Hence, when Russia, after 1933, felt that it must line up with France against Germany, all former intransigence was forgotten. The Comintern became the champion of “democracy” and united not only with socialists but even with some capitalist parties into the so-called Popular Front. Gradually it’s power to attract, through pretending that it represented the old revolutionary traditions, began to disappear; it’s proletarian following diminished.

But at the same time, it’s influence on the intellectual middle classes in Europe and America began to grow. A large number of books and reviews in all fields of social thought were issued by more or less camouflaged C.P. publishing houses in England, France and America. Some of them were valuable historical studies or popular compilations; but mostly they were worthless expositions of so-called Leninism. All this was literature evidently not intended for workers, but for intellectuals, in order to win them over to Russian communism.

The new approach met with some success. The ex-soviet diplomat Alexander Barmine tells in his memoirs how he perceived with surprise in western Europe that just when he and other Bolsheviks began to have their doubts as to the outcome of the Russian revolution, the western middle class intellectuals, misled by the lying praises of the successes of

the Five Year Plan, began to feel a sympathetic interest in Communism. The reason is clear: now that Russia was obviously not a worker's state any more, they felt that this state-capitalistic rule of a bureaucracy came nearer to their own ideals of rule by the intelligentsia than did the European and American rule of big finance. Now that a new ruling minority over and above the masses was established in Russia, the Communist Party, its foreign servant had to turn to those classes from which, when private capitalism collapsed, new rulers for exploiting the masses could arise.

Of course, to succeed in this way, they needed a worker's revolution to put down capitalist power. Then they must try to divert it from its own aims and make it an instrument for their party rule. So we see what kind of difficulties the future working class revolution may have to face. It will have to fight not only the bourgeoisie but the enemies of the bourgeoisie as well. It has not only to throw off the yoke of its present masters; it must also keep from those who would try to be its future masters.

VI.

The world has now entered into its new great imperialistic war. Cautious though the warring governments may be in handling the economic and social forces and in trying to prevent hell from breaking loose entirely, they will not be able to hold back a social catastrophe. With the general exhaustion and impoverishment, most severe on the European continent, with the spirit of fierce aggressiveness still mighty, violent class struggles will accompany the unavoidable new adjustments of the system of production. Then, with private capitalism broken down, the issues will be planned economy, state capitalism, worker's exploitation on the one side; worker's freedom and mastery over production on the other.

The working class is going into this war burdened with the capitalistic tradition of Party leadership and the phantom tradition of a revolution of the Russian kind. the tremendous pressure of this war will drive the workers into spontaneous resistance against their governments and into the beginnings of new forms of real fight. When it happens that Russia enters the field against the Western powers, it will reopen it's old box of slogans and make an appeal to the workers for 'world revolution against capitalism" in an attempt to get the rebellious-minded workers on it's side. So Bolshevism would have it's chance once more. But this would be no solution for the problems of the workers. when the general misery increases and conflicts between classes become fiercer, the working class must, out of it's own necessity, seize the means of production and find ways to free itself from the influence of Bolshevism.

Anton Pannekoek

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THE FAILURE OF THE WORKING CLASS(1946)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

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In former issues of Politics the problem has been posed: Why did the working class fail in its historical task? Why did it not offer resistance to national socialism in Germany? Why is there no trace of any revolutionary movement amongst the workers of America? What has happened to the social vitality of the world working class? Why do the masses all over the globe no longer seem capable of initiating anything new aimed at their own self-liberation? Some light may be thrown upon this problem by the following considerations.

It is easy to ask: why did not the workers rise against threatening fascism? To fight you must have a positive aim. Opposed to fascism there were two alternatives: either to maintain, or to return to the old capitalism, with its unemployment, its crises, its corruption, its misery--whereas Nationalism Socialism preserved itself as an anti-capitalist reign of labor, without unemployment, a reign of national greatness, of community politics that could lead to a socialist revolution. Thus, indeed, the deeper question is: why did the German workers not make their revolution?

Well, they had experienced a revolution: 1918. But it had taught them the lesson that neither the Social Democratic Party, nor the trade unions was the instrument of their liberation; both turned out to be instruments for restoring capitalism. So what were they to do? The Communist Party did not show a way either; it propagated the Russian system of state-capitalism, with its still worse lack of freedom.

Could it have been otherwise? The avowed aim of the Socialist Party in Germany--and then in all countries--was state socialism. According to program the working class had to conquer political dominance, and then by its power over the state, had to organize production into a state-directed planned economic system. Its instrument was to be the Socialist Party, developed already into a huge body of 300,000 members, with a million trade-union members and three million voters behind them, led by a big apparatus of politicians, agitators, editors, eager to take the place of the former rulers. According to program, then, they should expropriate by law the capitalist class and organize production in a centrally-directed planned system.

It is clear that in such a system the workers, though their daily bread may seem to be secured, are only imperfectly liberated. The upper echelons of society have been changed, but the foundations bearing the entire building remain the old ones: factories with wage-earning workers under the command of directors and managers. So we find it described by the English socialist G.D.H. Cole, who after World War 1 strongly influenced the trade unions by his studies of guild socialism and other reforms of the industrial system. He says:

"The whole people would no more be able than the whole body of shareholders in a great enterprise to manage an industry....It would be necessary, under socialism as much as under large scale capitalism, to entrust the actual management of industrial enterprise to salaried experts, chosen for their specialized knowledge and ability in particular branches of work....There is no reason to suppose that the methods of appointing the actual managers in socialized industries would differ widely from those already in force in large scale capitalist enterprise....There is no reason to suppose that the socialization of any industry would mean a great change in its managerial personnel."

Thus the workers will have got new masters instead of the old ones. Good humane masters instead of the bad, rapacious masters of today. Appointed by a socialist government or at best chosen by themselves. But, once chosen, they must be obeyed. The workers are not master over their shops, they are not master of the means of production. Above them stands the commanding power of a state bureaucracy of leaders and managers. Such a state of affairs can attract the workers as long as they feel powerless against the power of the capitalists: so in their first rise during the 19th century this was put up as the goal. They were not strong enough to drive the capitalists out of the command over the production installations; so their way out was state socialism, a government of socialists expropriating the capitalists.

Now that the workers begin to realize that state socialism means new fetters, they stand before the difficult task of finding and opening new roads. This is not possible without a deep revolution of ideas, accompanied by much internal strife. No wonder that the vigor of the fight slackens, that they hesitate, divided and uncertain, and seem to have lost their energy.

Capitalism, indeed, cannot be annihilated by a change in the commanding persons; but only by the abolition of commanding. The real freedom of the workers consists in their direct mastery over the means of production. The essence of the future free world community is not that the working masses get enough food, but they direct their work themselves, collectively. For the real content of their life is their productive work; the fundamental change is not a change in the passive realm of consumption, but in the active realm of production. Before them now the problem arises of how to unite freedom and organization; how to combine mastery of the workers over the work with the binding up of all this work into a well-planned social

entirety. How to organize production, in every shop as well as over the whole of world economy, in such a way that they themselves as parts of a collaborating community regulate their work. Mastery over production means that the personnel, the bodies of workers, technicians and experts that by their collective effort run the shop and put into action the technical apparatus are at the same time the managers themselves. The organization into a social entity is then performed by delegates of the separate plants, by so-called workers councils, discussing and deciding on the common affairs. The development of such a council organization will afford the solution of the problem; but this development is a historical process, taking time and demanding a deep transformation of outlook and character.

