

# **Anton Pannekoek Collection**

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# Contents

Introduction	7
Two Sorts of Reforms (1908)	22
The New Middle Class (1909)	25
The Destruction of Nature (1909)	38
Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics (1912)	42
1. Our Differences	42
2. Class and Masses	45
3. The Organisation	50
4. The Conquest of Power	55
5. Parliamentary Activity and Action by the Masses	61
6. Marxism and the Role of the Party	64
Class Struggle and Nation (1912)	70
Introduction	70
I. The Nation and its Transformations	71
II. The Nation and the Proletariat	87
III. Socialist Tactics	109
War Against War (1913)	130
I.	130
II.	133
III. The Congress of Basel	139
Imperialism and the Tasks of the Proletariat (1916)	145
Introduction	145
I	147
II	152
III	156
Socialisation (Part I) (1920)	166
Socialisation (Part II) (1920)	171

COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ANTON PANNEKOEK

Social Democracy and Communism (1927)	175
1. The Road Followed by the Workers Movement	175
2. Class Struggle and Socialization	180
3. Mass Action and Revolution	186
4. Democracy and Parliamentarism	192
5. Proletarian Democracy, or the Council System	197
Farewell to Hermann Gorter (1927)	205
The Personal Act (1933)	212
Individual Acts (1933)	216
Destruction as a Means of Struggle (1933)	220
The theory of the collapse of capitalism (1934)	223
Marx and Rosa Luxemburg	224
Rosa Luxemburg and Otto Bauer	228
Grossman's reproduction schema	230
Grossman versus Marx	237
Historical materialism	242
The new workers' movement	247
Party and Class (1936)	251
Party and Working Class (1936)	258
Trade Unionism (1936)	267
General Remarks on the Question of Organisation (1938)	282
Lenin as Philosopher (1938)	297
Introduction	297
Chapter 1. Marxism	299
Chapter 2. Middle-Class Materialism	311
Chapter 3. Dietzgen	324
Chapter 4. Mach	336
Chapter 5. Avenarius	349
Chapter 6. Lenin	358
Chapter 7. The Russian Revolution	384
Chapter 8. The Proletarian Revolution	393

Religion (1947)	402
Public Ownership and Common Ownership (1947)	422
Theses On The Fight Of The Working Class Against Capitalism (1947)	426
Strikes (1948)	432
Workers' Councils (1948)	436
Preface to 1950 Edition	436
Original Preface	436
Part 1 — The Task	437
1. Labor	437
2. Law and Property	450
3. Shop Organization	457
4. Social Organization	464
5. Objections	472
6. Difficulties	488
7. Council Organization	496
8. Growth	505
Part 2 — The Fight	514
1. Trade Unionism	514
2. Direct Action	520
3. Shop Occupation	528
4. Political Strikes	531
5. The Russian Revolution	542
6. The Workers' Revolution	552
Part 3 — The Foe	576
1. The English Bourgeoisie	576
2. The French Bourgeoisie	585
3. The German Bourgeoisie	591
4. Nationalism	600
5. American Capitalism	614
6. Democracy	626

COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ANTON PANNEKOEK

7. Fascism	634
8. National Socialism	643
<b>Part 4. The War</b>	<b>669</b>
1. Japanese Imperialism	669
2. The Rise Of China	677
3. The Colonies	688
4. Russia And Europe	695
5. In The Abyss	701
<b>Part 5. The Peace</b>	<b>709</b>
1. Towards New War	709
2. Towards New Slavery	720
3. Towards New Freedom	729
Letter on Workers Councils (1952)	736
The Politics Of Gorter (1952)	739



# Introduction

Anton Pannekoek's life span coincided with what was almost the whole history of the modern labour movement; he experienced its rise as a movement of social protest, its transformation into a movement of social reform, and its eclipse as an independent class movement in the contemporary world. But Pannekoek also experienced its revolutionary potentialities in the spontaneous upheavals which, from time to time, interrupted the even flow of social evolution. He entered the labour movement a Marxist and he died a Marxist, still convinced that if there is a future, it will be a socialist future.

As have many prominent Dutch socialists, Pannekoek came from the middle class and his interest in socialism, as he once remarked, was due to a scientific bent strong enough to embrace both society and nature. To him, Marxism was the extension of science to social problems, and the humanisation of society. His great interest in social science was entirely compatible with his interest in natural science; he became not only one of the leading theoreticians of the radical labour movement but also an astronomer and mathematician of world renown.

This unifying attitude regarding natural and social science and philosophy determined the character of most of Pannekoek's work. One of his earliest publications, *Marxism and Darwinism*, elucidates the relationship between the two theories; one of his last, *Anthropogenesis*, deals with the origin of man. "The scientific importance of Marxism as well as of Darwinism," he wrote, "consists in their following out the theory of evolution, the one upon the domain of the organic world, the

other upon the domain of society.” What was so important in Darwin’s work was the recognition that “under certain circumstances some animal-kinds will necessarily develop into other animal-kinds.” There was a “mechanism,” a “natural law,” which explained the evolutionary process. That Darwin identified this “natural law” with a struggle for existence analogous to capitalist competition did not affect his theory, nor did capitalist competition become therewith a “natural law.”

It was Marx who formulated the propelling force for social development. “Historical materialism” referred to society; and though the world consists of both nature and society – as expressed in the need for man to eat in order to live – the laws of social development are not “laws of nature”. And, of course, all “laws,” whether of nature or society, are not absolute. But they are reliable enough, as verified by experience, to be considered “absolute” for purposes of human practise. At any rate, they deny sheer arbitrariness and free choice and relate to observed rules and regularities which allow for expectations that form the rationale for human activities.

With Marx Pannekoek held that it is “the production of the material necessities of life which forms the main structure of society and determines the political relations and social struggles.” It is by way of class struggle that decisive social changes have been brought about and these changes have led from a less to a more productive level of social production. Socialism, too, implies the further development of the social forces of production, which are now hampered by the prevailing class relations. And this can only be done by a labouring population able to base its expectations on the emergence of a classless society. In known history, stages of human and social existence are recognisable through changing tools and forms of production that alter the productivity of social labour. The “origin” of this process is lost in pre-history, but it is reasonable to assume that it is to be found in man’s struggle for existence in a natural setting which enabled and forced him to develop

a capacity for work and social organisation. Since Friedrich Engels wrote *The Role of Labour in the Transformation of Ape into Man*, a whole literature has been built around the question of tools and human evolution.

In *Anthropogenesis*, Pannekoek returned to problems raised in his early Marxism and Darwinism. Just as there are “mechanisms” that account for social development and natural evolution, so there must be a “mechanism” that expels the rise of man in the animal world. Society, mutual aid, and even the use of “tools” are characteristic of other species besides man; what is specific to man is language, reason, and the making of tools. It is the last, the making of tools, which in all probability accounts for the simultaneous development of language and thought. Because the use of tools interposes itself between an organism and the outer world, between stimulus and action, it compels action, and hence thinking, to make a detour, from sense impressions by way of the tool, to the object.

Speech would be impossible without human thinking. The human mind has the capacity for abstract thought, of thinking in concepts. While mental life for both man and animal starts from sensations, which combine into images, the human mind differentiates between perceptions and actions by way of thought, just as the tool intervenes between man and that which he seeks to attain. The break between perceptions and actions, and the retention of past perceptions, allows for consciousness and thought, which establishes the inter connections of perceptions and formulates theories applicable to practical actions. Natural science is a living proof of the close connection that exists between tools and thinking. Because the tool is a separate and dead object which can be replaced when damaged, can be changed for a better one and differentiated into a multiplicity of forms for various uses, it assured man’s extraordinary and rapid development; its use, in turn, assured the development of his brain. Labour, then, is the making

and the “essence” of man, however much the worker may be despised and alienated. Work and the making of tools lifted man out of the animal world to the plane of social actions in order to cope with life’s necessities.

The change from animal to man must have been a very long process. But the change from primitive to modern man is relatively short. What distinguishes primitive from modern man is not a different brain capacity but a difference in the uses of this capacity. Where social production stagnates, society stagnates; where the productivity of labour develops slowly, social change is also tardy. In modern society social production developed rapidly, creating new and destroying old class relationships. Not the natural struggle for existence but the social struggle for one or another concept of social organisation has determined social development.

From its very beginning, socialism has been both theory and practise. It is thus not restricted to those who are thought to benefit by the transformation from capitalism to socialism. Being concerned with the classless society and the ending of social strife, and by attracting intelligent men from all layers of society, socialism demonstrated its possible realisation in advance. Already as a young student of the natural sciences, specialising in astronomy, Pannekoek entered the Sociaal Demokratische Arbeiderspartij (SDAP) and found himself, at once, in its left wing, on the side of Herman Gorter and Henriette Roland-Holst.

This party had been preceeded by the Sociaal-Demokratische Bond (SDP) which under the influence of Dometa Nieuwenhuis dissociated itself from the Second International. Anti-militarism was its foremost concern and Nieuwenhuis advocated the use of the General Strike for the prevention of war. He could not get a majority for his proposals and he detected, quite early, the trend towards class collaboration within the International. He opposed the exclusion of the Anarchists from

the International and his experiences as a member of Parliament led him to reject parliamentarism as a weapon of social emancipation. The “anarchist-syndicalist” tendencies, represented by Nieuwenhuis, split the organisation, and the new socialist party, more akin to the “model” German Social-Democracy, came into being. However, the radical ideology of the old party entered the traditions of the Dutch socialist movement.

This traditional radicalism found expression in the new party’s monthly, *De Nieuwe Tijd*, particularly in the contributions of Gorter and Pannekoek who fought the growing opportunism of the party leaders. In 1909 the left wing group around Gorter was expelled and established a new organisation, the Sozial-Demokratische Partij. Pannekoek had meanwhile gone to Germany. He lectured in the party schools of the German Sozial-Demokratische Partei, wrote for its theoretical publications and for various other papers, especially the Bremer Burgerzeitung. He associated himself with Gorter’s new organisation which, years later, under the leadership of van Revesteyn, Wijnkoop, and Ceton became the Moscow oriented Communist Partij.

Though in the tradition of the “libertarian socialism” of Nieuwenhuis, Pannekoek’s opposition to reformism and social-democratic “revisionism” was a Marxist opposition to the “official Marxism” in both its “orthodox” and “revisionist” forms. In its “orthodox” form, Marxism served as an ideology that covered up a non-Marxian theory and practise. But Pannekoek’s defence of Marxism Was not that of the doctrinaire; more than anyone else he recognised that Marxism is not a dogma but a method of thinking about social issues in the actual process of social transformation. Not only were certain aspects of Marxist theory superceded by the development of Marxism itself, but some of its theses, brought forth under definite conditions, would lose their validity when conditions changed.

The First World War brought Pannekoek back to Holland. Prior to the war, together with Radek, Paul Frohlich and Johann Krief, he had been active in Bremen. The Bremen group of left-radicals, the International Communists, later amalgamated with the Spartakus Bund, thus laying the foundation for the Communist Party of Germany. Anti-war groups in Germany found their leaders in Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring; anti-war sentiment in Holland centred around Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, and Henrietta Roland-Holst. In Zimmerwald and Kienthal these groups joined Lenin and his followers in condemning the imperialist war and advocating proletarian actions for either peace or revolution. The Russian Revolution of 1917, hailed as a possible beginning of a world-revolutionary movement, was supported by both Dutch and German radicals despite previous basic differences between them and the Leninists.

While still in prison, Rosa Luxemburg expressed misgivings about the authoritarian tendencies of bolshevism. She feared for the socialist content of the Russian Revolution unless it should find a rectifying support in a proletarian revolution in the West. Her position of critical support towards the bolshevik regime was shared by Gorter and Pannekoek. They worked nevertheless in the new Communist Party and towards the establishment of a new International. In their views, however, this International was to be new not only in name but also in outlook, and with regard to both the socialist goal and the way to reach it. The social-democratic concept of socialism is state socialism, to be won by way of democratic-parliamentary procedures. Universal suffrage and trade unionism were the instruments to accomplish a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. Lenin and the bolsheviks did not believe in a peaceful transformation and advocated the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. But their concept of socialism was still that of social-democracy, and instrumentalities to this end still included parliamentarism and trade unionism.

However, Czarism was not overthrown by democratic processes and trade union activities. The Organisation of the Revolution was that of spontaneously-evolving soviets, of workers' and soldiers' councils, which soon gave way, however, to the bolshevik dictatorship. Just as Lenin was ready to make use of the soviet movement, so was he ready to utilise any other form of activity, including parliamentarism and trade unionism, to gain his end – dictatorial power for his party camouflaged as the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” Having reached his goal in Russia, he tried to consolidate his regime with the help of revolutionary movements in Western Europe and, should this fail, by trying to gain sufficient influence in the Western labour movement to secure at least its indirect support. Because of the immediate needs of the bolshevik regime, as well as the political ideas of its leaders, the Communist International was not the beginning of a new labour movement but merely an attempt to gain control of the old movement and use it to secure the bolshevik regime in Russia.

The social patriotism of the Western labour organisations and their policy of class collaboration during the war convinced the revolutionary workers of Western Europe that these organisations could not be used for revolutionary purposes. They had become institutions bound to the capitalist system and had to be destroyed together with capitalism. However unavoidable and necessary for the early development of socialism and the struggle for immediate needs, parliamentarism and trade unionism were no longer instruments of class struggle. When they did enter the basic social conflict, it was on the side of capital. For Pannekoek this was not a question of bad leadership, to be solved by a better one, but of changed social conditions wherein parliamentarism and trade unionism played no longer an emancipatory role. The capitalist crisis in the wake of the war posed the question of revolution and the old labour movement could not be turned into

a revolutionary force since socialism has no room for trade unions or formal bourgeois democracy.

Wherever, during the war, workers fought for immediate demands they had to do so against the trade unions, as in the mass-strikes in Holland, Germany, Austria and Scotland. They organised their activities by way of shop committees, shop stewards or workers' councils, independently of existing trade unions. In every truly revolutionary situation, in Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, as well as in the Germany and Austria of 1918, workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets) arose spontaneously and attempted to organise economic and political life by extending the council system on a national scale. The rule of workers' councils is the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the councils are elected at the point of production, thus leaving unrepresented all social layers not associated with production. In itself, this may not lead to socialism, and, in fact, the German workers' councils voted themselves out of existence by supporting the National Assembly. Yet, proletarian self-determination requires a social organisation which leaves the decision-making power over production and distribution in the hands of the workers.

In this council movement, Pannekoek recognised the beginnings of a new revolutionary labour movement which, at the same time, was the beginning of a socialist reorganisation of society. This movement could arise and maintain itself only in opposition to the old labour movement. Its principles attracted the most militant sector of the rebellious proletariat, much to the chagrin of Lenin who could not conceive of a movement not under the control of a party, or the state, and who was busy emasculating the soviets in Russia. But neither could he agree to an international communist movement not under the absolute control of his own party. At first by way of intrigue, and then openly, after 1920, the bolsheviks tried to get the communist movement away from its anti-parliamentary and anti-trade union course, under the pretext that

it was necessary not to lose contact with the masses which still adhered to the old organisations. Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism : An Infantile Disorder was directed first of all against Gorter and Pannekoek, the spokesmen of the communist council movement.

The Heidelberg Convention in 1919 split the German Communist Party into a Leninist minority and a majority adhering to the principles of anti-parliamentarism and anti-trade unionism on which the party had originally been based. But there was now a new dividing question, namely, that of party or class dictatorship. The non-Leninist communists adopted the name, Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD), and a similar organisation was later founded in Holland. Party communists opposed council communists and Pannekoek sided with the latter. The council communists attended the Second Congress of the Third International in the capacity of sympathisers. The conditions of admission to the International – complete subordination of the various national organisations to the will of the Russian Party – divorced the new council movement from the Communist International altogether.

The activities of the Communist International against the "ultra left" were the first direct Russian interventions in the life of communist organisations in other countries. The pattern of control never changed and subordinated, eventually, the whole world communist movement to the specific needs of Russia and the bolshevik state. Although the Russian dominated movement, as Pannekoek and Gorter had predicted, never "captured" the Western trade unions, nor dominated the old socialist organisations by divorcing their followers from their leaders, they did destroy the independence and radical character of the emerging new communist labour movement. With the enormous prestige of a successful political revolution on their side, and with the failure of the German revolution, they could not fail to win a large majority in the communist movement to the principles of Leninism. The ideas and the movement of council communism declined steadily

and practically disappeared altogether in the fascist reign of terror and the Second World War.

While Lenin's fight against the "ultra left" was the first indication of the "counter revolutionary" tendencies of bolshevism, Pannekoek's and Gorter's struggle against the Leninist corruption of the new labour movement was the beginning of anti-bolshevism from a proletarian point of view. And this, of course, is the only consistent anti-bolshevism there is. Bourgeois "anti-bolshevism" is the current ideology of imperialist capital competition, which waxes and wanes according to changing national power relations. The Weimar Republic, for instance, fought bolshevism on the one hand and on the other made secret deals with the Red Army and open business deals with bolshevism in order to bolster its own political and economic position within the world competitive process. There was the Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Russia. The Western allies of yesterday are the cold-war enemies of today, to mention only the most obvious of "inconsistencies" which, in fact, are the "politics" of capitalism, determined as they are, by nothing but the profit and power principles.

Anti-bolshevism must presuppose anti-capitalism since bolshevik state capitalism is merely another type of capitalism. This was not as obvious, of course, in 1920 as it is now. It required experience with Russian bolshevism to learn how socialism cannot be realised. The transfer of control of the means of production from private owners to the state and the centralistic and antagonistic determination of production and distribution still leaves intact capital labour relations as a relation between exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled. In its development, it merely leads to a more modern form of capitalism where capital is directly – and not indirectly, as it was previously – the collective property of a politically main tained ruling class. It is in this direction that all capitalist systems move, thus reducing capitalist "anti-bolshevism" to a mere imperialist struggle for world control

In retrospect it is easy to see that the differences between Pannekoek and Lenin could not be resolved by way of argument. In 1920, however, it was still possible to hope that the Western working class would take an independent course not towards a modified capitalism but towards its abolition. Answering Lenin's "Left-wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, Gorter still tried to convince the bolsheviks of the "errors" of their ways, by pointing to the differences in socio economic conditions between Russia and the West, and to the fact that the "tactics" which brought bolshevism to power in Russia could not possibly apply to a proletarian revolution in the West. The further development of bolshevism revealed, that the "bourgeois" elements in Leninism were due not to a "faulty theory," but had their source in the character of the Russian Revolution itself, which had been conceived and was carried out as a state capitalist revolution sustained by a pseudo-Marxian ideology.

In numerous articles in anti-bolshevik communist journals, and until the end of his life, Pannekoek elucidated upon the character of bolshevism and the Russian Revolution. Just as he did in his earlier criticism of Social Democracy, so here, too, he did not accuse the bolsheviks of a "betrayal" of working-class principles. He pointed out that the Russian Revolution, though an important episode in the development of the working-class movement, aspired only to a system of production which could be called state socialism, or state capitalism, which are one and the same thing. It did not betray its own goal any more than trade unions "betray" trade unionism. Just as there cannot be any other type of trade unionism than the existing one, so one cannot expect state capitalism to be something other than itself.

The Russian Revolution, however, had been fought under the banner of Marxism, and the bolshevik state is almost generally considered a Marxist regime. Marxism, and soon Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, remained the ideology of Russian state capitalism. To show

what the “Marxism” of Leninism really implied, Pannekoek undertook a critical examination of its philosophical basis, published under the title *Lenin as Philosopher*, in 1938.

Lenin’s philosophical ideas appeared in his work *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, in Russian in 1908 and in German and English translations in 1927. Around 1904 certain Russian socialists, Bogdanov in particular, had taken an interest in modern Western natural philosophy, especially in the ideas of Ernst Mach, and tried to combine these with Marxism. They gained some influence within the Russian socialist party and Lenin set out to destroy this influence by attacking its apparent philosophical source.

Though not in a philosophical sense, Marx had called his system of thought materialism. It referred to the material base of all social existence and change and grew out of his rejection of both the philosophical materialism of Feuerbach and the philosophical idealism of Hegel. For bourgeois materialism, nature was objectively given reality and man was determined by natural laws. This direct confrontation of individual man and external nature, and the inability to see society and social labour as an indivisible aspect of the whole of reality, distinguished middle-class materialism from Historical Materialism.

Early bourgeois materialism, or natural philosophy, had held that through sense experience and the intellectual activity derived therefrom, it would be possible to gain absolute, valid knowledge of physical reality – thought to be made up of matter. In an attempt to carry the materialist representation of the objective world to the process of knowledge itself, Mach and the positivists denied the objective reality of matter, since physical concepts must be constructed from sense experience and thus retain their subjectivity. This disturbed Lenin greatly, because for him, knowledge was only what reflects objective truth, truth, that is, about matter, In Mach’s influence in socialist circles,

he saw a corruption of Marxian materialism. The subjective element in Mach's theory of knowledge became, in Lenin's mind, an idealist aberration and a deliberate attempt to revive religious obscurantism.

It was true, of course, that the critical progress of science found idealistic interpreters who would give comfort to the religionists. Some Marxists began to defend the materialism of the once revolutionary bourgeoisie against the new idealism – and the new science as well – of the established capitalist class. To Lenin this seemed particularly important as the Russian revolutionary movement, still on the verge of the bourgeois revolution, waged its ideological struggle to a large extent with the scientific and philosophical arguments of the early Western bourgeoisie.

By confronting Lenin's attack on "Empiriocriticism" with its real scientific content, Pannekoek not only revealed Lenin's biased and distorted exposition of the ideas of Mach and Avenarius, but also his inability to criticise their work from a Marxian point of view. Lenin attacked Mach not from the point of view of historical materialism, but from that of an earlier and scientifically less developed bourgeois materialism. In this use of middle-class materialism in defence of "Marxism" Pannekoek saw an additional indication of the half-bourgeois, half-proletarian character of bolshevism and of the Russian Revolution itself. It went together with the state capitalist concept of "socialism", with the authoritarian attitudes towards spontaneity and Organisation, with the out-dated and unrealisable principle of national self-determination, and with Lenin's conviction that only the middle-class intelligentsia is able to develop a revolutionary consciousness and is thus destined to lead the masses. The combination of bourgeois materialism and revolutionary Marxism which characterised Lenin's philosophy reappeared with the victorious bolshevism as the combination of neo-capitalist practise and socialist ideology.

However the Russian Revolution was a progressive event of enormous significance comparable to the French Revolution. It also revealed that a capitalist system of production is not restricted to the private property relations which dominated its laissez-faire period. With the subsiding feeble wave of revolutionary activities in the wake of the First World War, capitalism re-established itself, despite the prevailing crisis conditions, by way of increasing state interventions in its economy. In the weaker capitalist nations this took the form of fascism and led to the intensification of imperialist policies which, finally, led to the Second World War. Even more than the First, the Second World War showed clearly that the existing labour movement was no longer a class movement but part and parcel of contemporary capitalism.

In Occupied Holland, during the Second World War, Pannekoek began his work on Workers' Councils, which he completed in 1947. It was a summing-up of his life experience with the theory and practise of the international labour movement and the development and transformation of capitalism in various nations and as a whole. This history of capitalism, and of the struggle against capitalism, ends with the triumph of a revived, though changed, capitalism after the Second World War, and with the utter subjugation of working-class interests to the competitive needs of the two rival capitalist systems preparing for a new world war. While in the West, the still existing labour organisations aspire, at best, to no more than the replacement of monopoly by state-capitalism, the so-called communist world movement hopes for a world revolution after the model of the Russian Revolution. In either case, socialism is confounded with public ownership where the state is master of production and workers are still subjected to a ruling class.

The collapse of the capitalism of old was also the collapse of the old labour movement. What this movement considered to be socialism turns out to be a harsher form of capitalism. But unlike the the ruling

class, which adapts itself quickly to changed conditions, the working class, by still adhering to traditional ideas and activities, finds itself in a powerless and apparently hopeless situation. And as economic changes only gradually change ideas, it may still take considerable time before a new labour movement – fitted to the new conditions – will arise.

For labour's task is still the same, that is, the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the realisation of socialism. And this can be brought about only when the workers organise themselves and society in such a way as to assure a planned social production and distribution determined by the producers themselves. When such a labour movement arises, it will recognise its origins in the ideas of council communism and in those of one of its most consistent proponents – Anton Pannekoek.

— Paul Mattick (1962)

# Two Sorts of Reforms (1908)

The question of the relationship between reform and revolution has played a preponderant role in all debates these last few years. We saw this at the congresses of Nuremberg and Toulouse.

People seek to oppose reform to revolution. Intransigent comrades, always preoccupied with revolution, are accused of neglecting reform. Opposed to them is the concept that says that reforms systematically and methodically realized in current society lead to socialism without a violent rupture being necessary.

Contempt for reform is more anarchist than socialist. It is just as little justified as the reformist concept. In fact revolution cannot be opposed to reform because it is composed, in the final instance, of reforms, but socialist reforms.

Why do we seek to conquer power if it's not to accomplish decisive social reforms in a socialist direction? It's possible that some anarchist or bourgeois brains have conceived the idea of the destruction of the old society and the introduction of a new mode of production with the assistance of a decree. But we socialists know that a new mode of production cannot be improvised by a magic spell; it can only proceed from the old via a series of reforms. But *our* reforms will be of a completely different kind from those of even the most radical bourgeois. The declaration of these reforms will make tremble the bourgeois reformists who never stop talking in congresses about social reforms,

complaining of their difficulty. On the other hand, proletarian hearts will leap for joy. It's only when we will have conquered power that we can carry out the complete task. Once master of this power, and no longer needing to take into account capitalist interests, the proletariat will have to destroy all of the miseries of our regime up to their roots. Then we will advance rapidly, while now every step must be painfully conquered and defended, and sometimes the conquered positions are lost again. That will be the era of true reform, in comparison with which the greatest bourgeois reforms will be nothing but poorly done work.

After having conquered power the proletariat can have one sole goal: the suppression of its poverty by the suppression of the causes that give rise to it. It will suppress the exploitation of the popular masses by socializing monopolies and trusts. It will put an end to the exploitation of children, and will consecrate large amounts of resources to the physical and intellectual education of the children of the people. It will suppress unemployment by furnishing productive labor to all the unemployed. It will find the resources to carry out its work of reform in the accumulated colossal riches. It will ensure and develop finally conquered freedom by the complete realization of democracy and autonomy.

The social revolution is nothing but this social reform. In realizing this program the proletariat revolutionizes the mode of production, for capitalism can only subsist on the misery of the proletariat. Once political power has been conquered by the proletariat and unemployment has been suppressed, it will be easy for union organizations to considerably raise salaries and gradually improve working conditions, up to the disappearance of profit. Exploitation will become so difficult that the capitalists will be forced to renounce it. The workers will take their place and will organize production by doing without parasites. The positive work of the revolution will begin.

Proletarian social reform directly leads to the complete realization of socialism.

What distinguishes revolution from what is today called social reform? Its depth. The revolution is a series of profound and decisive reforms. Where does this decisive character come from? It comes from the class that accomplishes them. Today it is the bourgeoisie, or even the nobility, that holds power. All that these classes do they naturally do in their own interests. It's in their self-interest that they accord the workers a few ameliorations. As soon as they see that reforms don't succeed in putting down the people they begin to concoct new laws of an oppressive character. In Germany these are laws against the freedom of assembly, against cooperatives, sick funds, etc. After the revolution the proletariat will act in its own interest in making the machine of state work for it. The difference between revolution and social reform consequently resides in the class holding power.

Those who believe that we will manage to gradually realize socialism by social reform within the current regime misunderstand the class antagonisms that determine reforms. Current social reform, having as a goal the preservation of the capitalist system, finds itself in opposition to the proletarian reform of tomorrow, which will have the contrary goal: the suppression of the system.

The organic connection that exists today between reform and revolution is completely different. In fighting for reform the working class develops and makes itself strong. It ends by conquering political power. This is the unity of reform and revolution. It's only in this special sense that it can be said that from today on we work every day for the revolution.

# The New Middle Class (1909)

The middle class is the one which stands between the highest and the lowest strata of society. Above it is the class of great capitalists; below it the proletariat, the class of wage-workers. It constitutes the social group with medium incomes. Accordingly, it is not divided with equal sharpness from both of the other two classes. From the great capitalist the small bourgeois is distinguished only by a difference of degree; he has a smaller amount of capital, a more modest business. Therefore the question as to who belongs to this small bourgeois class is difficult to answer. Every capitalist who suffers from the competition of still greater capitalists denounces those above him and cries out for help on behalf of the middle class.

From the proletariat, on the contrary, the small bourgeois is divided by a difference in kind, in economic function. Be his business and his income ever so small, he is independent. He lives by virtue of his ownership of the means of production, like any other capitalist, and not from the sale of his labor power, like a proletarian. He belongs to the class that undertakes enterprises, that must possess some capital in order to carry them on; often he employs laborers himself. From the wage-working class he is, therefore, sharply differentiated.

In former times this class of small capitalists constituted the main body of the industrial population. Social development, however, has gradually brought about its destruction. The motive power of this

development was competition. In the struggle for existence the greatest capitalists, the ones financially and technically best fitted to survive, crowded out the poorer and more backward ones. This process has gone on to such an extent that at present industrial production is carried on almost exclusively on a large scale; in industry small production survives only in the form of repair work or special artistic activities. Of the members of the earlier middle class a small number have worked themselves up to the rank of great capitalists; the great majority have lost their independence and sunk down into the proletariat. For the present generation the industrial middle class has only a historical existence.

The class that I referred to in my first paragraph is the commercial middle class. This social stratum we ourselves have seen, and still see, decaying before our eyes. It is made up of small merchants, shopkeepers, etc. Only during the last decades have the great capitalists gone into the retail business; only recently have they begun to establish branch concerns and mail-order houses, thus either driving out the small concerns or forcing them into a trust. If during recent times there has been great lamentation over the disappearance of the middle class we must keep in mind that it is only the commercial middle class that is in question. The industrial middle class long ago went down and the agrarian middle class became subordinate to capitalism without losing the forms of independence.

In this account of the decline of the middle class we have the theory of Socialism in a nut-shell. The social development which resulted in this phenomenon made of Socialism a possibility and a necessity. So long as the great mass of the people were independent producers Socialism could exist only as the utopia of individual theorizers or little groups of enthusiasts; it could not be the practical program of a great class. Independent producers do not need Socialism; they do not even want to hear of it. They own their means of production and these are

to them the guarantee of a livelihood. Even the sad position into which they are forced by competition with the great capitalists can hardly render them favourable to Socialism. It makes them only the more eager to become great capitalists themselves. They may wish, occasionally, to limit the freedom of competition — perhaps under the name of Socialism; but they do not want to give up their own independence or freedom of competition. So long, therefore, as there exists a strong middle class it acts as a protecting wall for the capitalists against the attacks of the workers. If the workers demand the socialization of the means of production, they find in this middle class just as bitter an opponent as in the capitalists themselves.

The decay of the middle class signifies the concentration of capital and the growth of the proletariat. Capital faces, therefore, an ever-increasing army of opponents and is supported by a constantly decreasing number of defenders. For the proletariat Socialism is a necessity; it constitutes the only means of protecting labor against robbery by a horde of useless parasites, the only bulwark against want and poverty. As the great mass of the population comes more and more to consist of proletarians, Socialism, in addition to being a necessity, comes more and more to be a possibility; for the bodyguard of private property grows constantly weaker and becomes powerless against the constantly mounting forces of the proletariat.

It goes without saying, therefore, that the bourgeoisie views with alarm the disappearance of the middle class. The new development which inspires the proletariat with hope and confidence fills the ruling class with fear for its future. The faster the proletariat, its enemy increases in numbers, the faster the owning class decreases, the more certainly the bourgeoisie sees the approach of its doom. What is to be done?

A ruling class cannot voluntarily give up its own predominance; for this predominance appears to it the sole foundation of the world order.

It must defend this predominance; and this it can do only so long as it has hope and self-confidence. But actual conditions cannot give self-confidence to the capitalist class; therefore it creates for itself a hope that has no support in reality. If this class were ever to see clearly the principles of social science, it would lose all faith in its own possibilities; it would see itself as an aging despot with millions of persecuted victims marching in upon him from all directions and shouting his crimes into his ears. Fearfully he shuts himself in, closes his eyes to the reality and orders his hirelings to invent fables to dispel the awful truth. And this is exactly the way of the bourgeoisie. In order not to see the truth, it has appointed professors to soothe its troubled spirit with fables. Pretty fables they are, which glorify its overlordship, which dazzle its eyes with visions of an eternal life and scatter its doubts and dreams as so many nightmares. Concentration of capital? Capital is all the time being democratised through the increasing distribution of stocks and bonds. Growth of the proletariat? The proletariat is at the same time growing more orderly, more tractable. Decay of the middle class? Nonsense; a new middle class is rising to take the place of the old.

It is this doctrine of the new middle class that I wish to discuss in some detail in the present paper. To this new class belong, in the first place, the professors. Their function is to comfort the bourgeoisie with theories as to the future of society, and it is among them that this fable of the new middle class found its origin. In Germany there were Schmoller, Wagner, Masargh and a host of others who devoted themselves to the labor of elaborating it. They explained that the Socialist doctrine as to the disappearance of the middle class was of small importance. Every table of statistics showed that medium incomes remained almost exactly as numerous as in former times. In the places of the disappearing independent producers there were appearing other groups of the population. Industry on a large scale demanded an immense army of intermediating functionaries: overseers, skilled

workers, engineers, managers of departments, bosses, etc. They formed a complete hierarchy of officials; they were the officers and subalterns of the industry army, an army in which the great capitalists are the generals and the workingmen the common soldiers. Members of the so-called "free" vocations, physicians, lawyers, authors, etc., belonged also to this class. A new class, then, constantly increasing in numbers, was said to be taking the place formerly occupied by the old middle class.

This observation in itself is correct, though not at all new. All that there is new about it is its exposition with a view to disproving the Socialist theories of classes. It was expressed clearly, e. g., by Schmoller at an Evangelical Social Congress held at Leipsic as far back as 1897. The audience burst into joyful enthusiasm at the good news, and declared in a resolution: "The congress notes with pleasure the reassuring and scientifically grounded conviction of the speaker that the economic development of modern times does not necessarily lead to the destruction of a class so useful to the welfare of society as the middle class." And another professor declared: "He has filled us with optimism for the future. If it is not true that the middle class and the small bourgeoisie are disappearing, we shall not be forced to alter the fundamental principles of capitalist society."

The fact that science is merely the servant of capitalism could not be more clearly expressed than in such statements. Why is this declaration that the middle class is not decaying hailed as reassuring? Why does it create content and optimism? Is it because through it the workers will attain better conditions, be less exploited? No. Just the opposite. If this statement is true, the worker will be kept forever in slavery by a permanent army of enemies; what appears to prevent his liberation is pronounced reassuring and optimistic. Not the discovery of truth, but the reassurance of an increasingly superfluous class of parasites is the object of this science. No wonder that it comes into conflict with the truth. It fails, not only in its denial of Socialist teaching, but in its

reassurance of the capitalist class. The comfort that it gives is nothing more than self-deception.

