

OTTO RÜHLE



WHICH SIDE TO TAKE?
(1940)



**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 anarchivist!!!

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

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

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

(L-P. Boon)

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

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

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

WELCOME!!

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The second World War has presented grave and fateful problems to the socialist workers' movement. Again it is faced with a situation similar to that which confronted the old labor movement at the outbreak of the first World War. There is a danger that the mistakes which brought doom to social-democracy will be repeated.

The question confronting us today is whether Liebknecht's slogan : "The enemy is at home !" is as valid for the class struggle now as it was in 1914. When Liebknecht voiced his slogan class-struggle conditions were relatively simple. In Germany, for instance, the semi-feudal government was undoubtedly considered a greater foe of the proletariat than the democratic governments of the Entente. Today, too, the fascist government of Germany is apparently a more dangerous enemy of the workers than is England. Liebknecht's slogan would therefore have today an even greater validity for the German working class than it had in 1914.

It would seem, however, that today the workers in the democratic countries are faced with a different situation. Bourgeois democracy confronts them in their struggle for political and economic emancipation. Nevertheless,

being at war with the totalitarian states, primarily with German fascism, the democracies cannot be regarded as the arch-foe of the proletariat.

Because of their political structure and their class-struggle mechanics, the democratic countries are forced to grant certain liberties to the proletariat which enables it to carry on its struggle in its own manner. In the totalitarian countries this is no longer possible. Within the framework of dictatorship, even when it calls itself socialist, the proletariat has no liberties, no rights or possibilities to fight its own struggles. There is no doubt that totalitarianism is the greater, the more vicious and dangerous foe of the proletariat. It would appear then that Liebknecht's slogan has thus lost its validity for the proletariat in the democratic countries.

In the face of this situation working-class movements of democratic countries shift in a direction which sets aside the struggle against democracy as long as the latter is engaged in a war against the totalitarian countries, in a great crusade against its arch foe, against monopoly, fascism, bolshevism -- the totalitarian system in general.

It is this situation which gives rise to the present confusion, debate and controversy within the working-class movement. To understand the present tactical shifts, however, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the situation preceding the shift in policy in 1914. Laws, principles, programs and slogans have only a transitory validity, are determined historically by time factors, situations, and circumstances, and are to be viewed dialectically. Thus what may have been the wrong tactic then may be the right one today, and vice versa. Let us apply this to the present tactical shift.

When German Social Democracy in 1914 capitulated to the Kaiser and voted war credits, the proletariat of the whole world branded this act as a shameful betrayal of socialism. Until then it had been an established policy of socialists in parliaments to oppose military appropriations. In the case of war credits it was taken for granted that the socialists would act in accordance with the established policy. Therefore, when the socialists did vote the war credits they disrupted an established tactic and betrayed an established principle.

This act was universally condemned and aroused heated disputes within the entire socialist movement. The opportunists justified it on the grounds that they were exchanging "cannons for social reforms". The radicals, on the other hand, urged a more vigorous struggle against the government in order to turn the war into a civil war and to prepare for the final struggle -- the coming revolution.

For present day fractions this struggle has become meaningless, mainly because socialist parties and parliamentary functionaries have become meaningless in many countries. And in those countries where they are still tolerated their voices have become mere patter. Either they are not consulted at all about whether they will grant war credits, or they themselves are its staunchest supporters. Without deliberation and without struggle they are on the side of their governments. If formerly they were allies of the bourgeoisie they are now its servants and lackeys, without being in the least aware of their role of betrayers. In England, France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia -- in fact everywhere -- the Socialists

were and are siding with the bourgeoisie. And the "Communists", once the fiercest critics and opponents of the Social-Democrats, for whom they especially invented the term "Social-fascist", bowed to the bourgeoisie even before their political degeneration and betrayal which culminated in the capitulation to Hitler and fascism.

How shall we account for this shift ? Is it because the representatives of Socialism and Communism have all become knaves and blackguards ? To assume that would be too simple. No matter how many rascals and blackguards there may be among them, the reason for this shift lies deeper. It must be sought in the changed conditions of party organizations, in the changed times. These changes have become apparent and obvious.

The old social-democratic movement arose during the first phase of the capitalist era, the one we can refer to as the phase of private capitalism (*laissez-faire*). From it social-democracy received the impulse of its origin, the conditions for its growth, the structure of its mass-organizations, the field, tactic and weapons for its struggles. Its substance was derived from the substance of the system in which it lived and fought, and which it hoped to vanquish. Though striving to be the opposite, it could not help but be like it in every way.

This system entered its last phase with the first World War. It is now in a life-and-death struggle against the ascending new phase, which we describe as state-capitalistic. Just as the first one found its ideological and political expression in Liberalism and Democracy, so the second finds its expression in Fascism and Dictatorship. Democracy was the state form of capitalist ascendancy, of its struggle against feudalism, monarchism and

clericalism, of the unfolding of all individual powers for the victory and rise of the capitalist economic system, for the social setting and cultural endowment of the bourgeois order. This ascending period ended long ago. Democracy becomes more and more inadequate and unbearable for present day capitalism, for the capitalistic interests can no longer live and grow under it. They demand new social and political conditions, a new ideology and a new state form -- a new ruling apparatus. The democratic phase is discarded and demolished in order that fascism can take its place. For only under fascism can state-capitalism develop and thrive.