This new vision of a free communism is only beginning to take hold of the minds of the workers. And so now we begin to understand why former promising workers' movements could not succeed. When the aims are too narrow there can be no real liberation. When the aim is a semi- or mock-liberation, the inner forces aroused are insufficient to bring about fundamental results. So the German socialist movement, unable to provide the workers with arms powerful enough to fight successfully monopolistic capital, had to succumb. The working class had to search for new roads. But the difficulty of disentangling itself from the net of socialist teachings imposed by old parties and old slogans made it powerless against aggressive capitalism, and brought about a period of continuous decline, indicating the need for a new orientation.

Thus what is called the failure of the working class is the failure of its narrow socialist aims. The real fight for liberation has yet to begin; what is known as the workers' movement in the century behind us, seen in this way, was

only a series of skirmishes of advance guards. Intellectuals, who are wont to reduce the social struggle to the most abstract and simple formulas, are inclined to underrate the tremendous scope of the social transformation before us. They think how easy it would be to put the right name into the ballot box. They forget what deep inner revolution must take place in the working masses; what amount of clear insight, of solidarity, of perseverance and courage, of proud fighting spirit is needed to vanquish the immense physical and spiritual power of capitalism.

The workers of the world nowadays have two mighty foes, two hostile and suppressing powers over against them: the monopolistic capitalism of America and England, and Russian state capitalism. The former is drifting toward social dictatorship camouflaged in democratic forms; the latter proclaims dictatorship openly, formerly with the addition "of the proletariat," although nobody believes that any more. They both try to keep the workers in a state of obedient well-drilled followers, acting only at the command of the party leaders, the former by the aid of the socialist program of socialist parties, the latter by the slogans and wily tricks of the Communist party. The tradition of glorious struggle helps keep them spiritually dependent on obsolete ideas. In the competition for world domination, each tries to keep the workers in its fold, by shouting against capitalism here, against dictatorship there.

In the awakening resistance to both, the workers are beginning to perceive that they can fight successfully only by adhering to and proclaiming the exactly opposite principle--the principle of devoted collaboration of free and equal personalities. Theirs is the task of finding out the way in which the principle can be carried out in their practical action.

The paramount question here is whether there are indications of an existing or awakening fighting spirit in the

working class. So we must leave the field of political party strife, now chiefly intended to fool the masses, and turn to the field of economic interests, where the workers intuitively fight their bitter struggle for living conditions. Here we see that with the development of small business into big business, the trade unions cease to be instruments of the workers' struggle. In modern times these organizations ever more turn into the organs by which monopoly capital dictates its terms to the working class.

When the workers begin to realize that the trade unions cannot direct their fight against capital they face the task of finding and practicing new forms of struggle. These new forms are the wildcat strikes. Here they shake off direction by the old leaders and the old organizations; here they take the initiative in their own hands; here they have to think out time and ways, to take the decisions, to do all the work of propaganda, of extension, of directing their actions themselves. Wildcat strikes are spontaneous outbursts, the genuine practical expression of class struggle against capitalism, though without wider aims as yet; but they embody a new character already in the rebellious masses: self-determination instead of determination by leaders, self-reliance instead of obedience, fighting spirit instead of accepting the dictates from above, unbreakable solidarity and unity with the comrades instead of duty imposed by membership. The unit in action and strike is, of course, the same as the unit of daily productive work, the personnel of the shop, the plant, the docks; it is the common work, the common interest against the common capitalist master that compels them to act as one. In these discussions and decisions all the individual capabilities, all the forces of character and mind of all the workers, exalted and strained to the utmost, are co-operating towards the common goal. In the wildcat strikes we may see the beginnings of a new practical orientation of the working class, a new tactic, the

method of direct action. They represent the only actual rebellion of man against the deadening suppressing weight of world-dominating capital. Surely, on small scale such strikes mostly have to be broken off without success--warning signs only. Their efficiency depends on their extension over larger masses; only fear for such indefinite extension can compel capital to make concessions. If the pressure by capitalist exploitation grows heavier--and we may be sure it will--resistance will be aroused ever anew and will involve ever larger masses. When the strikes take on such dimensions as to disturb seriously the social order, when they assail capitalism in its inner essence, the mastery of the shops, the workers will have to confront state power with all its resources. Then their strikes must assume a political character; they have to broaden their social outlook; their strike committees, embodying their class community, assume wider social functions, taking the character of workers' councils. Then the social revolution, the breakdown of capitalism, comes into view.

Is there any reason to expect such a revolutionary development in coming times, through conditions that were lacking until now? It seems that we can, with some probability, indicate such conditions. In Marx's writings we find the sentence: a production system does not perish before all its innate possibilities have developed. In the persistence of capitalism, we now begin to detect some deeper truth in this sentence than was suspected before. As long as the capitalist system can keep the masses alive, they feel no stringent necessity to do away with it. And it is able to do so as long as it can grow and expand its realm over wider parts of the world. Hence, so long as half the world's population stands outside capitalism, its task is not finished. The many hundreds of millions thronged in the fertile plains of Eastern and Southern Asia are still living in pre-capitalist conditions. As long as they can afford a market to

be provided with rails and locomotives, with trucks, machines and factories, capitalist enterprise, especially in America, may prosper and expand. And henceforth it is on the working class of America that world-revolution depends.

This means that the necessity of revolutionary struggle will impose itself once capitalism engulfs the bulk of mankind, once a further significant expansion is hampered. The threat of wholesale destruction in this last phase of capitalism makes this fight a necessity for all the producing classes of society, the farmers and intellectuals as well as the workers. What is condensed here in these short sentences is an extremely complicated historical process filing a period of revolution, prepared and accompanied by spiritual fights and fundamental changes in basic ideas. These developments should be carefully studied by all those to whom communism without dictatorship, social organization on the basis of community-minded freedom, represents the future of mankind.

FIVE THESES ON THE FIGHT OF THE WORKING CLASS AGAINST CAPITALISM(1947)

ANTON PANNEKOEK -

<http://kurasje.tripod.com/index.html>

I. Capitalism in one century of growth has enormously increased its power, not only through expansion over the entire earth, but also through development into new forms. With it the working class has increased in power, in numbers, in massal concentration, in organisation. Its fight against capitalist exploitation, for mastery over the means of production, also is continually developing and has to develop into new forms.

The development of capitalism led to the concentration of power over the chief branches of production in the hands of big monopolistic concerns. They are intimately connected with State Power, and dominate it, they control the main part of the press, they direct public opinion. Middle-class democracy has proved the best camouflage of the political dominance of big capital. At the same time there is a growing tendency in most countries to use the organised power of the State in concentration the management of the key industries in its hands, as beginning of the planned economy. In Germany a State-directed economy united political leadership and capitalist management into one combined exploiting class. In Russia State-capitalism the bureaucracy is collectively master over the means of production, and by dictatorial government keeps the exploited masses in submission.

II. Socialism, put up as the goal of the workers' fight, is the organisation of production by Government. It means State-

socialism, the command of the State-officials over production and the command of managers, scientists, shop-officials in the shop. In socialist economy this body, forming a well-organised bureaucracy, is the direct master over the process of production. It has the disposal over the total product, determining what part shall be assigned as wages to the workers, and takes the rest for general needs and for itself. The workers under democracy may choose their masters, but they are not themselves master of their work; they receive only part of the produce, assigned to them by others; they are still exploited and have to obey the new master class. The democratic forms, supposed or intended to accompany it, do not alter the fundamental structure of this economic system.