The Socialist doctrine as to the concentration of capital does not imply the disappearance of medium incomes. It has nothing to do with relative incomes; it deals, on the contrary, with social classes and their economic functions. For our theory society consists, not of poor, well-to-do and rich, of those who own nothing, little, or much; but rather of classes, each one of which plays a separate part in production. A merely external, superficial classification according to incomes has always been a means whereby bourgeois writers have confused actual social conditions and produced uncleanness instead of clearness. The Socialist theory restores clearness and scientific exactness by concentrating attention upon the natural divisions of society. This method has made it possible to formulate the law of social development; production on a large scale constantly replaces production on a small scale. Socialists maintain, not that medium incomes, but rather small, independent producers, tend more and more to disappear. This generalization the professors do not attack; everyone acquainted with social conditions, every journalist, every government official, every petty bourgeois, every capitalist knows that it is correct. In the very declaration that the middle class is being rescued by a new, rising class it is specifically acknowledged that the former is disappearing.

But this new middle class has a character altogether different from that of the old one. That it stands between capitalists and laborers and subsists on a medium income constitutes its only resemblance to the small bourgeoisie of former times. But this was the least essential characteristic of the small bourgeois class. In its essential character, in its economic function, the new middle class differs absolutely from the old.

The members of the new middle class are not self-supporting, independent industrial units; they are in the service of others, those who possess the capital necessary to the undertaking of enterprises.

Economically considered, the old middle class consisted of capitalists, even if they were small capitalists; the new consists of proletarians, even if they are highly paid proletarians. The old middle class lived by virtue of its possession of the means of production; the new makes its livelihood through the sale of its labor power. The economic character of the latter class is not at all modified by the fact that this labor power is of a highly developed quality; that, therefore, it receives comparatively high wages; no more is it modified by the fact that this labor power is chiefly of an intellectual sort, that it depends more on the brain than on the muscles. In modern industry the chemist and the engineer are dealt with as mere wage-workers; their intellectual powers are worked to the limit of exhaustion just like the physical powers of the common laborer.

With the statement of this fact the professorial talk about the new middle class stands revealed in all its foolishness; it is a fable, a piece of self-deception. As a protection against the desire of the proletariat for expropriation the new middle class can never take the place of the old. The independent small capitalists of former times felt themselves interested in the maintenance of private property in the means of production because they were themselves owners of means of production. The new middle class has not the slightest interest in keeping for others a privilege in which they themselves have no part. To them it is all one whether they stand in the service of an individual manufacturer, a stock company, or a public organization, like the community or state. They no longer dream of sometime carrying on an independent business; they know that they must remain all their lives in the position of subordinates. The socialization of the means of production would not change their position except as it would improve it by liberating them from the caprice of the individual capitalist.

It has often been remarked by bourgeois writers that the new middle class has a much more certain position than the old one and, therefore, less ground for discontent. The fact that stock companies destroy the

small business men is a charge that cannot be allowed to count against its many advantages; it is really insignificant in view of the fact that the small business men, after being ruined, are given positions in the service of the company, where, as a rule, their life is much freer from care than it was in the first place. (Hamburg.) Strange, then, that they struggled so long, sacrificed their wealth and exerted their strength to the utmost, to maintain themselves in their old positions while all the time such an alluring berth was inviting them! What these apologists of the capitalist system carefully conceal is the great difference between present dependence and former independence. The middle class man of former times no doubt felt the pressure of want, of competition; but the new middle class man must obey a strange master, who may at any moment arbitrarily discharge him.

Now it is certainly true that those who serve the modern capitalist as skilled technical workers or company officials are not tortured by the cares which weighed down the spirit of the small bourgeois of former days. Often, also, their incomes are greater. But so far as the maintenance of the capitalist system is concerned they are worthless. Not personal discontent, but class interest, is the motive power of social revolution. In many cases even the industrial wage-worker of today is in a better position than the independent small farmer. Nevertheless the farmers, by virtue of the possession of their little pieces of ground, have an interest in the maintenance of the system of private ownership, while the wage-worker demands its destruction. The same is true of the middle class: the oppressed, discontented small capitalists, despite the disadvantages of their position, were props of capitalism; and this the better situated, care-free modern trust employees can never be.

This fact means nothing more than that the professorial phrases, intended to reassure the bourgeoisie with the notion of this new middle class and so hide from them the tremendous transformation which has taken place, have turned out to be pure trickery, without

even the remotest resemblance to science. The statement that the new class occupies the same position in the class-struggle as did the small bourgeoisie of the past has proved to be a worthless deception. But as to the real position of this new class, its actual function in our social organism, I have thus far hardly touched upon it [1].

The new intellectual middle class has one thing in common with the rest of the proletariat: it consists of the propertyless, of those who sell their labor power, and therefore has no interest in the maintenance of capitalism. It has, moreover, in common with the workers, the fact that it is modern and progressive, that through the operation of the actual social forces it grows constantly stronger, more numerous, more important. It is, therefore, not a reactionary class, as was the old small bourgeoisie; it does not yearn for the good old pre-capitalistic days. It looks forward, not backward.

But this does not mean that the intellectuals are to be placed side by side with the wage-workers in every respect, that like the industrial proletariat they are predisposed to become recruits of Socialism. To be sure, in the economic sense of the term, they are proletarians; but they form a very special group of wage-workers, a group that is socially so sharply divided from the real proletarians that they form a special class with a special position in the class-struggle.

In the first place, their higher pay is a matter of importance. They know nothing of actual poverty, of misery, of hunger. Their needs may exceed their incomes and so bring about a discomfort that gives real meaning to the expression "gilded poverty"; still immediate need does not compel them, as it does the real proletarians, to attack the capitalist system. Their position may rouse discontent, but that of the workers is unendurable. For them Socialism has many advantages; for the workers it is an absolute necessity.

In addition to this, it must be remembered that this body of intellectuals and highly-paid industrial employes divides itself into

a large number of widely varying strata. These strata are determined chiefly by differences in income and position. We begin at the top with heads of departments, superintendents, managers, etc., and go on down to bosses and office employes. From these it is but a step to the highest paid workers. Thus, so far as income and position are concerned, there is really a gradual descent from capitalist to proletarian. The higher strata have a definitely capitalistic character; the lower ones are more proletarian, but there is no sharp dividing line. On account of these divisions the members of this new middle class lack the unity of spirit which makes co-operation easy for the proletariat.

The state of affairs just described hinders them in their struggle to improve their position. It is to their interest, as it is to that of other workers, to sell their labor power at the highest possible price. Workingmen bring this about through joining forces in unions; as individuals they are defenceless against the capitalists, but united they are strong. No doubt this upper class of employes could do more to coerce the capitalists if they formed themselves into a great union. But this is infinitely more difficult for them than for workingmen. In the first place they are divided into numberless grades and ranks, ranged one above the other; they do not meet as comrades, and so cannot develop the spirit of solidarity. Each individual does not make it a matter of personal pride to improve the condition of his entire class; the important thing is rather that he personally struggle up into the next higher rank. In order to do this it is first of all necessary not to call down on himself the disfavor of the master class by opposing it in an industrial struggle. Thus mutual envy of the upper and lower ranks prevents co-operative action. A strong bond of solidarity cannot be developed. It results from this condition that employes of the class in question do not co-operate in large bodies; they make their efforts separately, or only a few together, and this makes cowards of them; they do not feel in themselves the power which the workingmen draw from

consciousness of numbers. And then, too, they have more to fear from the displeasure of the masters; a dismissal for them is a much more serious matter. The worker stands always on the verge of starvation and so unemployment has few terrors for him. The high class employe, on the contrary, has a comparatively agreeable life, and a new position is difficult to find.

For all these reasons this class of intellectuals and higher employees is prevented from instituting a fight along union lines for the improvement of their position. Only in the lower ranks, where great numbers labor under the same conditions and the way to promotion is difficult, are there any signs of a union movement. In Germany two groups of employes of this class have lately made a beginning. One of these groups consists of foremen in coal mines. These men constitute a very high class of labor, for in addition to superintending industry they have oversight of arrangements designed to insure sanitary conditions and safety from accidents. Special conditions have fairly forced them to organize. The millionaire operators, in their greed of profits, have neglected safety devices to an extent that makes catastrophes inevitable. Something had to be done. Thus far the organization is still weak and timid, but it is a beginning. The other group is made up of machinists and engineers. It has spread all over Germany, has become so important, in fact, as to be made a point of attack by the capitalists. A number of ruthless employers demanded that their men desert the organization, and when they refused to comply discharged them. For the present the union has been able to do nothing for these victims except to support them; but even in this it has taken up the cudgels against the capitalist class.

For the cause of Socialism we can count on this new middle class even less than for the labor union struggle. For one thing, they are set over the workers as superintendents, overseers, bosses, etc. In these capacities they are expected to speed up the workers, to get the utmost

out of them. So, representing the interest of capital in relation to labor, they naturally assume a position a bitter enmity to the proletariat and find it almost impossible to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in the struggle for a single goal.

In addition, a set of ideas, particularly notions of themselves and their position, tends to ally them to the capitalists. Most of them come from bourgeois, or at least small capitalist, circles and bring with them all the prejudices which stand opposed to Socialism. Among the workers such prejudices are uprooted by their new environment, but among these higher, intellectual employes they are actually strengthened. Small producers had, for example, as the first article of their faith, the idea that each one could struggle upward in competitive strife only by virtue of his own energy; as a complement to this teaching stood the notion that Socialism would put an end to personal initiative. This individualistic conception of things is, as I have remarked, strengthened in the intellectuals by their new environment; among these very technical and often high placed employes the most efficient sometimes find it possible to climb into the most important positions.

All the regular bourgeois prejudices strike deepest root in this class, further, because its members are nourished on the study of unscientific theories. They regard as scientific truth that which existed among the small bourgeois as subjective, unreasoned opinion. They have great notions of their own education and refinement, feel themselves elevated far above "the masses"; it naturally never occurs to them that the ideals of these masses may be scientifically correct and that the "science" of their professors may be false. As theorizers, seeing the world always as a mass of abstractions, laboring always with their minds, knowing nothing of little of material activities, they are fairly convinced that minds control the world. This notion shuts them out from the understanding of Socialist theory. When they see the masses of laborers and hear of Socialism they think of a crude "levelling down"

which would put an end to their own social and economic advantages. In contrast to the workers they think of themselves as persons who have something to lose, and forget, therefore, the fact that they are being exploited by the capitalists.

Take this altogether and the result is that a hundred causes separate this new middle class from Socialism. Its members have no independent interest which could lead them to an energetic defense of capitalism. But their interest in Socialism is equally slight. They constitute an intermediate class, without definite class ideals, and therefore they bring into the political struggle an element which is unsteady and incalculable.

In great social disturbances, general strikes, e. g., they may sometimes stand by the workers and so increase their strength; they will be the more likely to do this in cases in which such a policy is directed against reaction. On other occasions they may side with the capitalists. Those of them in the lower strata will make common cause with a "reasonable" Socialism, such as is represented by the Revisionists. But the power which will overthrow capitalism can never come from anywhere outside the great mass of proletarian.

# The Destruction of Nature (1909)

There are numerous complaints in the scientific literature about the increasing destruction of forests. But it is not only the joy that every nature-lover feels for forests that should be taken into account. There are also important material interests, indeed the vital interests of humanity. With the disappearance of abundant forests, countries known in Antiquity for their fertility, which were densely populated and famous as granaries for the great cities, have become stony deserts. Rain seldom falls there except as devastating diluvian downpours that carry away the layers of humus which the rain should fertilise. Where the mountain forests have been destroyed, torrents fed by summer rains cause enormous masses of stones and sand to roll down, which clog up Alpine valleys, clearing away forests and devastating villages whose inhabitants are innocent, "due to the fact that personal interest and ignorance have destroyed the forest and headwaters in the high valley."

The authors strongly insist on personal interest and ignorance in their eloquent description of this miserable situation but they do not look into its causes. They probably think that emphasising the consequences is enough to replace ignorance by a better understanding and to undo the effects. They do not see that this is only a part of the phenomenon, one of numerous similar effects that capitalism, this mode of production which is the highest stage of profit-hunting, has on nature.

Why is France a country poor in forests which has to import every year hundreds of millions of francs worth of wood from abroad and spend much more to repair through reforestation the disastrous consequences of the deforestation of the Alps? Under the Ancien Régime there were many state forests. But the bourgeoisie, who took the helm of the French Revolution, saw in these only an instrument for private enrichment. Speculators cleared 3 million hectares to change wood into gold. They did not think of the future, only of the immediate profit.

For capitalism all natural resources are nothing but gold. The more quickly it exploits them, the more the flow of gold accelerates. The private economy results in each individual trying to make the most profit possible without even thinking for a single moment of the general interest, that of humanity. As a result, every wild animal having a monetary value and every wild plant giving rise to profit is immediately the object of a race to extermination. The elephants of Africa have almost disappeared, victims of systematic hunting for their ivory. It is similar for rubber trees, which are the victim of a predatory economy in which everyone only destroys them without planting new ones. In Siberia, it has been noted that furred animals are becoming rarer due to intensive hunting and that the most valuable species could soon disappear. In Canada, vast virgin forests have been reduced to cinders, not only by settlers who want to cultivate the soil, but also by "prospectors" looking for mineral deposits who transform mountain slopes into bare rock so as to have a better overview of the ground. In New Guinea, a massacre of birds of paradise was organised to satisfy the expensive whim of an American woman billionaire. Fashion craziness, typical of a capitalism wasting surplus value, has already led to the extermination of rare species; sea birds on the east coast of America only owe their survival to the strict intervention of the state. Such examples could be multiplied at will.

But are not plants and animals there to be used by humans for their own purposes? Here, we completely leave aside the question of the preservation of nature as it would be without human intervention. We know that humans are the masters of the Earth and that they completely transform nature to meet their needs. To live, we are completely dependent on the forces of nature and on natural resources; we have to use and consume them. That is not the question here, only the way capitalism makes use of them.

A rational social order will have to use the available natural resources in such a way that what is consumed is replaced at the same time, so that society does not impoverish itself and can become wealthier. A closed economy which consumes part of its seed corn impoverishes itself more and more and must inevitably fail. But that is the way capitalism acts. This is an economy which does not think of the future but lives only in the immediate present. In today's economic order, nature does not serve humanity, but capital. It is not the clothing, food or cultural needs of humanity that govern production, but capital's appetite for profit, for gold.

Natural resources are exploited as if reserves were infinite and inexhaustible. The harmful consequences of deforestation for agriculture and the destruction of useful animals and plants expose the finite character of available reserves and the failure of this type of economy. Roosevelt recognises this failure when he wants to call an international conference to review the state of still available natural resources and to take measures to stop them being wasted.

Of course the plan itself is humbug. The state could do much to stop the pitiless extermination of rare species. But the capitalist state is in the end a poor representative of the good of humanity. It must halt in face of the essential interests of capital.

Capitalism is a headless economy which cannot regulate its acts by an understanding of their consequences. But its devastating character

does not derive from this fact alone. Over the centuries humans have also exploited nature in a foolish way, without thinking of the future of humanity as a whole. But their power was limited. Nature was so vast and so powerful that with their feeble technical means humans could only exceptionally damage it. Capitalism, by contrast, has replaced local needs with world needs, and created modern techniques for exploiting nature. So it is now a question of enormous masses of matter being subjected to colossal means of destruction and removed by powerful means of transportation. Society under capitalism can be compared to a gigantic unintelligent body; while capitalism develops its power without limit, it is at the same time senselessly devastating more and more the environment from which it lives. Only socialism, which can give this body consciousness and reasoned action, will at the same time replace the devastation of nature by a rational economy.

# Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics (1912)

## 1. Our Differences

For several years past, profound tactical disagreement has been developing on a succession of issues amongst those who had previously shared common ground as Marxists and together fought against Revisionism in the name of the radical tactic of class struggle. It first came into the open in 1910, in the debate between Kautsky and Luxemburg over the mass strike; then came the dissension over imperialism and the question of disarmament; and finally, with the conflict over the electoral deal made by the Party Executive and the attitude to be adopted towards the liberals, the most important issues of parliamentary politics became the subject of dispute.

One may regret this fact, but no party loyalty can conjure it away; we can only throw light upon it, and this is what the interest of the party demands. On the one hand, the causes of the dissension must be identified, in order to show that it is natural and necessary; and on the other, the content of the two perspectives, their most basic principles and their most far-reaching implications, must be extracted from the formulations of the two sides, so that party comrades can orientate

themselves and choose between them; this is only possible through theoretical discussion.

The source of the recent tactical disagreements is clear to see: under the influence of the modern forms of capitalism, new forms of action have developed in the labour movement, namely mass action. When they first made their appearance, they were welcomed by all Marxists and hailed as a sign of revolutionary development, a product of our revolutionary tactics. But as the practical potential of mass action developed, it began to pose new problems; the question of social revolution, hitherto an unattainably distant ultimate goal, now became a live issue for the militant proletariat, and the tremendous difficulties involved became clear to everyone, almost as a matter of personal experience. This gave rise to two trends of thought: the one took up the problem of revolution, and by analysing the effectiveness, significance and potential of the new forms of action, sought to grasp how the proletariat would be able to fulfil its mission; the other, as if shrinking before the magnitude of this prospect, groped among the older, parliamentary forms of action in search of tendencies which would for the time being make it possible to postpone tackling the task. The new methods of the labour movement have given rise to an ideological split among those who previously advocated radical Marxist party-tactics.

In these circumstances it is our duty as Marxists to clarify the differences as far as possible by means of theoretical discussion. This is why, in our article "Mass action and revolution", we outlined the process of revolutionary development as a reversal of the relations of class power to provide a basic statement of our perspective, and attempted to clarify the differences between our views and those of Kautsky in a critique of two articles by him. In his reply, Kautsky shifted the issue on to a different terrain: instead of contesting the validity of theoretical formulations, he accused us of wanting to force new tactics upon the party. In the Leipziger Volkszeitung of

9 September, we showed that this turned the whole purpose of our argument on its head.

We had attempted, insofar as it was possible, to clarify the distinctions between the three tendencies, two radical and one Revisionist, which now confront each other in the party. Comrade Kautsky seems to have missed the point of this entire analysis, since he remarks testily: "Pannekoek sees my thinking as pure Revisionism."

What we were arguing was on the contrary that Kautsky's position is not Revisionist. For the very reason that many comrades misjudged Kautsky because they were preoccupied with the radical-Revisionist dichotomy of previous debates, and wondered if he was gradually turning Revisionist — for this very reason it was necessary to speak out and grasp Kautsky's practice in terms of the particular nature of his radical position. Whereas Revisionism seeks to limit our activity to parliamentary and trade-union campaigns, to the achievement of reforms and improvements which will evolve naturally into socialism — a perspective which serves as the basis for reformist tactics aimed solely at short-term gains — radicalism stresses the inevitability of the revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power that lies before us, and therefore directs its tactics towards raising class consciousness and increasing the power of the proletariat. It is over the nature of this revolution that our views diverge. As far as Kautsky is concerned, it is an event in the future, a political apocalypse, and all we have to do meanwhile is prepare for the final show-down by gathering our strength and assembling and drilling our troops. In our view, revolution is a process, the first stages of which we are now experiencing, for it is only by the struggle for power itself that the masses can be assembled, drilled and formed into an organisation capable of taking power. These different conceptions lead to completely different evaluations of current practice; and it is apparent that the Revisionists' rejection of any revolutionary action and Kautsky's postponement of it to the indefinite

future are bound to unite them on many of the current issues over which they both oppose us.

This is not of course to say that these currents form distinct, conscious groups in the party: to some extent they are no more than conflicting trends of thought. Nor does it mean a blurring of the distinction between Kautskian radicalism and Revisionism, merely a rapprochement which will nevertheless become more and more pronounced as the inner logic of development asserts itself, for radicalism that is real and yet passive cannot but lose its mass base. Necessary as it was to keep to traditional methods of struggle in the period when the movement was first developing, the time was bound to come when the proletariat would aspire to transform its heightened awareness of its own potential into the conquest of decisive new positions of strength. The mass actions in the struggle for suffrage in Prussia testify to this determination. Revisionism was itself an expression of this aspiration to achieve positive results as the fruit of growing power; and despite the disappointments and failures it has brought, it owes its influence primarily to the notions that radical party-tactics simply mean waiting passively without making definite gains and that Marxism is a doctrine of fatalism. The proletariat cannot rest from the struggle for fresh advances; those who are not prepared to lead this struggle on a revolutionary course will, whatever their intentions, be inexorably pushed further and further along the reformist path of pursuing positive gains by means of particular parliamentary tactics and bargains with other parties.

## 2. Class and Masses

We argued that Comrade Kautsky had left his Marxist analytical tools at home in his analysis of action by the masses, and that the inadequacy of his method was apparent from the fact that he failed to

come to any definite conclusion. Kautsky replies: "Not at all. I came to the very definite conclusion that the unorganised masses in question were highly unpredictable in character." And he refers to the shifting sands of the desert as similarly unpredictable. With all due respect to this illustration, we must nevertheless stand by our argument. If, in analysing a phenomenon, you find that it takes on various forms and is entirely unpredictable, that merely proves that you have not found the real basis determining it. If, after studying the position of the moon, for example, someone "came to the very definite conclusion" that it sometimes appears in the north-east, sometimes in the south and sometimes in the west, in an entirely arbitrary and unpredictable fashion, then everyone would rightly say that this study was fruitless — though it may of course be that the force at work cannot yet be identified. The investigator would only have deserved criticism if he had completely ignored the method of analysis which, as he perfectly well knew, was the only one which could produce results in that field.

This is how Kautsky treats action by the masses. He observes that the masses have acted in different ways historically, sometimes in a reactionary sense, sometimes in a revolutionary sense, sometimes remaining passive, and comes to the conclusion that one cannot build on this shifting, unpredictable foundation. But what does Marxist theory tell us? That beyond the limits of individual variation, — that is where the masses are concerned — the actions of men are determined by their material situation, their interests and the perspectives arising from the latter and that these, making allowances for the weight of tradition, are different for the different classes. If we are to comprehend the behaviour of the masses, then, we must make clear distinctions between the various classes: the actions of a lumpenproletarian mass, a peasant mass and a modern proletarian mass will be entirely different. Of course Kautsky could come to no conclusion by throwing them all together indiscriminately; the cause of his failure to find a basis for

prediction, however, lies not in the object of his historical analysis, but in the inadequacy of the methods he has used.

Kautsky gives another reason for disregarding the class character of the masses of today: as a combination of various classes, they have no class character:

"On p. 45 of my article, I examined what elements might potentially be involved in action of this kind in Germany today. My finding was that, disregarding children and the agricultural population, one would have to reckon with some thirty million people, only about a tenth of whom would be organised workers. The rest would be made up of unorganised workers, for the most part still infected with the thinking of the peasantry, the petty-bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat, together with a good many members of the latter two strata themselves.

Even after Pannekoek's reproaches, I still do not see how a unified class character can be attributed to such motley masses. It is not that I 'left my Marxism at home', I never possessed such 'analytic tools'. Comrade Pannekoek clearly thinks the essence of Marxism consists in seeing a particular class, namely the class-conscious, industrial wage-proletariat, wherever masses are involved."

Kautsky is not doing himself justice here. In order to legitimate a momentary lapse, he generalises it, and without justification. He claims that he has never possessed the Marxist "analytical tools" capable of identifying the class character of these "motley masses" — he says "unified", — but what is at issue is obviously the predominant class character, the character of the class that makes up the majority and whose perspectives and interests are decisive, as is the case today with the industrial proletariat. But he is doing himself wrong; for this same mass, made all the more motley by the addition of the rural population, arises in the context of parliamentary politics. And all the writers of the Social-Democratic Party set out from the principle that the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat forms the basic content

of its parliamentary politics, that the perspectives and interests of wage-labour govern all its policies and represent the perspectives and interests of the people as a whole. Does that which holds good for the masses in the field of parliamentary politics suddenly cease to apply as soon as they turn to mass action?

On the contrary, the proletarian class character comes out all the more clearly in mass action. Where parliamentary politics are concerned, the whole country is involved, even the most isolated villages and hamlets; how densely the population is concentrated has no bearing. But it is mainly the masses pressed together in the big cities who engage in mass action; and according to the most recent official statistics, the population of the 42 major cities of Germany is made up of 15.8 per cent self-employed, 9.1 per cent clerical employees and 75.0 per cent workers, disregarding the 25 per cent to whom no precise occupation can be attributed. If we also note that in 1907 15 per cent of the German labour-force worked in small concerns, 29 per cent in medium-scale concerns and 56 per cent in large-scale and giant concerns, we see how firmly the character of the wage-labourer employed in large-scale industry is stamped upon the masses likely to participate in mass action. If Kautsky can only see motley masses, it is firstly because he counts the wives of organised workers as belonging to the twenty-seven million not organised, and secondly because he denies the proletarian class character of those workers who are not organised or who have still not shrugged off bourgeois traditions. We therefore re-emphasise that what counts in the development of these actions, in which the deepest interests and passions of the masses break surface, is not membership of the organisation, nor a traditional ideology, but to an ever-increasing extent the real class character of the masses.

It now becomes clear what relationship our methods bear each other. Kautsky denounces my method as "over-simplified Marxism"; I am once again asserting that his is neither over-simplified nor over-

sophisticated, but not Marxist at all. Any science seeking to investigate an area of reality must start by identifying the main factors and basic underlying forces in their simplest form; this first simple image is then filled out, improved and made more complex as further details, secondary causes and less direct influences are brought in to correct it, so that it approximates more and more closely to reality. Let us take as an illustration Kautsky's analysis of the great French revolution. Here we find as a first approximation the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the feudal classes; an outline of these main factors, the general validity of which cannot be disputed, could be described as "over-simplified Marxism". In his pamphlet of 1889, Kautsky analysed the sub-divisions within those classes, and was thus able to improve and deepen this first simple sketch significantly. The Kautsky of 1912, however, would maintain that there was no kind of unity to the character of the motley masses which made up the contemporary Third Estate; and that it would be pointless to expect definite actions and results from it. This is how matters stand in this case — except that the situation is more complicated because the future is involved, and the classes of today have to try and locate the forces determining it. As a first approximation aimed at gaining an initial general perspective, we must come down to the basic feature of the capitalist world, the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the two principal classes; we attempted to outline the process of revolution as a development of the power-relations between them. We are, of course, perfectly well aware that reality is much more complex, and that many problems remain to be resolved before we comprehend it: we must to some extent await the lessons of practice in order to do so. The bourgeoisie is no more unified a class than the proletariat; tradition still influences both of them; and among the mass of the people there are also the lumpenproletarians, petty-bourgeois, and clerical employees whose actions are inevitably determined by their particular class situations. But since they only

form admixtures insufficiently important to obscure the basic wage-proletarian character of the masses, the above is merely a qualification which does not refute the initial outline, but rather elaborates it. The collaboration of various tendencies in the form of a debate is necessary to master and clarify these issues. Need we say that we were counting on the author of the *Class Conflicts of 1789* to indicate the problems and difficulties still to be resolved in his criticisms of our initial sketch?

But the Kautsky of 1912 declares it beyond his competence to assist in this, the most important question facing the militant proletariat, that of identifying the forces which will shape its coming revolutionary struggle, on the grounds that he does not know how a “unified class character” can be attributed to “such motley masses” as the proletarian masses of today.

### 3. The Organisation

In our article in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, we maintained that Kautsky had without justification taken our emphasis on the essential importance of the spirit of organisation to mean that we consider the organisation itself unnecessary. What we had said was that irrespective of all assaults upon the external forms of association, the masses in which this spirit dwells will always regroup themselves in new organisations; and if, in contrast to the view he expressed at the Dresden party congress in 1903, Kautsky now expects the state to refrain from attacking the workers’ organisations, this optimism can only be based upon the spirit of organisation which he so scorns.

The spirit of organisation is in fact the active principle which alone endows the framework of organisation with life and energy. But this immortal soul cannot float ethereally in the kingdom of heaven like that of Christian theology; it continually recreates an organisational form for itself, because it brings together the men in whom it lives for the

purpose of joint, organised action. This spirit is not something abstract or imaginary by contrast with the prevailing form of association, the "concrete" organisation, but is *just as concrete and real* as the latter. It binds the individual persons which make up the organisation more closely together than any rules or statutes can do, so that they no longer scatter as disparate atoms when the external bond of rules and statutes is severed. If organisations are able to develop and take action as powerful, stable, united bodies, if neither joining battle nor breaking off the engagement, neither struggle nor defeat can crack their solidarity, if all their members see it as the most natural thing in the world to put the common interest before their own individual interest, they do not do so because of the rights and obligations entailed in the statutes, nor because of the magic power of the organisation's funds or its democratic constitution: the reason for all this lies in the proletariat's sense of organisation, the profound transformation that its character has undergone. What Kautsky has to say about the powers which the organisation has at its disposal is all very well: the quality of the arms which the proletariat forges for itself gives it self-confidence and a sense of its own capabilities, and there is no disagreement between us as to the need for the workers to equip themselves as well as possible with powerful centralised associations that have adequate funds at their disposal. But the virtue of this machinery is *dependent* upon the readiness of the members to sacrifice themselves, upon their discipline within the organisation, upon their solidarity towards their comrades, in short, upon the fact that they have become completely different persons from the old individualistic petty-bourgeois and peasants. If Kautsky sees this new character, this spirit of organisation, as a product of organisation, then in the first place there need be no conflict between this view and our own, and in the second place it is only half correct; for this transformation of human nature in the proletariat is primarily the effect of the conditions under which the workers live, trained as they are

to act collectively by the shared experience of exploitation in the same factory, and secondarily a *product of class struggle*, that is to say militant action on the part of the organisation; it would be difficult to argue that such activities as electing committees and counting subscriptions make much contribution in this respect.

It immediately becomes clear what constitutes the essence of proletarian organisation if we consider exactly what distinguishes a trade union from a whist club, a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals or an employers' association. Kautsky obviously does not do so, and sees no difference of principle between them; hence he puts the "yellow associations", which employers compel their workers to join, on a par with the organisations of the militant proletariat. He does not recognise the world-transforming significance of the proletarian organisation. He feels able to accuse us of disdain for the organisation: in reality he values it far less than we do. What distinguishes the workers' organisations from all others is the development of solidarity within them as the basis of their power, the total subordination of the individual to the community, the essence of a new humanity still in the process of formation. The proletarian organisation brings unity to the masses, previously fragmented and powerless, moulding them into an entity with a conscious purpose and with power in its own right. It lays the foundations of a humanity which governs itself, decides its own destiny, and as the first step in that direction, throws off alien oppression. In it there grows up the only agency which can abolish the class hegemony of exploitation; the development of the proletarian organisation in itself signifies the repudiation of all the functions of class rule; it represents the self-created order of the people, and it will fight relentlessly to throw back and put an end to the brutal intervention and despotic attempts at repression which the ruling minority undertakes. It is within the proletarian organisation that the new humanity grows, a humanity now developing into a coherent entity for the first time in

the history of the world; production is developing into a unified world economy, and the sense of belonging together is concurrently growing between men, the firm solidarity and fraternity which bind them together as one organism ruled by a single will.

As far as Kautsky is concerned, the organisation consists only in the "real, concrete" association or club formed by the workers for some practical goal in their own interests and held together only by the external bonds of rules and statutes, just like an employers' association or a grocers' mutual-aid society. If this external bond is broken, the whole thing fragments into so many isolated individuals and the organisation disappears. It is understandable that a conception of this kind leads Kautsky to paint the external dangers threatening the organisation in such sombre colours and warn so energetically against injudicious "trials of strength" which bring demoralisation, mass desertion and the collapse of the organisation in their train. At this level of generalisation there can be no objection to his warnings: nobody wants injudicious trials of strength. Nor are the unfortunate consequences of a defeat a fantasy on his part; they correspond to the experience of a young labour movement. When the workers first discover organisation, they expect great things of it, and enter into battle full of enthusiasm; but if the contest is lost, they often turn their backs upon the organisation in despondency and discouragement, because they regard it only from the direct, practical perspective, as an association bringing immediate benefits, and the new spirit has yet to take firm root in them. But what a different picture greets us in the mature labour movement that is setting its stamp ever more distinctly upon the most advanced countries! Again and again we see with what tenacity the workers stick to their organisations, we see how neither defeat nor the most vicious terrorism from the upper classes can induce them to abandon the organisation. They see in the organisation not merely a society formed for purposes of convenience, they feel rather

that it is their only strength, their only recourse, that without the organisation they are powerless and defenceless, and this consciousness rules their every action as despotically as an instinct of self-preservation.

This is not yet true of all workers, of course, but it is the direction in which they are developing; this new character is growing stronger and stronger in the proletariat. And the dangers painted so black by Kautsky are therefore becoming of increasingly little moment. Certainly the struggle has its dangers, but it is nevertheless the organisation's element, the only environment in which it can grow and develop internal strength. We know of no strategy that can bring only victories and no defeats; however cautious we may be, setbacks and defeats can only be completely avoided by quitting the field without a fight, and this would in most cases be worse than a defeat. We must be prepared for our advances to be only too often brought to a halt by defeat, with no way of avoiding battle. When well-meaning leaders hold forth on the serious consequences of defeat, the workers are therefore able to retort: "Do you think that we, for whom the organisation has become flesh and blood, who know and feel that the organisation is more to us than our very lives — for it represents the life and future of our class — that simply because of a defeat we shall straightway lose confidence in the organisation and run off? Certainly, a whole section of the masses who flooded to us in attack and victory will drift away again when we suffer a reverse; but this only means that we can count on wider support for our actions than the steadily growing phalanx of our unflinching fighting battalions."

This contrast between Kautsky's views and our own also makes it clear how it is that we differ so sharply in our evaluation of the organisation even though we share the same theoretical matrix. *It is simply that our perspectives correspond to different stages in the development of the organisation*, Kautsky's to the organisation in its first flowering, ours to a more mature level of development. This is why he considers

the external form of organisation to be what is essential and believes that the whole organisation is lost if this form suffers. This is why he takes the transformation of the proletarian character to be the consequence of organisation, rather than its essence. This is why he sees the main characterological effect of organisation upon the worker in the confidence and self-restraint brought by the material resources of the collectivity — in other words, the funds. This is why he warns that the workers will turn their backs upon the organisation in demoralisation if it suffers a major defeat. All this corresponds to the conception one would derive from observing the organisation in its initial stages of development. The arguments that he puts against us do, therefore, have a basis in reality; but we claim a *greater* justification for our perspective in that it belongs to the new reality irresistibly unfolding — and let us not forget that Germany has only had powerful proletarian organisations for a decade! It therefore reflects the sentiments of the young generation of workers that has evolved over the last ten years. The old ideas still apply, of course, but to a decreasing extent; Kautsky's conceptions express the primitive, immature moments in the organisation, still a force to be reckoned with, but an inhibiting, retarding one. It will be revealed by practice what relationship these different forces bear towards each other, in the decisions and acts by which the proletarian masses show what they deem themselves capable of.

## 4. The Conquest of Power

For a refutation of Kautsky's extraordinary remarks on the role of the state and the conquest of political power and for discussion of his tendency to see anarchists everywhere, we must refer the reader to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* of 10 September. Here we will add only a few comments to clarify our differences.

