

OTTO RÜHLE



REPORT FROM MOSCOW
(SEPTEMBER 1920)



**P R I N C I P L E S , P R O P O S I T I O N S &
D I S C U S S I O N S
F O R L A N D & F R E E D O M**

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE ‘ANARCHIVE’
“Anarchy is Order!”

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

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

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

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

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the ‘new anarchism’ outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain

standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

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

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

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

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

(L-P. Boon)

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

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be sent to A.O@advalvas.be.

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

WELCOME!!

REPORT FROM MOSCOW

OTTO RUHLE

(September 1920)

I travelled illegally to Russia. The business was difficult and dangerous; but it succeeded. On 16th June I stepped on to Russian soil: on the 19th I was in Moscow.

The departure from Germany went hastily. In April, upon invitation from Moscow, the KAPD (Communist Workers Party - Germany) had sent two comrades as negotiators to the Executive, to advise upon the KAPD's joining of the Third International. It was being said that the two comrades had been arrested in Estonia on the return journey. The necessity was to immediately recommence the negotiations and to bring them to completion and if possible to send back a report to the KAPD, so that information from the the KAPD could be received before the start of the Congress. All in the greatest rush, in that the congress should already begin on 15th June.

Having arrived in Russia, I found out to my joy that the news about the arrests of our comrades had been incorrect. They had travelled back via Murmansk and so were already in Norway on the way to Germany. I also learnt that the congress was not to begin on the 15th June but only on the 15th July.

What I further constituted was less pleasing. My first conversation with Radek was a real argument. Hours long. Partly highly vehement. Every sentence of Radek was a sentence out of the "Red Flag." Every argument a Spartacist argument. Radek is after all, lord and master of the KPD. Dr. Levi and consorts are his willing parrots. They have no opinions of their own and are paid by Moscow.

I asked Radek to hand over to me the Open Letter to the KAPD. He promised me it, but didn't keep his word. I reminded him of it repeatedly still and others to remind him but didn't receive it. When I later heard that the two comrades who'd been acting as negotiators had only received the Open Letter only at the very last moment before their departure, the psychology of Radek's behaviour became clear to me. He, the wiliest of the wily, and the most unscrupulous of the unscrupulous, considering the perfidious lies and insolences which absolutely abounded in the Open Letter, felt of course something so like shame that he shied away from having to account for himself eye to eye with the insulted and libelled.

The methods which I saw practised on me in Moscow aroused my strongest aversions. Where to I saw: political 'scene-shifting', calculated as bluff, using flashy revolutionary resolutions to conceal the opportunistic background. Best of all I'd have gone up and away again. However I decided to stay until the second delegate Comrade Merges) Braunschweig, would arrive.

I used the time to make studies.

II

First I looked around Moscow, mostly without official guidance, so as to also see that which wasn't decreed to be for viewing. Then I made a long car tour to Kashira and a trip to Nischny)Nowgorod, Kasan Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov, Tambov, Tula,etc., thus getting to know the most important places in Central Russia. That provided an abundance of impressions more unpleasant than pleasnat. Russia was suffering in all of its limbs, from every disease. But how could it have been any different! Lots was being reported but the example of Crispian and Dittman didn't tempt me to follow suit. Whose interests would be served then? Only the opponents of Communism. All these shortcomings and drawbacks aren't, of course, any evidence against Communism. At the most against the methods and tactics employed by Russia to realise Communism.

The Russian tactic is the tactic of authoritarian organisation. It has been so consistently developed and in the end carried to extremes, by the Bolsheviks to the fundamental principle of centralism that it has led to over)centralism. The Bolsheviks didn't do that out of wantonness or desire to experiment. The revolution forced them to it. If today the representatives of German party organisations are filled with indignation and cross themselves over the dictatorial and terroristic phenomena in Russia, its easy for them to talk. Were they in the position of the Russian government. they'd have to act exactly so.

Centralism is the organisational principle of the bourgeois)capitalist age. With it the bourgeois state and the capitalist economy can be built up. Not however the

proletarian state and the socialist economy. They demand the council system. For the KAPD) contrary to Moscow) the revolution is no party matter, the party no authoritarian organisation from the top down, the leader no military chief, the masses no army condemned to blind obedience, the dictatorship no despotism of a ruling clique; communism no springboard for the rise of a new Soviet bourgeoisie. For the KAPD the revolution is the business of the whole proletarian class within which the communist party forms only the most mature and determined vanguard. The rise and development of the masses to political maturity of this vanguard doesn't await the tutelage of the leadership, discipline and regulation. On the contrary: these methods produce in an advanced proletariat such as the German exactly the opposite result. They strangle initiatives, paralyse the revolutionary activity, impair the combativeness, reduce the personal feeling of responsibility. What counts is to trigger the initiative of the masses, to free them from authority, to develop their self-confidence, to train them in self)activity and thereby to raise their interest in the revolution. Every fighter must know and feel why he is fighting, what he is fighting for. Everyone must become in his consciousness a living bearer of the revolutionary struggle and creative member of the communist build-up. The necessary freedom therefore will however never be won in the coercive system of centralism, the chains of bureaucratic-militaristic control, under the burden of a leader)dictatorship and its inevitable accompaniments: arbitrariness, personality cult, authority, corruption, violence. Therefore transformation of the party-conception into a federative community)conception on the line of councilist ideas. Therefore: supercession of external commitments and compulsion through internal readiness and willingness. Therefore: elevation of

communism from the demagogic prattle of the paper cliché to the height of one of the most internally captivating and fulfilling experiences of the whole world.