Socialism was proclaimed the goal of the working class when in its first rise it felt powerless, unable by itself to conquer command over the shops, and looking to the State for protection against the capitalist class by means of social reforms. The large political parties embodying these aims, the Social Democratic and the Labour Parties, turned into instruments for regimenting the entire working class into the service of capitalism, in its wars for world power, as well as in peace time home politics. The Labour Government of the British L.P. cannot even be said to be socialistic; but modernizing capitalism. By abolishing its ignominies and backwardness, by introducing State management under preserving State-guaranteed profits for the capitalists, it strengthens capitalist domination and perpetuates the exploitation of the workers.

III. The goal of the working class is liberation from exploitation. This goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting the bourgeoisie. It can only be realised by the workers themselves being master over production.

Mastery of the workers over production means, first, organisation of the work in every shop and enterprise by its personnel. Instead of through command of a manager and his underlings all the regulations are made through decision of the entire body of the workers. This body, comprising all kinds of workers, specialists and scientists, all taking part in the production, in assembly decides everything related to the common work. The role that those who have to do the work also have to regulate their work and take the responsibility, within the scope of the whole, can be applied to all branches of production. It means, secondly, that the workers create their organs for combining the separate enterprises into an organised entirety of planned production. These organs are the workers' councils

The workers councils are bodies of delegates, sent out by the personnels of the separate shops or sections of big enterprises, carrying the intentions and opinions of the personnel, in order to discuss and take decisions on the common affairs, and to bring back the results to their mandatories. They state and proclaim the necessary regulations, and by uniting the different opinions into one common result, form the connection of the separate units into a well-organised whole. They are no permanent board of leaders, but can be recalled and changed at every moment. Their first germs appeared in the beginning of the Russian and German revolutions (Soviets, Arbitrate). They are to play an increasing role in future working class developments.

IV. Political parties to the present times have two functions. They aspire, first, at political power, at dominance in the State, to take government into their hands and use its power to put their program into practice. For this purpose they have, secondly, to win the masses of the working people to their programs: by means of their teachings clarifying the

insight, or, by their propaganda, simply trying to make of them a herd of followers.

Working class parties put up as their goal the conquest of political power, thereby to govern in the interest of the workers, and especially to abolish capitalism. They assert themselves as the advance guard of the working class, its most clear-sighted part, capable of leading the uninstructed majority of the class, acting in its name as its representative. They pretend to be able to liberate the workers from exploitation. An exploited class, however, cannot be liberated by simply voting and bringing into power a group of new governors. A political party cannot bring freedom, but , when it wins, only new forms of domination. Freedom can be won by the working masses only through their own organised action, by taking their lot into their own hands, in devoted exertion of all their faculties, by directing and organising their fight and their work themselves by means of their councils.

For the parties - then remains the second function, to spread insight and knowledge, to study, discuss and formulate social ideas, and by their propaganda to enlighten the minds of the masses. The workers' councils are the organs for practical action and fight of the working class; to the parties falls the task of the building up of its spiritual power. Their work forms an indispensable part in the self-liberation of the working class.

V. The strongest form of fight against the capitalist class is the strike. Strikes are necessary, ever again, against the capitalists' tendency to increase their profits by lowering wages and increase the hours or the intensity of work.

The trade unions have been formed as instruments of organised resistance, based on strong solidarity and mutual help. With the growth of big business capitalist power has increased enormously, so that only in special cases the

workers are able to withstand the lowering of their working conditions. The Trade Unions grow into instruments of mediation between capitalists and workers; they make treaties with the employers which they try to enforce upon the often unwilling workers. The leaders aspire to become a recognised part of the power apparatus of capital and State dominating the working class; the Unions grow into instruments of monopolist capital, by means of which it dictates its terms to the workers.

The fight of the working class, under these circumstances, ever more takes the form of wild strikes. They are spontaneous, massal outbursts of the long suppressed spirit of resistance. They are direct actions in which the workers take their fight entirely into their own hands, leaving the Unions and their leaders outside.

The organisation of the fight is accomplished by the strike-committees, delegates of the strikers, chosen and sent out by the personnel's. By means of discussions in these committees the workers establish their unity of action. Extension of the strike to ever larger masses, the only tactics appropriate to wrench concessions from capital, is fundamentally opposed to the Trade Union tactics to restrict the fight and to put an end to it as soon as possible. Such wild strikes in the present times are the only real class fights of the workers against capital. Here they assert their freedom, themselves choosing and directing their actions, not directed by other powers for other interests.

That determines the importance of such class contests for the future. When the wild strikes takes on ever larger extension they find the entire physical power of the State against them. So they assume a revolutionary character. When capitalism turns into an organised world government - though as yet only in the form of two contending powers, threatening mankind with entire devastation - the fight for freedom of the working class takes the form of a fight

against State Power. Its strikes assume the character of big political strikes, sometimes universal strikes. Then the strike-committees need acquire general social and political functions, and assume the character of workers' councils. Revolutionary fight for dominance over society is at the same time a fight for mastery over and in the shops. Then the workers' councils, as the organs of fight, grow into organs of production at the same time.

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THE THEORY OF THE COLLAPSE OF CAPITALISM (S.D.)

ANTON PANNEKOEK

The original publication details for this article by Pannekoek are given in the translators introduction below.

This translation and the introduction first appeared in Capital & Class Number 1. (Spring 1977). The translator is a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and writes regularly for their paper Socialist Standard. Some articles by him can be found on the World Socialist Movement website. With John Crump he wrote State Capitalism : The Wages System Under New Management, London, 1986

Pannekoek's article is a critique of Henryk Grossman's book Das Akkumulations - und Zusammenbruchsgesetz des Kapitalischen Systems. At the time this translation was first published this book had not been translated into English. An abridged version now has been - The Accumulation of Capital and the Breakdown of the Capitalist System, Pluto Press, London, 1992

MARX AND ROSA LUXEMBURG

In the second part of Capital Marx dealt with the general conditions of capitalist production as a whole. In the abstract case of pure capitalist production all production is carried on for the market, all products are bought and sold as commodities. The value of the means of production is passed on to the product and a new value is added by labour. This new value is broken down into two parts: the value of the labour power, which is paid as wages and used by the workers to buy means of subsistence, and the remainder, the surplus value, which goes to the capitalist. Where the surplus value is used for means of subsistence and luxury goods then there is simple reproduction; where a part of it is accumulated as new capital there is reproduction on an extended scale.

For the capitalists to find on the market the means of production they need and for the workers to likewise find the means of subsistence they need, a given proportion must exist between the various branches of production. A mathematician would easily express this in algebraic formulae. Marx gives instead numerical examples to express these proportions, making up cases with selected figures, to serve as illustrations. He distinguishes two spheres, two main departments of production: the means of production department (I) and the means of consumption department (II). In each of these departments a given value of the means of production used is transferred to the product without undergoing any change (constant capital, c); a given part of the newly added value is used to pay for labour-power (variable capital, v), the other part being the surplus value (s). If it is assumed for the numerical example that the constant capital is four times greater than the variable capital (a figure which rises with technical

progress) and that the surplus value is equal to the variable capital (this ratio is determined by the rate of exploitation), then, in the case of simple reproduction, the following figures satisfy these conditions:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{I } 4000c + 1000v + 1000s & = & 6000 \text{ (product)} \\ \text{II } 2000c + 500v + 500s & = & 3000 \text{ (product)} \end{array}$$

Each of these lines satisfies the conditions. Since $v+s$, which are used as means of consumption, are together equal to a half of c , the value of the means of production, Department II must produce a value equal to a half the value produced in Department I. Then the exact proportion is found: the means of production produced (6000) are just the amount needed for the next turnover period: $4000c$ for Department I and $2000c$ for Department II; and the means of subsistence produced in Department II (3000) are exactly what must be supplied for the workers ($1000+500$) and the capitalists ($1000+500$).