The question as to *how the proletariat gains the fundamental democratic rights* which, once its socialist class consciousness is sufficiently developed, endow it with political hegemony, is the *basic issue underlying our tactics*. We take the view that they can only be won from the ruling class in the course of engagements in which the latter's whole might takes the field against the proletariat and in which, consequently, this whole might is overcome. Another conception would be that the ruling class surrenders these rights voluntarily under the influence of universal democratic or ethical ideals and without recourse to the means of coercion at its disposal — this would be the peaceful evolution towards the state of the future envisaged by the Revisionists. Kautsky rejects both these views: what possible alternative is there? We inferred from his statements that he conceived the conquest of power as the destruction of the enemy's strength once and for all, a single act qualitatively different from all the proletariat's previous activity in preparation for this revolution. Since Kautsky rejects this reading and since it is desirable that his basic conceptions regarding tactics should be clearly understood, we will proceed to quote the most important passages. In October 1910, he wrote:

"In a situation like that obtaining in Germany, I can only conceive a political general strike as a unique event in which the entire proletariat throughout the nation engages with all its might, as a life-and-death struggle, one in which our adversary is beaten down or else all our organisations, all our strength shattered or at least paralysed for years to come."

It is to be supposed that by beating down our adversary, Kautsky means the conquest of political power; otherwise the unique act would have to be repeated a second or third time. Of course, the campaign might also prove insufficiently powerful, and in this case it would have failed, would have resulted in serious defeat, and would therefore have to be begun over again. But if it succeeded, the final goal would have

been attained. Now, however, Kautsky is denying that he ever said that the mass strike could be an event capable of bringing down capitalism at a stroke. How, therefore, we are to take the above quotation I simply do not understand.

In 1911, Kautsky wrote in his article "Action by the masses" of the spontaneous actions of unorganised crowds:

"If the mass action succeeds, however, if it is so dynamic and so tremendously widespread, the masses so aroused and determined, the attack so sudden and the situation in which it catches our adversary so unfavourable to him that its effect is irresistible, then the masses will be able to exploit this victory in a manner quite different from hitherto. [There follows the reference to the workers' organisations.] Where these organisations have taken root, the times are past when the proletariat's victories in spontaneous mass actions succeeded only in snatching the chestnuts from the fire for some particular section of its opponents which happened to be in opposition. Henceforth, it will be able to enjoy them itself."

I can see no other possible interpretation of this passage than that as a result of a powerful spontaneous uprising on the part of the unorganised masses triggered off by some particularly provocative events, political power now falls into the hands of the proletariat itself, instead of into the hands of a bourgeois clique as hitherto. Here too the possibility is envisaged of assaults initially failing and collapsing in defeat before the attack finally succeeds. The protagonists in a political revolution of this kind and the methods they were using would put it completely outside the framework of the labour movement of today; while the latter was carrying on its routine activity of education and organisation, revolution would break over it without any warning "as if from another world" under the influence of momentous events. Thus, we can see no other interpretation that that put forward in our article. The crux of it is not that in this view revolution is a *single* sharp

act; even if the conquest of power consisted of several such acts (mass strikes and “street” actions), the main point is the stark contrast between the current activity of the proletariat and the future revolutionary conquest of power, which belongs to a completely different order of things. Kautsky now explicitly confirms this:

“In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I should like to point out that my polemic with Comrade Luxemburg dealt with the political *general strike* and my article on ‘Action by the masses’ with *street riots*. I said of the latter that they could in certain circumstances lead to political upheavals, but were unpredictable by nature and could not be instigated at will. I was not referring to simple *street demonstrations* ...”

I will repeat once again that my theory of ‘passive radicalism’, that is to say waiting for the appropriate occasion and mood among the masses, neither of which can be predicted in advance or hastened on by decision of the organisation, related only to street riots and mass strikes aimed at securing a particular political decision — and not to street demonstrations, nor to protest strikes. The latter can very well be called by party or trade union from time to time, irrespective of the mood of the masses outside the organisation, but do not necessarily involve new tactics so long as they remain mere demonstrations.”

We will not dwell on the fact that a political mass strike only permissible as a once-and-for-all event in 1910 and therefore ruled out of the contemporary Prussian suffrage campaign now suddenly appears among the day-to-day actions which can be initiated at the drop of a hat as a “protest strike”. We will merely point out that Kautsky is here making a sharp distinction between day-to-day actions, which are only demonstrations and can be called at will, and the unforeseeable revolutionary events of the future. New rights may occasionally be won in the day-to-day struggle; these are in no sense steps towards the conquest of power, otherwise the ruling class would put up resistance to them which could only be overcome by political strikes. Governments

friendly to the workers may alternate with governments hostile to them, street demonstrations and mass strikes may play some part in the process, but for all that, nothing essential will change; our struggle remains “a political struggle against governments” restricting itself to “opposition” and leaving the power of the state and its ministries intact. Until one day, when external events trigger off a massive popular uprising with street riots and political strikes that puts an end to this whole business.

It is only possible to maintain such a perspective by restricting one's observation to external political forms and ignoring the political reality behind them. Analysis of the balance of power between the classes in conflict as one rises and the other declines is the only key to understanding revolutionary development. This transcends the sharp distinction between day-to-day action and revolution. The various forms of action mentioned by Kautsky *are not polar opposites, but part of a gradually differentiated range*, weak and powerful forms of action within the same category. *Firstly, in terms of how they develop:* even straightforward demonstrations cannot be called at will, but are only possible when strong feeling has been aroused by external causes, such as the rising cost of living and the danger of war today or the conditions of suffrage in Prussia in 1910. The stronger the feeling aroused, the more vigorously the protests can develop. What Kautsky has to say about the most powerful form of mass strike, namely that we should “give it the most energetic support and use it to strengthen the proletariat”, does not go far enough for cases where this situation has already generated a mass movement; when conditions permit, the party, as the conscious bearer of the exploited masses' deepest sensibilities, *must instigate such action as is necessary and take over leadership of the movement* — in other words, play the same role in events of major significance as it does today on a smaller scale. The precipitating factors cannot be foreseen, but it is we who act upon them. *Secondly, in terms of those taking part:* we

cannot restrict our present demonstrations solely to party members; although these at first form the nucleus, others will come to us in the course of the struggle. In our last article we showed that the circle of those involved grows as the campaign develops, until it takes in the broad masses of the people; there is never any question of unruly street riots in the old sense. *Thirdly, in terms of the effects such action has:* the conquest of power by means of the most potent forms of action basically amounts to liquidating the powers of coercion available to the enemy and building up our own strength; but even today's protests, our simple street demonstrations, display this effect on a small scale. When the police had to abandon their attempts to prevent demonstrations in sheer impotence in 1910, that was a first sign of the state's coercive powers beginning to crumble away; and the content of revolution consists in the total destruction of these powers. In this sense, that instance of mass action can be seen as the beginning of the German revolution.

The contrast between our respective views as set out here may at first sight appear to be purely theoretical; but it nevertheless has great practical significance with respect to the tactics we adopt. As Kautsky sees it, each time the opportunity for vigorous action arises we must stop and consider whether it might not lead to a "trial of strength", an attempt to make the revolution, that is, by mobilising the entire strength of our adversary against us. And because it is accepted that we are too weak to undertake this, it will be only too easy to shrink from any action — this was the burden of the debate on the mass strike in *Die Neue Zeit* in 1910. Those who reject Kautsky's dichotomy between day-to-day action and revolution, however, assess every action as an immediate issue, to be evaluated in terms of the prevailing conditions and the mood of the masses, and at the same time, as part of a great purpose. In each campaign one presses as far ahead as seems possible in the conditions obtaining, without allowing oneself to be hamstrung by specious theoretical considerations projected into the future; for the

issue is never one of total revolution, nor of a victory with significance only for the present, but always of a step further along the path of revolution.

## 5. Parliamentary Activity and Action by the Masses

Mass action is nothing new: it is as old as parliamentary activity itself. Every class that has made use of parliament has also on occasion resorted to mass action; for it forms a necessary complement or — better still — *a corrective to parliamentary action*. Since, in developed parliamentary systems, parliament itself enacts legislation, including electoral legislation, a class or clique which has once gained the upper hand is in a position to secure its rule for all time, irrespective of all social development. But if its hegemony becomes incompatible with a new stage of development, mass action, often in the form of a revolution or popular uprising, intervenes as a corrective influence, sweeps the ruling clique away, imposes a new electoral law on parliament, and thus reconciles parliament and society once again. Mass action can also occur when the masses are in particularly dire straits, to impel parliament to alleviate their misery. Fear of the consequences of the masses' indignation often induces the class holding parliamentary power to make concessions which the masses would not otherwise have obtained. Whether or not the masses have spokesmen in parliament on such occasions is far from immaterial, but is nevertheless of secondary importance; the crucial determinant force lies outside.

We have now again entered a period when this corrective influence upon the working of parliament is more necessary than ever; the struggle for democratic suffrage on the one hand and the rising cost of living and the danger of war on the other are kindling mass action. Kautsky likes to point out that there is nothing new in these forms of

struggle; he emphasises the similarity with earlier ones. We, however, stress the new elements which distinguish them from all that has gone before. The fact that the socialist proletariat of Germany has begun to use these methods endows them with entirely new significance and implications, and it was precisely to clarifying these that my article was devoted. Firstly, because the highly organised, class-conscious proletariat of which the German proletariat is the most developed example has a completely different class character from that of the popular masses hitherto, and its actions are therefore qualitatively different. Secondly, because this proletariat is destined to enact a far-reaching revolution, and the action which it takes will therefore have a profoundly subversive effect on the whole of society, on the power of the state and on the masses, even when it does not directly serve an electoral campaign.

Kautsky is therefore not justified in appealing to England as a model "in which we can best study the nature of modern mass action". What we are concerned with is mass political action aimed at securing new rights and thus giving parliamentary expression to the power of the proletariat: in England it was a case of mass action by the trade unions, a massive strike in furtherance of trade-union demands, which expressed the weakness of the old conservative trade-union methods by seeking assistance from the government. What we are concerned with is a proletariat as politically mature, as deeply instilled with socialism as it is here in Germany; the socialist awareness and political clarity necessary for such actions were completely lacking among the masses on strike in England. Of course, the latter events also demonstrate that the labour movement cannot get by without mass action; they too are a consequence of imperialism. But despite the admirable solidarity and determination manifested in them, they had rather the character of desperate outbursts than the deliberate actions leading to the conquest

of power which only a proletariat deeply imbued with socialism can undertake.

As we pointed out in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, parliamentary activity and action by the masses are not incompatible with each other; mass action in the struggle for suffrage endows parliamentary activity with a new, broader basis. And in our first article we argued that the rising cost of living and the danger of war under imperialism, the modern form of capitalism, are at the root of modern mass action. Comrade Kautsky "fails to see" how this results in "the necessity for new tactics" — the necessity for mass action, in other words; for mass action aimed at "altering or exacting decisions by parliament" can no more do away with the basic effects of capitalism — the causes of the rise in the cost of living, for example, which lie in bad harvests, gold production and the cartel system — against which parliaments are powerless, than any other form of political action. It is a pity that the Parisians driven to revolt in 1848 by the crisis and the rising cost of living did not know that; they would certainly not have made the February Revolution. Perhaps Comrade Kautsky would see this as yet another demonstration of the incomprehension of the masses, whose instinct is deaf to the urgings of reason. But if, spurred on by hunger and misery, the masses rise up together and demand relief despite the theoretician's arguments that no form of political action can achieve anything in the face of the fundamental evils of capitalism, then it is the masses' instincts that are in the right and the theoretician's science that is in the wrong. Firstly, because the action can set itself immediate goals that are not meaningless; when subjected to powerful pressure, governments and those in authority can do a great deal to alleviate misery, even when this has deeper causes and cannot be altered merely by parliamentary decision — as could duties and tariffs in Germany. Secondly, because the lasting effect of large-scale mass action is a more

or less shattering blow to the hegemony of capital, and hence attacks the root of the evil.

Kautsky constantly proceeds upon the assumption that so long as capitalism has not been transformed into socialism, it must be accepted as a fixed, unchangeable fact against the effects of which it is pointless to struggle. During the period when the proletariat is still weak it is true that a particular manifestation of capitalism — such as war, the rising cost of living, unemployment — cannot be done away with so long as the rest of the system continues to function in all its power. But this is not true for the period of capitalist decline, in which the now mighty proletariat, itself an elemental force of capitalism, throws its own will and strength into the balance of elemental forces. If this view of the transition from capitalism to socialism seems “very obscure and mysterious” to Comrade Kautsky — which only means that it is new to him — then this is only because he regards capitalism and socialism as fixed, ready-made entities, and fails to grasp the transition from one to the other as a dialectical process. Each assault by the proletariat upon the individual effects of capitalism means a weakening of the power of capital, a strengthening of our own power and a step further in the process of revolution.

## 6. Marxism and the Role of the Party

In conclusion, a few more words on theory. These are necessary because Kautsky hints from time to time that our work takes leave of the materialist conception of history, the basis of Marxism. In one place he describes our conception of the nature of organisation as spiritualism ill befitting a materialist. On another occasion he takes our view that the proletariat must develop its power and freedom “in constant attack and advance”, in a class struggle escalating from one engagement to another, to mean that the party executive is to “instigate” *the revolution*.

Marxism explains all the historical and political actions of men in terms of their material relations, and in particular their economic relations. A recurrent bourgeois misconception accuses us of ignoring the role of the human mind in this, and making man a dead instrument, a puppet of economic forces. We insist in turn that Marxism does not eliminate the mind. Everything which motivates the actions of men does so through the mind. Their actions are determined by their will, and by all the ideals, principles and motives that exist in the mind.

But Marxism maintains that the content of the human mind is nothing other than a product of the material world in which man lives, and that economic relations therefore only determine his actions by their effects upon his mind and influence upon his will. Social revolution only succeeds the development of capitalism because the economic upheaval first transforms the mind of the proletariat, endowing it with a new content and directing the will in this sense. Just as Social-Democratic activity is the expression of a new perspective and new determination instilling themselves in the mind of the proletariat, so organisation is an expression and consequence of a profound mental transformation in the proletariat. This mental transformation is the term of mediation by which economic development leads to the act of social revolution. There can surely be no disagreement between Kautsky and ourselves that this is the role which Marxism attributes to the mind.

And yet even in this connection our views differ; not in the sphere of abstract, theoretical formulation, but in our practical emphasis. It is only when taken together that the two statements "The actions of men are entirely determined by their material relations" and "Men must make their history themselves through their own actions" constitute the Marxist view as a whole. The first rules out the arbitrary notion that a revolution can be made at will; the second eliminates the fatalism that would have us simply wait until the revolution happens of its own accord through some perfect fruition of development. While

both maxims are correct in theoretical terms, they necessarily receive different degrees of emphasis in the course of historical development. When the party is first flourishing and must before all else organise the proletariat, seeing its own development as the primary aim of its activity, the truth embodied in the first maxim gives it the patience for the slow process of construction, the sense that the time of premature putsches is past and the calm certainty of eventual victory. Marxism takes on a predominantly historico-economic character in this period; it is the theory that all history is economically determined, and drums into us the realisation that we must wait for conditions to mature. But the more the proletariat organises itself into a mass movement capable of forceful intervention in social life, the more it is bound to develop a sense of the second maxim. The awareness now grows that the point is not simply to interpret the world, but to change it. Marxism now becomes the *theory of proletarian action*. The questions of how precisely the proletariat's spirit and will develop under the influence of social conditions and how the various influences shape it now come into the foreground; interest in the philosophical side of Marxism and in the nature of the mind now comes to life. Two Marxists influenced by these different stages will therefore express themselves differently, the one primarily emphasising the determinate nature of the mind, the other its active role; they will both lead their respective truths into battle against each other, although they both pay homage to the same Marxian theory.

From the practical point of view, however, this disagreement takes on another light. We entirely agree with Kautsky that an individual or group cannot make the revolution. Equally, Kautsky will agree with us that the proletariat must make the revolution. But how do matters stand with the party, which is a middle term, on the one hand a large group which consciously decides what action it will take, and on the other the representative and leader of the entire proletariat? *What is the function of the party?*

With respect to revolution, Kautsky puts it as follows in his exposition of his tactics: "Utilisation of the political general strike, but only in occasional, extreme instances when the masses can no longer be restrained." Thus, the party is to hold back the masses for as long as they can be held back; so long as it is in any way possible, it should regard its function as to keep the masses placid, to restrain them from taking action; only when this is no longer possible, when popular indignation is threatening to burst all constraint, does it open the flood-gates and if possible put itself at the head of the masses. The roles are thus distributed in such a way that all the energy, all the initiative in which revolution has its origins must come from the masses, while the party's function is to hold this activity back, inhibit it, contain it for as long as possible. But the relationship cannot be conceived in this way. Certainly, all the energy comes from the masses, whose revolutionary potential is aroused by oppression, misery and anarchy, and who by their revolt must then abolish the hegemony of capital. But the party has taught them that desperate outbursts on the part of individuals or individual groups are pointless, and that success can only be achieved through collective, united, organised action. It has disciplined the masses and restrained them from frittering away their revolutionary activity fruitlessly. But this, of course, is only the one, negative side of the party's function; it must simultaneously show in positive terms how these energies can be set to work in a different, productive manner, and lead the way in doing so. The masses have, so to speak, made over part of their energy, their revolutionary purpose, to the organised collectivity, not so that it shall be dissipated, but so that the party can put it to use as their collective will. *The initiative and potential for spontaneous action which the masses surrender by doing so is not in fact lost, but re-appears elsewhere and in another form as the party's initiative and potential for spontaneous action;* a transformation of energy takes place, as it were. Even when the fiercest indignation flares up among the masses

— over the rising cost of living, for example — they remain calm, for they rely upon the party calling upon them to act in such a way that their energy will be utilised in the most appropriate and most successful manner possible.

The relationship between masses and party cannot therefore be as Kautsky has presented it. If the party saw its function as restraining the masses from action for as long as it could do so, then party discipline would mean a loss to the masses of their initiative and potential for spontaneous action, a *real* loss, and not a transformation of energy. *The existence of the party would then reduce the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat rather than increase it.* It cannot simply sit down and wait until the masses rise up spontaneously in spite of having entrusted it with part of their autonomy; the discipline and confidence in the party leadership which keep the masses calm place it under an obligation to intervene actively and itself give the masses the call for action at the right moment. Thus, as we have already argued, the party actually has a duty to *instigate* revolutionary action, because it is the bearer of an important part of the masses' capacity for action; but it *cannot do so as and when it pleases*, for it has not assimilated the entire will of the entire proletariat, and cannot therefore order it about like a troop of soldiers. It must wait for the right moment: not until the masses will wait no longer and are rising up of their own accord, but until the conditions arouse such feeling in the masses that large-scale action by the masses has a chance of success. This is the way in which the Marxist doctrine is realised that although men are determined and impelled by economic development, they make their own history. The revolutionary potential of the indignation aroused in the masses by the intolerable nature of capitalism must not go untapped and hence be lost; nor must it be frittered away in unorganised outbursts, but made fit for organised use in action instigated by the party with the objective of weakening the

hegemony of capital. It is in these revolutionary tactics that Marxist theory will become reality.

# Class Struggle and Nation (1912)

## Introduction

Not being Austrian, perhaps I should apologize for writing on the national question. If it were a purely Austrian issue, anyone who is not intimately acquainted with the practical situation and who is not obliged to be acquainted with it through everyday practice would not get involved in examining it. But this question is acquiring increasing importance for other countries as well. And thanks to the writings of the Austrian theoreticians, and especially to Otto Bauer's valuable work, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*[1], it is no longer an exclusive preserve of Austrian practice and has become a question of general socialist theory. Currently, this question, the way it has been addressed and its implications cannot but arouse lively interest in every socialist who considers theory to be the guiding thread of our practice; at the present time one can also make judgments and engage in criticism outside the realm of specifically Austrian conditions. Since we shall have to combat certain of Bauer's conclusions in the following pages, we shall say in advance that this by no means diminishes the value of his work; its importance does not reside in having established definitive and irrefutable results in this domain, but in laying the groundwork for further debate and discussion on this question.

This discussion seems to be especially timely at this juncture. The separatist crisis puts the national question on the agenda in the party and obliges us to re-examine these questions, and to subject our point of view to thorough scrutiny. And maybe a debate concerning theoretical basics would not be totally useless here; with this study we hope to make our contribution in this debate to our Austrian comrades. The fact that comrade Strasser, in his study *Worker and Nation*, has arrived at the same conclusions as we have, by a completely different route, on the basis of Austrian conditions (guided of course by the same basic Marxist conception), has played a determinant role in the decision to publish this pamphlet. Our labors may therefore complement one another in regard to this question.

## I. The Nation and its Transformations

### The Bourgeois Conception and the Socialist Conception

Socialism is a new scientific conception of the human world which is fundamentally distinct from all bourgeois conceptions. The bourgeois manner of representing things considers the different formations and institutions of the human world either as products of nature, praising or condemning them depending on whether or not they contradict or conform to "eternal human nature", or as products of chance or arbitrary human decisions which can be altered at will by means of artificial violence. Social democracy, on the other hand, considers the same phenomena to be naturally-arising products of the development of human society. While nature undergoes practically no change—the genesis of animal species and their differentiation took place over very long periods—human society is subject to constant and fast-paced development. This is because its basis, labor for survival, has constantly had to assume new forms as its tools have been perfected; economic life is thrown into turmoil and this gives rise to new ways of seeing

and new ideas, new laws, and new political institutions. It is therefore in relation to this point that the opposition between the bourgeois and socialist conceptions resides: for the former, a naturally immutable character and at the same time, the arbitrary; for the latter, an incessant process of becoming and transformation in accordance with laws established via the economy, upon the basis of labor.

This also applies to the nation. The bourgeois conception sees in the diversity of nations natural differences among men; nations are groupings constituted by the community of race, of origin, and of language. But at the same time it also believes that it can, by means of coercive political measures, oppress nations in one place, and extend its domain at the expense of other nations somewhere else. Social democracy considers nations to be human groups which have formed units as a consequence of their shared history. Historical development has produced nations within its limits and in its own way; it also produces change in the meaning and essence of the nation in general with the passage of time and changing economic conditions. It is only on the basis of economic conditions that one can understand the history and development of the nation and the national principle.

From the socialist point of view, it is Otto Bauer who has supplied, in his work *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, the most profound analysis; his exposition constitutes the indispensable point of departure for the further examination and discussion of the national question. In this work, the socialist point of view is formulated as follows: "The nation is thus no longer for us a fixed thing, but a process of becoming, determined in its essence by the conditions under which the people struggle for their livelihood and for the preservation of their kind" (p. 107). And a little further on: "the materialist conception of history can comprehend the nation as the never-completed product of a constantly occurring process, the ultimate driving force of which is constituted by the conditions governing the struggle of humans with

nature, the transformation of the human forces of production, and the changes in the relations governing human labor. This conception renders the nation as the historical within us" (p. 108). National character is "solidified history".

### **The Nation as Community of Fate**

Bauer most correctly defines the nation as "*the totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate into a community of character*" (p.117). This formula has frequently but mistakenly been attacked, since it is perfectly correct. The misunderstanding resides in the fact that similarity and community are always confused. Community of fate does not mean submission to an identical fate, but the shared experience of a single fate undergoing constant changes, in a continuous reciprocity. The peasants of China, India and Egypt resemble one another in the similarity of their economic conditions; they have the same class character but there is not a trace of community between them. The petit-bourgeois, the shop-keepers, the workers, the noble landowners, and the peasants of England, however, although they display many differences in character due to their different class positions, nonetheless still constitute a community; a history lived in common, the reciprocal influence they exercise upon one another, albeit in the form of struggles, all of this taking place through the medium of a common language, makes them a community of character, a nation. At the same time, the mental content of this community, its common culture, is transmitted from generation to generation thanks to the written word.

This is by no means meant to imply that all characters within a nation are similar. To the contrary, there can be great differences of character within a nation, depending on one's class or place of residence. The German peasant and the German industrialist, the Bavarian and the Oldenburger, display manifest differences in character; they nonetheless still form part of the German nation. Nor does this imply that there are no communities of character other than

nations. We are not, of course, referring to special organizations, limited in time, such as joint-stock companies or trade unions. But *every human organization which comprises an enduring unity, inherited from generation to generation, constitutes a community of character engendered by a community of fate.*

The religious communities offer another example. They are also “solidified history”. They are not just groups of people who share the same religion and who come together for a religious purpose. This is because they are, so to speak, born in their churches and rarely pass from one church to another. In principle, however, the religious community includes all those who are connected socially in one way or another by origin, their village or their class; the community of interests and conditions of existence simultaneously created a community of basic mental representations which assumed a religious form. It also created the bond of reciprocal duties, of loyalty and protection, between the organization and its members. The community of religion was the expression of social belonging in primitive tribal communities and in the Church of the Middle Ages. The religious communities born during the Reformation, the Protestant Churches and sects, were organizations of class struggle against the dominant Church, and against each other; they thus correspond to a certain extent to our contemporary political parties. As a result, the different religious faiths expressed living, real, deeply-felt interests; one could convert from one religion to another in much the same way that one can quit one party and join another in our time. Later, these organizations petrified into communities of faith in which only the top stratum, the clergy, maintained relations within its own ambit which set it above the entire Church. The community of interests disappeared; within each Church, there arose, with social development, numerous classes and class contradictions. The religious organization became more and more an empty shell, and the profession of faith, an abstract formula lacking any social content. It

was replaced by other organizations which were living associations of interests. Hence the religious community constitutes a grouping whose community of fate increasingly belongs to the past, and is progressively dissolving. *Religion, too, is a precipitate of what is historical in us.*

The nation, then, is not *the only* community of character which has arisen from a community of fate, but only one of its forms, and sometimes it is hard to distinguish it from the others without ambiguity. It would serve no purpose to attempt to discover which human units of organization could be defined as nations, especially in ancient times. Primitive tribal units, great or small, were communities of character and of fate in which characteristics, customs, culture and language were passed on from generation to generation. The same is true of the village communes or the peasant regions of the Middle Ages. Otto Bauer discovers in the Middle Ages, in the era of the Hohenstauffens, the "German nation" in the political and cultural community of the German nobility. On the other hand, the medieval Church possessed numerous traits which made it a kind of nation; it was the community of the European peoples, with a common history and common mental representations, and they even had a common language, the Latin of the Church, which allowed educated people to mutually influence one another, the dominant intellectual force of all of Europe, and united them in a community of culture. Only in the last years of the Middle Ages did nations in the modern sense of the term slowly arise, each with its own national language, national unity and culture.

*A common language* is, insofar as it forms a living bond between men, *the most important attribute* of the nation; *but this does not justify identifying nations with human groups speaking the same language.* The English and the Americans are, despite the fact that they speak the same language, two nations with different histories, two different communities of fate which present strikingly divergent national characteristics. It is also incorrect to reckon the German Swiss as part of a common German nation which

would embrace all German-speaking peoples. No matter how many cultural elements have been allowed to be exchanged between them by means of an identical written language, fate has separated the Swiss and the Germans for several centuries. The fact that the former are free citizens of a democratic republic and the latter have lived successively under the tyranny of petty princes, foreign rule, and the weight of the new German police state, had to confer upon each group, even if they read the same authors, a very different character and one cannot speak of a community of fate and of character in this case. The political aspect is yet more evident among the Dutch; the rapid economic development of the maritime provinces, which surrounded themselves on the landward side with a wall of dependent provinces, and then became a powerful mercantile State, a political entity, made Low German a separate modern written language, but only for a small segment separated from the mass of those who spoke Low German; all the others have been excluded from this language by political barriers and have adopted, as residents of Germany who have been subject to a common history, the High German written language and culture. If the Austrian Germans continue to emphasize their German qualities despite their long history of separate development and the fact that they have not shared in the most important of the most recent historical experiences of the Germans of the Empire, this is essentially due to their embattled position in relation to Austria's other nationalities.

### **The Peasant Nation and the Modern Nation**

The peasants have often been described as being stalwart guardians of nationality. Otto Bauer, however, also calls them the tenants of the nation who do not participate in national culture. This contradiction starkly reveals that what is "national" in the peasantry is a very different thing than what constitutes the modern nation. Modern nationality does of course descend from peasant nationality but differs from it in a fundamental way.

In the ancient natural economy of the peasants, the economic unit was reduced to its smallest scale; the operative interest did not extend beyond the borders of the village or the valley. Each district constituted a community which barely maintained relations with its nearest neighbors, a community that had its own history, its own customs, its own dialect and its own character. Some of them were connected by ties of kinship with the villages of neighboring districts, but they did not have much influence on one another. The peasant clings powerfully to the specificity of his community. To the extent that his economy has nothing to do with the outside world, to the extent that his seeds and his crops are only in exceptional cases affected by the vicissitudes of political events, all the influences of the outside world pass over him without a trace. He is in any case unconcerned and remains passive; such events do not penetrate his innermost being. The only thing which can modify man's nature is that which he actively grasps, which obliges him to transform himself and in which he participates out of self-interest. This is why the peasant preserves his particularism against all the influences of the outside world and remains "without history" as long as his economy is self-sufficient. From the moment that he is dragged into the gears of capitalism and established in other conditions—he becomes bourgeois or a worker, the peasant begins to depend on the world market and makes contact with the rest of the world—from the moment that he has new interests, the indestructible character of his old particularism is lost. He is integrated into the modern nation; he becomes a member of a much more extensive community of fate, a nation in the modern sense.

The peasantry is often spoken of as if the preceding generations already belonged to the same nation as their descendants under capitalism. The term "nations without history" implies a concept according to which the Czechs, Slovenes, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians have always been so many different and particular nations but

that somehow they have long remained dormant as such. In fact, one cannot speak of the Slovenes, for example, except as a certain number of groups and districts with related dialects, without these groups ever having constituted a real unity or a community. What the name faithfully conveys is the fact that, as a general rule, dialect decides which nations are to be claimed by the descendants of its original speakers. In the final analysis, however, it is the real developments which decide whether the Slovenes and the Serbs, or the Russians and the Ukrainians, must become one national community with one written language and one common culture, or two separate nations. It is not language which is decisive but the political-economic process of development. By identifying language as the decisive factor one could just as well say that the peasantry of Lower Saxony is the faithful guardian of German nationality, and also of Dutch nationality, depending on which side of the border it inhabits; it only preserves its own village or provincial particularity; it would be just as foolish to say that the peasant of the Ardennes tenaciously preserves a Belgian, Walloon or French nationality when he clings to the dialect and the customs of his valley, or to say that a Carinthian peasant of the precapitalist era belonged to the Slovener nation. The Slovener nation *only made its appearance* with the modern bourgeois classes which formed a specific nation, and the peasant would not willingly have become a part of it unless he was linked to that community by real self-interest.

Modern nations are integral products of bourgeois society; they appeared with commodity production, that is, with capitalism, and its agents are the bourgeois classes. Bourgeois production and circulation of commodities need vast economic units, large territories whose inhabitants are united in a community with a unified State administration. As capitalism develops it incessantly reinforces the central State power; the State becomes more cohesive and is sharply defined in relation to other States. The State is the combat organization

of the bourgeoisie. Insofar as the bourgeois economy rests upon competition, in the struggle against others of the same kind, the organizations which are formed by the bourgeoisie must necessarily fight among themselves; the more powerful the State, the greater the benefits to which its bourgeoisie aspire. Language has not been a crucial factor except in the effort to draw the boundaries of these States; regions with related dialects have been forced into political mergers where other factors do not intervene, because political unity, the new community of fate, requires a single language as a means of intercourse. The written language used for general concourse is created from one of these dialects; it is thus, in a sense, an *artificial* creation. So Otto Bauer is right when he says: "I create a common language together with those individuals with whom I most closely interact; and I interact most closely with those individuals with whom I share a common language" (p. 101). This is how those nation States which are both State and nation arose.[2] They did not become political entities simply because they already constituted national communities; it was their new economic interests and economic necessity which was the basis of men's joining together into such solid groupings; but whether these States or others emerged—if, for example, southern Germany and northern France did not together form a political entity but this was instead the case with southern and northern Germany—is due principally to the ancient kinship of dialect.

The spread of the nation State, and its capitalist evolution, have brought about a situation where an extreme diversity of classes and populations coexist within it; this is why it sometimes seems dubious to define the nation State as a community of fate and of character, because classes and populations do not act directly upon one another. But the community of fate of the German peasants and big capitalists, of the Bavarians and the people of Oldenburg, consists in the fact that all are members of the German Empire, within whose borders they wage their

economic and political struggles, within which they endure the same policies, where they must take a position regarding the same laws and thus have an effect upon one another; this is why they constitute a real community despite all the diversity of this community.

The same is not true of those States which emerged as dynastic entities under absolutism, without the direct collaboration of their bourgeois classes, and which consequently, through conquest, came to include populations speaking many different languages. When the penetration of capitalism begins to make headway in one of these States, various nations arise within the same State, which becomes a multinational State, like Austria. The cause of the appearance of new nations alongside the old resides once again in the fact that *competition is the basis for the existence of the bourgeois classes*. When the modern classes arose from a purely peasant population group, when large masses were installed in the cities as industrial workers, soon to be followed by small merchants, intellectuals and factory owners, the latter were then compelled to undertake efforts on their own behalf to secure the business of these masses who all spoke the same language, placing the accent on their nationality. The nation, as a cohesive community, constitutes for those elements that form part of it a market, a customer base, a domain of exploitation where they have an advantage over their competitors from other nations. To form a community with modern classes, they must elaborate a common written language which is necessary as a means of communication and becomes the language of culture and of literature. The permanent contact between the classes of bourgeois society and State power, which had hitherto only known German as the official language of communication, obliges them to fight for the recognition of their languages, their schools and their administrative apparatuses, in which fight the class having the most material interest is the national intelligentsia. Since the State must represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and must give it material

support, each national bourgeoisie must secure as much influence over the State as possible. To win this influence it must fight against the bourgeoisie of other nations; the more successfully it rallies the whole nation around it in this struggle, the more power it exercises. As long as the leading role of the bourgeoisie is based upon the essence of the economy and is acknowledged as something which is self-evident, the bourgeoisie can count on the other classes which feel bound to it on this point by an identity of interests.

In this respect as well the nation is utterly a product of capitalist development, and is even a necessary product. Wherever capitalism penetrates, it must necessarily appear as the community of fate of the bourgeois classes. The national struggles within such a State are not the consequence of any kind of oppression, or of legal backwardness, it is the natural expression of competition as the basic precondition for the bourgeois economy; the (bourgeois) struggle of each against all is the indispensable precondition for the abrupt separation of the various nations from one another.

### **Tradition and the Human Mind**

In man, nationality is indeed part of his nature, but primarily of his mental nature. Inherited physical traits eventually allow the various peoples to be distinguished from one another, but this does not serve to separate them, nor, even less so, does it make them enter into conflict with one another. Peoples distinguish themselves as communities of culture, a culture transmitted by a common language; in a nation's culture, which can be defined as mental in nature, is inscribed the whole history of its life. National character is not composed of physical traits, but of the totality of its customs, its concepts and its forms of thought over time. If one wishes to grasp the essence of a nation, it is above all necessary to get a clear view of how man's mental aspect is constituted under the influence of his living conditions.