The KAPD came to these of its conclusions through the simple realisation of the very obvious circumstance, that every country and every people because they have their own particular economy, social structure, traditions, maturity of the proletariat ie.their own particular revolutionary requirements and conditions, must also have their own revolutionary laws, methods, rhythm of development and outward appearances. Russia isn't Germany, Russian politics aren't German politics, Russian revolution isn't German revolution. Lenin might demonstrate hundreds of times that the tactics of the Bolsheviks were a brilliant success in the Russian Revolution) they wouldn't by a long way be the right tactics for the German revolution. Every attempt to force us to adopt these tactics must provoke the most decisive opposition.

Moscow is making this terroristic attempt. It wants to elevate its principles to the principles of world revolution. The KPD is its agent. It works on Russian orders and to the Russian model. It is Moscow's gramophone. Because the KAPD doesn't play along in this eunuch)role, it is persecuted with deadly hate. One reads only the most insulting aspersions, the poisonous libels and accusations with which one fights us without hindsight of therevolutionary situation in which we stand and of the effect which this vile parctice triggers in our bourgeois opponents. Dr. Leviand Heckert must fling at us every piece of rubbish that Radekand Zinoviev press into their hands. That's what those boys are paid for.

However because the KAPD doesn't give in nevertheless it ought to be censured by the Congress of the III International to comply to Moscow's power) of)command. It was all excellently prepared. The guillotine was set up. Radek smugly tested the sharpness of the blade. And already the high court was sitting It should have been a grand scene. too beautiful to be accomplished.

III

As I returned from the Volga, Comrade Merges had arrived in Moscow. On the same day a sitting of the Executive of the III International took place. We weren't invited. In our absence, the motion of Meyer (KPD) that we should be refused admission to the Congress was discussed. The motion was rejected. On this they called us to the sitting, and were so gracious as to grant us advisory status at the Congress. At this meeting we got to see the discussion guidelines which were to be laid before the Congress. They were intended to be the basis for the decisions of the Congress. Of which in his boastful manner Radek had already said to me earlier, that he had it in the pocket. "In the pocket!" The discussion guidelines) weren't these not old familiars? Indeed. We recognised in them the notorious Heidelberg theses repeated. They were only somewhat more elaborately set out, somewhat theoretically doctored, somewhat enhanced in "Centralist)dictatorial". They were made into theses of Russian power)politics out of theses of Spartacist division)politics, and should now become theses of international violation by Russian methods.

We sacrificed a night to their study, and knew in the morning what we had to do.

We went to Radek, and put to him the question of if in the Open Letter (which still hadn't been given to us) the demanded expulsions of Laufenberg, Wolfheim and Ruhle was an ultimatum, and if the Executive insisted upon the fulfilment of these demands before the KAPD would be admitted to the III International. Radek tried miscellaneous evasions, but we demanded a plain answer. Then Radek explained: It would satisfy the Executive if the KAPD promised that they would) at a later date, at a suitable opportunity) free themselves of Laufenberg and Wolfheim. Of my expulsion there wasn't any more question. This remarkable yielding to demands which had been raised with the truest ring of conviction as conditions sine qua non made us suspicious. Now we demanded to know which demands of the Executive concerning the admission of the KAPD into the III International were definitive. Radek explained: You must in the name of your party at the beginning of the Congress give the declaration that the KAPD will abide by all decisions) then you'll receive voting status at Congress: then nothing will stand in the way of your admission into the III International.

Were we hearing right: in advance most solemnly declare that we wished to submit to the Congress decisions, which we didn't even know. . . .Was that supposed to be one of Radek's jokes? No it was serious.

Now if the Congress were to decide upon the dissolution of the KAPD?...Joking apart: he did indeed have that intention. Thereby Radek was unmasked.

What was in the theses then?

Ah now.

1 The communists are duty)bound to set themselves up in a rigid centralistic, iron)hard, militaristic, dictatorial organisation.

2 The communists are duty)bound to take part in parliamentary elections, and to enter parliament to carry out a new type of revolutionary parliamentary work there.

3 The communists are duty)bound to remain in the trade unions so as to help the revolution to victory in these revolutionarily)transformable institutions.

4 Each of the parties that are members of the III International is to call itself the Communist Party, consequently the KAPD has to sacrifice its continuing independence and dissolve itself into the KPD.

Thus joking apart: the Congress actually should pronounce the death sentence upon the KAPD, and we, the KAPD delegates, should receive voting status, i.e. we should be able to help pronounce the death sentence, if we were to declare prior that the KAPD wanted to submit to the pronounced death sentence without resistance.