To illustrate in a similar way the case of capital accumulation the part of surplus value going to accumulation must be indicated; this part is added to the capital in the following year (for reasons of simplicity a production period of a year is assumed each time) so that a larger capital is then employed in each department. We will assume in our example that half the surplus value is accumulated (and so used for new c and new v) and that the other half is consumed (consumption, k). The calculation of the proportion between Department I and Department II becomes a little more complicated but can of course still be found. It turns out that, on the assumptions given, this proportion is 11 : 4, as is shown in the following figures:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{I } 4400c + 1100v + 1100s \quad (= 550k + 550acc (= 440c + \\
 110v)) \quad = \quad 6600 \\
 \text{II } \quad 1600c + 400v + 400s \quad (= 200k + 200acc (= 160c + \\
 40v)) \quad = \quad 2400
 \end{array}$$

The capitalists need 4400+1600 for the renewal and 440+160 for the extension of their means of production, and in fact they find 6600 means of production on the market. The capitalists need 550+200 for their consumption, the original workers need 1100+400 and the newly engaged workers 110+40 as means of subsistence; which together is equal to the 2400 in fact produced as means of subsistence. In the following year all the figures are increased by 10 per cent:

$$\begin{array}{l}
 \text{I } 4840c + 1210v + 1210s \quad (= 605k + 484c + 121v) \\
 = \quad 7260 \\
 \text{II } \quad 1760c + 440v + 440s \quad (= 220k + 176c + 44v) \\
 = \quad 2640
 \end{array}$$

Production can thus continue increasing each year in the same proportion. This is of course a grossly oversimplified example. It could be made more complicated, and thus nearer to reality, if it is assumed that there are different compositions of capital (the ratio c:v) in the two departments, or different rates of accumulation or if the ratio c:v is made to grow gradually, so changing the proportion between Department I and Department II each year. In all these cases the calculation becomes more complicated, but it can always be done, since an unknown figure - the proportion of Department I to Department II - can always be calculated to satisfy the condition that demand and supply coincide.

Examples of this can be found in the literature. In the real world, of course, complete equilibrium over a period is never found; commodities are sold for money and money is only used later to buy something else so that hoards are formed which act as a buffer and a reserve. And commodities remain unsold; and there is trade with non-capitalist areas. But the essential, important point is seen clearly from these reproduction schemes: for production to expand and steadily progress given proportions must exist between the productive sectors; in practice these proportions are approximately realised; they depend on the following factors: the organic composition of capital, the rate of exploitation, and the proportion of surplus value which is accumulated.

Marx did not have the chance to provide a carefully prepared presentation of these examples (see Engels' introduction to the second volume of *Capital*). This is no doubt why Rosa Luxemburg believed that she had discovered an omission here, a problem which Marx had overlooked and so left unsolved and whose solution she had worked out in her book *The Accumulation of Capital* (1912). The problem which seemed to have been left open was who was to buy from each other more and more means of production and means of subsistence this would be a pointless circular movement from which nothing would result. The solution would lie in the appearance of buyers situated outside capitalism, foreign overseas markets whose conquest would therefore be a vital question for capitalism. This would be the economic basis of imperialism.

But from what we have said before it is clear that Rosa Luxemburg has herself made a mistake here. In the schema used as the example it can be clearly seen that all the products are sold within capitalism itself. Not only the part

of the value transmitted ($4400+1600$) but also the $440+160$ which contain the surplus value accumulated are brought, in the physical form of means of production, by the capitalists who wish to start the following year with in total 6600 means of production. In the same way, the $110+40$ from surplus value is in fact bought by the additional workers. Nor is it pointless: to produce, to sell products to each other, to consume, to produce more is the whole essence of capitalism and so of men's life in this mode of production. There is no unsolved problem here which Marx overlooked.

ROSA LUXEMBURG AND OTTO BAUER

Soon after Rosa Luxemburg's book was published it was criticised from different sides. Thus Otto Bauer wrote a criticism in an article in the *Neue Zeit* (7-14 March 1913). As in all the other criticisms Bauer showed that production and sales do correspond. But his criticism had the special feature that it linked accumulation to population growth. Otto Bauer first assumes a socialist society in which the population grows each year by five per cent; the production of means of subsistence must therefore grow in the same proportion and the means of production must increase, because of technical progress, at a faster rate. The same has to happen under capitalism but here this expansion does not take place through planned regulation, but through the accumulation of capital. Otto Bauer provides as a numerical example a schema which satisfies these conditions in the simplest way: an annual growth of variable capital of five per cent and of constant capital of ten per cent and a rate of exploitation of 100 per cent ($s = v$). These conditions themselves determine the share of surplus value which is consumed and the share which must be accumulated in order to produce the posited growth of capital. No difficult calculations are needed to draw up a schema which produces the exact growth from year to year:

Year 1	$200,000c + 100,000v + 100,00s$	(= 20,000c + 5,000v + 75,000k)
Year 2	$220,000c + 105,000c + 105,000s$	(= 22,000c + 5,250v + 77,750k)
Year 3	$242,000c + 110,250v + 110,250s$	(= 24,200c + 5,512v + 80,538k)

Bauer continues his schema for four years and also calculates the separate figures for Departments I and II.

This was sufficient for the purpose of showing that no problem in Rosa Luxemburg's sense existed. But the character of this criticism was itself bound to call forth criticism. Its basic idea is well brought out by Bauer's introduction of population growth in a socialist society. Capitalism thereby appears as an unplanned socialism, as a wild and kicking foal that has not yet been broken in and which only needs to be tamed by the hands of the socialist trainer. Accumulation here serves only to enlarge production as required by population growth, just as capitalism has the general function of providing mankind with means of subsistence; but, because of the lack of planning, both these functions are carried out badly and erratically, sometimes providing too much, sometimes too little, and causing catastrophes. A gentle growth of population of 5 per cent a year might well suit a socialist society in which all mankind was neatly lined up. But for capitalism, as it is and was, this is an inappropriate example. Capitalism's whole history has been a rush forward, a violent expansion far beyond the limits of population growth. The driving force has been the urge to accumulation; the greatest possible amount of surplus value has been invested as new capital and, to set it in motion, more and more sections of the population have been drawn into the process. There was even, and there still is, a large surplus of workers who remain outside or half outside as a reserve, kept ready to serve the need to set in motion the accumulated capital, being drawn in or rejected as required by this need. This essential and basic feature of capitalism was completely ignored in Bauer's analysis.

It was obvious that Rosa Luxemburg would take this as the target for her anti-critique. In answer to the proof that there was no problem of omission in Marx's schemas, she could bring forward nothing much else than the scoffing

declaration that everything can be made to work beautifully in artificial examples. But making population growth the regulator of accumulation was so contrary to the spirit of Marxian teaching that the sub-title of her anti-critique "What the Epigones have done to Marxian Theory" was this time quite suitable. It was not a question here (as it was in Rosa Luxemburg's own case) of a simple scientific mistake; Bauer's mistake reflected the practical political point of view of the Social Democrats of that time. They felt themselves to be the future statesmen who would take over from the current ruling politicians and carry through the organisation of production; they therefore did not see capitalism as the complete opposite to the proletarian dictatorship to be established by revolution, but rather as a mode of producing means of subsistence that could be improved and had not yet been brought under control.