Every move that man makes must first pass through his head. The direct motor force of all his actions resides in his mind. It can consist of habits, drives and unconscious instincts which are the expressions of always similar repetitions of the same vital necessities in the same external living conditions. It could also enter into man's consciousness as thoughts, ideas, motivations or principles. Where do they come from? Here, the bourgeois conception sees the influence of a higher supernatural world which penetrates us, the expression of an eternal moral principle within us, or else the spontaneous products of the mind itself. Marxist theory, however, historical materialism, explains that *everything which is mental in man is the product of the material world around him*. This entire real world penetrates every part of the mind through the sensory organs and leaves its mark: our vital needs, our experience, everything we see and hear, that which others communicate to us as their thought appears as if we had actually observed it ourselves.

[3] Consequently, any influence from an unreal, merely postulated supernatural world is excluded. Everything in the mind has come from the external world which we designate with the name of the material world, which is not meant to imply that material constituted of physical matter which can be measured, but everything which really exists, including thought. But in this context mind does not play the role which is sometimes attributed to it by a narrow mechanistic conception, that of a passive mirror that reflects the external world, an inanimate receiver that absorbs and preserves everything thrown at it. *Mind is active, it acts, and it modifies everything that penetrates it from the outside in order to make something new.* And it was Dietzgen who has most clearly demonstrated how it does so. The external world flows before the mind like an endless river, always changing; the mind registers its influences, it merges them, it adds them to what it had previously possessed and combines these elements. From the river of infinitely varied phenomena, it forms solid and consistent concepts in which the

reality in motion is somehow frozen and fixed and loses its fugitive aspect. The concept of "fish" involves a multitude of observations of animals that swim, that of "good" innumerable stances in relation to different actions, that of "capitalism" a whole lifetime of frequently very painful experiences. Every thought, every conviction, every idea, every conclusion, such as, for example, the generalization that trees do not have leaves in the winter, that work is hard and disagreeable, that whoever gives me a job is my benefactor, that the capitalist is my enemy, that there is strength in organization, that it is good to fight for one's nation, are the summaries of part of the living world, of a multiform experience in a concise, abrupt and, one could say, rigid and lifeless formula. The greater and the more complete the experience which serves as documentation, the more deep-rooted and solid the thought and conviction, the more true it is. But all experience is limited, the world is constantly changing, new experiences are ceaselessly being added to the old, they are integrated into the old ideas or enter into contradiction with them. This is why man has to restructure his ideas and abandon some of them as mistaken—such as that of the capitalist benefactor—and confer a new meaning to certain concepts—such as the concept of "fish", from which the whales had to be separated—and create new concepts for new phenomena—like that of imperialism—and find other causal relations for some concepts—the intolerable character of labor is a result of capitalism—and evaluate them in a different manner—the national struggle is harmful to the workers—in short, man must ceaselessly begin all over again. All of his mental activity and development consists in the endless restructuring of concepts, ideas, judgments and principles in order to keep them as consistent as possible with his ever-richer experience of reality. This takes place consciously in the development of science.

The meanings of Bauer's definitions of the nation as that which is historical in us, and of national character as solidified history, are thus

placed in their proper context. A common material reality produces a common way of thinking in the minds of the members of a community. The specific nature of the economic organization they jointly compose determines their thoughts, their customs and their concepts; it produces a coherent system of ideas in them, *an ideology* which they share and which forms part of their material living conditions. Life in common has penetrated their minds; common struggles for freedom against foreign enemies, common class struggles at home. It is narrated in history books and is transmitted to the youth as national memory. What was desired, hoped for and wanted was clearly highlighted and expressed by the poets and thinkers and these thoughts of the nation, the mental sediment of their material experience, was preserved in the form of literature for future generations. Constant mutual intellectual influence consolidates and reinforces this process; extracting from the thought of each compatriot what they all have in common, what is essential and characteristic of the whole, that is, what is national, constitutes the cultural patrimony of the nation. What lives in the mind of a nation, its national culture, is the abstract synthesis of its common experience, its material existence as an economic organization.

Therefore, all of man's mental qualities are products of reality, but not only of *current* reality; the whole past also subsists there in a stronger or weaker form. Mind is slow in relation to matter; it ceaselessly absorbs external influences while its old existence slowly sinks into Lethe's waters of oblivion. *Thus, the adaptation of the content of the mind to a constantly renewed reality is only incremental.* Past and present both determine its content, but in different ways. The living reality which is constantly exercising its influence on the mind is embedded within it and impressed upon it in an increasingly more effective manner. But that which no longer feeds off of the present reality, no longer lives except in the past and can still be preserved for a long time, above all by the relations men maintain among themselves,

by indoctrination and artificial propaganda, but to the extent that these residues are deprived of the material terrain that gave them life, they necessarily slowly disappear. This is how they acquire a traditional character. A *tradition* is also part of reality which lives in the minds of men, acts upon the other parts and for that reason frequently disposes of a considerable and potent force. But *it is a natural mental reality whose material roots are sunk in the past*. This is how religion became, for the modern proletariat, an ideology of a purely traditional nature; it may still have a powerful influence on its action, but this power only has roots in the past, in the importance that the community of religion possessed in other times; it is no longer nourished by contemporary reality, in its exploitation by capital, in its struggle against capital. For this reason the process leading to its extinction among the proletariat will not stop. To the contrary, contemporary reality is increasingly cultivating class consciousness which is consequently occupying a larger place in the proletariat's mind, and which is increasingly determining its action.

### Our Task

I have framed the task assigned by our study. History has given rise to nations with their limitations and their specific characteristics. But they are not yet finished and complete definitive facts with which one must contend. History is still following its course. Each day it continues to build upon and modify what the previous days built. It is not enough, then, to confirm that the nation is that which is historical in us, solidified history. *If it were nothing but petrified history*, it would be of a purely traditional nature, like religion. But for our practice, and for our tactics, the question of whether or not it is something more than this assumes the utmost importance. Of course, one must deal with it in any case, as with any great mental power in man; but the question of whether nationalist ideology only presents itself as a power of the past, or whether it sinks its roots into today's world, are two completely

different things. For us, the most important and decisive question is the following: how does *present-day reality* act upon the nation and everything national? In what sense are they being modified today? The reality in question here is *highly-developed capitalism and the proletarian class struggle*.

This, then, is our position in regard to Bauer's study: in other times, the nation played no role at all in the theory and practice of social democracy. There was no reason to take it into consideration; in most countries it is of no use to the class struggle to pay any attention to the national question. Obliged to do so by Austria's situation Bauer has filled this gap. He has demonstrated that the nation is neither the product of the imagination of a few literati nor is it the artificial product of nationalist propaganda; with the tool of Marxism he has shown that it has sunk its material roots into history and he has explained the necessity and the power of national ideas by the rise of capitalism. And the nation stands revealed as a powerful reality with which we must come to terms in our struggle; he gives us the key to understand the modern history of Austria, and we must thus answer the following question: what is the influence of the nation and nationalism on the class struggle, how must it be assessed in the class struggle? This is the basis and the guiding thread of the works of Bauer and the other Austrian Marxists. But with this approach, the task is only half-finished. For the nation is not simply a self-contained and complete phenomenon whose effect on the class struggle must be ascertained: it is itself in turn subjected to the influence of contemporary forces, among which the proletariat's revolutionary struggle for emancipation is increasingly tending to become a factor of the first order. *What effect, then, does the class struggle, the rise of the proletariat, for its part exercise upon the nation?* Bauer has not examined this question, or he has done so in an insufficient manner; the study of this issue leads, in many cases, to judgments and conclusions which diverge from those he provided.

## II. The Nation and the Proletariat

### Class Antagonism

The current reality which most intensely determines man's mentality and existence is *capitalism*. But it does not affect all men in the same way; it is one thing for the capitalist and another for the proletarian. For the members of the bourgeois class, capitalism is the world of the production of wealth and competition; more well-being, an increase in the mass of capital from which they try to extract the maximum possible profit in an individualistic struggle with their peers and which opens up for them the road to luxury and the enjoyment of a refined culture, this is what the process of production provides for them. For the workers, it is the hard labor of endless slavery, permanent insecurity in their living conditions, eternal poverty, without the hope of ever getting anything but a poverty wage. Consequently, capitalism must exercise very different effects on the minds of the bourgeoisie and the minds of the members of the exploited class. The nation is an economic entity, a community of labor, even between workers and capitalists. Capital and labor are both necessary and must come together so that capitalist production can exist. It is a community of labor of a particular nature; in this community, capital and labor appear as antagonistic poles; they constitute a community of labor in the same way that predators and prey constitute a community of life.

The nation is a community of character which has arisen from a community of fate. But with the development of capitalism, it is the *difference of fates* which is increasingly dominant in considering the bourgeoisie and the proletariat within any particular people. To explain what he means by the community of fate, Bauer speaks (p. 101) of the "relations constituted by the fact that both [the English worker and the English bourgeois] live in the same city, that both read the same posters

and the same newspapers, take part in the same political and sporting events, by the fact that on occasion they speak with one another or, at least, both speak with the various intermediaries between capitalists and workers". Now, the "fate" of men does not consist in reading the same billboards, but in *great and important experiences* which are totally different for each class. The whole world knows what the English Prime Minister Disraeli said about the two nations living alongside one another in our modern society without really understanding it. Did he not intend to say that no community of fate links the two classes?[4]

Of course, one does not have to take this statement literally in its modern sense. The community of fate of the past still exercises its influence on today's community of character. As long as the proletariat does not have a clear consciousness of the particularity of its own experience, as long as its class consciousness has not been awakened or is only slightly stirred, it remains the prisoner of traditional thinking, its thought is nourished on the leftovers of the bourgeoisie, it surely constitutes with the latter a kind of community of culture in the same way that the servants in the kitchen are the guests of their masters. The peculiarities of English history make this mental community all the more powerful in England, while it is extremely weak in Germany. In all the young nations where capitalism is just making its appearance, the mentality of the working class is dominated by the traditions of the previous peasant and petit-bourgeois era. Only little by little, with the awakening of class consciousness and class struggle under the impact of new antagonisms, will the community of character shared by the two classes disappear.

There will undoubtedly still be relations between the two classes. But they are limited to rules and regulations of the factory and to carrying out work orders, so that the community of language is not even necessary, as the use of foreign-born workers speaking various languages proves. The more conscious of their situation and of

exploitation the workers become, the more frequently they fight against the employers to improve their working conditions, the more that the relations between the two classes are transformed into enmity and conflict. There is just as little community between them as between two peoples who are constantly engaged in frontier skirmishes. The more aware of social development the workers become, and the more socialism appears to them as the necessary goal of their struggle, the more they feel the rule of the capitalist class as *foreign rule*, and with this expression one becomes aware of just how much the community of character has dissipated.

Bauer defines national character as the “difference in orientations of the will, the fact that the same stimulus produces different reactions, that the same external circumstances provoke different decisions” (p. 100). Could one imagine more antagonistic orientations than those of the will of the bourgeoisie and the will of the proletariat? The names of Bismarck, Lassalle, 1848, stimulate feelings which are not just different but even opposed in the German workers and the German bourgeoisie. The German workers of the Empire who belong to the German nation judge almost everything that happens in Germany in a different and opposed way to that of the bourgeoisie. All the other classes rejoice together over anything that contributes to the greatness and the foreign reach of their national State, while the proletariat combats every measure which leads to such results. The bourgeois classes speak of war against other States in order to increase their own power, while the proletariat thinks of a way to prevent war or discovers an occasion for its own liberation in the defeat of its own government.

This is why one cannot speak of the nation as an entity except prior to the full unfolding within it of the class struggle, since it is only in that case that the working class still follows in the footsteps of the bourgeoisie. *The class antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat results in the progressive disappearance of their national community of fate*

*and of character.* The constitutive forces of the nation must therefore be separately examined in each of the two classes.

### **The Will to Form a Nation**

Bauer is completely correct when he views the differences in orientation of the will as the essential element in differences of national character. Where all wills are oriented in the same way, a coherent mass is formed; where events and influences from the outside world provoke different and opposed determinations, rupture and separation result. The differences of wills have separated the nations from one another; but whose will is involved here? That of the rising bourgeoisie. As a result of the preceding proofs concerning the genesis of modern nations, its will to form a nation is the most important constitutive force.

What is it that makes the Czech nation a specific community in relation to the German nation? That which is acquired by life in common, the content of the community of fate which continues to practically influence the national character, is extremely weak. The content of its culture is almost totally taken from the modern nations which preceded it, above all the German nation; this is why Bauer says (p. 105): "It is not completely incorrect to say that the Czechs are Czech-speaking Germans..." One might also add some peasant traditions rounded off with reminiscences of Huss, Ziska and the battle of White Mountain,[5] exhumed from the past and without any practical meaning today. How could a "national culture" have been erected upon the basis of a particular language? Because the bourgeoisie *needs* separation, because it *wants* to constitute a nation in relation to the Germans. It wants to do so because it needs to do so, because capitalist competition obliges it to monopolize to the greatest possible extent a territory of markets and exploitation. The conflict of interests with the other capitalists creates the nation wherever the necessary element exists, a specific language. Bauer and Renner clearly demonstrate in their expositions of the genesis of modern nations that

the will of the rising bourgeois classes created the nations. Not as a conscious or arbitrary will, but as wanting at the same time as being compelled, the necessary consequence of economic factors. *The "nations" involved in the political struggle, which are fighting among themselves for influence over the State, for power in the State* (Bauer, pp. 218–243), *are nothing but organizations of the bourgeois classes*, of the petit-bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals—classes whose existence is based upon competition—and here the proletarians and the peasants play a secondary role.

The proletariat has nothing to do with this necessity of competition of the bourgeois classes, with their will to constitute a nation. For it, the nation does not mean the privilege of securing a customer base, positions, or opportunities for work. The capitalists immediately learned to import foreign workers who do not speak German or Czech. By mentioning this capitalist practice it is not our basic intention to expose nationalist hypocrisy, but above all to make the workers understand that under the rule of capitalism the nation can never be synonymous with a labor monopoly for them. And only infrequently does one hear among backward workers, such as the American trade unionists of the old school, of a desire to restrict immigration. The nation can also temporarily assume its own significance for the proletariat. When capitalism penetrates an agrarian region, the landlords then belong to a more developed capitalist nation, and the workers leave the peasantry for the other nation. National feeling can then be for the workers an initial means of becoming aware of their community of interests against the foreign capitalists. National antagonism is in this case the primitive form of class antagonism, just as in Rhineland-Westphalia, during the era of the *Kulturkampf*, the religious antagonism between the Catholic workers and their liberal employers was the primitive form of class antagonism. But from the moment when a nation is sufficiently developed to have a proper bourgeoisie

which takes responsibility for exploitation, proletarian nationalism is uprooted. In the struggle for better living conditions, for intellectual development, for culture, for a more dignified existence, the other classes in their nation are the sworn enemies of the workers while their foreign language-speaking class comrades are their friends and allies. The class struggle creates an international community of interests. *Thus, for the proletariat, one cannot speak of a will to become a separate nation based on economic interests, on its material situation.*

### **The Community of Culture**

Bauer discovers another nation-building force in the class struggle. Not in the economic content of the class struggle, but in its cultural effects. He defines the politics of the modern working class as a *national-evolutionary politics* (p. 135) that will unite the entire people in a nation. This has to be more than just a primitive and popular way of expressing our goals in the language of nationalism, with the intention of making them accessible to those workers who have gotten mixed up with nationalist ideology and who have not yet become aware of the great revolutionary importance of socialism. So Bauer adds: "But because the proletariat necessarily struggles for possession of the cultural wealth that its work creates and makes possible, the effect of this politics is necessarily that of calling the entire people to take part in the national community of culture and thereby to make the totality of the people into a nation."

At first glance this seems to be completely correct. As long as the workers, crushed by capitalist exploitation, are immersed in physical misery and vegetate without hope or intellectual activity, they do not participate in the culture of the bourgeois classes, a culture which is based on the labor of the workers. They form part of the nation in the same way as livestock, they constitute nothing but property, and they are nothing more than second-class citizens in the nation. It is the class struggle which brings them to life; it is by way of the class struggle

that they get free time, higher wages and therefore the opportunity to engage in intellectual development. Through socialism, their energy is awakened, their minds are stimulated; they begin to read, first of all socialist pamphlets and political newspapers, but soon the aspiration and the need to complete their intellectual training leads them to tackle literary, historical and scientific works: the party's educational committees even devote special efforts to introducing them to classical literature. In this manner they accede to the community of culture of the bourgeois classes of their nation. And when the worker can freely and without coercion devote himself to his intellectual development under socialism, which shall free him from the endless slavery of labor—unlike his present situation where he can only appropriate in scarce moments of leisure, and then only with difficulty, small fragments of culture—only then will the worker be able to absorb the entire national culture and become, in the fullest sense of the word, a member of the nation.

But one important point is overlooked in these reflections. A community of culture between the workers and the bourgeoisie can only exist superficially, apparently and sporadically. The workers can to some extent, of course, read the same books as the bourgeoisie, the same classics and the same works of natural history, but this produces no community of culture. Because the basis of their thought and their world-view is so different from that of the bourgeoisie, the workers *derive something very different from their reading* than does the bourgeoisie. As pointed out above, national culture does not exist in a vacuum; it is the expression of the material history of the life of those classes whose rise created the nation. What we find expressed in Schiller and Goethe are not abstractions of the aesthetic imagination, but the feelings and ideals of the bourgeoisie in its youth, its aspiration to freedom and the rights of man, its own way of perceiving the world and its problems. Today's class-conscious worker has other feelings, other ideals and

another world-view. When he is reading and comes across William Tell's individualism or the eternal, indomitable and ethereal rights of man, the mentality which is thus expressed is not his mentality, which owes its maturity to a more profound understanding of society and which knows that the rights of man can only be conquered through the struggle of a mass organization. He is not insensitive to the beauty of ancient literature; it is precisely his historical judgment which allows him to understand the ideals of past generations on the basis of their economic systems. He is capable of feeling their power, and is thus capable of appreciating the beauty of the works in which they have found their most perfect expression. This is because the beautiful is that which approaches and represents in the most perfect way possible the universality, the essence and the most profound substance of a reality.

To this one must add that, in many respects, the feelings of the bourgeois revolutionary era produced a powerful echo in the bourgeoisie; but what is found as an echo in the bourgeoisie of that era, is precisely what is lacking in the modern bourgeoisie. This is all the more true in regard to radical and proletarian literature. As for what made the proletariat so enthusiastic about the works of Heine and Freiligrath[6], the bourgeoisie does not want to know anything. The way the two classes read the literature which is available to both, is totally different; their social and political ideals are diametrically opposed, their world-views have nothing in common. This is to a certain extent even truer of their views of history. In history, what the bourgeoisie considers to be the most sublime memories of the nation arouse nothing but hatred, aversion or indifference in the proletariat. Here nothing points to their possessing a shared culture. Only the physical and natural sciences are admired and honored by both classes. Their content is identical for both. But how different from the attitude of the bourgeois classes, is that of the worker who has recognized these sciences as the basis of his absolute rule over nature and over his destiny in the future

socialist society. *For the worker, this view of nature, this concept of history and this literary sentiment, are not elements of a national culture in which he participates, they are elements of his socialist culture.*

The most essential intellectual content, the determinant thoughts, and the real culture of the social democrats do not have their roots in Schiller or Goethe, but in Marx and Engels. And this culture, which has arisen from a lucid socialist understanding of history and the future of society, the socialist ideal of a free and classless humanity, and the proletarian communitarian ethic, and which for those very reasons is in all of its characteristic features opposed to bourgeois culture, is international. This culture, despite its various manifestations among different peoples—since the proletarians' perspectives vary according to their conditions of existence and the form assumed by their economies—and despite the fact that it is powerfully influenced by the historical background of each nation, especially where the class struggle is underdeveloped, is everywhere the same. Its form, the language in which it is expressed, is different, but all the other differences, even the national ones, are progressively reduced by the development of the class struggle and the growth of socialism. Indeed, the gap between the culture of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat is constantly expanding. It is therefore inaccurate to say that the proletariat is fighting for the ownership of the national cultural goods which it produces with its labor. It does not fight to appropriate the cultural goods of the bourgeoisie; it fights for control over production and to establish its own socialist culture upon that foundation. What we call the cultural effects of the class struggle, the workers' acquisition of self-consciousness, of knowledge and the desire to learn, of higher intellectual standards, has nothing to do with a bourgeois national culture, but represents the growth of socialist culture. This culture is a product of the struggle, a struggle which is waged against the whole bourgeois world. And just as we see the new humanity developing in the proletariat, proud and sure

of victory, freed from the vile slavery of the past, comprised of brave combatants, capable of an unprejudiced and complete understanding of the course of events, united by the strongest bonds of solidarity in a solid unit, so from now on the spirit of the new humanity, socialist culture, weak at first, confused and mixed with bourgeois traditions, will be awakened in this proletariat, and will then become clearer, purer, more beautiful and richer.

This is obviously not intended to imply that bourgeois culture will not also continue to rule for a long time and exercise a powerful influence on the minds of the workers. Too many influences from that world affect the proletariat, with or without its consent; not only school, church, and bourgeois press, but all the fine arts and scientific works impregnated by bourgeois thought. But more and more frequently, and in an ever-more comprehensive fashion, life itself and their own experience triumphs over the bourgeois world-view in the minds of the workers. And this is how it must be. Because the more the bourgeois world-view takes possession of the workers, the less capable of fighting they become; under its influence, the workers are full of respect for the ruling powers, they are inculcated with the ideological thought of the latter, their lucid class consciousness is obscured, they turn on their own kind from this or that nation, they are scattered and *are therefore weakened in the struggle and deprived of their self-confidence*. Our goal demands a proud human species, self-conscious, bold in both thought and action. And this is why the very requirements of the struggle are freeing the workers from these paralyzing influences of bourgeois culture.

*It is, then, inaccurate to say that the workers are, by means of their struggle, gaining access to a "national community of culture". It is the politics of the proletariat, the international politics of the class struggle, which is engendering a new international and socialist culture in the proletariat.*

### The Community of Class Struggle

Bauer opposes the nation as a *community of fate* to the class, in which the *similarity* of fates has developed similar character traits. But the working class is not just a group of men who have experienced the same fate and thus have the same character. *The class struggle welds the proletariat into a community of fate.* The fate lived in common is the struggle waged *in common* against *the same enemy*.

In the trade union struggle, workers of different nationalities see themselves confronted by the same employer. They must wage their struggle as a compact unit; they know its vicissitudes and effects in the most intimate kind of community of fate. They have brought their national differences with them from their various countries, mixed with the primitive individualism of the peasants or the petit-bourgeoisie, perhaps also a little national consciousness, combined with other bourgeois traditions. But all of these differences are traditions of the past opposed to the present need to resist as a compact mass, and opposed to the living community of combat of the present day. *Only* one difference has any practical significance here: that of *language*; all explanations, all proposals, all information must be communicated to everyone in their own language. In the great American strikes (the steelworkers strike at McKee's Rocks or the textile workers strike at Lawrence, for example), the strikers—a disjointed conglomeration of the most varied nationalities: French, Italians, Poles, Turks, Syrians, etc.—formed separate language sections whose committees always held joint meetings and simultaneously communicated proposals to each section in its own language, thus preserving the unity of the whole, which proves that, despite the inherent difficulties of the language barrier, a close-knit community of proletarian struggle can be achieved. Wanting to proceed here to an organizational separation between that which unites life and struggle, the real interests of those involved—and such a

separation is what separatism implies—is so contrary to reality that its success can only be temporary.

This is not only true for the workers in one factory. In order to wage their struggle successfully, the workers of the whole country must unite in one trade union; and all of its members must consider the advancement of each local group as their own struggle. This is all the more necessary when, in the course of events, the trade union struggle assumes harsher forms. The employers unite in cartels and employers' associations; the latter do not distinguish between Czech or German employers, as they group together all the employers in the whole State, and sometimes even extend beyond the borders of the State. All the workers of the same trade living in the same State go on strike and suffer the lock-outs in common and consequently form a community of lived fate, and this is of the utmost importance, trumping all national differences. And in the recent sailors' movement for higher wages which in the summer of 1911 confronted an international association of ship-owners, one could already see an international community of fate arising as a tangible reality.

The same thing happens in the political struggle. In the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, one may read the following: "Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."<sup>[7]</sup> In this passage it is clear that the word "national" is not used in its Austrian sense, but arises from the context of the situation in Western Europe where State and nation are synonymous. This passage only means that the English workers cannot wage the class struggle against the French bourgeoisie, nor can the French workers wage the class struggle against the English bourgeoisie, but that the English bourgeoisie and the power of the English State can be attacked and defeated only by the English proletariat. In Austria, State and nation

are separate entities. The nation naturally arises as a community of interests of the bourgeois classes. *But it is the State which is the real solid organization of the bourgeoisie for protecting its interests.* The State protects property, it takes care of administration, puts the fleet and the army in order, collects the taxes and keeps the masses under control. The “nations”, or, more precisely: the active organizations which use the nation’s name, that is, the bourgeois parties, have no other purpose than to fight for the conquest of a fitting share of influence over the State, for participation in State power. For the big bourgeoisie, whose economic interests embrace the whole State and even other countries, and which needs direct privileges, customs duties, State purchases and protection overseas, it is its natural community of interests, rather than the nation, which defines the State and its limitations. The apparent independence which State power has managed to preserve for so long thanks to the conflicts between nations cannot obscure the fact that that it has also been an instrument at the service of big capital.

This is why the center of gravity of the political struggle of the working class is shifting towards the State. As long as the struggle for political power still remains a secondary issue, and agitation, propaganda and the struggle of ideas—which naturally must be expressed in every language—are still the highest priority, the proletarian armies will continue to be separated nationally for the political struggle. In this first stage of the socialist movement, the most important task is to free the proletarians from the ideological influence of the petit bourgeoisie, to snatch them away from the bourgeois parties and inculcate them with class consciousness. The bourgeois parties, separated by national boundaries, then become the enemies to be fought. The State appears to be a legislative power from which laws can be demanded for the protection of the proletariat; the conquest of influence over the State in favor of proletarian interests is presented to the barely-conscious proletarians as the first goal of proletarian action.

And the final goal, the struggle for socialism, is presented as a struggle *for* State power, *against* the bourgeois parties.

But when the socialist party attains the status of an important factor in parliament, our task changes. In parliament, where all essential political questions are settled, the proletariat is confronted by the representatives of the bourgeois classes of the entire State. The essential political struggle, to which educational work is increasingly subjected and into which it is increasingly integrated, unfolds on the terrain of the State. It is the same for all the State's workers, regardless of their nationalities. The community of struggle extends to the entire proletariat of the State, a proletariat for whom the common struggle against the same enemy, against all of the bourgeois parties and their governments in all nations, becomes a common fate. *It is not the nation, but the State which determines for the proletariat the borders of the community of fate constituted by the parliamentary political struggle.* As long as socialist propaganda remains the most important activity for the Austrian and Russian Ruthenians,[8] the two national groups will be closely linked. But from the moment when developments reach a point where the real political struggle is waged against State power—the bourgeois majority and its government—they must go their separate ways, and fight in different places with sometimes completely different methods. The former intervene in Vienna in the Reichsrat together with Tyrolean and Czech workers, while the latter now carry on the fight under clandestine conditions, or in the streets of Kiev against the Czar's government and its Cossacks. Their community of fate is sundered.

All of this is all the more clearly manifested as the proletariat becomes more powerful and its struggle occupies a larger and larger share of the field of history. State power, along with all the potent means at its disposal, is the fief of the owning classes; the proletariat cannot free itself, it cannot defeat capitalism unless it first defeats this powerful organization. The conquest of political hegemony is not

a struggle for State power; it is a struggle against State power. The social revolution which shall issue into socialism consists essentially of defeating State power with the power of the proletarian organization. This is why it must be carried out by the proletariat of the entire State. One could say that this *common liberation struggle against a common enemy is the most important experience in the entire history of the life of the proletariat from its first awakening until its victory. This makes the working class of the same State, rather than the same nation, a community of fate.* Only in Western Europe, where State and nation more or less coincide, does the struggle waged on the terrain of the nation-state for political hegemony give rise within the proletariat to communities of fate which coincide with nations.

But even in this case the international character of the proletariat develops rapidly. The workers of different countries exchange theory and practice, methods of struggle and concepts, and they consider these topics to be matters common to all. This was certainly the case with the rising bourgeoisie; in their economic and philosophical concepts, the English, French and Germans were mutually and profoundly influenced by their exchange of ideas. But no community resulted from this exchange because their economic antagonism led them to organize into mutually hostile nations; it was precisely the French bourgeoisie's conquest of the bourgeois freedom long enjoyed by the English bourgeoisie which provoked the bitter Napoleonic Wars. Such conflicts of interest are utterly lacking in the proletariat and for that reason the reciprocal intellectual influence exercised by the working classes of the various countries can act without constraint in forming an international community of culture. But their community is not limited to this aspect. The struggles, the victories and the defeats in one country have profound impacts on the class struggle in other countries. The struggles waged by our class comrades in other countries against their bourgeoisie are *our affairs* not only on the terrain of ideas, but also *on the*

*material plane*; they form part of our own fight and we feel them as such. The Austrian workers, for whom the Russian Revolution was a decisive episode in their own struggle for universal suffrage, know this quite well.[9] The proletariat of the whole world perceives itself as *a single army*, as a great association which is only obliged for practical reasons to split into numerous battalions which must fight the enemy separately, since the bourgeoisie is organized into States and there are as a result numerous fortresses to reduce. This is also the way the press informs us of struggles in foreign countries: the English Dock Strikes, the Belgian elections, and the demonstrations on the streets of Budapest are all of interest to our great class organization. In this manner the international class struggle becomes the *common experience* of the workers of all countries.

### **The Nation in the State of the Future**

This conception of the proletariat already reflects the conditions of the future social order, in which men will no longer know State antagonisms. Through the overthrow of the rigid State organizations of the bourgeoisie by the organizational power of the proletarian masses, the State disappears as a coercive power and as the terrain of domination which is so sharply demarcated in relation to foreign States. Political organizations take on a new function: "The government of persons gives way to the administration of things," Engels said in his *Anti-Dühring*.[10] For the conscious regulation of production, you need organization, executive organs and administrative activity; but the extremely strict centralization such as that practiced by today's State is neither necessary nor can it possibly be employed in pursuit of that goal. Such centralization will give way to full decentralization and self-administration. According to the size of each sector of production, the organizations will cover larger or smaller areas; while bread, for example, will be produced on a local scale, steel production and the operation of railroad networks require State-sized economic entities.

There will be production units of the most various sizes, from the workshop and the municipality to the State, and even, for certain industries, all of humanity. Those naturally-occurring human groups, nations—will they not then take the place of the vanished States as organizational units? This will undoubtedly be the case, for the simple practical reason, that they are *communities of the same language* and all of man's relations are mediated through language.

But Bauer confers a totally different meaning upon the nations of the future: "The fact that socialism will make the nation autonomous, will make its destiny a product of the nation's conscious will, will result in an increasing differentiation between the nations of the socialist society, a clearer expression of their specificities, a clearer distinction between their respective characters" (p. 96). Some nations, of course, receive the content of their culture and their ideas in various ways from other nations, but they only accept them in the context of their own national cultures. "For this reason, the autonomy of the national community of culture within socialism necessarily means, despite the diminishing of differences between the material contents of their cultures, a growing differentiation between the intellectual cultures of the nations" (p. 98)... Thus "the nation based on the community of education carries within it the tendency for unity; all its children are subject to the same education, all its members work together in the national workshops, participate in the creation of the collective will of the nation, and enjoy with each other the cultural wealth of the nation. Socialism thus carries within itself the guarantee of the unity of the nation." (p. 98). Capitalism already displays the tendency to reinforce the national differences of the masses and to provide the nation with a stronger inner coherence. "However, it is only a socialist society that will see this tendency to triumph. Through differences in national education and customs, socialist society will distinguish peoples from one another to the same extent that the educated classes of the different nations are

distinguished from one another today. There may well exist limited communities of character within the socialist nation; but autonomous cultural communities will not be able to exist within the nation, because every local community will be subject to the influence of the culture of the nation of the nation as a whole and will engage in cultural interaction, in the exchange of ideas with the entire nation" (p. 117).

The conception which is expressed in these sentences is nothing but the ideological transposition of the Austrian present into a socialist future. It confers upon the nations under socialism a role which is currently played by the States, that is, an increasing isolation from the outside and an internal leveling of all differences; among the many levels of economic and administrative units, it gives the nations a privileged rank, similar to that which falls to the State in the conception of our adversaries, who loudly complain about the "omnipotence of the State" under socialism, and here Bauer even speaks of "national workshops". In any event, while socialist writings always refer to the workshops and means of production of the "community" in opposition to private property, without precisely delineating the dimensions of the community, here the nation is considered as the only community of men, autonomous in respect to other nations, undifferentiated within its borders.

Such a conception is only possible if one totally abandons the material terrain from which the mutual relations and ideas of men have arisen and only insists on the mental forces as determinant factors. National differences thereby totally lose the economic roots which today give them such an extraordinary vigor. The socialist mode of production does not develop oppositions of interest between nations, as is the case with the bourgeois mode of production. The economic unit is neither the State nor the nation, but the world. This mode of production is much more than a network of national productive units connected to one another by an intelligent policy of communications and by

international conventions, as Bauer describes it on pages 413–414; it is an *organization of world production in one unit* and the common affair of all humanity. In this world community of which the proletariat's internationalism is henceforth a beginning, one can no more discuss the autonomy of the German nation, to take an example, than one could speak of the autonomy of Bavaria, or of the City of Prague or the Poldi Steelworks. All partially manage their own affairs and all depend upon the whole, as parts of that whole. The whole notion of autonomy comes from the capitalist era, when the conditions of domination led to their opposite, that is, freedom in respect to a particular form of domination.

This material basis of the collectivity, *organized world production*, transforms the future of humanity into a single community of destiny. For the great achievements which are hoped for, the scientific and technological conquest of the entire earth and its transformation into a magnificent home for a race of masters [*ein Geschlecht von Herrenmenschen*], happy and proud of their victory, who have become rulers of nature and its forces, for such great achievements—which we can hardly even imagine today—the borders of States and peoples are too narrow and restrictive. *The community of fate will unite all of humanity in an intellectual and cultural community.* Linguistic diversity will be no obstacle, since every human community which maintains real communication with another human community will create a common language. Without attempting here to examine the question of a universal language, we shall only point out that today it is easy to learn various languages once one has advanced beyond the level of primary instruction. This is why it is useless to examine the question of to what degree the current linguistic boundaries and differences are of a permanent nature. What Bauer says about the nation in the last sentence quoted above therefore applies to all of humanity: although restricted communities of character will subsist within humanity, there cannot be independent communities of culture because every local (and national) community, without

exception, will find itself, under the influence of the culture of all of humanity, in cultural communication, in an exchange of ideas, with humanity in its entirety.

### **The Transformations of the Nation**

Our investigation has demonstrated that under the rule of advanced capitalism, which is accompanied by class struggle, the proletariat cannot be a nation-building force. It does not form a community of fate with the bourgeois classes, nor does it share a community of material interests, nor a community which could possibly be that of intellectual culture. The rudiments of such a community, which were sketched at the very beginning of capitalism, will necessarily disappear with the further development of the class struggle. While powerful economic forces generate national isolation, national antagonism and the whole nationalist ideology in the bourgeois classes, these features are absent among the proletariat. They are replaced by the class struggle, which gives the lives of the proletarians their essential content, and creates an international community of fate and of character in which nations as linguistic groups have no practical significance. And since the proletariat is humanity in the process of becoming, this community constitutes the dawn of the economic and cultural community of all of humanity under socialism.