Could there be a greater political comedy? Or a greater perfidy? We laughed in Radek's face, and asked if he was mad.

A party, that on the grounds of the Heidelberg theses had split from the KPD, had constituted itself on a new basis, and had given itself organisationally a new structure, tactically a new orientation and theoretically a new programme, that vigorously stood on its own two feet, concentrated in itself all the active forces of the German revolution and in size of membership is far superior to the KPD) such a party refuses, may, indeed must refuse, even once to enter into a discussion on the discussion of its right to exist. As a child can never return to its mother's womb, likewise the KAPD doesn't return to the KPD. Even one word of discussion about this is mischief, is absurdity, is apolitical childishness.

We left Radek standing so, with the hangman's rope that he had intended to put around the neck of the KAPD, and went on our way. We felt no desire to give ourselves further headaches in this atmosphere of political trickery and cheating, of diplomatic stage)management and opportunistic string)pulling, of lack of moral restraint and cold)grinning cunning. Inside ourselves we had nothing, nothing at all to look for in a congress which met so far from all communism.

Therefore we declared: "We decline with thanks participation in the Congress. We have decided to travel home, to recommend to the KAPD a wait)and)see attitude, until a truly revolutionary International has come into being, which it can join. Adios!

IV

Our decision had a surprising effect. If until then we were treated like spoilt children, whose misdeeds caused

the poor parents anxiety and vexation, and should be put across the knee and given a good hiding, so they now suddenly started to come round. The threateningly swung whip disappeared behind the mirror, and the carrot was brought out of the drawer. They began to woo us with brotherly words, such as should be customary between communists, and with the appearance of goodwill towards objective communication. Even Radek took on manners. He negotiated reasonably and railed against the KPD, who he called, "a lazy and cowardly gang", who he would make "wet their pants", etc. We had prolonged and thorough discussions with him, Zinoviev, Bukharin and at the last moment even a determined discussion with Lenin. The great respect and high admiration that we have for him, and that through this discussion were raised even further, did not prevent us telling him, in a totally German manner, our opinions. We explained to him that we felt it a scandal and a crime against the German revolution, that in a time when hundreds of brochures had to be written opposing opportunism, he found the time and felt occasioned to write a brochure exactly against the KAPD) the active and most consistent party of the German revolution, which now, like his other writings of recent times, was being used by the entire counter)revolution as an arsenal, not to correct our supposedly wrong tactic in the interest of the revolution, but to knock dead every stirring activity of the masses with arguments and quotes from Lenin. We demonstrated to him that he is completely misinformed about conditions in Germany, and that his arguments for the revolutionary exploitation of the parliament and the trades unions only have a laughable effect. We finally left him without the slightest doubt that the KAPD, as it refuses any material help from

Moscow, also with complete determination won't stand for any interference from Moscow in its politics.

The discussions left in us the feeling that the Russian comrades had begun to appreciate what a mistake it had been to go too far. That in the end the International, i. e. in the first line Russia, needed the KAPD more than vice versa, the KAPD the International. So for them our decision was most unpleasant, and they sought a compromise. As we were in Petrograd on the way home, the Executive sent after us another invitation to the Congress with the statement that the KAPD (although it hadn't complied with or promised to comply with a single one of the draconian conditions of the Open Letter) had been allowed the right to the voting status at the Congress. Too crude a bait! Fundamentally it was of course a matter of complete indifference whether the KAPD assisted at its proposed execution in Moscow with advisory or voting status. So we gave our thanks once more and travelled to Germany.

The outcome of the Congress had justified our tactics. The decisions taken on the questions of concern to us) building of the party, parliamentarianism, trade union politics) reveal the most unconcealed opportunism. They are decisions on the line of the right wing of the USP, decisions that even to the interpretation of the Damigs, Curt Geyers, Koenens, etc., on the parliamentary and trades unions questions mean a violation. But can and should the KAPD share the same Congress decisions on the same ground with the USP? One must answer in the affirmative to this question and think out the consequences in order to judge the complete monstrosity and absolute impossibility of the KAPD joining this III International.

This is not to say that we wished to oppose the organisational unification of communist workers and an international alliance of the revolutionary proletariat. By no means! We only mean, that the affiliation to an actual revolutionary International will not be decided through paper Congress decisions and the goodwill of the strata of the hierarchies. It decides itself through the will to struggle and the revolutionary activities of the masses in the hour of the decision. It is the product of the great purifying and maturing processes of the revolution, which eliminates everything halfway and wrong and only lets the true and whole count. The KAPD may confidently look forward to this decision, then it will rise to the historic task that awaits it.

As I said goodbye to Lenin, I said to him: "Hopefully the next Congress of the III International can take place in Germany. Then we will have brought you the concrete evidence that we were in the right. Then you will have to correct your point of view." To which Lenin replied laughing: "If it so happens, then we would be the last to stand in the way of correction."

May it so happen! It will so happen!

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