GROSSMANN'S REPRODUCTION SCHEMA

Henryk Grossman linked his reproduction schema to that set out by Otto Bauer. He noticed that it is not possible to continue it indefinitely without it in time coming up against contradictions. This is very easy to see. Otto Bauer assumes a constant capital of 200,000 which grows each year by 10 per cent and a variable capital of 100,000 which grows each year by 5 per cent, with the rate of surplus value being assumed to be 100 per cent, i.e., the surplus value each year is equal to the variable capital. In accordance with the laws of mathematics, a sum which increases each year by 10 per cent doubles itself after 7 years, quadruples itself after 14 years, increases ten times after 23 years and a hundred times after 46 years. Thus the variable capital and the surplus value which in the first year were each equal to half the constant capital are after 46 years only equal to a twentieth of a constant capital which has grown enormously over the same period. The surplus value is therefore far from enough to ensure the 10 per cent annual growth of constant capital.

This does not result just from the rates of growth of 10 and 5 percent chosen by Bauer. For in fact under capitalism surplus value increases less rapidly than capital. It is a well-known fact that, because of this, the rate of profit must continually fall with the development of capitalism. Marx devoted many chapters to this fall in the rate of profit. If the rate of profit falls to 5 per cent the capital can no longer be increased by 10 per cent, for the increase in capital out of accumulated surplus value is necessarily smaller than the surplus value itself. The rate of accumulation evidently thus has the rate of profit as its higher limit (see Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, p. 236, where it is stated that "the rate of accumulation falls with the rate of profit"). The use of a

fixed figure - 10 percent which was acceptable for a period of a few years as in Bauer, becomes unacceptable when the reproduction schema are continued over a long period.

Yet Grossman, unconcerned, continues Bauer's schema year by year and believes that he is thereby reproducing real capitalism. He then finds the following figures for constant and variable capital, surplus value, the necessary accumulation and the amount remaining for the consumption of the capitalists (the figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand):

c	v	s	accumulation k					
Commencement			200	100	100	20+	5=	25
	75							
After 20 years	1222	253	253	122+13=135	118			
After 30 years	3170	412	412	317+21=338	74			
After 34 years	4641	500	500	464+25=489	11			
After 35 years	5106	525	525	510+26=536	-11			

After 21 years the share of surplus value remaining for consumption begins to diminish; in the 34th it almost disappears and in the 35th it is even negative; the Shylock of constant capital pitilessly demands its pound of flesh, it wants to grow at 10 per cent, while the poor capitalists go hungry and keep nothing for their own consumption.

From the 35th year therefore accumulation - on the basis of the existing technical progress - cannot keep up with the pace of population growth. Accumulation would be too small and there would necessarily arise a reserve army which would have to grow each year (Grossmann, p. 126). In such circumstances the capitalists do not think of continuing production. Or if they do, they don't do so; for, in view of the deficit of 11 in capital accumulation they

would have to reduce production. (In fact they would have had to have done so before in view of their consumption expenses). A part of the workers therefore become unemployed; then a part of the capital becomes unused and the surplus value produced decreases; the mass of surplus value falls and a still greater deficit appears in accumulation, with a still greater increase in unemployment. This, then, is the economic collapse of capitalism. Capitalism becomes economically impossible. Thus does Grossmann solve the problem which he had set on page 79:

How, in what way, can accumulation lead to the collapse of capitalism?

Here we find presented what in the older Marxist literature was always treated as a stupid misunderstanding of opponents, for which the name 'the big crash' was current. Without there being a revolutionary class to overcome and dispossess the bourgeoisie, the end of capitalism comes for purely economic reasons; the machine no longer works, it clogs up, production has become impossible. In Grossmann's words:

...with the progress of capital accumulation the whole mechanism, despite periodic interruptions, necessarily approaches nearer and nearer to its end....The tendency to collapse then wins the upper hand and makes itself felt absolutely as 'the final crisis' (p. 140).

and, in a later passage:

...from our analysis it is clear that, although on our assumptions objectively necessary and although the moment when it will occur can be precisely calculated, the collapse of capitalism need not therefore result

automatically by itself at the awaited moment and therefore need not be waited for purely passively (p. 601).

In this passage, where it might be thought for a moment that it is going to be a question of the active role of the proletariat as agent of the revolution, Grossmann has in mind only changes in wages and working time which upset the numerical assumptions and the results of the calculation. It is in this sense that he continues:

It thus appears that the idea of a necessary collapse for objective reasons is not at all in contradiction to the class struggle; that, on the contrary, the collapse, despite its objectively given necessity, can be widely influenced by the living forces of classes in struggle and leaves a certain margin of play for the active intervention of classes. It is for this precise reason that in Marx the whole analysis of the process of reproduction leads to the class struggle (p.602).

The "it is for this precise reason" is rich, as if the class struggle meant for Marx only the struggle over wage claims and hours of work.

Let us consider a little closer the basis of this collapse. On what is the necessary growth of constant capital by 10 per cent each time based? In the quotation given above it was stated that technical progress (the rate of population growth being given) prescribes a given annual growth of constant capital. So it could then be said, without the detour of the production schema: when the rate of profit becomes less than the rate of growth demanded by technical progress then capitalism must break down. Leaving aside the fact that this has nothing to do with Marx, what is this growth of capital demanded by technology? Technical improvements are introduced, in the context of mutual competition, in order to obtain an extra profit (relative surplus value); the introduction of technical improvements is however limited

by the financial resources available. And everybody knows that dozens of inventions and technical improvements are not introduced and are often deliberately suppressed by the entrepreneurs so as not to devalue the existing technical apparatus. The necessity of technical progress does not act as an external force; it works through men, and for them necessity is not valid beyond possibility.

But let us admit that this is correct and that, as a result of technical progress, constant capital has to have a varying proportion, as in the schema: in the 30th year 3170:412, in the 34th year 4641:500, in the 35th year 5106:525, and in the 36th, 5616:551. In the 35th year the surplus value is only 525,000 and is not enough for 510,000 to be added to constant capital and 26,000 to variable capital. Grossmann lets the constant capital grow by 510,000 and retains only 15,000 as the increase in variable capital - 11,000 too little! He says of this:

11,509 workers (out of 551,000) remain unemployed; the reserve army begins to form. And because the whole of the working population does not enter the process of production, the whole amount of extra constant capital (510,563) is not needed for the purchase of means of production. If a population of 551,584 uses a constant capital of 5,616,200, then a population of 540,075 would use a constant capital of only 5,499,015. There, therefore, remains an excess capital of 117,185 without an investment outlet. Thus the schema shows a perfect example of the situation Marx had in mind when he gave the corresponding part of the third volume of *Capital* the title "Excess Capital and Excess Population" (p. 116).

Grossmann has clearly not noticed that these 11,000 become unemployed only because, in a complete arbitrary fashion and without giving any reason, he makes the

variable capital bear the whole deficit, while letting the constant capital calmly grow by 10 percent as if nothing was wrong; but when he realises that there are no workers for all these machines, or more correctly that there is no money to pay their wages, he prefers not to install them and so has to let the capital lie unused. It is only through this mistake that he arrives at a "perfect example" of a phenomenon which appears during ordinary capitalist crises. In fact the entrepreneurs can only expand their production to the extent that their capital is enough for both machinery and wages combined. If the total surplus value is too small, this will be divided, in accordance with the assumed technical constraint, proportionately between the elements of capital; the calculation shows that of the 525,319 surplus value, 500,409 must be added to constant capital and 24,910 to variable capital in order to arrive at the correct proportion corresponding to technical progress. Not 11,000 but 1,326 workers are set free and there is no question of excess capital. If the scheme is continued in this correct way, instead of a catastrophic eruption there is an extremely slow increase in the number of workers laid off.