We must therefore respond in the affirmative to the question we posed above: *For the proletariat, national phenomena are of no more significance than traditions. Their material roots are buried in the past and cannot be nourished by the experiences of the proletariat.* Thus, for the proletariat the nation plays a role which is similar to that of religion. We acknowledge their differences, despite their kinship. The material roots of religious antagonisms are lost in the distant past and the people of our time know almost nothing about them. For this reason these antagonisms are totally disconnected from all material interests and seem to be purely abstract disputes about supernatural questions.

On the other hand, the material roots of national antagonisms are all around us, in the modern bourgeois world with which we are in constant contact, and this is why they preserve all the freshness and vigor of youth and are all the more influential the more capable we are of directly feeling the interests they express; but, due to the fact that their roots are not so deep, they lack the resistance of an ideology petrified by the passage of centuries, a resistance which is so hard to overcome.

Our investigation therefore leads us to a completely different conception than Bauer's. The latter imagines, contrary to bourgeois nationalism, a continuous transformation of the nation towards new forms and new types. So the German nation has assumed, throughout its history, continually changing appearances from the proto-German to the future member of the socialist society. Under these changing forms, however, the nation remains the same, and even if certain nations must disappear and others arise, the nation will always be the basic structure of society. According to our findings, however, the nation is just a temporary and transitory structure in the history of the evolution of humanity, one of numerous forms of organization which follow one another in succession or exist side by side: tribes, peoples, empires, churches, village communities, States. Among these forms, the nation, in its particular nature, is a product of bourgeois society and will disappear with the latter. A desire to discover the nation in all past and future communities is as artificial as the determination to interpret, after the fashion of the bourgeois economists, the whole panoply of past and future economic forms as various forms of capitalism, and to conceive world evolution as the evolution of capitalism, which would proceed from the "capital" of the savage, his bow and arrows, to the "capital" of socialist society.

This is the weak point of the basic underlying idea of Bauer's work, as we pointed out above. When he says that the nation is not a fixed

object but a process of becoming, he implies that the nation as such is permanent and eternal. For Bauer, the nation is “the never-finished product of an eternally-occurring process”. *For us, the nation is an episode in the process of human evolution, a process which develops towards the infinite.* For Bauer the nation constitutes the permanent fundamental element of humanity. His theory is *a reflection on the whole history of humanity from the perspective of the nation*. Economic forms change, classes emerge and pass away, but these are only changes of the nation, within the nation. The nation remains the primary element upon which the classes and their transformations simply confer a changing content. This is why Bauer expresses the ideas and the goals of socialism in the language of nationalism and speaks of the nation where others have used the terms people and humanity: the “nation”, due to the private ownership of the means of labor, has lost control over its destiny; the “nation” has not consciously determined its destiny, the capitalists have; the “nation” of the future will become the architect of its own destiny; we have already referred to his mention of national workshops. So Bauer is led to describe as national-evolutionary and national-conservative the two opposed trends in politics: that of socialism, oriented towards the future, and that of capitalism, which is trying to preserve the existing economic order. Following the example cited above, one could just as well call this kind of socialism the socialism of capitalist-evolutionary politics.

Bauer’s way of approaching the national question is a specifically Austrian theory, and is a doctrine of the evolution of humanity which could only have arisen in Austria, where national questions totally dominate public life. It is a confirmation of the fact that, and this is not meant to stigmatize him, a researcher who so successfully masters the method of the Marxist conception of history in turn becomes, by succumbing to the influence of his surroundings, a proof of that theory.

It is only such influence which has placed him in such circumstances that he can make our scientific understanding advance to such a point. Along with the fact that we are not logical thinking machines but human beings who are living in a world which obliges us to have a full knowledge of the problems which the practice of the struggle pose for us, by relying on experience and reflection.

But it seems to us that the different conclusions also involve different basic philosophical concepts. In what way have all our criticisms of Bauer's conceptions always converged? In a different evaluation of material and intellectual forces. While Bauer bases himself on the indestructible power of mental phenomena, of ideology as an independent force, we always put the accent on its dependence on economic conditions. It is tempting to consider this deviation from Marxist materialism in the light of the fact that Bauer has on various occasions represented himself as a defender of Kant's philosophy and figures among the Kantians. In this manner, his work is a double confirmation of the fact that Marxism is a precious and indispensable scientific method.

Only Marxism has allowed him to enunciate numerous noteworthy results which enrich our understanding; it is precisely at those points which are in some respect lacking that his method is most distant from the materialist conceptions of Marxism.

### III. Socialist Tactics

#### Nationalist Demands

Socialist tactics are based on the science of social development. The way a working class assumes responsibility for pursuing its own interests is determined by its conception of the future evolution of its conditions. Its tactics must not yield to the influence of every desire and every goal which arise among the oppressed proletariat, or by every

idea that dominates the latter's mentality; if these are in contradiction with the effective development they are unrealizable, so all the energy and all the work devoted to them are in vain and can even be harmful. This was the case with all the movements and attempts to stop the triumphant march of big industry and to reintroduce the old order of the guilds. The militant proletariat has rejected all of that; guided by its understanding of the inevitable nature of capitalist development, it has put forth its socialist goal. The leading idea of our tactics is to favor that which will inevitably realize this goal. For this reason it is of paramount importance to establish, not what role nationalism is playing in this or that proletariat at this moment, but what will its long-term role be in the proletariat under the influence of the rise of the class struggle. Our conceptions of the future meaning of nationalism for the working class are the conceptions which must determine our tactical positions in relation to the national question.

Bauer's conceptions concerning the nation's future constitute the theoretical basis of the *tactics of national opportunism*. The opportunistic tactic itself presents the very outline of the basic premise of his work, which considers nationality as the sole powerful and permanent result of historical development in its entirety. If the nation constitutes, and not just today but on an ever expanding scale in conjunction with the growth of the workers movement, and under socialism totally does so, the natural unifying and dividing principle of humanity, then it would be useless to want to fight against the power of the national idea in the proletariat. Then it would be necessary for us to champion nationalist demands and we would have to make every effort to convince the patriotic workers that socialism is the best and the only real nationalism.

Tactics would be completely different if one were to adopt the conviction that nationalism is nothing but bourgeois ideology which does not have material roots in the proletariat and which will therefore disappear as the class struggle develops. In this case, nationalism is

not only a passing episode in the proletariat, but also constitutes, like all bourgeois ideology, *an obstacle for the class struggle whose harmful influence must be eliminated as much as possible*. Its elimination is part of the timeline of evolution itself. Nationalist slogans and goals distract the workers from their specifically proletarian goals. They divide the workers of different nations; they provoke the mutual hostility of the workers and thus destroy the necessary unity of the proletariat. They line up the workers and the bourgeoisie shoulder to shoulder in one front, thus obscuring the workers' class consciousness and transforming the workers into the executors of bourgeois policy. National struggles prevent the assertion of social questions and proletarian interests in politics and condemn this important means of struggle of the proletariat to sterility. All of this is encouraged by socialist propaganda when the latter presents nationalist slogans to the workers as valid, regardless of the very goal of their struggle, and when it utilizes the language of nationalism in the description of our socialist goals. It is indispensable that class feeling and class struggle should be deeply rooted in the minds of the workers; then they will progressively become aware of the unreality and futility of nationalist slogans for their class.

This is why the nation-State as a goal in itself, such as the re-establishment of an independent national State in Poland, has no place in socialist propaganda. This is not because a national State belonging to the proletariat is of no interest for socialist propaganda purposes. It is a result of the fact that nationalist demands of this kind cause the hatred of exploitation and oppression to easily take the form of nationalist hatred of foreign oppressors, as in the case of the foreign rule exercised by Russia, which protects the Polish capitalists, and is prejudicial to the acquisition of a lucid class consciousness. The re-establishment of an independent Poland is utopian in the capitalist era. This also applies to the solution of the Polish question proposed by Bauer: national autonomy for the Poles within the Russian Empire. However desirable

or necessary this goal may be for the Polish proletariat, as long as capitalism reigns the real course of development will not be determined by what the proletariat believes it needs, but by what the ruling class wants. If, however, the proletariat is strong enough to impose its will, the value of such autonomy is then infinitely minuscule compared with the real value of the proletariat's class demands, which lead to socialism. The struggle of the Polish proletariat against the political power under which it really suffers—the Russian, Prussian or Austrian government, as the case may be—is condemned to sterility if it assumes the form of a nationalist struggle; only as a class struggle will it achieve its goal. The only goal which can be achieved and which for this reason is imposed as a goal is that of the conquest, in conjunction with the other workers of these States, of capitalist political power and the struggle for the advent of socialism. Hence under socialism the goal of an independent Poland no longer makes sense since in that case nothing would prevent all Polish-speaking individuals from being free to unite in an administrative unit.

These different views are evident in the respective positions of the two Polish Socialist Parties.[11] Bauer insists that both are justified, since each of them embodies one facet of the nature of the Polish workers: the P.P.S., nationalist feeling, the SDKPiL, the international class struggle. This is correct, but incomplete. We do not content ourselves with the very objective historical method which proves that all phenomena or tendencies can be explained by and derived from natural causes. We must add that one facet of this nature is reinforced during the course of development, while another declines. The principle of one of the two parties is based on the future, that of the other is based on the past; one constitutes the great force of progress, the other is a compulsory tradition. This is why the two parties do not represent the same thing for us; as Marxists who base our principles on the real science of evolution and as revolutionary social democrats who seek what is

ours in the class struggle, we must support one party and help it in its struggle against the other.

We spoke above of the lack of value of nationalist slogans for proletariat. But is it not true that certain nationalist demands are also of great importance for the workers, and should the workers not fight for them alongside the bourgeoisie? Is it not true, for example, that national schools, in which the children of the proletariat can receive instruction in their own language, possess a certain value? *For us, such demands constitute proletarian demands rather than nationalist demands.* Czech nationalist demands are directed against the Germans, while the Germans oppose them. If, however, the Czech workers were to interest themselves in Czech schools, a Czech administrative language, etc., because these things allow them to enhance their opportunities for education and to increase their independence in respect to the employers and the authorities, these issues would also be of interest to the German workers, who have every interest in seeing their class comrades acquire as much force as possible for the class struggle. Therefore, not only the Czech social democrats, but their German comrades as well must demand schools for the Czech minority, and it is of the little importance to the representatives of the proletariat how powerful the German or the Czech "nation" is, that is, how powerful the German or the Czech bourgeoisie is within the State, which will be strengthened or weakened by this development. The interest of the proletariat must always prevail. If the bourgeoisie, for nationalist reasons, were to formulate an identical demand, in practice it will be pursuing something totally different since its goals are not the same. In the schools of the Czech minority, the workers will encourage the teaching of the German language because this would help their children in their struggle for existence, but the Czech bourgeoisie will try to prevent them from learning German. The workers demand the most extensive diversity of languages employed in administrative bodies, the

nationalists want to suppress foreign languages. *It is only in appearance, then, that the linguistic and cultural demands of the workers and those of the nationalists coincide. Proletarian demands are those demands which are common to the proletariat of all nations.*

### **Ideology and Class Struggle**

The Marxist tactic of social democracy is based upon the recognition of the real class interests of the workers. It cannot be led astray by ideologies, even when the latter seem to be rooted in men's minds. As a result of its Marxist mode of comprehension, it knows that those ideas and ideologies which apparently do not have material bases, are by no means supernatural nor are they invested with a spiritual existence disconnected from the corporeal, but are the traditional and established expressions of past class interests. This is why we are certain *that in the face of the enormous density of class interests and real current needs, even if there is little awareness of them, no ideology rooted in the past, however powerful it may be, can resist for long.* This basic concept also determines the form assumed by our struggle against that ideology's power.

Those who consider ideas to be autonomous powers in the minds of men, which spontaneously appear or are manifested thanks to a strange spiritual influence, can choose one of two ways to win men over to their new goals: they can either directly fight the old ideologies, demonstrating their erroneous nature by means of abstract theoretical considerations and in that way attempt to nullify their power over men; or they can try to enlist ideology in their cause by presenting their new goals as the consequence and the realization of old ideas. Let us take the example of religion.

Religion is the most powerful among the ideologies of the past which dominate the proletariat and are used in an attempt to lead it astray from the united class struggle. Confused social democrats, who have witnessed the construction of this powerful obstacle to socialism, have tried to fight religion directly and to prove the erroneous nature

of religious doctrines—in the same way previously attempted by bourgeois nationalism—in order to shatter their influence. Or, on the other hand, they have tried to present socialism as an improved Christianity, as the true realization of religious doctrine, and thus to convert Christian believers to socialism. But these two methods have failed wherever they have been tried; theoretical attacks against religion have not succeeded at all and have reinforced prejudice against socialism; similarly, no one has been convinced by ridiculous social democratic attempts to cloak socialism in Christian attributes, because the tradition to which men are firmly attached is not just Christianity in general, but a particular Christian doctrine. It was obvious that both of these attempts were destined to fail. Since the theoretical considerations and debates which accompanied these attempts focus the mind on abstract religious questions, they detour it away from real life and reinforce ideological thinking. In general, faith cannot be attacked with theoretical proofs; only when its basis—the old conditions of existence—has disappeared and a new conception of the world occurs to man, will doubts arise concerning doctrines and ancient dogmas. Only the new reality, which more and more clearly penetrates the mind, can overthrow a faith handed down from generation to generation; it is, of course, necessary that men's consciousness should clearly come to grips with this reality. *It is only through contact with reality that the mind frees itself from the power of inherited ideas.*

This is why Marxist social democracy would not even in its wildest dreams think of fighting religion with theoretical arguments, or of trying to use religion for its own purposes. Both such approaches would help to artificially preserve received abstract ideas, instead of allowing them to slowly dissipate. *Our tactic consists in making the workers more aware of their real class interests, showing them the reality of this society and its life in order to orient their minds more towards the real world of today. Then the old ideas, which no longer find any nourishment in the reality of*

*proletariat life, yield without being directly attacked.* What men think of theoretical problems is no concern of ours as long as they struggle together with us for the new economic order of socialism. This is why social democracy never speaks or debates about the existence of God or religious controversies; it only speaks of capitalism, exploitation, class interests, and the need for the workers to collectively wage the class struggle. In this way the mind is steered away from secondary ideas of the past in order to focus on present-day reality; these ideas of the past are thus deprived of their power to lead the workers astray from the class struggle and the defense of their class interests.

Of course, this cannot be achieved all at once. That which remains petrified within the mind can only be slowly eroded and dissolved under the impact of new forces. How many years passed before large numbers of the Christian workers of Rhineland-Westphalia abandoned the *Zentrum*[12] for social democracy! But the social democracy did not allow itself to be led astray; it did not try to accelerate the conversion of the Christian workers by means of concessions to their religious prejudices; it was not impatient with the scarcity of its successes, nor did it allow itself to be seduced by anti-religious propaganda. It did not lose faith in the victory of reality over tradition, it clung firmly to principle, it opted for no tactical deviations which would give the illusion of a quicker route to success; it always opposed ideology with the class struggle. And now the fruits of its tactic continue to ripen.

It is the same with regard to nationalism, with the sole difference that in dealing with the latter, due to the fact that it is a more recent and less petrified ideology, we are less prepared to avoid the error of fighting on the abstract theoretical plane as well as the error of compromise. *In this case as well it suffices for us to put the accent on the class struggle and to awaken class feeling in order to turn attention away from national problems.* In this case, too, all our propaganda could appear to be useless against the power of nationalist ideology;[13] most of all,

it could seem that nationalism is making the most progress among the workers of the young nations. Thus, the Christian trade unions of the Rhineland made their greatest gains at the same time as the Social Democracy; this could be compared to the phenomenon of national separatism, which is a part of the workers movement that concedes more importance to a bourgeois ideology than to the principle of class struggle. But insofar as such movements are in practice capable only of following in the wake of the bourgeoisie and thus of arousing the feeling of the working class against them, they will progressively lose their power.

We would therefore have gone completely off the rails if we wanted to win the working masses over to socialism by being more nationalist than they are, by yielding to this phenomenon. This *nationalist opportunism* could, at the very most, allow these masses to be won over externally, in appearance, for the party, *but this does not win them over to our cause, to socialist ideas*; bourgeois conceptions will continue to rule their minds as before. And when the decisive moment arrives when they must choose between national and proletarian interests, *the internal weakness of this workers movement* will become apparent, as is currently taking place in the separatist crisis. How can we rally the masses under our banner if we allow them to flock to the banner of nationalism? Our principle of class struggle can only prevail when the other principles that manipulate and divide men are rendered ineffective; but if our propaganda enhances the reputation of those other principles, we subvert our own cause.

As a result of what has been set forth above, it would be a complete error to want to fight nationalist feelings and slogans. In those cases where the latter are deeply-rooted in people's heads, they cannot be eliminated by theoretical arguments but only by a more powerful reality, which is allowed to act upon the people's minds. If one begins to speak about this topic, the mind of the listener is immediately

oriented towards the terrain of nationalism and can think only in terms of nationalism. It is therefore better not to speak of it at all, not to get mixed up in it. To all the nationalist slogans and arguments, the response will be: exploitation, surplus value, bourgeoisie, class rule, class struggle. If they speak of their demands for national schools, we shall call attention to the insufficiency of the teaching dispensed to the children of the workers, who learn no more than what is necessary for their subsequent life of back-breaking toil at the service of capital. If they speak of street signs and administrative posts, we will speak of the misery which compels the proletarians to emigrate. If they speak of the unity of the nation, we will speak of exploitation and class oppression. If they speak of the greatness of the nation, we will speak of the solidarity of the proletariat of the whole world. Only when the great reality of today's world—capitalist development, exploitation, the class struggle and its final goal, socialism—has entirely impregnated the minds of the workers, will the little bourgeois ideals of nationalism fade away and disappear. *The class struggle and propaganda for socialism comprise the sole effective means of breaking the power of nationalism.*

### **Separatism and Party Organization**

In Austria after the Wimberg Congress, the social democratic party was divided by nationalities, each national workers party being autonomous and collaborating with the others on a federalist basis. [14] This separation of the proletariat by nationalities did not cause major inconveniences and was frequently considered to be the natural organizational principle for the workers movement in a country which is so profoundly divided by nationalities. But when this separation ceased to be restricted to the political organization and was applied to the trade unions under the name of separatism, the danger suddenly became palpable. The absurdity of a situation where the workers in the same workshop are organized in different trade unions and thus stand in the way of the common struggle against the employer is evident.

These workers constitute a community of interests; they can only fight and win as a cohesive mass and therefore must be members of a single organization. The separatists, by introducing the separation of workers by nationalities into the trade union, shatter the power of the workers in the same way the Christian trade union schismatics did and significantly contribute to obstructing the rise of the proletariat.

The separatists know this and can see it as well as we do. What, then, impels them to take this hostile stance towards the workers despite the fact that their cause was condemned by an overwhelming majority at the International Congress at Copenhagen?[15] First of all, the fact that they consider the national principle to be infinitely superior to the material interests of the workers and the socialist principle. In this case, however, they make reference to the rulings of another international Congress, the Stuttgart Congress (1907), according to which *the party and the trade unions of a country must be intimately linked in a constant community of labor and struggle.*[16] How is this possible when the party is articulated by nationality and the trade union movement is at the same time internationally centralized throughout the State? Where will the Czech social democracy find a trade union movement with which it can be intimately linked, if it does not create its own Czech trade union movement?

To proceed, as have many German-speaking social democrats in Austria, by referring to the total disparity of political and trade union struggles as an essential argument in the theoretical struggle against separatism, is to literally choose the weakest position. There is, of course, no other way out if they want to simultaneously defend international unity in the trade unions and separation by nationalities in the party. But this argument does not produce the sought-after results.

This attitude is derived from the situation which prevailed at the beginning of the workers movement when both party and trade union had to assert themselves slowly while fighting against the prejudices

of the working masses and when each of them was trying to find its own way: at that time it seemed that the trade unions were only for improving the immediate material conditions, while the party carries out the struggle for the future society, for general ideals and elevated ideas. In reality, both are fighting for immediate improvements and both are helping to build the power of the proletariat which will make the advent of socialism possible. It is just that, insofar as the political struggle is a general struggle against the entire bourgeoisie, the most distant consequences and the most profound bases of the socialist world-view must be taken into account, while in the trade union struggle, in which contemporary issues and immediate interests come to the fore, reference to general principles is not necessary, and could even be harmful to momentary unity. But in reality it is the same working class interests which determine the two forms of struggle; it is just that in the party they are somewhat more enveloped in the form of ideas and principles. But as the movement grows, and the closer the party and the trade union approach one another, the more they are compelled to fight in common. The great trade union struggles become mass movements whose enormous political importance makes the whole of social existence tremble. On the other hand, political struggles assume the dimensions of mass actions which demand the active collaboration of the trade unions. The Stuttgart resolution makes this necessity even more clear. Thus, every attempt to defeat separatism by positing the total disparity of trade union and political movements is in conflict with reality.

The error of separatism, then, lies not in wanting the same organization for the party and the trade unions, but in destroying the trade union to accomplish this goal. *The root of the contradiction is not found in the unity of the trade union movement, but in the division of the political party.* Separatism in the trade union movement is merely the unavoidable consequence of the autonomy of the party's national

organizations; since it subordinates the class struggle to the national principle, it is even the ultimate consequence of the theory which considers nations to be the natural products of humanity and sees socialism in the light of the national principle, as the realization of the nation. *This is why one cannot really overcome separatism unless, on all fronts, in tactics, in agitation, in the consciousness of all the comrades, the class struggle rules as the sole proletarian principle* compared to which all national differences are of no importance. The unification of the socialist parties is the only way to resolve the contradiction which has given birth to the separatist crisis and all the harm it has done to the workers movement.

In the section above entitled "The Community of Class Struggle" it was demonstrated how the class struggle develops on the terrain of the State and unifies the workers of all the State's nationalities. It was also confirmed that during the early days of the socialist party, the center of gravity was still located in the nations. This explains historical developments since then: from the moment that it began to reach the masses through its propaganda, the party split up into separate units on the national level which had to adapt to their respective environments, to the situation and specific ways of thinking of each nation, and for that very reason were more or less contaminated by nationalist ideas. The entire workers movement during its ascendant phase was stuffed full of bourgeois ideas which it can only slowly rid itself of in the course of development, through the practice of struggle and increasing theoretical understanding. This bourgeois influence on the workers movement, which in other countries has assumed the form of revisionism or anarchism, necessarily took the form of nationalism in Austria, not only because nationalism is the most powerful bourgeois ideology, but also because in Austria nationalism is opposed to the State and the bureaucracy. National autonomy in the party is not only the result of an erroneous yet avoidable resolution of this or that party congress,

but is also a natural form of development, created incrementally by the historical situation itself.

But when the conquest of universal suffrage created the terrain for the parliamentary struggle of the modern capitalist State, and the proletariat became an important political force, this situation could not last. Then one could see if the autonomous parties still really comprised one single party (*Gesamtpartei*). It was no longer possible to be satisfied with platonic declarations about their unity; henceforth a more solidly-grounded unity was needed, so that the socialist fractions of the various national parties would submit in practice and in deed to a common will. The political movement has not passed this test; in some of its component parts, nationalism still has such deep roots that they feel closer to the bourgeois parties of their nations than to the other socialist fractions. This explains a contradiction which is only apparent: the single party collapsed at the precise moment when the new conditions of the political struggle required a real single party, the solid unity of the whole Austrian proletariat; the slack bonds connecting the national groups broke when these groups were confronted by the pressing need to transform themselves into a solid unity. But it was at the same time evident that this absence of the single party could only be temporary.  
*The separatist crisis must necessarily lead to the appearance of a new single party that will be the compact political organization of the whole Austrian working class.*

The autonomous national parties are forms from the past which no longer correspond to the new conditions of struggle. The political struggle is the same for all nations and is conducted in one single parliament in Vienna; there, the Czech social democrats do not fight against the Czech bourgeoisie but, together with all the other workers deputies, they fight against the entire Austrian bourgeoisie. To this assertion it has been objected that electoral campaigns are conducted within each nation separately: the adversaries are therefore not the

State and its bureaucracy, but the bourgeois parties of each nation. This is correct; but the electoral campaign is not, so to speak, any more than an extension of the parliamentary struggle. *It is not the words, but the deeds of our adversaries, which constitute the material of the electoral campaign,* and these deeds are perpetrated in the *Reichsrat*; they form part of the activity of the Austrian parliament. This is why the electoral campaign coaxes the workers out of their little national worlds; it directs their attention to a much greater institution of domination, a powerful organization of coercion of the capitalist class, which rules their lives.

The State, which in other times seemed weak and defenseless against the nation, is increasingly asserting its power as a consequence of the development of large-scale capitalism. The growth of *imperialism*, which drags the Danubian monarchy in its wake, puts increasingly more potent instruments of power into the hands of the State for the purposes of international policy, imposes greater military pressure and tax burdens on the masses, contains the opposition of the national bourgeois parties and completely ignores the workers' sociopolitical demands. Imperialism had to provide a powerful impulse to the joint class struggle of the workers; in comparison with their struggles, which shake the entire world, which set capital and labor against each other in a bitter conflict, the goals of national disputes lose all meaning. And it is not to be totally ruled out that the common changes to which the workers are exposed by international politics, above all the danger of war, will unite the now-divided working masses for a common struggle more quickly than is generally thought.

It is true that, as a result of linguistic differences, propaganda and education must be conducted separately in each particular nation. The practice of the class struggle must acknowledge nations as groups distinguished by different languages; this applies to the party as well as the trade union movement. *As organizations for struggle, both the party and the trade union must be organized in a unitary manner on an international*

*scale. For purposes of propaganda, explanation, and educational efforts which are also of common concern, they need national organizations and structures.*

### **National Autonomy**

Even though we do not get involved in the slogans and watchwords of nationalism and continue to use the slogans of socialism, this does not mean that we are pursuing a kind of ostrich policy in regard to national questions. These are, after all, real questions which are of concern to men and which they want to solve. We are trying to get the workers to become conscious of the fact that, for them, it is not these questions, but exploitation and the class struggle, which are the most vital and important questions which cast their shadows over everything. But this does not make the other questions disappear and we have to show that we are capable of resolving them. Social democracy does not just simply leave men with the promise of the future State, it also presents in its program of immediate demands the solution it proposes for every one of those questions which constitute the focal points of contemporary struggles. We are not merely attempting to unite the Christian workers with all the others in the common class struggle, without taking religion into consideration, but, in our programmatic proposal, *Proclamation Concerning the Private Character of Religion*, we are also showing them the means to preserve their religious interests more effectively than through religious struggles and disputes. In opposition to the power struggles of the Churches, struggles which are inherent in their character as organizations of domination, we propose the principle of self-determination and freedom for all men to practice their faith without risk of being harmed by others for doing so. This programmatic proposal does not supply the solution for any particular question, but contains a blanket solution insofar as it provides a basis upon which the various questions can be settled at will. By removing all public coercion, all necessity for self-defense and dispute is simultaneously

removed. Religious questions are eliminated from politics and left to organizations that will be created by men of their own free will.

Our position in regard to national questions is similar. *The social democratic program of national autonomy offers the practical solution which will deprive struggles between nations of their raison d'etre.* By means of the employment of the personal principle instead of the territorial principle, nations will be recognized as organizations which will be responsible for the care of all the cultural interests of the national community within the borders of the State. Each nation thus obtains the legal power to regulate its affairs autonomously even where it is in the minority. In this way no nation finds itself faced with the permanent obligation of conquering and preserving this power in the struggle to exercise influence over the State. This will definitively put an end to the struggles between nations which, through endless obstructions, paralyze all parliamentary activity and prevent social questions from being addressed. When the bourgeois parties engage in a free-for-all, without advancing a single step, and find themselves to be helpless before the question of how to get out of this chaos, the social democracy has shown the practical way which permits the satisfaction of justified national desires, without for that reason necessitating mutual harm.

This is not to say that this program has any chance of being implemented. All of us are convinced that our programmatic proclamation of the private character of religion, along with the greater part of our immediate demands, will not be brought to fruition by the capitalist State. Under capitalism, religion is not, as people have been made to believe, a matter of personal belief—if it were, the promoters of religion would have had to adopt and implement our program—but is instead a means of rule in the hands of the owning class. And that class will not renounce the use of that means. A similar idea is found in our national program, which seeks to transform the popular conception of nations into a reality. Nations are not just groups of men

who have the same cultural interests and who, for that reason, want to live in peace with other nations; they are combat organizations of the bourgeoisie which are used to gain power within the State. Every national bourgeoisie hopes to extend the territory where it exercises its rule at the expense of its adversaries; it is therefore totally erroneous to think that the bourgeoisie could through its own initiative put an end to these exhausting struggles, just as it is utterly out of the question that the capitalist world powers will usher in an epoch of eternal world peace, through a sensible settlement of their differences. For in Austria, the situation is such that a higher body is available which is capable of intervening: the State, the ruling bureaucracy. It is hoped that the central power of the State will be engaged to resolve national differences, because the latter threaten to tear the State apart and impede the regular functioning of the State machinery; but the State has learned how to coexist with national struggles, and has gone so far as to make use of them to reinforce the power of the government against the parliament, so that it is no longer at all necessary to do away with them. And, what is even more important: the realization of national autonomy, such as the social democracy demands, is based upon democratic self-administration. And this quite justifiably strikes terror into the hearts of the feudal and clerical elements of big business and the militarists who rule Austria.

But does the bourgeoisie really have an interest in putting an end to national struggles? Not at all, it has the greatest interest in not putting an end to them, especially since the class struggle has reached a high point. Just like religious antagonisms, *national antagonisms constitute excellent means to divide the proletariat, to divert its attention from the class struggle with the aid of ideological slogans and to prevent its class unity*. The instinctive aspirations of the bourgeois classes to block the proletariat's lucid and powerful efforts towards unification form an increasingly larger part of bourgeois policy. In countries like England, Holland,

the United States, and even Germany (where the conservative party of the *Junkers* is an exceptional case of a sharply-defined class party), we observe that the struggles between the two major bourgeois parties—generally between a “liberal” party and a “conservative” or “religious” party—are becoming more embittered, and the war-cries more strident, at the same time that their real conflicts of interest diminish and their antagonism consists of ideological slogans handed down from the past. Anyone with a schematic conception of Marxism who wants to see the parties as merely the representatives of the interests of bourgeois groups, is faced with an enigma here: when one would expect that they would fuse into a reactionary mass to confront the threat of the proletariat, it seems, to the contrary, that the gap between them grows deeper and wider. The very simple explanation of this phenomenon is that they have instinctively understood that it is impossible to crush the proletariat with force alone and that it is infinitely more important to confuse and divide the proletariat with ideological slogans. This is why the national struggles of Austria’s various bourgeoisies *flare up all the more violently the less reason there is for their existence*. The more closely these gentlemen cooperate to share State power, the more furiously they attack one another in public debates over issues relating to nationalist trifles. In the past, each bourgeoisie strove to group the proletariat of its nation into a compact body in order to mount a more effective battle against its adversaries. Today, the opposite is taking place: the struggle against the national enemy must serve to unite the proletariat behind the bourgeois parties and thus impede its international unity. The role played in other countries by the battle-cry, “With us for Christianity!”, “With us for freedom of conscience!”, by means of which it was hoped that the workers’ attention would be diverted from social questions, this role will be increasingly assumed by national battle-cries in Austria. It is in relation to social questions that their class unity and their class antagonism against the bourgeoisie will be asserted.

We do not expect that the practical solution to national disputes we have put forth will ever be implemented, precisely because these struggles will no longer have any point. When Bauer says that “national power politics and proletarian class politics are logically difficult to reconcile; psychologically, one excludes the other: national contradictions can disperse the forces of the proletariat at any moment; the national struggle renders the class struggle impossible. The centralist-atomist constitution, which makes the national power struggle inevitable, is therefore intolerable for the proletariat” (p. 252), he is perhaps partly correct, to the extent that he helps to provide a basis for our program’s demands. If, however, he means that the national struggle must first cease so that the class struggle could then take place, he is wrong. It is precisely the fact that we are striving to make national struggles disappear which leads the bourgeoisie to maintain their existence. But this is not how we will be stopped. *The proletarian army is only dispersed by national antagonisms as long as socialist class consciousness is weak.* It is after all true that, in the final accounting, the class struggle far surpasses the national question. *The baleful power of nationalism will in fact be broken not by our proposal for national autonomy, whose realization does not depend upon us, but solely by the strengthening of class consciousness.*

It would therefore be incorrect to concentrate all our forces on a “positive national policy” and to stake everything on this one card, the implementation of our national program as a precondition for the development of the class struggle. This programmatic demand, like most of our practical demands, only serves to show how easily we could resolve these questions if only we had power, and to illustrate, in the light of the rationality of our solutions, the irrationality of the bourgeois slogans. As long as the bourgeoisie rules, our rational solution will probably remain just a piece of paper. Our politics and our agitation can only be directed towards the necessity of always and exclusively

COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ANTON PANNEKOEK

carrying out the class struggle, to awaken class consciousness so that the workers, thanks to a clear understanding of reality, will become inaccessible to the slogans of nationalism.

Anton Pannekoek

Reichenberg, 1912

# War Against War (1913)

## I.

DURING the closing months of the year 1912 the war against war has dominated the thought and action of European Socialism. Geographical and historical conditions give to war an extremely important role in the social evolution of Europe. In America there exists one great political unit in which immigrants from all lands amalgamate into a single mass; therefore America offers the best conditions for a gigantic development of capitalism and the class struggle.

But old Europe, with its hundreds of millions crowded into a small area, is divided into small nations; on account of the traditions of past centuries, when everything was still on a small scale, these nations stand to one another in the relation of foreigners, different in traditions, speech, customs, and political life. Each of them has developed into a capitalist state, with a government organized in the interest of its own bourgeoisie. This capitalistic development necessitated struggles against the survivals of feudalism and absolutistic monarchical power, but also struggles of each nation against the others; for in the restricted area available each found itself opposed by the others. In all of these conflicts there persisted an element of ancient barbarism and traditional dynastic interests. Thus it has come about that to the evil of division into small political units has been added the greater evil of militarism, which, through compulsory military service and heavy taxes, squanders much

of the productive power of the nations and increases the strength of the governments as against the people.

The recent development of capitalism has increased these differences. While bourgeois idealists have been dreaming of the United States of Europe the facts of actual development have gone in the opposite direction. The imperialist policy has made each of the important European nations the center of a world empire. The cause of this state of affairs is the export of capital. The accumulation of capital outgrows the possibilities of the home-land; it seeks new fields of investment, where it becomes the foundation of new industries, which, in turn, bring about an increase in the demand for home products.

This phase of evolution requires the political domination of the new industrial region or, at least, an adequate influence over its government. Every government attempts, therefore, to take possession of the largest possible areas of foreign territory or to increase to the utmost its influence over foreign governments. To this end power and respect are necessary, and these are attainable only through military and naval equipment. Governments have thus become the representatives of big business. They find their support, however in the whole body of the bourgeois class, most of the members of which, without having any direct interest in the results of imperialism, feel a concern in whatever promises higher profits for capitalism as a whole.