When democracy ceases to be the valid and dominant state-form, that movement which received its impetus, its right to and form of existence from democracy, also ceases. It cannot continue to live on its own power. Its parliamentarism, its party-machine, its authoritative-centralistic organization methods, its agit-prop technique, its military strategy, its compromisory tactic, its rationalizations as well as its metaphysical-irrational illusions -- all these it received from the rich arsenal of the bourgeoisie, all of it was part and parcel, flesh of the flesh of the bourgeois-democratic-liberal world. Because all this has ended, the movement has collapsed, becomes but a shadow of its former self. It can only toss and groan under the cover of the torn and tattered cloak of dying democracy until its own death overtakes it.

Private capitalism -- and with it democracy, which is trying to save it -- is obsolete and going the way of all mortal things. State capitalism -- and with it fascism, which paves the way for it -- is growing and seizing power. The old is gone forever and no exorcism works against the new. No matter how hard we may try to

revive Democracy, to help her once more stand on her legs, to breathe life into her, all efforts will be futile. All hopes for a victory of democracy over fascism are the crassest illusions, all belief in the return of democracy as a form of capitalist government has only the value of cunning betrayal and cowardly self-delusion. Those labor leaders who today are on the side of the democracies, and are trying to win the workers' organizations to that side, are doing only what their particular governments and general staffs are doing; namely, recruiting workers and homeless, hopeless emigrants into their armies to hurl them against fascist fronts. These volunteer recruiting officers, hirelings of the democracies, are gentlemen no finer than those kidnapers who supply death-ships with shanghaied sailors. Sooner or later even the democracies will be forced to rid themselves of them, for it becomes more and more obvious that the democratic governments do not desire a real and serious war against fascism. They afforded no real help to Poland. No serious attempt was made to save Finland. They sent badly armed soldiers to Norway. They sign economic pacts with Russia, the accomplice and camp-follower in the service of Hitler. Everything they are doing is only calculated to force Germany into such a difficult and untenable position that she will be willing to enter into a capitalist-fascist business partnership which will enable both sides to enslave the whole world. Both methods of government are getting more similar every day. What real democracy was there in Czechoslovakia? in Poland? What democracy did the Spanish refugees and other emigrants find in France where all human rights and human dignity have been thrown to the dogs? And how democratic is the rule of monopoly capitalism in the U.S.A.? All democracy is practically dead. And all the hopes of

workers to revive it through their efforts are sheer illusion. Are the experiences of the Austrian, German and Czechoslovakian social democracies not frightful enough? It is the misfortune of the proletariat that its obsolete organizations based upon an opportunistic tactic make it defenseless against the onslaught of fascism. It has thus lost its own political position in the body politic of the present time. It has ceased to be a history-making factor of the present epoch. It has been swept upon the dungheap of history and will rot on the side of Democracy as well as on the side of Fascism, for the Democracy of today will be the Fascism of tomorrow.

Hope for the final uprising of the proletariat and its historical deliverance does not spring from the miserable remnants of the old movements in the still-democratic countries, and still less from the shabby fragments of those party traditions that were scattered and spilled in the emigration of the world. Nor does it spring from the stereotyped notions of past revolutions, regardless of whether one believes in the blessings of violence or in "peaceful transition". Hope comes rather from the new urges and impulses which will animate the masses in the totalitarian states and will force them to make their own history. The self-expropriation and proletarianization of the bourgeoisie by the second World War, the surmounting of nationalism by the abolition of small states, the state-capitalistic world-politic based on state federations, the spreading of the class concept until it fosters a majority interest in socialism, the shift of gravity from the typically laissez-faire form of bourgeois competition to the unavoidable collectivization of the future, the transformation of the class-struggle from an abstract-ideological category into a practical-positive-economic category, the automatic rise of factory councils

after the unfolding of labor democracy as a reaction to bureaucratic terror, the exact and rational regulations and directions of human activities and conduct through the abolition of the power of the impersonal, unconscious and blind market economy -- all these factors can make us aware of the enormous upsurge of energies made free when the primitive, mechanical, raw and brutal beginnings of a social collectivism, such as fascism presents, are at last overcome.

As yet we do not see by what means fascism will be overcome. We feel, however, justified in assuming that the mechanics and dynamics of revolution will undergo fundamental changes. The familiar concept of revolution stems primarily from that period which saw the transition from the feudal to the bourgeois world. This concept will not be valid for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The effect and success of the revolution may be perceived from the fact that the present forced collectivization, which is even now bursting its bureaucratic fetters, develops its own dynamics toward a higher and wider balance, consolidation, and distillation. The final sublimation must lead to an orientation based upon the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity so that the free development of every individual will become the precondition for the free development of all.

This is by no means a Utopia, but an aspect of a very real development within the next historical epoch, which the second World War is ushering in. To focus attention upon this development, to reckon with this basically universal and profoundly revolutionary process, to help strengthen this process by one's conduct and action, to defend it against hindrances and distortions is the

revolutionary task confronting us today. In the second World War both fronts, the democratic as well as the fascist, are likely to be defeated -- the one militarily, the other economically. No matter to which side the proletariat offers itself, it will be among the defeated. Therefore it must not side with the democracies, nor with the totalitarians. For class-conscious revolutionaries there is only one solution, the solution which breaks with all traditions and all remnants of organizations of the past, which sweeps away all the illusions of the bourgeois-intellectual epoch and which really learns from the lessons of discouragements and disillusionment suffered during the infantile stage of the working-class movement.

Otto Ruehle.

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