But how can someone attribute this alleged collapse to Marx and produce, chapter after chapter, dozens of quotations from Marx? All these quotations in fact relate to economic crises, to the alternating cycle of prosperity and depression. While the schema has to serve to show a predetermined final economic collapse after 35 years, we read two pages further on of "the Marxian theory of the economic cycle expounded here" (p. 123).

Grossmann is only able to give the impression that he is presenting a theory of Marx's by continually scattering in this way throughout his own statements comments which

Marx made on periodic crises. But nothing at all is to be found in Marx about a final collapse in line with Grossmann's schema. It is true that Grossmann quotes a couple of passages which do not deal with crises. Thus he writes on page 263:

It appears that "capitalist production meets in the development of its productive forces a barrier..." (Marx, Capital, Vol. III, p. 237).

But if we open Volume III of Capital at page 237 we read there:

But the main thing about their (i.e., Ricardo and other economists) horror of the falling rate of profit is the feeling that capitalist production meets in the development of its productive forces a barrier...

which is something quite different. And on page 79 Grossmann gives this quotation from Marx as proof that even the word "collapse" comes from Marx:

This process would soon bring about the collapse of capitalist production if it were not for counteracting tendencies, which have continuous decentralising effect alongside the centripetal one (Capital, Vol. II, p. 241).

As Grossmann correctly emphasises, these counteracting tendencies refer to "soon" so that with them the process only takes place more slowly. But was Marx talking here of a purely economic collapse? Let us read the passage which precedes in Marx:

It is this same severance of the conditions of production, on the one hand, from the producers, on the other, that forms the conception of capital. It begins with primitive accumulation, appears as a permanent process in the accumulation and concentration of capital, and expresses

itself finally as centralisation of existing capitals in a few hands and a deprivation of many of their capital (to which expropriation is now changed).

It is clear that the collapse which thus results is, as so often in Marx, the ending of capitalism by socialism. So there is nothing in the quotations from Marx: a final economic catastrophe can be as little read from them as it can be concluded from the reproduction schema. But can the schema serve to analyse and explain periodic crises? Grossmann seeks to join the two together: "The Marxian theory of collapse is at the same time a theory of crises" - so reads the beginning of Chapter 8 (p. 137). But as proof he only provides a diagram (p. 141) in which a steeply rising 'accumulation line' is divided after 35 years; but here a crisis occurs every 5 or 7 years when in the schema everything is going smoothly. If a more rapid collapse is desired it would be obtained if the annual rate of growth of constant capital was not 10 per cent but much greater. In the ascendant period of the economic cycle there is in fact a much more rapid growth of capital; the volume of production increases by leaps and bounds; but this growth has nothing at all to do with technical progress. Indeed, in these periods variable capital too increases rapidly by leaps. But why there must be a collapse after 5 or 7 years remains obscure. In other words, the real causes which produce the rapid rise and then the collapse of economic activity are of a quite different nature from what is set out in Grossmann's reproduction schema.

Marx speaks of over-accumulation precipitating a crisis, of there being too much accumulated surplus value which is not invested and which depresses profits. But Grossmann's collapse comes about through there being too little accumulated surplus value.

The simultaneous surplus of unused capital and unemployed workers is a typical feature of crises; Grossmann's schema leads to a lack of sufficient capital, which he can only transform into a surplus by committing the mistake mentioned above. So Grossmann's schema cannot demonstrate a final collapse, nor does it correspond to the real phenomena of collapse, crises.

It can also be added that his schema, in conformity with its origin, suffers from the same defect as Bauer's: the real, impetuous pushing forward of capitalism over the world which brings more and more peoples under its domination is here represented by a calm and regular population growth of 5 per cent a year, as if capitalism was confined in a closed national economy.

GROSSMANN VERSUS MARX

Grossmann prides himself for having for the first time correctly reconstructed Marx's theory in the face of the distortions of the Social Democrats.

One of these new additions to knowledge,
(he proudly says at the beginning of the introduction),

is the theory of collapse, set out below, which represents the portal column of Marx's system of economic thought. We have seen how little what Grossmann considers to be a theory of collapse has to do with Marx. Nevertheless, on his own personal interpretation, he could well believe himself to be in agreement with Marx. But there are other points where this does not hold. Because he sees his schema as a correct representation of capitalist development, Grossman deduces from it in various places explanations which, as he himself had partly noticed, contradict the views developed in *Capital*.

This is so, first of all, for the industrial reserve army. According to Grossmann's schema, from the 35th year a certain number of workers become unemployed and a reserve army forms.

The formation of the reserve army, viz., the laying off of workers, which we are discussing, must be rigorously distinguished from the laying off of workers due to machines. The elimination of workers by machines which Marx describes in the empirical part of the first volume of *Capital* (Chapter 13) is a technical fact . . . (pp. 128-9) . . . but the laying off of workers, the formation of the reserve army, which Marx speaks of in the chapter on the accumulation of capital (Chapter 23) is not caused - as has

been completely ignored until now in the literature - by the technical fact of the introduction of machines, but by the lack of investment opportunities...(p. 130).

This amounts basically to saying: if the sparrows fly away, it is not because of the gunshot but because of their timidity. The workers are eliminated by machines; the expansion of production allows them in part to find work again; in this coming and going some of them are passed by or remain outside. Must the fact that they have not yet been re-engaged be regarded as the cause of their unemployment? If Chapter 23 of Capital Vol. I is read, it is always elimination by machines that is treated as the cause of the reserve army, which is partially reabsorbed or released anew and reproduces itself as overpopulation, according to the economic situation. Grossmann worries himself for several pages over the proof that it is the economic relation $c:v$ that operates here, and not the technical relation means of production: labour power; in fact the two are identical. But this formation of the reserve army, which according to Marx occurs everywhere and always from the commencement of capitalism, and in which workers are replaced by machines, is not identical to the alleged formation of the reserve army according to Grossmann, which starts as a consequence of accumulation after 34 years of technical progress.

It is the same with the export of capital. In long explanations all the Marxist writers - Varga, Bukharin, Nachimson, Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Rosa Luxemburg - are one after the other demolished because they all state the view that the export of capital takes place for a higher profit. As Varga says:

It is not because it is absolutely impossible to accumulate capital at home that capital is exported....but because there

exists the prospect of a higher profit abroad (quoted by Grossmann, p. 498).

Grossmann attacks this view as incorrect and un-Marxist:

It is not the higher profit abroad, but the lack of investment opportunities at home that is the ultimate reason for the export of capital (p. 561).

He then introduces numerous quotations from Marx about overaccumulation and refers to his schema, in which after 35 years the growing mass of capital can no longer be employed at home and so must be exported.

Let us recall that according to the schema, however, there was too little capital in existence for the existing population and that his capital surplus was only an error of calculation. Further, in all the quotations from Marx, Grossmann has forgotten to cite the one where Marx himself speaks of the export of capital:

If capital is sent abroad, this is not done because it absolutely could not be applied at home, but because it can be employed at a higher rate of profit in a foreign country (Vol. III, p. 251).