Thus the various nations of Europe stand opposed to each other like gigantic camps of contending armies. They have divided themselves into two groups about the mightiest of the rivals, England and Germany. On the one side stands the Triple Alliance, made up of Germany, Austria and Italy, three nations poor in colonies. On the other stands Triple Entente of the three nations which control the largest colonial regions, England, France, and Russia. As a result of the present division of colonial possessions the members of the former group are

naturally the instigators of any struggle looking toward a redistribution, and the members of the latter are the defenders of the *status quo*.

Especially in Germany, which has developed into a great industrial power in the same class as England and the United States, there is a tremendous impulse in the direction of territorial expansion. The German government has been arming itself for fifteen years; it has now a mighty fleet which compels England to add constantly more vessels to its navy. Austria and Italy are beginning to imitate Germany. At the same time armies are increased and placed on a war footing. Throughout the world German capital and German political influence attempt to gain entrance. In China the Shantung railway is built and Kiastchou is held as a military station; in Asia Minor the railway from Constantinople to Bagdad is built; in Central Africa an attempt is made to enlarge German colonial possessions. Everywhere, however, England stands guard, jealous and suspicious of every German advance. This is the explanation for the enmity which the German bourgeoisie feels toward England.

The conflict between England and Germany is most acute in Asiatic Turkey. England has long had an eye on Mesopotamia, the ancient Babylonia, the cradle of human civilization, the biblical Garden of Eden, which now lies barren and waste but can be transformed into a fruitful land. But German capital, supported by the Turkish government, pushes on toward this territory along the line of the Bagdad railway. If this line is finally completed to the Persian Gulf, the shortest route to India will lie in the hands of Germany and her friends, and the English dream of uniting India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, southern Persia in a great English empire will have gone up in smoke. On this account England sought to prevent the construction of the Bagdad line and to undermine the Turkish government.

The break-down of Turkish power will involve a readjustment of all the interests involved, including those of the United States and

other countries. Herein lies a constant danger of war between various European nations.

But it is to the west of the Bosphorus that the danger of a great international conflict has first become imminent. The agrarian nations of the Balkan region, which had hitherto been regarded by Austria as the national sphere for her expansion, began to develop their own capitalist systems; the familiar class lines appeared and a strong national feeling developed. Hence there arose the necessity of nationalities large enough to permit of commercial development and the desire for the possession of seaports. This, in brief, is the cause of the present war, in which Turkey has been nearly forced out of Europe.

Austria, disappointed in the prospect of territories to the east scents new dangers in the results of the conflict. She fears especially the effect of a strong, independent Servian government on the Serbs at present under Austrian rule. Therefore a great war fever has swept over Austria and the Austrian government has made the most strenuous opposition to Servia's efforts to secure a port on the Adriatic. This situation contained the threat of a conflict of the great powers. Russia and Austria began immediately to mobilize their troops. This was the time for the proletariat of Europe to arise and assert its influence.

## II.

The international policy of Socialism has not always been opposed to war. Marx and Engels repeatedly (in 1843 and 1853) urged the nations of western Europe to declare war against Russia in opposition to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. In this Marx and Engels represented the interests of the working-class and of democracy. Throughout the nineteenth century Russia was the protector of the reactionary governments against the revolutionary peoples. So long as Russia maintained its position it could restore the absolutism which had been

conquered by the German revolutionists in 1848; in order to secure the results of the revolution, Marx, called upon the German bourgeoisie to take up arms against Russia. But the bourgeoisie did not answer this call to arms; it feared Russia less than the political power of the German people. Even later the influence of Russia remained an element in the situation of the rising working-class of western Europe. It was on this account that Bebel declared himself ready to shoulder a musket in a war against Russia.

But since this time conditions have changed. The liberation and increasing poverty of the Russian peasants, together with the development of capitalist industry, led, after the Russo-Japanese war, to a revolution which broke the military power of Russia for a long time to come. Russia can no longer play the part of guardian over the governments of Europe. It has become, like the others, a capitalist state which must reckon with capitalist interests and proletarian opposition. No fear of Russia need turn the working-class from a policy of international peace.

But in the meantime the society of western Europe has undergone a transformation. As capitalism developed, the necessity of being prepared to meet other nations in battle took hold of the imaginations of all classes. Even the working-class came instinctively to believe in the purposes to be attained through warfare. This was the case in Germany in 1870, and history has repeated itself in the Balkans during the past year. Such wars as these are called national; they are supposed to be waged in the interest of the national good. The Socialists, who see deeper and farther than this, were in both instances a negligible element in the situation. But at the present time Socialism has behind it in western Europe great masses of the working-class; in Germany a third of the entire population. In all countries these masses are in opposition to the government and they know that wars between modern governments are not national, but imperialistic. This means that

they are conducted in the interest of big business, for the purpose of increasing profits. This conception destroys any enthusiasm which the proletariat might develop for a foreign war.

On the other hand, the workers have every reason for striving to maintain a state of peace. A war in modern Europe would be far more devastating than any which has ever occurred. The armies which stand opposed count their soldiers by the million. And the weapons which they carry are far more murderous than any which have been employed in the past; especially the rifles of modern infantry are calculated to destroy life with a rapidity which has hitherto been unexampled. War in the future will be far more bloody than in the past; a far larger proportion of the forces will be killed or wounded. For those who remain at home, moreover, war will be far more terrible. Formerly the greater part of the population lived by agriculture, which could be temporarily carried on by women, boys and men too old for military service. Only within the region of actual military operations did the population know the real hardships of war. But through the development of capitalism our social organism has become more complicated and sensitive. Every disturbance which upsets credit or otherwise interferes with production may bring about a crisis. Every war which removes great masses of workers from the field of production, hinders transportation or blockades the harbors; means a crisis, a terrible industrial catastrophe which reaches the smallest village and brings bankruptcy, unemployment, poverty, and starvation in its train. A great European war at the present time would destroy civilization, force the world back to a low plane of industry and in general bring about a condition approaching that of primitive barbarism.

Such a possibility concerns especially the working-class, which is exerting its energies to raise civilization to a higher plane. The proletariat bases its activities on the new order of society; it is bringing

into being strong organizations in which the egoism of the bourgeois world is to be replaced by the communistic virtue of solidarity. It is through the cultivation of this virtue that it is gaining the power to conquer capitalism and throw off its domination.

And this organization of the working class is international. Across all national boundaries and all distinctions of race and language the workers join hands; they regard one another as brothers, as comrades, and see in the bourgeois and the government of their own land only enemies. There can be for them nothing more disgusting than the notion of massacring their brothers at the command of their enemies. They do not wish to see their international brotherhood, the growing unity of mankind, destroyed by the capitalistic quarrels of their governments. Therefore they make war against war with all their might. For these reasons the international policy of Socialism must be a policy of active devotion to the cause of peace. "War against war!" is the cry of the proletarians of all lands.

This was clearly expressed by the Congress of Stuttgart in 1907. In the resolution there adopted, after explaining the capitalistic nature of war and the determined opposition of the proletariat to militarism, the representatives of international Socialism declared:

"In case there is danger of war, the working-classes of the countries involved and their parliamentary representatives are in duty bound to oppose the resort to arms by the employment of the means which seem to them most effective, the character of which means will naturally be adapted to the degree of acuteness which has been developed in the class struggle and to the general political situation."

Since this resolution was adopted have the workers more than once been forced to oppose the war policies of their governments. When, finally, the Balkan war broke out the Socialists recognized immediately the danger to European peace. Our journals resolutely opposed the imperialist statesmen and professional chauvinists. In the countries

immediately involved there were immediately held great anti-war demonstrations. In Berlin there occurred on November 17 a meeting participated in by 300,000 persons. In Russia a strike demonstration was made. The International Bureau met in Brussels and called a special congress of the international Socialist movement.

This congress met in Basel, where the fine old minster, the chief church building of the place, was placed at its disposal. What an extraordinary spectacle, the red revolutionary hosts of Socialism gathering there in the old church to the swelling tones of the great organ! This would have been impossible in any other land than Switzerland, for everywhere else the bourgeois is committed to the policy of violence and detests the activities of the workers; it was possible here only because the Swiss bourgeoisie consists for the most part of bond-holders in state enterprises, which could only be injured by an international war. This incident was tantamount to an acknowledgement by the only peace-loving section of the bourgeoisie that the Socialist proletariat is at present the only group which has the power to prevent an international conflict.

The proletariat stood before all the world as the standard bearer of civilization. And for the working-class of the world the Congress of Basel was the visible demonstration of their international unity. Previous international congresses had made possible the exchange of ideas and the attainment of mutual understanding; they left the practical struggles of the proletariat to be carried on by the national organizations within the national boundary lines. Here the international policy became for the first time the most vital problem of the working class. Therefore the Congress of Basel was more important than any similar gathering which preceded it. Formerly internationalism was but a feeling which dominated the heart; now it became an important political fact.

The work of the congress consisted of the resolution accepted without opposition and the speeches which were made in connection with it. The resolution reaffirms the statement made at Stuttgart that the workers will attempt to prevent war with all the effective weapons at their disposal. And the addresses delivered by the representatives of the various nations left no doubt as to the determination of the working class.

"Not only in words," said Jaurès, "but in the deepest passion of our natures, we declare: We are prepared to make the utmost sacrifice."

And Victor Adler, speaking in the name of the working class of Austria, which now bears the brunt of the struggle against war, said:

"All the power of the proletariat, all the means of each individual worker, must be concentrated in this struggle."

"In the use of the means determined by our conditions, by our political and industrial organizations," declared Haase in the name of the German Social Democracy. "We will devote our utmost power to the securing of that which we all desire to have secured, the world peace and our common future.

With regard to the declaration of policy contained in the resolution there can be little difference of opinion. Oppose one another as we may as to the wisdom of the separate demands which are made, in devotion to the general principle we are all united; everywhere peace and friendship shall be maintained between peoples; all oppression of nation by nation shall be opposed; and for every people the fullest measure of self-government shall be demanded. In making these demands, expressive as they are of the desire of the workers for peace on earth as against the oppression and violence characteristic of the ruling class, the Congress of Basel set up for the masses of the people everywhere a great torch which shall illumine for them the path to the new world.

### III. The Congress of Basel

The Congress of Basel was a demonstration of the proletarian opposition to war, but such a demonstration cannot prevent war. As was said by Vaillant, the veteran of the Commune, "The international congress has finished its work; but the real struggle has just begun." What will be the plan of campaign of this battle? What weapons will be used? In what manner can the workers of the world prevent a war? These questions were not answered at Basel. As at Stuttgart, it was definitely declared that in each country the means employed are to be adapted to the conditions. In order to avoid even the appearance of a lack of unity, discussion of methods was avoided. The Congress contented itself with drawing the attention of governments and peoples to what has hitherto been achieved, our international unity and our unanimous opposition to war; it did not suggest any definite line of action. It showed to all the world the goal toward which we are bound, but failed to mark out the way which is to lead to it. The finding of the way has been left to the workers themselves.

Fortunately, our future line of march is not entirely unknown. In the actual practice of the labor movement, it has already been discovered. Both theoretically and practically the working-class has concerned itself with the methods to be employed in this phase of its struggle.

There are Socialists for whom political struggle and parliamentary struggle are identical. For them the entire political struggle of the working-class consists of political campaigns and speeches in parliamentary assemblies. The narrowness of this view has been demonstrated again and again. Wherever the right of franchise is a limited one, the representation of the proletariat necessarily remains in the minority; the task of the workers is, then, the conquest of a democratic electoral law. This is possible only by means of political

activity of the masses outside of the halls of parliament, what we have to come to call mass action. The same is true of the struggle against war. This is a political conflict of the greatest importance, but it cannot be carried on inside the parliamentary halls. There the representatives of the workers can voice their protest, but they are in the minority against the bourgeois majority which supports the government. And the diplomatic negotiations upon which depend the great issues of war and peace are not carried on in the open before the representatives of the people; these matters, so vital to the nations' life, are debated behind closed doors by a small coterie of ministers. In order to prevent war the proletariat must bring to bear a sufficient weight of public opinion to compel the government to keep the peace. This can be done only through mass action.

The mere existence of a Socialist proletariat constitutes a strong influence for peace. In view of the great influence exerted over the masses of people by a revolutionary party any government conceives at last a secret dread of war. For an unsuccessful conflict with a foreign power may always bring in its train revolutionary uprisings and the danger of complete downfall of the existing government. This fear of the proletariat has done much toward maintaining peace in Europe during the past forty years. But this gives the workers no excuse for deceiving themselves with a sense of security. The forces of international competition which make for war grow constantly stronger. And because the bourgeoisie, as the ruling class, is accustomed to command and have the working-class obey, and because it knows that it has under its control a strong governmental machine, it feels certain of its ability to drive the masses of the people into a conflict with a foreign power which it points out as the enemy. On this account the workers must bestir themselves, must take the initiative. No one will take account of the desires of those who simply hold their peace. But if the masses of the workers make energetic protest and declare with all

possible emphasis that they will not have war, then the government will be forced to proceed with caution. No government would dare at the present time to undertake a war against the energetically proclaimed desire of the great masses of the people.

This the workers have instinctively felt as they have been carrying on mass meetings and street demonstrations. These activities do more, however, than express the will of the participants. As a method of propaganda and agitation their effect is wide-spread. They attract the attention of those who have hitherto remained indifferent and waken hope and confidence in those who have remained aloof from the struggle. They draw increasing numbers into the struggle and so heighten the courage and enthusiasm of the entire proletariat. And the very fact that the government recognizes the effect of these demonstrations is reason enough for its fear of them and its tendency to give way before them.

But it is evident that in case bourgeoisie and government had definitely decided upon a war, such demonstrations as these would not suffice to compel them to relinquish their purpose. Such means as these could not force the will of the proletariat upon the government; they are effective only in case the forces making for war are not great. In the presence of them, governments will not declare war to satisfy a mere whim or to gain an unimportant advantage. They know how much is involved and whenever possible attempt to get on without war. If they do decide to declare war, it is because very important capitalistic interests are to be served. But the development of big business in the direction of new fields of investment is so persistent, so peremptory that they sometimes compel governments to go to war and plunge the entire bourgeoisie into a war fever. When this happens the influence for peace proceeding from mass-meetings and street demonstrations remains ineffective. Against the peace agitation of the proletariat a wave of fanatic nationalism is set in motion. Street demonstrations may be

forbidden. Patriotism serves as an excuse for the suppression of any opposition, and the mobilizing of troops places the most active elements of the proletariat under military law. Under these circumstances, what is to be done?

It is at this point that the conflict really becomes serious. Then the workers must resort to more effective means than the ordinary ones. Concerning the exact form of the struggle, however, it is impossible to go beyond conjectures. At Copenhagen Keir Hardie and Vaillant proposed as the ultimate weapons to be used against war a strike of those employed on railways and in arsenals and ammunition factories. This form of tactics is adapted to the French and English conditions. In England the great mass of the working-class is indifferent to war, for to the English war means a naval conflict or a land campaign carried on by professional, hired troops. On the other hand, military operations would be dependent upon the groups of workers employed in the arming of troops and the carrying on of transportation. In France the situation is substantially the same, for small capitalists and farmers make up the bulk of the population. On this account the proposition of Hardie and Vaillant is a perfectly natural one for them to make. But the fallacy involved in it lies in the fact that it places upon a comparatively small group the burden which belongs to an entire class. Any such group might be easily overcome by the superior forces of the government; popular opinion would approve of any violent means utilized against it. Not by means of such rather mechanical devices can a war be prevented, but only through action of the entire working-class. The struggle against war is a political struggle of class against class; it can be carried on successfully only when the entire proletariat exerts its whole strength against that of the government and the bourgeoisie.

The strongest weapon of the working class is the strike; the political mass strike is the great weapon of the revolution, the one most adapted to the conditions of the workers. Its tremendous power has been

repeatedly demonstrated, especially in Belgium in 1893 and in Russia in 1905. Concerning the question as to whether it can be employed against war, and how it can best be used, there is great difference of opinion. In the countries of Western Europe where great meetings and street demonstrations are commonplaces, Socialists have discovered that a protest strike for a limited time is the least exhibition of power that will make an impression. On the other hand, the leaders of German Socialism have little patience with the proposal to use the mass-strike as a means of preventing war. In part their opposition is due to the fear of precipitating unnecessary conflicts which might lead the government to such ruthless suppression of the labor movement as would set it back and postpone for many years the victory which it confidently expects. But another important element in the situation is the fact that the German labor movement leads the world in organization and power of numbers. Whereas a weak movement feels obliged to use immediately its strongest weapon, a strong movement may achieve the same result by the simple pressure of its mass. In addition, it must be remembered that street demonstrations, the right to make which has only recently been wrung from the police power, have in Germany a much greater influence than in other countries.

This does not mean that a political strike against war is impossible in Germany. It is not the desire of the leaders which gives the ultimate decision, but rather the force of circumstances, the masses may be compelled to act in a manner quite unforeseen, and in that case the leaders will be carried along despite their predilections and prejudices. In case the danger of war becomes really imminent, this will unquestionably take place. Such a socialistically trained working-class as that of Germany will not allow itself to be dragged into a war at the command of the ruling class. The greater the danger, the more the working-class will be roused, the more energetically will it defend itself with any and all weapons.

Hitherto this has never been necessary; in every case the danger of war has passed away after a period of greater or less excitement. Germany has been the greatest trouble-maker in Europe, yet the fact that the workers have not been prevented from making their demonstrations shows that the government has not seriously and definitely planned for war. But the danger constantly recurs, and constantly in more threatening form. So, what is now but theory must eventually become practice. Then the conflict concerning war will become one of the most important features of the class-struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. In this conflict for peace the workers will be compelled to use their sharpest weapons and to perfect their fighting power for employment against the whole strength of the ruling class. Thus the development of imperialism is calling into being the revolutionary force which will put an end to capitalism.

A new epoch in world history is beginning. Hitherto wars have been a necessary element in the development of the race; under capitalism they have been inevitable. The ruling classes simply had the masses at their disposal and without opposition were able to lead them into war in the interests of capital. Now, for the first time, a new power has appeared as a force in world history, the power of the self-conscious workers. Thus far the working-class has not been strong enough to overcome the bourgeoisie. But against the militarism of the competing capitalistic governments they now heroically declare their determination to have peace. And this war against war means the beginning of the process of revolution which is to lead from capitalism to Socialism.

# Imperialism and the Tasks of the Proletariat (1916)

## Introduction

In his 1912 debate with Kautsky over parliamentarism vs. mass-action, Pannekoek postulated a dialectical relationship between imperialism and mass-actions as a counterpoise to the purely electoral and parliamentary tactics of the SPD-Centre:

We do not have to deal here with the causes and driving forces of imperialism; let us just enumerate its manifestations and effects: world-power politics, the armaments-race (especially warship-building), colonial conquests, growing tax-oppression, war-danger, growing spirit of violence and domination among the bourgeoisie, reaction in domestic politics, discontinuation of social reform, growth of employers' associations, aggravation of trade-union struggles, high cost of living. All this places the working class in a new fighting position. Earlier it could hope to progress slowly but surely, improving working conditions through the trade-union struggle, advancing social reforms and increasing its political rights through its political representation. Today it has to strain all its forces not to be deprived of its current rights and living standard. *Its attack has been turned into a defence.*

The class-struggle thus becomes sharper and more generalised; its driving force, more and more, is not the allure of a better situation, but the bitter need of the workers to defend their rights from deterioration. Imperialism threatens the masses with new dangers and catastrophes (the petty bourgeoisie as much as the proletariat) and whips them up into resistance; taxes, high cost of living, and the war-danger make a bitter resistance necessary. But these phenomena originate only partially in legislation and can therefore only partially be fought against in parliament. The masses themselves must enter the political arena and exert a direct pressure on the ruling classes. This necessity is joined by the growing ability of the proletariat to assert its power. An ever-growing contradiction develops between the impotence of parliament, including our Reichstag-fraction, to fight against these phenomena and the working class's growing consciousness of its power. Mass-actions are therefore the natural consequence of the imperialist development of modern capitalism and increasingly constitute the necessary form of struggle against it.<sup>1</sup>

Karl Kautsky replied that the goal of the socialist movement was 'the conquest of state-power by winning a majority in parliament and by making parliament the controller of the government.'<sup>2</sup> In 'Imperialism and the Tasks of the Proletariat,' Pannekoek rejected long-established traditions of Social-Democratic parliamentarism to emphasise, instead, the priority of revolutionary, mass-struggle. We have chosen to conclude this volume with Pannekoek's article because it effectively summarises the history we have been documenting and the

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1 Pannekoek 1912a, pp. 541–2, in Grunenberg (ed.), pp. 264–5.

2 Kautsky 1912e, p. 732. For the continuation of the debate see Pannekoek 1912b and 1913b, Kautsky 1913 and Pannekoek 1913c.

reasons for the final submission of Europe's Social-Democratic parties to the nationalism and imperialist war-hysteria of 1914–18.

We also regard this article as significant in another respect; namely, its anticipation of the issues ultimately posed by Lenin's concept of the 'vanguard-party.' Though the present article was published in a journal issued jointly by the Bolsheviks and the Dutch Tribunists, Pannekoek's emphasis on mass-actions, as against the bureaucratic organisations of class-parties and trade-unions, clearly foreshadows the future break between Leninism and council-communism.<sup>3</sup> Pannekoek saw the enemy of socialism in the rule of officials, whether they be officials of a parliamentary party or the Secretariat of a tightly centralised vanguard-party. In that sense, his 'Imperialism and the Tasks of the Proletariat' provides equal insight into the fatal afflictions of both the Second International and its successor, the Third (Communist) International.

## I.

The outbreak of the first major world war in 1914 luridly illuminated two facts: first, the *enormous force of imperialism*, and second, the *weakness of the proletariat*, especially its vanguard and leadership in the struggle, the Social-Democratic parties of almost all countries.

Imperialism differs from the old capitalism in its striving to bring foreign parts of the world under its domination in order to create new markets for its products, to find new sources of raw materials and, above all, new investment areas for the overflowing masses of capital. The masses of capital increased enormously during the prosperous period of the last twenty years, and the urge to invest them in undeveloped countries with high profits therefore became dominant

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<sup>3</sup> On council-communism, see van der Linden 2004. On Pannekoek's further political evolution see Gerber 1989, Smart 1978, Bricanier 1978, Pannekoek 1970.

among the bourgeoisie. As a result, the various bourgeoisies confronted each other as competitors. The young German bourgeoisie, whose rise is recent, looked everywhere for new territories (colonies or spheres of influence), but saw its way obstructed by the old world-ruling states, particularly England, as in Morocco in 1911, while the German bourgeoisie itself prevented Russia's penetration into Asia Minor. All of them armed in order to have a decisive say in the battle for distribution of the world; all strove for as much *world power as possible*. This quest gradually seized the entire bourgeoisie everywhere. The anti-militarist, progressive or radical opposition among the ranks of the bourgeoisie gradually gave in, yielding to the growing military demands or being abandoned by its old following. In England, as in France and Germany, the old bourgeois opposition to the imperialist course increasingly melted down to a few phrases as votes were cast for the fleet, the army and colonial outlays. In Germany, the growth of this tendency among the bourgeoisie was most clearly visible because *German imperialism* naturally had to be *aggressive*; it still had everything to gain and felt strong enough for the purpose. In other countries, where imperialism had primarily to defend its possessions, that process was less evident; in those places the growth of imperialist aspirations and resolve became fully apparent only during the war. But, during the past twenty years, imperialism has everywhere become the ruling policy of all the major capitalist states.

Only one force stood apart from imperialism and fought against it: Social Democracy, representing the proletariat. Its resolutions at numerous national and international conferences expressed antipathy towards this policy. The sincerity of these statements cannot be doubted, because the danger drew steadily closer that a war would flare out of these imperialist ambitions, and, for the workers, such a world war meant the greatest disasters — countless victims and material sacrifices, collapse of their international union, and economic

decline over long decades. The international congresses, therefore, made the fight against war the main duty of the Social-Democratic parties. Sometimes people even boasted that governments' fear of Social Democracy would prevent a war. But, when the governments really wanted war in 1914, *the resistance of Social Democracy* in the West-European countries *turned out to be an insubstantial shadow*. Social Democracy never acknowledged its impotence while *gnashing its teeth*. Rather, it went along with the War, submitted to the will of the bourgeoisie, became patriotic and approved the war-loans — a complete break with everything it had proclaimed until then to be its principles and tactics.

How was that possible? The answer repeatedly given is that Social Democracy, the proletariat, was *too weak*. This is true, but it can easily be misunderstood. Defenders of the German Party's attitude also said: We were too weak, so we could not resist and had to join in. But had the problem simply been lack of material force, one could have tried to fight and resist to the utmost, as in Italy for instance. It was far worse — *no attempt was made to fight*. The weakness was much more profound: a lack of ability to fight at all, a lack of mental strength, a lack of will to wage the class-struggle. Everyone knew in advance that the [German Social-Democratic] Party could not defeat and crush the bourgeoisie. In the last elections, it received only one-third of all votes, and, in a nation of seventy million, it only had only one million members (the vast majority of whom simply paid dues). But, according to these measures of its external strength, the Party was strong enough to unleash a large movement against the War and to become the core of a powerful opposition movement. The fact that no such attempt was made, and that people laid down their weapons without a struggle, proves that the Party *was rotten from the inside and incapable of fulfilling its new tasks*.

The Social-Democratic parties arose from earlier conditions of a preimperialist period; they are spiritually and materially adapted to

the tasks of the proletarian struggle in an earlier period. Their task was to fight for reforms during the ascending phase of capitalism — to the extent that they were possible within the capitalist framework — and to rally and organise the proletarian masses for that purpose. Large organisations and parties were thus created, but, in the meantime, the fight for improvements increasingly degenerated into *striving for reforms at any price*, into begging and compromising with the bourgeoisie, into a limited policy for the most immediate minor benefits, no longer paying any attention to the great interests of the entire class and even giving up the class-struggle itself. Under the influence of immense prosperity, which strictly limited the worst misery of unemployment, a spirit of contentment, of indifference towards general class interests, made itself manifest among a section of the proletariat. *Reformism* increasingly dominated Social Democracy and revealed the degeneration and decay of the old methods at precisely the time when the proletariat faced new tasks.

The fight against imperialism embodied these new tasks. One could no longer manage against imperialism with the old means. In parliament, one could criticise its manifestations (such as armaments, taxes, reaction, the standstill of social legislation), but one could not influence its policy because it was not made by the parliaments but by small groups of people (in Germany, the Kaiser along with some nobles, generals, ministers and bankers; in England, three or four aristocrats and politicians; in France, a few bankers and ministers). The unions could hardly ward off the powerful business associations; all the skill of their officers broke apart against the granite-power of the cartel-magnates. The reactionary election laws could not be shaken through elections alone. New means of struggle were necessary. *The proletarian masses themselves had to enter the stage with active methods of struggle.*

It was conceivable that the Party would be able to adapt to these new conditions and tasks in advance and change its tactics accordingly. In

order to do so, it was first of all necessary to have a clear conception, an intellectual grasp of imperialism, of its causes, strength and significance. Second, the masses themselves had to be involved in the fight where the power of parliaments was not enough. A small beginning was made in the struggle for the general suffrage in Prussia; the masses took to the streets so vigorously that the party leadership itself recoiled at the scale of the new struggles, which, all at once, seemed to prefigure the immediate future — and thereafter it began to stifle them. A small group of *left radicals* tried to push the Party further along this path of mass-struggles, and a few sought to awaken some understanding of imperialism. But the leading strata of the Party — the leadership, the *party bureaucracy*, Kautsky and his friends — stood in the way of that pursuit. For them, imperialism was just a bourgeois madness about the arms-race, nurtured by a few great capitalists, from which one had to dissuade the bourgeoisie by means of good arguments. They searched for their salvation in the slogan 'back to the old tried and tested tactic,' with which they opposed the new revolutionary tactic and sought in vain to drive back revisionism. The *bureaucracy of officials and leaders*, who naturally identified their own *group-interests* in peaceful and undisturbed party development with the interests of the proletariat, used all their strength to oppose the 'anarcho-syndicalist adventures' into which the 'mass-action fanatics' wanted to plunge the Party. Through its press, offices and prestige, the party bureaucracy dominated the Party mentally and physically. Thus, the traditional *party structure*, handed down from previous conditions, *was unable to face the new tasks and reshape itself accordingly*. It had to perish. The outbreak of war was the catastrophe. Taken by surprise, stunned and confused by events, unable to resist, carried away by nationalist slogans, and without spiritual support, the proudest organisation of Social Democracy broke down as an organ of revolutionary socialism. And with it went almost all the Social-Democratic parties of Europe, most of

them being long corroded inwardly by reformism. The question must be left to the future as to how, from these ruins and after a new power-struggle, the advent of socialism will take place. From the collapse of the old Social Democracy, we can only draw some lessons concerning the tasks awaiting the proletariat and how it will be able to fulfill them.

## II.

The struggle of the proletariat against capitalism is presently possible only as a struggle against imperialism, since modern capitalism does not know any policy other than imperialist policy. Nowadays, the class-struggle, the struggle for socialism, assumes the form of the struggle against imperialism. But, as such, it takes on a new, and actually a more promising character. New prospects of victory appear; indeed, we can calmly assert that *only imperialism creates the conditions for a victory of the proletariat, for the attainment of socialism.*

First, imperialism makes the class-struggle more intensive and all-embracing. Imperialism awakens all the forces dormant in the bourgeois world; it gives to the bourgeoisie much energy and enthusiasm for the ideals of world power that carry away large masses. So long as the workers are trapped in the old traditions and do not yet rise to the height of the times, that admittedly means, at first, a collapse of the labour-movement. But the hope of socialism does not lie in the inability and lack of energy of the bourgeoisie, but, rather, in the ability and strength of the proletariat. Pressure creates counter-pressure; the pressure and energy from above finally awaken exasperation, determination to fight, and energy from below. In the old capitalism, the driving force of the struggle was the desire to improve conditions; yet millions lived on in inert satisfaction, and the striving for reforms was not sufficient to awaken the requisite energy. Today, imperialism brings down their living standards, burdens the masses with rising taxes,

and demands from them ever greater sacrifices up to their complete destruction; today, the degradation of their lives arouses them and forces them to defend themselves. Today, the masses can no longer say: I do not care about it because I am satisfied. They are forcibly involved in the struggle because imperialism actively attacks the proletariat. And not just the proletariat, but the farmers and petty bourgeoisie as well; formerly, they did not suffer much from capital, but now they have to surrender their property and their lives for the imperialist goals of big business. Everyone is drawn into the fight on one side or the other, and no one can stand apart from it. And, because socialism cannot be won and built by a small core of fighters amid an unconcerned popular mass, but only by the *whole* nation, this generalisation of the struggle by imperialism creates for the first time the conditions for socialism.

Second, imperialism makes new tactical methods necessary. If *mass-actions* are often referred to as a *new* tactic, that is simply because the correct estimation of reality was lost in the age of parliamentarism, when the illusion arose that speeches by leaders were enough to bring a class to victory. Every major social upheaval, every transmission of power to a new class, has been the work of the masses, of the classes themselves that secured the victory. The parliamentary system was crucial during the preparation-period, when the class had first to be organised and the struggle could only be fought with words. Once sufficient forces were gathered to launch active attacks, the old truth came into its own that only the class itself can fight the battle. And that is all the more true when new conditions and new social hardships incite the masses to action. Just as the French Revolution was a result of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the penetration of new ideas, though its outbreak in precisely those years was simultaneously the effect of the greater distress of the masses and of increased political tension, so in the proletarian revolution the slow growth of socialist thought coincides with the stimulating effect of certain social events.

Both their distress and these events are created by imperialism, which in that way drives the masses to spontaneous action. Parliaments can usually do nothing when the policy of the ruling classes leads, so to speak, mechanically and instinctively to the worst harassment or hostilities against the masses, such as inflation, wage-cuts, taxes, unemployment, political reaction and war. In those circumstances, only the masses can do anything. If the masses remain inactive, being confused and uncertain, all the protests in parliament cannot help, and they must helplessly submit to everything. But, if they wish to act, they must do it as masses, exerting direct pressure on the government through spontaneous or planned demonstrations and actions. This pressure appears as a new political factor because the interest of the ruling class is more or less to give in for fear of the further growth of such movements. It has repeatedly happened in recent years and in various countries that a planned attack on the right of assembly was prevented by a mass-action, for instance, a political strike. Had the German proletariat stepped into action vigorously and massively three years ago against the high cost of living, or a year ago against the War, the ruling classes would certainly have been forced to take it more or less into account.

Not only are mass-actions the only means of waging a successful struggle against those hardships and dangers, but important reforms are also impossible to achieve any other way. In the first period of parliamentarism, many reforms were won because the growth of Social-Democratic votes terrified the ruling classes; they felt the foundations of their rule shaking. But, when they realised that it was just a question of elections, of an oppositional attitude followed by no further action, their fear disappeared and with it their willingness to reform. The phrase '*Oderint, dum metuant*'<sup>4</sup> also applies in the class-struggle; red

<sup>4</sup> ‘Let them hate so long as they fear.’ (A favorite saying of Caligula.)

votes do not harm the bourgeoisie if they are not followed by action. The ruling class makes concessions only out of fear that, otherwise, the dissatisfaction, power and rebellion of the proletariat will grow too far. With imperialism, which inspired the bourgeoisie with new self-confidence and assurance, reforms therefore came to an end. Stronger means and mass-actions are now required in order to win reforms; and in Belgium, Sweden and Russia this method of action has already proved its force in the conquest of new political rights.

This means that the contrast between the revolutionary tactics of mass-actions and the non-revolutionary tactics of 'pure-and-simple' parliamentarism must not be understood in any absolute sense. Everything that increases the power of the working class is revolutionary. Thus, parliamentarism was revolutionary thirty years ago, while attempts to carry out subversive actions were fruitless and therefore non-revolutionary. In many cases, parliamentarism now has non-revolutionary effects because it does not strengthen the power of the proletariat but, rather, weakens it — and yet a well-conducted parliamentary fight can continue to have great revolutionary significance. Under imperialism, the unity of reform and revolution still remains the fundamental principle of socialist tactics; the struggle for the direct vital interests of the proletariat against everything that oppresses it is, at the same time, the struggle for socialism. Compared with the past, the difference lies in the fact that, *in the future, great and important reforms can only be achieved with the great means of mass-actions*. Mass-actions are the main and decisive manifestations of the proletariat's power, which it needs against the enormous power of imperialism in order not to be smashed, to hold its ground and to move forwards. Besides this, all the minor means of the daily struggles still retain all their value and necessity. That is why this new period of capitalism, which we call the age of imperialism, will at the same time be *the age of mass-actions*.

### III.

We see, therefore, how the new character of modern capitalism makes a *new socialism*, a new labour-movement with a new character, necessary — in the sense that this is the only way in which a really successful fight against capitalism is possible. But this new struggle does not only follow as an inevitable necessity from the new capitalism; at the same time, it also constitutes the only way to overcome the domination of capital and represents the only road to socialism.

The rule of the bourgeoisie, like that of all previous ruling classes, is based on the great instruments of power at its disposal. Although it is usually a minority, it disposes of knowledge and skills that make it intellectually superior to the mass of the ruled; through the school, the Church and the press, the class of the owners rules over the thought and feelings of the masses. In addition, its power lies in its strong organisation. A well-organised minority can dominate a majority if the latter is not organised, that is to say, if it possesses no cohesion, no unity of action and will. This organisation of the ruling class is the state-power; through its multi-branched army of public servants, it confronts the fragmented atoms of the people as a body with a unified will. And where the resulting customary authority disappears among the masses and they become rebellious, the state has strong material instruments of power at its disposal, such as the police, the judiciary, and, finally, a well-disciplined and well-equipped army. What can an unorganised mass of individuals do against all this?