The fall in the rate of profit is one of the most important parts of Marx's theory of capital; he was the first to state and prove that this tendency to fall, which expresses itself periodically in crises, was the embodiment of the transitory nature of capitalism. With Grossmann it is another phenomenon which comes to the fore: after the 35th year workers are laid off en masse and capital is at the same time created in excess. As a result the deficit of surplus value in the following year is more serious, so that yet more labour and capital are left idle; with the fall in the number of workers, the mass of surplus value produced decreases and capitalism sinks still deeper into catastrophe. Has not

Grossmann seen the contradiction here with Marx? Indeed he has. Thus, after some introductory remarks, he sets to work in the chapter entitled "The Causes of the Misunderstanding of the Marxian Theory of Accumulation and Collapse":

The time is not ripe for a reconstruction of the Marxian theory of collapse (p. 195). The fact that the third chapter of Volume III is, as Engels says in the preface, presented, "as a series of uncompleted mathematical calculations" must be given as an external reason for the misunderstanding. Engels was helped in his editing by his friend, the mathematician Samuel Moore:

But Moore was not an economist....The mode of origin of this part of the work therefore makes it probable even in advance that many opportunities for misunderstanding and error exist here and that these errors could then easily have been carried over also into the chapter dealing with the tendency of the rate of profit to fall...

(NB: these chapters had already been written by Marx!)

The probability of error becomes almost certain when we consider that it is a question here of a single word which, unfortunately, completely distorts the whole sense of the analysis: the inevitable end of capitalism is attributed to the relative fall in the rate instead of in the mass of profit. Engels or Moore had certainly made a slip of the pen (p. 195).

So this is what the reconstruction of Marx's theory looks like! Another quotation is given in a note which says:

In the words in brackets. Engels or Marx himself made a slip of the pen; it should read correctly and at the same time a mass of profit which falls in relative value.

(Translators note: Grossmann refers to the passage on p. 214 of Vol. III which reads: "Hence, the same laws produce for the social capital a growing absolute mass of profit, and a falling rate of profit").

So now it is Marx himself who makes mistakes. And here it concerns a passage where the sense, as given in the text of Capital, is unambiguously clear. Marx's whole analysis, which ends with the passage Grossmann finds necessary to change, is a continuation of a passage where Marx explains:

...the mass of the surplus value produced by it, and therefore the absolute mass of the profit produced by it, can, consequently, increase, and increase progressively, in spite of the progressive drop in the rate of profit. And this not only can be so. Aside from temporary fluctuations it must be so, on the basis of capitalist production (Vol. III, p. 213).

Marx then sets out the reasons why the mass of profit must increase and says once again:

As the process of production and accumulation advances therefore, the mass of available and appropriated surplus labour, and hence the absolute mass of profit appropriated by the social capital must grow (Vol. III, p. 214).

Thus the exact opposite to the onset of the collapse invented by Grossmann. In the following pages this is repeated yet more often; the whole of Chapter 13 consists of a presentation of

the law that a fall in the rate of profit due to the development of productiveness is accompanied by an increase in the mass of profit... (Vol. III, p. 221).

So there can remain not the slightest doubt that Marx wanted to say precisely what was printed there and that he

had not made a slip of the pen. And when Grossmann writes:

The collapse cannot therefore result from the fall in the rate of profit. How could a percentage proportion, such as the rate of profit, a pure number, bring about the collapse of a real economic system! (p. 196).

he thereby shows yet again that he has understood nothing of Marx and that his collapse is in complete contradiction with Marx.

Here is the point at which he could have convinced himself of the instability of his construction. But if he had allowed himself to be taught by Marx here, then his whole theory would have fallen and his book would not have been written.

The fairest way of describing Grossmann's book is as a patchwork of quotations from Marx, incorrectly applied and stuck together by means of a fabricated theory. Each time a proof is required, a quotation from Marx, which does not deal with the point in question, is introduced, and it is the correctness of Marx's words which is supposed to give the reader the impression that the theory is correct.

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The question which in the end merits attention is how can an economist who believes he is correctly reconstructing Marx's views, and who further states with naive self-assurance that he is the first to give a correct interpretation of them, be so completely mistaken and find himself in complete contradiction with Marx. The reason lies in the lack of a historical materialist understanding. For you will not understand Marxian economics at all unless you have made the historical materialist way of thinking your own.

For Marx the development of human society, and so also the economic development of capitalism, is determined by a firm necessity like a law of nature. But this development is at the same time the work of men who play their role in it and where each person determines his own acts with consciousness and purpose - though not with a consciousness of the social whole. To the bourgeois way of seeing things, there is a contradiction here; either what happens depends on human free choice or, if it is governed by fixed laws, then these act as an external, mechanical constraint on men. For Marx all social necessity is accomplished by men; this means that a man's thinking, wanting and acting although appearing as a free choice in his consciousness - are completely determined by the action of the environment; it is only through the totality of these human acts, determined mainly by social forces, that conformity to laws is achieved in social development.

The social forces which determine development are thus not only purely economic acts, but also the general-political acts determined by them, which provide production with the necessary norms of right. Conformity to law does not reside solely in the action of competition which fixes prices

and profits and concentrates capital, but also in the establishment of free competition, of free production by bourgeois revolutions; not only in the movement of wages, in the expansion and contraction of production in prosperity and crisis, in the closing of factories and the laying off of workers, but also in the revolt, the struggle of the workers, the conquest by them of power over society and production in order to establish new norms of right. Economics, as the totality of men working and striving to satisfy their subsistence needs, and politics (in its widest sense), as the action and struggle of these men as classes to satisfy these needs, form a single unified domain of law-governed development. The accumulation of capital, crises, pauperisation, the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the working class form together, acting like a natural law, an indivisible unity, the collapse of capitalism.

The bourgeois way of thinking, which does not understand that this is a unity, has always played a great role not only outside but also within the workers' movement. In the old radical Social Democracy the fatalist view was current, understandable in view of the historical circumstances, that the revolution would one day come as a natural necessity and that in the meantime the workers should not try anything dangerous. Reformism questioned the need for a 'violent' revolution and believed that the intelligence of statesmen and leaders would tame capitalism by reform and organisation. Others believed that the proletariat had to be educated to revolutionary virtue by moral preaching. The consciousness was always lacking that this virtue only found its natural necessity through economic forces, and that the revolution only found its natural necessity through economic forces, and that the revolution only found its natural necessity through the mental forces of men. Other views have now appeared. On the one hand capitalism has

proved itself strong and unassailable against all reformism, all the skills of leaders, all attempts at revolution; all these have appeared ridiculous in the face of its immense strength. But, on the other hand, terrible crises at the same time reveal its internal weakness. Whoever now takes up Marx and studies him is deeply impressed by the irresistible, law-governed nature of the collapse and welcomes these ideas with enthusiasm.

But if his basic way of thinking is bourgeois he cannot conceive this necessity other than as an external force acting on men. Capitalism is for him a mechanical system in which men participate as economic persons, capitalists, buyers, sellers, wage-workers, etc., but otherwise must submit in a purely passive way to what this mechanism imposes on them in view of its internal structure.

This mechanistic conception can also be recognised in Grossmann's statements on wages when he violently attacks Rosa Luxemburg -

Everywhere one comes across an incredible, barbarous mutilation of the Marxian theory of wages (p. 585).

- precisely where she quite correctly treats the value of labour-power as a quantity that can be expanded on the basis of the standard of living attained. For Grossmann the value of labour-power is "not an elastic, but a fixed quantity" (p. 586). Acts of human choice such as the workers' struggles can have no influence on it; the only way in which wages can rise is through a higher intensity of labour obliging the replacement of the greater quantity of labour-power expended.

Here it is the same mechanistic view: the mechanism determines economic quantities while struggling and acting

men stand outside this relation. Grossmann appeals again to Marx for this, where the latter writes of the value of labour-power:

Nevertheless, in a given country, at a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known (*Capital*. Vol. I, p. 171); but Grossmann has unfortunately once again overlooked that in Marx this passage is immediately preceded by:

In contradiction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element.

Starting from his bourgeois way of thinking Grossmann states in his criticism of various Social Democratic views:

We see: the collapse of capitalism is either denied or based, in a voluntarist way, on extra-economic, political factors. The economic proof of the necessity of the collapse of capitalism has never been produced (pp. 58-59).

And he cites with approval an opinion of Tugan-Baranovsky that, in order to prove the necessity for the transformation of capitalism into its opposite, a rigid proof of the impossibility for capitalism to continue existing must first be produced. Tugan himself denies this impossibility and wishes to give socialism an ethical basis. But that Grossmann chooses to call as witness this Russian liberal economist who, as is known, was always completely alien to Marxism, shows to what degree their basic way of thinking is related, despite their opposed practical points of view (see also Grossmann, p. 108). The Marxian view that the collapse of capitalism will be the act of the working class and thus a political act (in the widest sense of this word: general social, which is inseparable from the take-over of economic power) Grossmann can only understand

as 'voluntarist', i.e., that it is something that is, governed by men's choice, by free will.

The collapse of capitalism in Marx does depend on the act of will of the working class; but this will is not a free choice, but is itself determined by economic development. The contradictions of the capitalist economy, which repeatedly emerge in unemployment, crises, wars, class struggles, repeatedly determine the will to revolution of the proletariat. Socialism comes not because capitalism collapses economically and men, workers and others, are forced by necessity to create a new organisation, but because capitalism, as it lives and grows, becomes more and more unbearable for the workers and repeatedly pushes them to struggle until the will and strength to overthrow the domination of capitalism and establish a new organisation grows in them, and then capitalism collapses. The working class is not pushed to act because the unbearableness of capitalism is demonstrated to them from the outside, but because they feel it generated within them. Marx's theory, as economics, shows how the above phenomena irresistibly reappear with greater and greater force and, as historical materialism, how they necessarily give rise to the revolutionary will and the revolutionary act.

THE NEW WORKERS MOVEMENT

It is understandable that Grossmann's book should have been given some attention by the spokesmen of the new workers' movement since he attacks the same enemy as them. The new workers' movement has to attack Social Democracy and the Party Communism of the Third International, two branches of the same tree, because they accommodate the working class to capitalism. Grossmann attacks the theoreticians of these currents for having distorted and falsified Marx's teachings, and insists on the necessary collapse of capitalism. His conclusions sound similar to ours, but their sense and essence are completely different. We also are of the opinion that the Social Democratic theorists, good theoretical experts that they often were nevertheless distorted Marx's doctrine; but their mistake was historical, the theoretical precipitate of an early period of the struggle of the proletariat. Grossmann's mistake is that of a bourgeois economist who has never had practical experience of the struggle of the proletariat and who is consequently not in a position to understand the essence of Marxism.

An example of how his conclusions apparently agree with the views of the new workers' movement, but are in essence completely opposed, is to be found in his theory of wages. According to his schema, after 35 years, with the collapse, a rapidly climbing unemployment appears. As a result wages sink well below the value of labour-power, without an effective resistance being possible.

"Here the objective limit of trade union action is given" (p. 599). However familiar this sounds, the basis is quite different. The powerlessness of trade union action, which has been evident for a long time, should not be attributed to

an economic collapse, but to a shift in the balance of social power. everyone knows how the increased power of the employers' combines of concentrated big capital has made the working class relatively powerless. To which is now added the effects of a severe crisis which depresses wages, as happened in every previous crisis.

The purely economic collapse of capitalism which Grossmann constructs does not involve a complete passivity by the proletariat. For, when the collapse takes place the working class must precisely prepare itself to re-establish production on a new basis.

Thus evolution pushes towards the development and exacerbation of the internal oppositions between capital and labour until the solution which can come only from the struggle between the two classes is brought about (p. 599). This final struggle is linked also with the wages struggle because (as was already mentioned above) the catastrophe can be postponed by depressing wages or hastened by raising them. But it is the economic catastrophe that is for Grossmann the really essential factor, the new order being forcibly imposed on men. Certainly, the workers, as the mass of the population, are to supply the preponderant force of the revolution, just as in the bourgeois revolutions of the past where they formed the mass force for action; but, as in hunger revolts in general, this is independent of their revolutionary maturity, of their capacity to take power over society and to hold it. This means that a revolutionary group, a party with socialist aims, would have to appear as a new governing power in place of the old in order to introduce some kind of planned economy.

The theory of the economic catastrophe is thus ready made for intellectuals who recognise the untenable character of

capitalism and who want a planned economy to be built by capable economists and leaders. And it must be expected that many other such theories will come from these quarters or meet with approval there. The theory of the necessary collapse will also be able to exercise a certain attraction over revolutionary workers. They see the overwhelming majority of the proletarian masses still attached to the old organisations, the old leaders, the old methods, blind to the task which the new development imposes on them, passive and immobile, with no signs of revolutionary energy. The few revolutionaries who understand the new development might well wish on the stupefied masses a good economic catastrophe so that they finally come out of the slumber and enter into action. The theory according to which capitalism has today entered its final crisis also provides a decisive, and simple, refutation of reformism and all Party programmes which give priority to parliamentary work and trade union action - a demonstration of the necessity of revolutionary tactics which is so convenient that it must be greeted sympathetically by revolutionary groups. But the struggle is never so simple or convenient, not even the theoretical struggle for reasons and proofs.

Reformism was a false tactic, which weakened the working class, not only in crises but also in prosperity. Parliamentarism and the trade union tactic did not have to await the present crisis to prove a failure; this has been shown for the last hundred years. It is not due to the economic collapse of capitalism but to the enormous development of its strength, to its expansion over all the Earth, to its exacerbation of political oppositions, to the violent reinforcement of its inner strength, that the proletariat must take mass action, summoning up the strength of the whole class. It is this shift in the relations of

power that is the basis for the new direction for the workers' movement.

The workers' movement has not to expect a final catastrophe, but many catastrophes, political - like wars, and economic - like the crises which repeatedly break out, sometimes regularly, sometimes irregularly, but which on the whole, with the growing size of capitalism, become more and more devastating. So the illusions and tendencies to tranquillity of the proletariat will repeatedly collapse, and sharp and deep class struggles will break out. It appears to be a contradiction that the present crisis, deeper and more devastating than any previous one, has not shown signs of the awakening of the proletarian revolution. But the removal of old illusions is its first great task: on the other hand, the illusion of making capitalism bearable by means of reforms obtained through Social Democratic parliamentary politics and trade union action and, on the other, the illusion that capitalism can be overthrown in assault under the leadership of a revolution-bringing Communist Party. The working class itself, as a whole, must conduct the struggle, but, while the bourgeoisie is already building up its power more and more solidly, the working class has yet to make itself familiar with the new forms of struggle. Severe struggles are bound to take place. And should the present crisis abate, new crises and new struggles will arise. In these struggles the working class will develop its strength to struggle, will discover its aims, will train itself, will make itself independent and learn to take into its hands its own destiny, viz., social production itself. In this process the destruction of capitalism is achieved. The self-emancipation of the proletariat is the collapse of capitalism.

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