During the period of parliamentarism, the illusion was often cherished that we fight against the bourgeoisie over state-power, to take command of the existing organism of the state that controls legislation. The consequence of this idea was the reformist conception that it was only necessary to replace capitalist by socialist ministers in order to

enter into socialism with full sails. One might, on the contrary, question whether any substantial change takes place in the world if the persons of the ministers change. One can recall from experience that every Social Democrat who became a minister, at the same time became a servant and trustee of the ruling class. But the decisive thing for evaluating this parliamentary conquest of power is the fact that the ruling class can everywhere make a peaceful seizure of political power impossible in advance by means of the electoral law and the constitution. To make a parliamentary conquest of power possible at all, universal and equal suffrage must first of all be obtained, and that is only possible through the extraparliamentary actions of the masses themselves. The constitutional conquest of political power by the proletariat consists of two elements: first, the majority of the people must be won over for socialism; and, second, the majority must have command over government and the state. The first requires propaganda, agitation and action, which are generally conceivable within the framework of the parliamentary system; the second implies absolute *political* democracy, which is nowhere available and cannot be realised by means of peaceful agitation and legislative work in parliament. *It can only be achieved by means of a mass-struggle, through mass-actions.* Thus, the centre of gravity in the struggle for political rule increasingly lies in the struggle for political rights, which constitute the expression of the popular majority's rule over the state. In this struggle, as in the class-struggle in general, the ruling class sets in motion against the proletariat the state authority with its instruments of power. State-power is not just a neutral object of the class-struggle, but a weapon and fortress of the bourgeoisie, its strongest prop, without which it could never hold its ground. The struggle of the proletariat is therefore first of all a struggle *against state-power.*

What is the significance of mass-actions in this struggle?

All political conditions and situations are determined by the balance of power between classes. Constitutional questions are questions of power. A rising class can seize power only when it becomes stronger than its opponents. The question of socialism is a question of growth in the power of the proletariat. The social power of the proletariat consists of its numerical superiority, which grows by itself due to capitalism; of its spiritual power — class consciousness, revolutionary thinking, clear comprehension of the nature of the state and society; and finally, of its material or moral force — organisation, solidarity, unity and discipline. Today, all these factors are still present only in insufficient measure, but, through their growth, the power of the working class will finally surpass that of the ruling class. Through its classconsciousness and socialist understanding, the working class will become intellectually independent of the bourgeoisie and eventually intellectually stronger; through its organisation, it will be able finally to withstand the powerful organisations of the bourgeoisie and become more solid than its state-power. And this growth in the elements of the proletariat's power also means transformation of the whole of humanity from a limited, undiscerning mass of isolated and selfish individuals into an organised mankind, guided by a common awareness of their social nature, who will thus become capable, for the first time, of exercising control by themselves and of consciously shaping their production and social life. That same growth in power will enable the proletariat to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie as it simultaneously makes the proletariat mature for socialism.

What is it that brings about this growth? The class-struggle. All struggles, regardless of whether they immediately end in victory or defeat, contribute to developing the proletariat's power by clarifying its understanding, strengthening its organisation or doing away with inhibiting traditions. In the previous period, the significance of parliamentarism lay in the fact that it established the first beginnings of

proletarian power, brought socialist consciousness to the masses, helped to create organisations, stirred the masses somewhat and, at the same time, undermined the moral prestige of the state. That was not enough to conquer political power, but it did make mass-actions possible. *Mass-actions will be the means to increase the power of the proletariat further, to its highest level, and at the same time to crush the power of the state.*

In mass-actions, the mightiest of which is the mass-strike, the strongest instruments of power of the two classes confront each other. Through its moral and spiritual force, its organisation and its violence, the state seeks to prevent or break the action of the masses in order to avoid having to yield to it. Through press-censorship, false reports, a state of siege, arrests, rifle-volleys, and the prevention of mutual understanding, the authorities seek to discourage, intimidate and divide the workers. Whether these measures will succeed depends then on the firm and clear knowledge, the unbreakable unity and discipline of the masses. If they do succeed, that means a defeat for the workers, who afterwards must try to do the same thing again with new force. But, if they fail, then the government has more or less to give in and the proletariat achieves a victory; its power grows once again, and the power of the state receives a blow. In a mass-strike, the entire organisation of the state can temporarily be thrown out of joint and its functions can devolve upon the organs of the proletariat. In the future, what happened in 1905 in Russia will happen in Western Europe on a much vaster scale. The organisation of the proletariat then showed — at least temporarily — its superiority over the organisation of the bourgeoisie. If the army is used against the masses, that can temporarily lead to a victory for the government; but, therewith, discipline begins to loosen at the same time, and, ultimately, the strongest means of power of the ruling class escapes from its hands. Of course, some of the achievements thus won can be lost again; victories and defeats will alternate, but, in the long run, the insight, organisational power and

revolutionary energy of the masses will continually increase while the power of the state will decrease. If the proletariat, and together with it society as such, are not to perish, then only one outcome of the struggle is possible: *the strength of proletarian solidarity and organisation, growing in battle, smashes the power and organisation of the state through mass-actions.* Political power therewith falls into the hands of the proletariat, who can then go on to create the institutions necessary for a new regulation of production.

The historic significance of mass-actions is that, through the hard struggles of the class itself, they will make the proletariat mature for socialism and enable the destruction of bourgeois rule. This is the historic significance of imperialism: it will force the working class to launch this struggle by means of mass-actions and to strike out on the path of freedom.

A new chapter is beginning in the proletarian liberation-struggle. For the first time, this struggle is now rising to the level of its great objectives: the entire force of the proletariat must be used against the enormous power of a massively developed capitalism and an energetic and combative bourgeoisie. In their many millions, the masses themselves must step onto the scene — whipped by hardship and suffering into energetic actions, their hearts full of enthusiasm, their souls full of revolutionary energy — with their glance no longer fixed on the narrow arena of the workplace and small improvements but on the great world struggle of classes. A new International will arise: not one that simply abounds with fraternal feelings towards class-comrades across the border and then immediately collapses before the national frenzy of the rulers, but one [in which the proletariat] will be ready to fight together with proletarians of other nationalities against its own war-mongering bourgeoisie.

At present we find ourselves amidst the ruins of the old International and the old socialism; we only see from afar, only

theoretically as it were, how things must and will turn out. *Can we already notice perhaps, in what is happening today, the beginnings of the new development?* Do we already see the new labour-movement, the new International arising from the old?

It has often been said that, after the War, a *split in the socialist parties must take place*. Those who have gathered on the side of imperialism, who have wholeheartedly made common 'national' cause with the bourgeoisie — people like Scheidemann, Heine, Lensch, Vaillant, Sembat, Plekhanov, the liquidators, Tillett — all of them, whatever their previous services to the labour-movement, will no longer be able to remain with the firm fighters against imperialism. But things are not that simple. Certainly, reformism has long wanted to go along with the bourgeoisie, with its colonial policy and imperialism; the War, which has exposed imperialism as the greatest enemy of the working class, merely made it clear that *reformists and revolutionaries*, who, during the period of small reforms, could remain together in the same organisation, no longer belong together but must be *mortal* enemies. But the case is different with the bulk of the German party leaders and its leading circles — whose literary agent is *Kautsky*. They are not friends of imperialism but enemies: they did not go along with the War out of imperialist convictions or clear national consciousness, but partly because they were duped by the watchword of defence, partly because they retained the old ideology of defence of the fatherland, and also out of ignorance and Philistinism, because they did not know how to fight and did not dare to fight against the ruling class. In their case, therefore, we have the prospect of a swing in their mood that is already significantly noticeable; and the same is true of the best part of the French workers, both among those who previously supported Social Democracy and among those who were with the syndicalists. It is conceivable that these masses and their representatives will come out against the bourgeoisie and the war in an increasingly energetic

way. Does this not imply hope that the majority, the largest or at least a very large part of the former Social Democracy, will brace itself for a vigorous struggle against imperialism and, disabused by hard experience, will be able to defend itself and apply the new tactical methods, thus building the new International out of the ashes of the old one?

This question is of paramount importance and cannot be predicted here with any certainty. But some important reasons can be cited for making *another* future likely. They lie in the whole nature of a large, fully developed party, of which German Social Democracy is the model. It is an entrenched gigantic organisation, functioning almost as a state within the state, with its own officers, finances, press, intellectual world and ideology (Marxism). The general character of this organisation is adapted to the peaceful pre-imperialist period; the mainstays of this character are the officials, secretaries, agitators, parliamentarians, theorists and writers, numbering several thousand individuals who already constitute a distinct caste, a group with their own interests who thereby totally dominate the organisation spiritually and materially. It is no coincidence that they all, with Kautsky at their head, want to know nothing about a real and fierce *struggle* against imperialism. All their vital interests are opposed to the new tactic, which threatens their existence as officials. Their peaceful work in offices and editorial departments, in congresses and committee meetings, in writing learned and unlearned articles against the bourgeoisie and against each other — this whole peaceful hustle and bustle is threatened by the storms of the imperialist era. Kautsky's theory and tactics are an attempt to secure this whole bureaucratic-learned apparatus against injury in the coming social revolutions. Actually, it can only be saved by setting it apart from the din of battle, beyond the revolutionary struggle, and thus outside of real life. If the Party and its leadership followed the tactics of mass-action, the state would immediately attack and perhaps

destroy the organisations (the foundation of their entire existence and life activity), confiscate their funds and arrest their leaders. Naturally, it would be an illusion if they believed that the power of the proletariat would also be broken that way: the organisational power of the workers does not consist in the outer form of institutional bodies but in their spirit of cohesion, discipline and unity, which would enable them to create new and better forms of organisation. But that would be the end for the officials, because that organisational form is their entire world, and without it they can neither exist nor function. Accordingly, their instinct for self-preservation and their future corporate interests necessarily compel them to [adopt] the tactic of evading [the issue of] imperialism and capitulating before it. What took place before the War and at the outbreak of the War is therefore not an abnormal accident. They say now — as they so often did in the past — that such dangerous mass-struggles will ruin the organisation and therefore must not be undertaken wantonly. It follows that organisations led by them will never wage the struggle against imperialism resolutely and with all their might. Their struggle will be a verbal struggle, with indictments, pleas and entreaties, a *sham-struggle* avoiding every *actual fight*. The best proof of this is provided precisely by Kautsky, who, after long wavering, took up the fight against social-imperialism only simultaneously to call the workers' street demonstrations an 'adventure.' Therefore imperialism must be fought with words alone, not by daring to undertake any action!

Therefore, nothing more must be expected from the previous party-bureaucracy other than further rejection of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism. It will attempt to limit the struggle to small quarrels in parliament and the press, to long speeches on small issues, to petty union-battles. Although the reformists are partisans of imperialism and the centrist radicals its opponents, they can remain together on a common line of mere criticism and inaction. They will

attempt to turn the party into a bourgeois reform party, into a Labour Party on the English pattern but with some socialist phrases; a party that will vigorously champion the daily interests of the workers but wage no great revolutionary struggle.

The task of showing the workers the importance and necessity of mass-actions against imperialism, and of standing at their head on every occasion, enlightening, helping and leading them, devolves upon the revolutionary socialists. But if this new tactic is only propagated by minorities or small groups that do not yet have the masses behind them, while, at the same time, the great mass-parties want to know nothing about it — will not any mass-action, which is inconceivable without the masses, be a utopia? This contradiction only proves that mass-actions are not possible as conscious, deliberately planned actions, prepared and led by the Social-Democratic Party, as the extreme Left in Germany advocated in its propaganda in the years before the War. They will come as spontaneous actions, erupting from masses who are whipped up by hardship, misery and outrage: in one case, as the unintended consequence of a small struggle planned by the Party that overflows its limits; in another, as an event that breaks out against the will and decisions of the organisations, breaching all discipline but then carrying these organisations along in their powerful swell and forcing them for a time to go along with the revolutionary elements. The possibility cannot be excluded that, if the War continues for some time, something of that sort could soon take place. The symptoms are already discernible.

In the coming period, therefore, the existing organisations (the Party and trade-unions), by virtue of their whole nature and in contradiction with the goals and tasks of the proletarian masses, will probably play above all an inhibiting role. But, if the new tactic is ever more prevalent, and if the power of the proletariat gradually increases in great mass-struggles, these organisations will no longer be able to play that role. Then the rigid, immovable bodies of the Party and the trade-unions

will become an increasingly subordinate part within a broader class-movement and a larger class-organisation, which will bind together the masses — not through its membership-book but through the community of class-goals — into a powerful community of struggle.

# Socialisation (Part I) (1920)

## I

During the first months that followed the German Revolution of November, 1918, there arose a cry of "Socialisation." It was the expression of the will of the masses to give to the revolution a social meaning, and not to let it stop at reshuffling of persons, or at a simple transformation of the political system. Kautsky warned the public against a too rapid socialisation, for which society would not yet be ripe. The miners put forward socialisation as one of their strike aims—as did recently the British miners. A commission to study the question of socialisation was formed, but secret councils and the Government sabotaged its decision. For the Majority Socialist Government, socialisation is only a phrase, a means of deceiving the workers; everyone knows that it has long ago abandoned all the former aims and principles of Socialism. But the Independents have remained the faithful guardians of the old Socialist doctrine; they believe in it sincerely, as far as the programme of socialisation is concerned. It is therefore interesting to study this programme, in order to characterise the radical tendency which exists in the social-democracy of all countries, side by side with the governmental Socialists or opposition to them.

When the workers demand socialisation, they are, beyond any doubt, thinking of Socialism, of its Socialist form of Society, of the suppression of capitalist exploitation. We shall see if it has the same

meaning for the social-democratic chiefs of to-day. Marx never spoke of socialisation: he spoke of the expropriation of the expropriators.

Of the two principal transformations introduced by Socialism in production—the suppression of exploitation and the organisation of the economic system—the first is the most significant, the most important for the proletariat. One can conceive the organisation of production on a capitalist basis; it leads to State Socialism, to a more complete enslavement and exploitation of the proletariat by the power of the centralised State. The suppression of exploitation with the dispersion of production was the ideal of the primitive co-operators and of the anarchists; but where the suppression of exploitation has been accomplished, as in Communist Russia, it is necessary immediately to occupy ourselves with the organisation of production.

It is at this point that the Social-Democrats put forward general watchwords, preparatory to practical measures of legislation, from which we can see, in the clearest possible way, what socialisation means to them. Such was the case at Vienna, where reign the "Marxists" Renner and Otto Bauer. We take from a lecture given by Bauer on April 24<sup>th</sup>, at a meeting of Trade Union leaders, the arguments by which he sought to recommend his plans to these working class representatives. In order, he said, completely to socialise large industry, in order to get rid of the capitalists, expropriation is first of all necessary. "We take their enterprises from them," and the organisation of the new form of administration must follow. "Expropriation must not take place without compensation, for we should be obliged to confiscate all capital, including war bonds. The savings banks would then go bankrupt, the small peasants and the employees would lose their savings, and international complications would arise. It is therefore impossible to realise a mere confiscation of capitalist property." The capitalist would therefore be compensated; an arbitral court would determine the amount of compensation, which "ought to be fixed according

to the permanent value, and ought not to consider war profits" The compensation would be paid in State loan bonds, which would bear an annual interest of four per cent.

Of course, he concludes, this does not yet mean complete socialisation, because the former capitalist still receives the interest on his enterprise as an annual income. "To suppress this gradually is a problem of fiscal legislation, and, eventually, of the transformation of the rights of inheritance"; after some generations, revenues not produced by labour would completely disappear.

To throw light on the principles which lie at the bottom of these plans of socialisation put forward by the Social-Democrats, we must consider more closely the essence of capitalist property and of economic expropriation.

## II

Money, in its capacity as capital, has the power of multiplying itself continually by means of surplus-value. Whoever transforms his money into capital and invests it in production receives his share of the total surplus-value produced by the world-proletariat.

The source of surplus-value is the exploitation of the proletariat: labour-power is paid less than the value it produces.

Money and property have thus, in the capitalist system, not merely quite a new meaning, but they have also become a new standard. In the petit-bourgeois world, money is the measure of the value of the labour-time necessary for the production of a commodity. In its capacity as capital, money is the measure of surplus-value, of the profit which can be realised by the means of production. Although it may have involved no labour, a price will be paid for piece of land corresponding to its rent capitalised. It is the same with a large enterprise. If its foundation has cost, let us say, 100,000 francs (a hundred shares of 1,000 francs each) and it produces a dividend of 10 per cent., a share will not be sold at 1,000 francs, but at about 2,000 francs: for 1,000 francs at 5 per

cent. bring in the same revenue as that share. Its capitalist value is 2,000 francs, for it is fixed by the revenue; and the capitalist value of the whole enterprise is 200,000 francs, although it may only have cost 100,000 francs.

We know that the great banks, on the formation of a new enterprise, put this difference in their pockets in advance, as "promoter's profits," by issuing (in the case under consideration) shares for 200,000 francs.

On the other hand, if the profits from this enterprise fall—for example, through the successful competition of still larger enterprises—more and more, until it can only produce a dividend of 1 per cent., its capitalist value falls to 10,000 francs. If the profit disappears entirely, the capitalist value of the enterprise falls to zero, and only the material value of the stock can still be realised.

Capitalist property signifies first of all, then, not the right to dispose of commodities, but the right to receive revenue without working for it, to receive surplus-value. Its form is the share, the paper on which this right is inscribed. The enterprise, the factory, is only the instrument by which surplus value is produced; property itself is the right to surplus value. The suppression of exploitation, the suppression of this right, is in consequence the suppression of capitalist value, the confiscation of capital. We can now understand the method of Otto Bauer: to confuse under the same heading this form of capital and the few pence saved by the little man—who is thinking primarily of safeguarding his property, and not of receiving a revenue without working for it—and in this way to make the Trade Union official's shudder at an attack on exploitation.

The suppression of capitalist property and the suppression of exploitation are not, therefore, cause and effect, means and end; they are one and the same thing. Capitalist property does not exist except by exploitation, and its value is fixed by surplus-value. Let surplus-value disappear in one way or another, let the worker receive the full product of his labour, and capitalist property will disappear at the same time.

If the proletariat improves its conditions of labour in such a way that enterprises will no longer bring any profit to capital, their capitalist value will fall to zero; the factories can become very useful to society, but they will have lost their value for the capitalists. Money, then, loses the power of producing more money, of producing surplus value, because the workers no longer allow themselves to be exploited. This is the expropriation of which Marx was thinking. Capitalist property will be suppressed because capital will have no value, will not produce any profit. This economic expropriation, by which property loses its value and is consequently destroyed, although the right of free disposition remains, is the opposite of the legal expropriation often carried out in the capitalist world, by which the right of free disposition is suppressed, while property is allowed to remain in the form of compensation.

# Socialisation (Part II) (1920)

It goes without saying that legal expropriation will also take place during the transition from capitalism to Socialism. The political power of the proletariat will take all the measures that are necessary for the suppression of exploitation. It will not content itself with limiting the former employers right of free exploitation by regularising wages, hours of labour; and prices; it will suppress it altogether. The economic basis of these measures is thus defined. It is not confiscation of all property; as the terrified petit-bourgeoisie think, but the suppression of all right to surplus-value, to a revenue not produced by labour. ) It is the legal expression of the political fact that the proletariat is master, and that it will not let itself be exploited any longer.

### III

Socialisation according to the recipe of Bauer is legal expropriation without an economic expropriation—a thing that any capitalist government might propose. The capitalist value of enterprises will be paid to employers in the form of compensation, and they will henceforward receive, in the form of interest on bonds, what they formerly received in the form of profits. The remark that war profits will not enter into consideration shows that the normal profit will be taken as a standard. This socialisation replaces private capitalism by State capitalism; the State assumes the task of sweating profits out of the workers and handing it over to the capitalists. For the workers,

very little will have been changed: as before, they will have to create a revenue for the capitalists without any labour on the part of the latter. Exploitation remains exactly the same as before.

If such a proposal had been made in the time of capitalist prosperity, it would have been acceptable for the proletariat; the amount of surplus-value accruing to the capitalists being fixed, every new increase of productivity through organisation and technical progress would benefit the proletariat. But the capitalist class did not think of it because it claimed these advantages for itself.

To-day, conditions are different, and surplus-value is in danger. The economic chaos, the loss of stocks, and of raw material, the heavy tribute to the capitalism of the Entente, give ground for anticipating a diminution capitalist profits. The revolt of the working class masses, the beginning of the proletarian revolution, which render doubtful the fate of all exploitation, have further complicated the situation. Socialisation now comes, just at the right moment, to guarantee capital its profits in the form of State interest. A Communist Government, like the Russian, guarantees immediately the results of the new-found power and liberty of the proletariat by refusing to capital all rights of further exploitation. A Social Democratic Government guarantees the existence of the former proletarian slavery by perpetuating the old tribute paid by the workers to capital just at the moment when it ought to disappear. Socialisation in these circumstances is only the legal expression of the political fact that the proletariat is only an apparent master, and is ready calmly to let itself go on being exploited. Just as the "Socialist" government is only the continuation of the former capitalist government under the banner of Socialism, "socialisation" is only the continuation also of the former capitalist exploitation under the guise of Socialism.

If we, enquire how it is that intelligent politicians and former Marxists can arrive at ideas like these, the well known political character of the tendency which has become embodied in the Independent

Socialist Party will give us our reply. It was radical in name, it paid lip service to the class war, but it feared every form of vigorous struggle. This was already the case before the war, when Kautsky, Haase, and their friends opposed themselves to the radical extreme left as a "Marxist centre." To day the same thing is happening. They wish to bring the workers Socialism. But they fear a struggle against the capitalist class. They see very well that a true suppression of all capitalist profits, confiscation of capital as it has been realised by Communism in Russia, involves the capitalist class in a violent struggle; for it is a question of its very existence, of its life or death as a class. They consider the proletariat to be too weak for this struggle, and consequently seek to achieve their object by roundabout paths, by making it attractive for the capitalist class. Politically, the plans for socialisation are an attempt to lead the proletariat to the Socialist goal, without touching the capitalist class at its vital spot, without provoking its violent anger; and in this way to avoid a violent class struggle.

The intention would be praiseworthy if only it could be. But if one considers all that would be necessary to make up the capitalist tribute—interest for the former capitalist proprietors of the means of production, interest on the war loans, the tribute to the capitalism of the Entente—we shall see that all this could not be realised, even were the proletariat to accept intensive toil, and worse conditions of life. In view of the present destruction of economic life and of the physical forces of the masses, the immediate suppression of all parasitism is a pressing necessity for the relief of society. But even if we do not take into account this abnormal state of misery, and if we only consider socialisation is one of the first steps of the proletarian revolution, as a first step towards Socialism, its impossibility is apparent so long as the proletariat has not yet acquired all its powers. When the workers wake up and strive for liberty and independence they put forward demands for the improvement of their conditions of labour and existence.

These improvements will immediately decrease profits. The Socialist State may cry for them: "Work harder!"; the opposite will nevertheless happen.

When the capitalist yoke no longer bears down with an iron grip upon the workers, the inhuman tension of exploitation will relax and labour will become, less intense, will become more human. The dividends, the profits of undertakings will fall. Without socialisation, the private capitalist would have to bear the loss but when the State has to pay them interest, it is the Socialist State which has guaranteed them their profits despite the beginning of the working-class revolution, and which will bear the loss There will remain to it the choice, either of opposing the workers demands; of breaking strikes, of becoming a violent government on the side of capital, and against the proletariat, or else to collapse in an unavoidable bankruptcy. The capitalist class will again proclaim its triumph, for the impossibility of "socialisation" will have been practically demonstrated.

This will be the result of the clever attempt to arrive at a form of Socialism by avoiding the class struggle. Socialisation which is devised to spare the profits of the capitalist class cannot be a path to Socialism There is no other way but to suppress exploitation and with this object to carry on an unrelenting class struggle.

# Social Democracy and Communism (1927)

## 1. The Road Followed by the Workers Movement

The world war brought not just a violent revolution in all economic and political relations; it also completely transformed socialism. Those who grew up with German social democracy and participated in its ranks in the workers class struggle, will be confused by all its new features, and will ask themselves if everything they had learned and accomplished until now was false, and if they must therefore learn and follow the new theories. The answer is: it was not false, but incomplete. Socialism is not an immutable theory. As the world changes, men's theoretical understanding grows, and along with new relations, new methods to achieve our goal also emerge. This can be seen by casting our glance back upon the development of socialism over the last century.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, utopian socialism reigned. Broad-minded thinkers deeply sensitive to the unbearable nature of capitalism sketched the outlines of a better society, in which labor would be organized cooperatively. A new perspective emerged when Marx and Engels published the Communist Manifesto in 1847. Here, for the first time, the principal points of the socialism of the future clearly stood out: it was from capitalism itself that the force capable of

transforming society would emerge, and this force would give birth to a socialist society. This force is the class struggle of the proletariat. The poor, scorned, ignorant workers will be in the forefront of those who will carry out this transformation, as they take up the struggle against the bourgeoisie, gaining in the process power and ability and organizing themselves as a class; by way of a revolution, the proletariat will conquer political power and carry out a comprehensive economic transformation.

It must also be emphasized that Marx and Engels never called this whole undertaking “socialism”, nor did they call themselves “socialists”. Engels expressed the reason for this quite clearly: in that era, various bourgeois currents were characterized under the name of socialism, currents which, due to a feeling of identification with the proletariat or other motives, wanted to overthrow the capitalist order; quite frequently, their goals were even reactionary. Communism, on the other hand, was a proletarian movement. The workers groups which attacked the capitalist system called themselves communists. It was from the Communist League that the Manifesto emerged, which pointed out to the proletariat the goal and the direction of its struggle.

In 1848 the bourgeois revolutions broke out, clearing the way for the development of capitalism in central Europe, and facilitating the transformation of the small traditional statelets into more powerful Nation-States. Industry expanded at a record pace during the 1850s and 1860s, and amidst the ensuing prosperity all the revolutionary movements collapsed so completely that even the word communism was forgotten. Later, during the 1860s, when the workers movement reemerged in England, France and Germany within a more fully-developed capitalism, it had a much broader base than the previous communist sects, but its goals were much more limited and short-term in nature: improvement of the immediate situation of the workers, legal recognition of trade unions, democratic reforms. In Germany, Lassalle

led agitation in favor of State-supported producers' cooperatives; in his view, the State should act as the architect of social policy in favor of the working class, and in order to compel the State to assume this role, the working class would have to avail itself of democracy—the power of the masses over the State. It is therefore understandable that the Party founded by Lassalle laid claim to the significant name of social democracy: this name expressed the Party's goal, that is, democracy with a social purpose.

Little by little, however, the Party outgrew its initial narrow objectives. Germany's unrestrained capitalist development, the war for the formation of the German Empire, the pact between the bourgeoisie and the militarist landowners, the anti-socialist law, the reactionary customs and taxation policies—all of these things drove the working class forward, making it the vanguard of the rest of European workers movement, which adopted its name and its policies. Practice honed its spirit for understanding Marx's doctrine, which was made accessible to socialists by the numerous popularized versions written by Kautsky and their political applications. In this manner they came to once again recognize the principles and goals of the old communism: the Communist Manifesto was their programmatic work, Marxism was their theory, the class struggle their tactic, the conquest of political power by the proletariat—the social revolution—their goal.

There was, however, one difference: the character of the new Marxism, the spirit of the whole movement, was unlike that of the old communism. The social democracy was growing within an environment characterized by a powerful burst of capitalist expansion. It was not, at first, compelled to consider a violent transformation. For this reason, the revolution was postponed into the distant future and the social democracy was satisfied with the tasks of propaganda and organization in preparation for the postponed revolution, and contented itself for the time being with struggles for immediate improvements. Its theory

asserted that the revolution had to come as the necessary result of economic development, forgetting that action, the spontaneous activity of the masses, was necessary to bring this about. It thus became a kind of economic fatalism. The social democracy and the rapidly growing trade unions which it dominated became members of the capitalist society; they became the growing opposition and resistance of the working masses, as the institutions which prevented the total impoverishment of the masses under the pressure of capital. Thanks to the general franchise, they even became a strong opposition within the bourgeois parliament. Their basic character was, despite their theory, reformist, and in relation to day-to-day issues, palliative and minimalist instead of revolutionary. The principal cause of this development lay in proletarian prosperity, which granted the proletarian masses a certain degree of essential security, dampening the expression of revolutionary views.

During the last decade these tendencies have been reinforced. The workers movement achieved what was possible in such circumstances: a powerful Party, with a million members and garnering one-third of the vote, and alongside it a trade union movement concentrating in its ranks the majority of organized labor. It then clashed with an even more powerful barrier, against which the old methods were not so effective: the potent organization of big capital into syndicates, cartels and trusts, as well as the policies of finance capital, heavy industry and militarism, all of which were forms of imperialism that were controlled by forces outside parliament. But this workers movement was not capable of a total tactical reorientation and renewal, as long as its own powerful organizations were arrayed against it, organizations which were considered to be ends in themselves and were eager for recognition. The voice of this tendency was the bureaucracy, the numerous army of officials, leaders, parliamentarians, secretaries and editors, who comprised a group of their own with their own interests. Their aim was

to gradually change the nature of the Party's activities while keeping the old name. The conquest of political power by the proletariat became, for them, the conquest of a parliamentary majority by their Party, that is, the replacement of the ruling politicians and State bureaucracy by themselves, the social democratic politicians and the trade union and Party bureaucracies. The advent of socialism was now supposed to arrive by way of new legislation in favor of the proletariat. And it was not just among the revisionists that this position found favor. Kautsky, too, the political theoretician of the radicals, said during a debate that the social democracy wanted to staff the State, with all of its departments and ministries, merely in order to put other people, from the social democracy, in the place of the ministers currently occupying those posts.

The World War also led to the outbreak of a crisis in the workers movement. The social democracy, generally, put itself at the service of imperialism under the formula of "defense of the fatherland"; the trade union and Party bureaucracies worked hand in hand with the State bureaucracy and business to make the proletariat expend its strength, its blood and its life to the utmost extremes. This signified the collapse of the social democracy as a Party of proletarian revolution. Now, despite the fierce repression, a growing opposition has emerged in all countries, and the old banner of the class struggle, of Marxism and of the revolution is raised again. But under what name should this banner be raised? It would be completely justified to reclaim the old formulas of social democracy, which the social democratic parties have left in the lurch. But the very name "socialist" has now lost all of its meaning and power, since the differences between the socialists and the bourgeoisie have almost entirely disappeared. In order for the class struggle to move forward, the first and most important matter to attend to is to fight against the social democracy, which has led the proletariat into the abyss of poverty, submission, war, annihilation and powerlessness.

Should the new fighters accept such infamous and shameful names? A new name was necessary, but what name was more appropriate than any other to declare its role as the principle bearer of the old original class struggle? In every country the same thought arose: reclaim the name of communism.

Once again, as in the time of Marx, communism as a revolutionary and proletarian movement confronts socialism as a reformist and bourgeois movement. And the new communism is not just a new edition of the theory of radical social democracy. As a result of the world crisis, it has gained new depth, which totally differentiates it from the old theory. In what follows, we shall elucidate the differences between the two theories.

## 2. Class Struggle and Socialization

During its best days, social democracy established as its principle the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and as its goal, the realization of socialism as soon as it could conquer political power. Now that social democracy has abandoned that principle and that goal, both of them have been taken up again by communism.

When the war broke out, social democracy abandoned the fight against the bourgeoisie. Kautsky asserted that the class struggle was only applicable to peacetime, while during wartime class solidarity against the enemy nation must take its place. In support of this assertion he pulled from out of his sleeve the lie of the “defensive war”, with which the masses were deceived at the start of hostilities. The leaders of the SPD majority and the Independents differed on this point only because the former collaborated enthusiastically with the war policy of the bourgeoisie while the latter patiently endured it, because they did not dare to lead the struggle themselves. After the defeat of German militarism in November 1918, the same pattern was repeated. The social

democratic leaders joined the government alongside the bourgeois parties and tried to persuade the workers that this constituted the political power of the proletariat. But they did not use their power over the Councils and government ministries to realize socialism, but to reestablish capitalism. Besides this, one must add that the colossal power of Capital, which is the principle enemy and exploiter of the proletariat, is now embodied in Entente Capital, which now rules the world. The German bourgeoisie, reduced to impotence, can only exist as a peon and agent of Entente imperialism and is responsible for crushing the German workers and exploiting them on behalf of Entente Capital. The social democrats, as the political representatives of this bourgeoisie, and who now form the German government, have the task of carrying out the orders of the Entente and requesting its aid and support.

For their part, the Independents, who during the war restrained the workers in their struggle against the powerful German imperialism, have seen that after the war their task consists—with, for example, their praise for the League of Nations and Wilson and their propaganda in favor of the Versailles Peace Treaty—in restraining the workers in their struggle against the arrogance of world capitalism.

In the previous period, when social democracy denounced and opposed war, the good faith of its leaders could have been taken for granted, and one could have also thought that their elevation to the highest posts in the government would have signified the political power of the proletariat, since, as representatives of the workers, they had framed legislation for the realization of, or at least the first steps towards socialism. But every worker knows that—despite the occasional proclamation—they now have nothing at all to do with such things. Is it agreed that these gentlemen, once they have satisfied the aims of their greed, have no other desires or goals; that the social democracy was therefore nothing to them but a lot of hot air? Perhaps to some degree.

But there are also other more important reasons which explain their behavior.

The social democracy has said that, in the current circumstances, after the terrible economic collapse, it is no longer by any means possible to realize socialism. And here we find an important distinction between the positions of communism and social democracy. The social democrats say that socialism is only possible in a society of abundance, of increasing prosperity. The communists say that in such periods capitalism is most secure, because then the masses do not think about revolution. The social democrats say: first, production must be reestablished, to avoid a total catastrophe and to keep the masses from dying of hunger. The communists say: now, when the economy has hit rock bottom, is the perfect time to reestablish it upon socialist foundations. The social democrats say that even the most basic recovery of production requires the continuation of the old capitalist mode of production, in conformance with which all institutions are structured and thanks to which a devastating class struggle against the bourgeoisie will be avoided. The communists say: a recovery of the capitalist economic foundations is completely impossible; the world is sinking ever deeper into bankruptcy before our eyes, into a degree of poverty which makes a break with the bourgeoisie necessary, as the bourgeoisie is blocking the only possible road to reconstruction. So the social democrats want to first reestablish capitalism, avoiding the class struggle; the communists want to build socialism from scratch right now, with the class struggle as their guide.

What, then, is this all about? The social labor process is the production of all the goods needed for life. But the satisfaction of human needs is not the goal of capitalist production; its goal is surplus value, profit. All capitalist activities are directed towards profit, and only for that purpose are the workers allowed to work in their factories to manufacture goods in their countries, goods which are required

to satisfy our needs. Now, this whole labor process is paralyzed and destroyed. Profits, of course, are still being made, even enormous profits, but this is taking place via the tortuous detours of capital flight, parasitism, plunder, the black market and speculation. If the regular source of profit is to be reestablished for the bourgeoisie, then production, the labor process, must be restarted. Is this possible?

Insofar as it is a question of labor, of production, this cannot be so difficult. The working class masses are there, ready to work. As for food, enough is produced in Germany. As for raw materials, such as coal and iron, these are in relatively short supply in comparison to the great mass of highly-skilled industrial workers; but this could easily be compensated for, thanks to trade with the less industrialized, but raw materials-rich countries of Eastern Europe. Thus, the recovery of production does not pose a superhuman problem. But capitalist production means that part of the product goes to the capitalist without the capitalist having to work for it.

The bourgeois legal order is the means which makes it possible for these capitalists to reap this profit as if it were a natural process, thanks to its property rights. By means of these rights, capital has "claims" to its profit. The same thing happened before the war. But the war has enormously increased the profit claims of capital. The State debt today is numbered almost in the billions, whereas before the war it was just in the millions. This means that the owners of those titles to public State debt expect to receive, without working, all their billions in interest payments from the labor of the whole population, in the form of taxes. Furthermore, in Germany's case one must add to this sum the war indemnities owed to the Entente, which add up to a total sum of 200 or 300 billion, more than half the gross national product. This means that, out of the total sum of production, more than half must be paid to the capitalists of the Entente on account of war indemnities. Besides this, there is the German bourgeoisie itself, which wants to extract the

greatest possible profit in order to accumulate new capital. So, what will be left for the workers? The worker, in spite of all of this, needs to live; but it is clear that under these circumstances his upkeep will be reduced to a minimum, while all of capital's profits can only be produced thanks to more intensive labor, a longer working day and more refined methods of exploitation.

Capitalist production now implies such a high degree of exploitation that it will make life intolerable and almost impossible for the workers. The reestablishment of production is not in itself so very difficult; it requires capable and determined organization, as well as the enthusiastic collaboration of the entire proletariat. But the reestablishment of production under such tremendous pressure and under conditions of such systematic exploitation, which only gives the workers the minimum needed to sustain life, is practically impossible. The first attempt to implement such a policy must fail due to the resistance and the refusal of the workers themselves, on the part of those whom it would dispossess of any prospects of meeting their essential life-needs, leading to the gradual destruction of the whole economy. Germany provides an example of such a scenario.

Already during the war the communists recognized the impossibility of paying the enormous war debt and its interest, and put forth the demand that the war debts and indemnities should be cancelled. But that is not all. Should the private debts incurred during the war also be cancelled? There is little difference between capital which has been borrowed during the war to build artillery pieces and the stock issues of a factory making armor or artillery shells. In this case one cannot distinguish between the various kinds of capital, nor can one admit the claims of one kind to its profit while rejecting the others. All profits constitute for capital a claim on production, which hinders reconstruction. For an economy in such a precarious situation, the tremendous burden of the costs of the war is not the only weight it

must bear; all its other claimants must also be entered on the scales. This is why communism, which as a matter of principle rejects all capital's claims to profit, is the only practically feasible principle. The economy must be practically rebuilt from scratch, without any regard for capital's profit.

The rejection of capital's right to profit was always, however, an axiom of social democracy as well. How does social democracy approach this problem now? It is fighting for "socialization", that is, for the expropriation of industry by the State, and the indemnification of the industrialists. This means that, once more—and this time even through the mediation of the State—part of the product of labor must be paid to these capitalists for not working. In this way, the exploitation of the workers by capital remains the same as before. Two things were always essential characteristics of socialism: the elimination of exploitation and the social regulation of production. The first is the most important goal for the proletariat; the second is the most rational method for increasing production, by way of its technical organization. But in the "socialization" plans being prepared by social democracy exploitation continues to exist, and the de-privatization of industry only leads to State capitalism (or State socialism), which turns the capitalist owners into shareholders of the State. The "socialization" currently sought by the social democrats is therefore a lie for the proletariat, to whom only the external façade of socialism is displayed, while in fact exploitation is kept alive. The foundation of this position is undoubtedly the fear of a harsh conflict with the bourgeoisie, at a time when the proletariat is growing more confident, but is still not in possession of all the forces required for the revolutionary struggle. In practice, however, what this really amounts to is an attempt to put capitalism back on its feet, upon new foundations. Naturally, this attempt must fail, since the impoverished economy cannot afford such gifts to capital.

The social democrats of both tendencies, then, maintain the exploitation of the workers by capital; one policy leaves capitalism to its own development, the other stimulates and regulates this exploitation through the intermediary of the State. Both, for the worker, have just this one solution: Work, work, work hard, with all your strength! Because the reconstruction of the capitalist economy is only possible if the proletariat exerts itself to satisfy the demands of the most extreme degree of exploitation.

### 3. Mass Action and Revolution

Even before the war the difference between social democracy and communism was already evident, although not under that name. This difference involved the tactics of the struggle. Under the name of "left radicals", an opposition arose at that time within social democracy (from which the predecessors of today's communists emerged), which defended mass action against the "radicals" and the revisionists. In this dispute it became clear that the radical spokesmen, especially Kautsky, defended a position opposed to revolutionary action, both theoretically as well as tactically.

The parliamentary and trade union struggle had brought the workers—in a vigorously expanding capitalism—some economic improvements, while simultaneously building a powerful barrier against capitalism's permanent tendencies towards pauperization of the working class. Over the last decade, however, this barrier slowly gave way, in spite of the workers' strong and expanding organization: imperialism reinforced the power of the capitalists and militarism, weakened parliament, put the trade unions on the defensive and began to prepare for the world war. It was clear that the old methods of struggle no longer worked. The masses were instinctively aware of this; in every country they participated in actions which were often opposed

by their leaders, launched large-scale trade union struggles, carried out transport strikes which paralyzed the economy, or took part in political demonstrations. The outbreak of proletarian revolt frequently erupted in such a way as to shatter the self-confidence of the bourgeoisie, which was compelled to make concessions; or the movements were often enough quenched by means of massacres.

The social democratic leaders also tried to use these actions for their own political objectives; they acknowledged the usefulness of political strikes for particular goals, but only on condition that they be reduced to pre-arranged limits, on condition that they begin and end when the leaders give the order, and that they always remain subordinated to the tactics determined by the leaders. Thus, it often happens that such strikes take place today, too, but usually without too much success. The tempestuous violence of the elemental uprising of the masses is paralyzed by a policy of compromise.

The element of class action that immediately creates panic in the ruling bourgeoisie—the fear that the workers movement might take on a revolutionary character—disappeared from these “disciplined” mass actions, since every precaution had been taken to ensure their harmlessness.

The revolutionary Marxists—today’s communists—then made an assessment of the limited character of the ideology of the social democratic leadership. They saw that, throughout history, the masses, the classes themselves, had been the motor force of and the impulse behind every action. Revolutions never arose from the prudent decisions of recognized leaders. When the circumstances and the situation became intolerable, the masses suddenly rose, overthrew the old authorities, and the new class or a fraction of that class took power and molded the State or society in accordance with its needs. It was only during the last 50 years of peaceful capitalist development that the illusion emerged and flourished that leaders, as

individual subjects, direct the course of history in accordance with their enlightened intelligence. Parliamentarians and the staff attached to the State executive offices believe that their deeds, actions and decisions determine the course of events; the masses who follow them must only take action when they are called upon to do so, ratifying the words of their spokesmen and then quickly disappearing from the political stage. The masses have to play a simple passive role, that of choosing their leaders, and it is the latter that provide the decisive impulse to the course of development.

But if this belief is inadequate for the understanding of the past revolutions of history, it is yet more inadequate for understanding the present situation, in the light of the profound difference between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution. In the bourgeois revolution, the popular masses of workers and petit bourgeoisie only rise once (as in Paris in February of 1848), or intermittently, as in the great French Revolution, in order to overthrow the old royalty or a new power which has gotten out of control such as that of the Girondins. Once their work was done they gave way to new men, the representatives of the bourgeoisie, who formed a new government, and proceeded to reconfigure and reconstruct the State institutions, the constitution and the laws. The power of the proletarian masses was needed to destroy the old regime, but not to construct the new one, because the new regime was the organization of a new class power.

It was in accordance with this model that the radical social democrats conceived the proletarian revolution, which—unlike the reformists—they believed to be necessary. A great popular uprising must put an end to the old military-absolutist rule and bring the social democrats to power, who would take care of everything else, building socialism by means of new legislation. This is how they conceive of the proletarian revolution. But the proletarian revolution is something completely different. The proletarian revolution is the liberation of the

masses from all class power and all exploitation. This means that they must themselves take history into their own hands, in order to make themselves masters of their own labor. Starting with the old human species, limited to slave labor, which only thinks of itself and sees no further than the walls of its factory, they must create new men, proud, ready to fight, with an independent spirit, suffused with solidarity, not allowing themselves to be deceived by the clever lies of bourgeois theories, regulating the labor process on their own. This change cannot take place as a result of a single revolutionary act, but will require a long process, in which the workers, through necessity and bitter disillusionments, occasional victories and repeated defeats, slowly build up the necessary force to attain the cohesive unity and the maturity for freedom and power. This process of struggle is the proletarian revolution.

How long this process will take will vary from country to country and according to the particular circumstances, and will depend above all on the power of resistance of each ruling class. The fact that it took a relatively short period of time in Russia was due to the fact that the bourgeoisie there was weak and that, thanks to the latter's alliance with the landed nobility, the peasants were impelled to take the side of the workers. The bourgeoisie's axis of power is the violence of the State, the violent organization of force with all the means at its disposal: law, school, police, judiciary, army and bureaucracy, which hold in their hands the control over all sectors of public life. The revolution is the struggle of the proletariat against this power apparatus of the ruling class; the proletariat can only win its freedom if it opposes the organization of the enemy with a stronger and more cohesive organization of its own. The bourgeoisie and State power try to keep the workers impotent, dispersed and intimidated, in order to interrupt the growth of their unity through violence and lies, and to demoralize them concerning the power of their own actions. Against these efforts,

mass action arises from the ranks of the workers multitudes, action leading to the paralysis and breakdown of State organizations. As long as the latter remain intact, the proletariat is not victorious, because those organizations will constantly operate against the proletariat. Therefore, its struggle—if the world does not want to come to an end in capitalism—must finally do away with the State machinery, which must be destroyed and rendered harmless by the powerful actions of the proletariat.

Kautsky had already opposed this conception before the war. According to him, the proletariat must not adopt this tactic, which would lead it to destroy the State in an outburst of violence, since it would need the State apparatus for its own purposes. All the ministries of the existing State, once in the power of the proletariat, will continue to be necessary in order to implement the laws passed on behalf of the workers. The goal of the proletariat must not be the destruction of the State, but its conquest. The question of how to create the organization of the power of the victorious proletariat—whether it will be a continuation of the bourgeois State, as Kautsky believed, or a completely new organization—is thus posed. But the social democratic theories, as they have been formulated and propagandized by Kautsky over the last thirty years, only spoke of economics and capitalism, from which socialism would have to “necessarily” emerge; “how” all of this is to happen was never elaborated and thus the question of the relation between the State and revolution was not addressed at the time. It was to find its answer only later. In any event, the opposition between the social democratic and communist theories was already clear in regard to the question of revolution.

For the social democrats, the proletarian revolution is a single act, a popular movement that destroys the old power and puts the social democrats in the driver’s seat of the State, in the government posts. The downfall of the Hohenzollerns in Germany on November 7, 1918

is in their eyes a pure proletarian revolution, which only achieved victory thanks to the special circumstance that the old compulsion was done away with as a result of the war. For the communists, this revolt could only signify the beginning of a proletarian revolution which, by overthrowing the old compulsion, cleared the way for the workers to finish off the old order and construct their class organization. As it turned out, the workers allowed themselves to be led by social democracy and helped rebuild the State's power after it had been paralyzed: they are still in the midst of an epoch of difficult struggles.

For Kautsky and his friends, Germany is an authentic social democratic republic where the workers, while not in power, at least collaborate in the government—Noske and his apparatus of repression are only esthetic blemishes. They must not, of course, think that they have arrived at socialism just yet. Kautsky has constantly repeated that, according to the Marxist conception, the social revolution will not take place all at once, but is a long historical process: capitalism is not yet mature enough for the economic revolution. By this he means to say, among other things, that, although the proletarian revolution has taken place, the proletarians must allow themselves to be exploited as before and a few big industries must only slowly be nationalized. Or, to put it in plain English: instead of the old ministers, the social democrats have occupied the highest positions in the State; but capitalism is still the same along with its exploitation.

This is the practical meaning of the social democratic claim, according to which, after a proletarian revolutionary uprising, struck at one blow, a much longer process of socialization and of social revolution must be undertaken. Against this conception, communism asserts that the proletarian revolution, the seizure of power by the proletariat, is a very slow process of mass struggle, through which the proletariat will rise to power and isolate the State machinery. At the apex of this struggle, when the workers take power, exploitation will be

quickly ended, the suppression of all claims to profit without labor will be proclaimed, and the first steps towards the new juridical basis for the reconstruction of the economy as a consciously-organized, goal-driven mechanism will be taken.

## 4. Democracy and Parliamentarism

Social democratic doctrine never concerned itself with the problem of discovering the political forms its power would assume after having reached its goal. The beginning of the proletarian revolution has provided the practical answer to this question, thanks to the events themselves. This practice of the first stages of the revolution has enormously increased our ability to understand the essence and the future path of the revolution; it has enormously clarified our intuitions and contributed new perspectives on a matter which was previously vaguely outlined in a distant haze. These new intuitions constitute the most important difference between social democracy and communism. If communism, in the points discussed above, signifies faithfulness to and the correct extension of the best social democratic theories, now, thanks to its new perspectives, it rises above the old theories of socialism. In this theory of communism, Marxism undergoes an important extension and enrichment.

Up until now, only a few people were aware of the fact that radical social democracy had become so profoundly estranged from Marx's views in its concept of the State and revolution—which, furthermore, no one had even taken the trouble to discuss. Among the few exceptions, Lenin stands out. Only the victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917, and their dissolution of the National Assembly shortly afterwards, showed the socialists of Western Europe that a new principle was making its debut in Russia. And in Lenin's book, *The State and Revolution*, which was written in the summer of 1917—although it only became available in

Western Europe in the following year—one finds the foundations of the socialist theory of the State considered in the light of Marx's views.

The opposition between social democracy and the socialism we are now considering is often expressed in the slogan, "Democracy or Dictatorship". But the communists also consider their system to be a form of democracy. When the social democrats speak of democracy, they are referring to democracy as it is applied in parliamentarism; the communists oppose parliamentary or bourgeois democracy. What do they mean by these terms?

Democracy means popular government, people's self-government. The popular masses themselves must administer their own affairs and determine them. Is this actually the case? The whole world knows the answer is no. The State apparatus rules and regulates everything; it governs the people, who are its subjects. In reality, the State apparatus is composed of the mass of officials and military personnel. Of course, in relation to all matters which affect the entire community, officials are necessary for carrying out administrative functions; but in our State, the servants of the people have become their masters. Social democracy is of the opinion that parliamentary democracy, due to the fact that it is the form of democracy where the people elect their government, is in a position—if the right people are elected—to make popular self-government a reality.

What really happens is clearly demonstrated by the experience of the new German republic. There can be no doubt that the masses of workers do not want to see the return of a triumphant capitalism. Even so, while in the elections there was no limitation of democracy, there was no military terrorism, and all the institutions of the reaction were powerless, despite all this the result was the reestablishment of the old oppression and exploitation, the preservation of capitalism. The communists had already warned of this and foresaw that, by way

of parliamentary democracy, the liberation of the workers from their exploitation by capital would not be possible.

The popular masses express their power in elections. On election day, the masses are sovereign; they can impose their will by electing their representatives. On this one day, they are the masters. But woe to them if they do not choose the right representatives! During the entire term after the election, they are powerless. Once elected, the deputies and parliamentarians can decide everything. This democracy is not a government of the people themselves, but a government of parliamentarians, who are almost totally independent of the masses. To make them more responsive to a greater extent one could make proposals, such as, for example, holding new elections every year, or, even more radical, the right of recall (compulsory new elections at the request of a certain number of the eligible voters); naturally, however, no one is making such proposals. Of course, the parliamentarians cannot do just as they please, since four years later they will have to run for office again. But during that time they manipulate the masses, accustoming them to such general formulas and such demagogic phrases, in such a way that the masses are rendered absolutely incapable of exercising any kind of critical judgment. Do the voters, on election day, really choose appropriate representatives, who will carry out in their name the mandates for which they were elected? No; they only choose from among various persons previously selected by the political parties who have been made familiar to them in the party newspapers.

But let us assume that a large number of people are elected by the masses as the representatives of their true intentions and are sent to parliament. They meet there, but soon realize that the parliament does not govern; it only has the mission of passing the laws, but does not implement them. In the bourgeois State there is a separation of powers between making and executing the laws. The parliament possesses only

the first power, while it is the second power which is really determinate; the real power, that of implementing the laws, is in the hands of the bureaucracy and the departments of the State, at whose summit is the government executive as the highest authority. This means that, in the democratic countries, the government personnel, the ministers, are designated by the parliamentary majority. In reality, however, they are not elected, they are nominated, behind closed doors with a lot of skullduggery and wheeling and dealing, by the leaders of the parties with a parliamentary majority. Even if there were to be an aspect of popular will manifested in the parliament, this would still not hold true in the government.

In the personnel staffing the government offices, the popular will is to be found only—and there, in a weakened form mixed with other influences—alongside bureaucratism, which directly rules and dominates the people. But even the ministers are almost powerless against the organizations of the bureaucracy, who are nominally subordinate to them. The bureaucracy pulls all the strings and does all the work, not the ministers. It is the bureaucrats who remain in office and are still there when the next batch of elected politicians arrives in office. They rely on the ministers to defend them in parliament and to authorize funding for them, but if the ministers cross them, they will make life impossible for them.

This is the whole meaning of the social democratic concept of the workers being able to take power and overthrow capitalism by means of the normal rule of general suffrage. Do they really think they can make anyone believe that all of these functionaries, office workers, department administrators, confidential advisors, judges and officials high and low, will be capable of carrying out any sort of change on behalf of the freedom of the proletariat at the behest of the likes of Ebert and Scheidemann, or Dittmann and Ledebour? The bureaucracy, at the highest levels, belongs to the same class as the exploiters of

the workers, and in its middle layers as well as in its lowest ranks its members all enjoy a secure and privileged position compared to the rest of the population. This is why they feel solidarity with the ruling layers which belong to the bourgeoisie, and are linked to them by a thousand invisible ties of education, family relationships and personal connections.

Perhaps the social democratic leaders have come to believe that, by taking the place of the previous government ministers, they could pave the way to socialism by passing new laws. In reality, however, nothing has changed in the State apparatus and the system of power as a result of this change of government personnel. And the fact that these gentlemen do not want to admit that this is indeed the case is proven by the fact that their only concern has been to occupy the government posts, believing that, with this change of personnel, the revolution is over. This is made equally clear by the fact that the modern organizations created by the proletariat have, under their leadership, a statist character and smell about them, like the State but on a smaller scale: the former servants, now officials, have promoted themselves to masters; they have created a dense bureaucracy, with its own interests, which displays—in an even more accentuated form—the character of the bourgeois parliaments at the commanding heights of their respective parties and groups, which only express the impotence of the masses of their memberships.

Are we therefore saying that the use of parliament and the struggle for democracy is a false tactic of social democracy? We all know that, under the rule of a powerful and still unchallenged capitalism, the parliamentary struggle can be a means of arousing and awakening class consciousness, and has indeed done so, and even Liebknecht used it that way during the war. But it is for that very reason that the specific character of democratic parliamentarism cannot be ignored. It has calmed the combative spirit of the masses, it has inculcated

them with the false belief that they were in control of the situation and squelched any thoughts of rebellion which may have arisen among them. It performed invaluable services for capitalism, allowing it to develop peacefully and without turmoil. Naturally, capitalism had to adopt the especially harmful formula of deceit and demagogic in the parliamentary struggle, in order to fulfill its aim of driving the population to insanity. And now the parliamentary democracy is performing a yet greater service for capitalism, as it is enrolling the workers organizations in the effort to save capitalism.

Capitalism has been quite considerably weakened, materially and morally, during the world war, and will only be able to survive if the workers themselves once again help it to get back on its feet. The social democratic labor leaders are elected as government ministers, because only the authority inherited from their party and the mirage of the promise of socialism could keep the workers pacified, until the old State order could be sufficiently reinforced. This is the role and the purpose of democracy, of parliamentary democracy, in this period in which it is not a question of the advent of socialism, but of its prevention. Democracy cannot free the workers, it can only plunge them deeper into slavery, diverting their attention from the genuine path to freedom; it does not facilitate but blocks the revolution, reinforcing the bourgeoisie's capacity for resistance and making the struggle for socialism a more difficult, costly and time-consuming task for the proletariat.

## 5. Proletarian Democracy, or the Council System

Social democracy believed that the conquest of political power by the proletariat had to take the form of a seizure of the power of the State apparatus by the workers party. This was why socialism had to leave

the State apparatus intact, to place it at the service of the working class. Marxists, including Kautsky, also shared this belief.

Marx and Engels viewed the State as the violent machinery of oppression created by the ruling class and then perfected and further developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the proletariat's revolt grew stronger. Marx thought that the task of the proletariat consisted in the destruction of this State apparatus and the creation of completely new administrative organs. He was well aware of the fact that the State exercises many functions which, at first sight, benefit the general interest—public safety, the regulation of trade, education, administration—but he also knew that all of these activities were subordinated to the overriding goal of securing the interests of capital, of assuring its power. This is why he never succumbed to the fantasy that this machinery of repression could ever become an organ of popular liberation, while preserving its other functions. The proletariat must provide itself with its own instrument of liberation.

It seemed that this instrument could not be identified prior to its actual appearance; only practice could unveil it. This became possible for the first time in the Paris Commune of 1871, when the proletariat conquered State power. In the Commune, the citizens and workers of Paris elected a parliament after the old model, but this parliament was immediately transformed into something quite unlike our parliament. Its purpose was not to entertain the people with fine words while allowing a small clique of businessmen and capitalists to preserve their private property; the men who met in the new parliament had to publicly regulate and administer everything on behalf of the people. What had been a parliamentary corporation was transformed into a corporation of labor; it formed committees which were responsible for framing new legislation. In this manner, the bureaucracy as a special class, independent of and ruling over the people, disappeared, thereby abolishing the separation of legislative and executive powers. Those

persons who occupied the highest posts over the people were at the same time elected by and representatives of the people themselves who put them in office, and could at any time be removed from office by their electors.

The short life of the Paris Commune did not permit a complete development of this new concept; it arose, so to speak, instinctively, within the feverish struggle for existence. It was Marx's brilliant perspicacity that caused it to be recognized as the embryonic form of the future forms of the State power of the proletariat. A new and important step was taken in 1905 in Russia, with the establishment of councils, or soviets, as organs of expression of the fighting proletariat. These organs did not conquer political power, although the Saint Petersburg central workers council assumed the leadership of the struggle, and exercised considerable power. When the new revolution broke out in 1917, the soviets were once again constructed, this time as organs of proletarian power. With the German November Revolution the proletariat took political control of the country and provided the second historical example of proletarian State power. It was in the Russian example, however, that the political forms and principles the proletariat needs to achieve socialism were most clearly presented. These are the principles of communism as opposed to those of social democracy.

The first principle is that of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx repeatedly maintained that the proletariat, immediately after taking power, must establish its dictatorship. By dictatorship he meant workers power to the exclusion of the other classes. This assertion provoked many protests: justice prohibits such a dictatorship, which privileges certain groups above others which are denied their rights, and instead requires democracy and equality before the law for everyone. But this is not at all the case: each class understands justice and rights to mean what is good or bad for it; the exploiter complains of injustice when he is put to work. In other times, when the proud aristocrat or the rich and

arrogant bourgeois scornfully looked down with repugnance upon the idea of political equality and political rights for the slaves who toiled in the worst, most downtrodden and degrading jobs, in those times it was a sign full of meaning for the honor of the men who were beginning to rebel, when in their status as proletarians they rose up against the status quo and said: we have the same rights as you.

The democratic principle was the first display of the emergence of the class consciousness of the working class, which did not yet dare to say: I was nothing, but I want to be everything. If the community of all the workers wants to rule and make all the decisions about public affairs, and to be responsible for everything, then will I have to hear about "natural" or heaven-sent rights from all the criminals, thieves, pickpockets, all those who eat at the expense of their fellow men, the war profiteers, black market speculators, landowners, moneylenders, rentiers, all those who live off the labor of others without doing any work themselves? If it is true that each person has a natural right to participate in politics, it is no less true that the whole world has a natural right to live and not to die from hunger. And, if to assure the latter, the former must be curtailed, then no one should feel that their democratic sensibilities have been violated.

Communism is not based on any particular abstract right, but on the needs of the social order. The proletariat has the task of organizing social production in a socialist manner and regulating labor in a new way. But then it clashes with the powerful resistance of the ruling class. The latter will do everything within its power to prevent or impede the advent of the new order: this is why the ruling class must be excluded from exercising any political influence whatsoever. If one class wants to go forward, and the other wants to go backward, the car will not leave the station; any attempt at cooperation will bring society to a standstill. During the first phase of capitalism, when it needed to fortify its position as a newly-risen class, the bourgeoisie built its dictatorship

upon the foundation of property qualifications for voter eligibility. Later it was compelled to change to democracy, granting the appearance of equal rights to the workers, which pacified them; but this democratic form did not affect the authentic class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, but only disguised it, even if it gave the growing proletariat the opportunity to assemble and to recognize its class interests.

After the initial victory of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie retained many means of power, of both a material and a spiritual nature, at its disposal, which will obviously be employed in an effort to impede the progress of the new order, and may be able to paralyze it, if full political freedom is conceded to the bourgeoisie. It will therefore be necessary to shackle this class with the strongest measures of compulsion, and to mercilessly punish, as a grave crime against the vital interests of the people, any attempt to restrain or to impede the new organization of the economy.

It may seem that the exclusion of a particular class always has something of the unjust and arbitrary about it. From the point of view of the parliamentary system, this may be so. But, given the special organization of the proletarian State, the council system automatically, so to speak, causes all exploiters and parasites to be self-excluded from participation in the regulation of society.

The council system constitutes the second principle of the communist order. In the council system, political organization is built upon the economic process of labor. Parliamentarism rests upon the individual in his quality as a citizen of the State. This had its historical justification, since bourgeois society was originally composed of producers who were equal in respect to one another, each one of whom produced his commodities himself and together formed, through the sum of all their little transactions, the production process as a whole. But in modern society, with its giant industrial complexes and its class antagonisms, this basis is becoming increasingly obsolete. From this

point of view, the theoreticians of French syndicalism (Lagardelle, for example) were correct in their harsh critique of parliamentarism. Parliamentary theory views each man primarily as a citizen of the State, and as such, individuals thereby come to be abstract entities, all of them equal. But in practice, the real, concrete man is a worker. His activity is the practical content of his life, and the activities of all men together form the social labor process as a whole.

It is neither the State nor politics, but society and labor, which constitute the great living community of man. In order to unite men in groups, parliamentary political practice divides the State into electoral districts; but the men who are assigned to these districts, workers, landlords, street peddlers, manufacturers, landowners, members of every class and every trade, haphazardly lumped together due to the purely accidental fact of their place of residence, can by no means arrive at a communitarian representation of their common interest and will, because they have nothing in common. The natural groups are production groups, the workers of a factory, who take part in the same activity, the peasants in a village, and, on a larger scale, the classes.

It is of course true that certain political parties recruit people principally from certain classes, whom they represent, although incompletely. Belonging to a party is primarily a matter of political convictions rather than one's class: a large part of the proletariat has always sought its political representatives from other parties besides social democracy.

The new society makes labor and its organization the conscious focus and foundation of all political life, where "political" refers to the outward arrangement of economic life. Under capitalism, this is expressed in an occult fashion, but in the future society it will take on an open and evident expression. People themselves act directly within their work groups. The workers in a factory elect one of their comrades as a representative of their will, who remains in continual contact

with them, and can at any time be replaced by another. The delegates are responsible for decisions concerning everything within their competence and hold meetings whose composition varies according to whether the agenda is about matters relating to a particular profession, or a particular district, and so forth. It is from among these delegates that the central directive bodies arise in each area.

Within such institutions there is no room for any kind of representation for the bourgeoisie; whoever does not work as a member of a production group is automatically barred from the possibility of being part of the decision-making process, without needing to be excluded by formal voting arrangements. On the other hand, the former bourgeois who collaborates in the new society according to his abilities, as the manager of a factory, for example, can make his voice heard in the factory assemblies and will have the same decision-making power as any other worker. The professions concerned with general cultural functions such as teachers or doctors, form their own councils, which make decisions in their respective fields of education and health in conjunction with the representatives of the workers in these fields, which are thus managed and regulated by all. In every domain of society, the means employed is self-management and organization from below, to mobilize all the forces of the people for the great objective; at the summit, these forces of the people are joined together in a central governing body, which guarantees their proper utilization.

The council system is a state organization without the bureaucracy of permanent officials which makes the State an alien power separate from the people. The council system realizes Friedrich Engels' assertion that government over people will give way to administration over things. Official posts (which are always necessary for administration) which are not especially crucial will be accessible to anyone who has undergone an elementary training program. The higher administration is in the hands of elected delegates, subject to immediate recall, who

are paid the same wage as a worker. It could happen that during the transition period this principle may not be totally and consistently implemented, since the necessary abilities will not be found in every delegate all the time; but when the bourgeois press deliberately goes to grotesque lengths in its praise for the abilities of today's bureaucratic system, it is worth recalling the fact that, in November 1918, the workers and soldiers councils successfully carried out formidable tasks before which the State and military bureaucracies quailed.

Since the councils combine the tasks of management and execution, and since the delegates themselves must carry out the decisions they make, there is no place for bureaucrats or career politicians, both of which are denizens of the institutions of bourgeois State power. The goal of every political party, that is, of every organization of professional politicians, is to be able to take the State machinery into its hands; this goal is foreign to the Communist Party. The purpose of the latter is not the conquest of power for itself, but to show the goal and the way forward to the fighting proletariat, by means of the dissemination of communist principles, towards the end of establishing the system of workers councils.

On this point, finally, social democracy and communism are opposed with respect to their immediate practical aims: the first seeks the reorganization of the old bourgeois State; the second, a new political system.

# A Life of Struggle – Farewell to Hermann Gorter (1927)

In the person of Hermann Gorter, the revolutionary proletariat has just lost one of its most faithful friends and one of its most notable comrades in arms. He figured among the greatest experts in Marxist theory and was one of the very few who, through conflicts and splits, remained invariably devoted to revolutionary communism.

Gorter was born on November 26, 1864, the son of a well-known writer; upon completing his studies in the humanities, he was appointed institute professor of secondary education. While still young he composed *Mei* ("May"), a work of poetry which had an explosive impact on the world of letters in Holland and was immediately considered a masterpiece. The decade of the 1880s was a veritable literary golden age; a whole constellation of writers and poets arose during that period. Rebell ing against the formal tradition which had been erected into a canon of beauty, truth and the expression of feeling, this school made the earth shake beneath the feet of Dutch language and letters. In the 1890s, however, the well progressively ran dry: everyone went their own ways. Gorter, too, had to watch in amazement as the movement of the "eighties" was struck down by sterility. He immersed himself in the great works of literature: the Greeks of antiquity, the Italians of the Middle Ages, the English of the

early modern era, in an effort to discover the source of their power. He applied himself to philosophy, he translated Spinoza, he studied Kant, but this did not give him any answers or new impulses. He then turned to the writings of Marx, and found what he was looking for: a clear understanding of social development as the basis for men's spiritual production. Whenever a new class has erupted in history, whenever its efforts have borne fruit, one witnesses a new energy, a new feeling of power, and a new enthusiasm lead to a flowering in letters; and this was certainly the case with the movement of which Gorter himself was part; an intellectual buoyancy accompanied the take-off of capitalist development in Holland. But Marx also showed him the limitations of the bourgeois development which had taken place, he taught him to understand the class struggle. And from that point on Gorter dedicated himself body and soul to the cause of the fighting proletariat. In a series of articles entitled *Critique of the Literary Movement of the 1880s in Holland* (1899–1900) he drew up a balance sheet of his past in order to set forth the self-understanding which he had acquired during that period. Towards the end of his life he turned once again to these questions, examining the masterpieces of world literature in the light of social evolution, but was unfortunately unable to bring his labors to a conclusion.

Gorter joined the social democratic workers party of Holland during the late 1890s. The clear simplicity with which he expounded its principles soon made him one of the most popular orators of this rapidly growing movement. He also published some excellent propaganda pamphlets. Later, however, he entered into open conflict with the party leaders who, with the growth of the movement, had increasingly gravitated towards reformism. Together with Van der Goes and Henriette Roland-Holst, he founded the journal *De Nieuwe Tijd* ("The New Era"), an organ of Marxist theory and principled critique. In regard to every one of the crucial questions which were the most

important issues of the day—the agrarian question, education, the rail workers strike, elections—he was in the front ranks of those combating opportunism. He was nonetheless a member of the party's leadership for a while, but finally his entire group was reduced to a minority faction by the reformist politicians and was denounced as a threat to the party (1906). These confrontations (similar to those that were coming to a head in every country) led him to focus his attention on forging close contacts with German social democracy. Although he only rarely contributed articles to *Neue Zeit* ("New Era"), the theoretical organ of German social democracy, Gorter established friendly relations with Kautsky, relations which later cooled when the two men went their separate ways but were never completely quenched. Nor was this the only time that, as a result of their open minds and broad outlooks, as well as because of the rigorous objectivity of their militant activities, friends gained in the common struggle remained friends later, although the course of the workers movement had turned them into political adversaries.

The conflict within the party reached a point of no return during the following year when some younger militants, Wijnkoop and Van Ravensteyn, launched their own attack on the parliamentary practice of the party leaders and began publishing an opposition weekly, *De Tribune*. After an extended period of further debate, they were expelled in 1909 and founded a new party, the Social Democratic Party, which later became the Communist Party. Gorter joined them and became the party's most outstanding leader, although he was constrained to leave to others the job of determining practical policy. He was also physically in a quite weakened state. Gifted with an iron constitution, he was capable of considerable efforts and, at the same time that he was teaching several different classes, he indefatigably dedicated himself to political activity. But when strife broke out in the ranks of the new party, he burned the candle at both ends, sometimes working twenty-

four hours a day; as a result he suffered from exhaustion, which served to remind him of the limits of human powers.

Gorter was a poet at heart, that is, a being who perceives directly and with clarity what there is of immensity, of the truly universal in the world, and knows how to express this in a language of total beauty or, to put it another way, in a language of total truth. These years of tireless activity and theoretical studies had the effect of leading him to increasingly transcribe the new socialist concept of the world in terms of immediate feelings. First, he brought out *Ein klein heldendicht* ("A Little Epic Poem"), which describes the awakening of class consciousness in two workers, a man and a woman; it was the epic poem of the proletariat, but in a more restricted framework and in a more peaceful environment. Later, in 1912, *Pan* appeared in its first version (it was to be significantly expanded later), which describes in a symbolic form the emancipation of the human species through the class struggle. Compared to *Mei*, which is a limpid, luminous vision of the world which emerged from the illusions characteristic of carefree youth, *Pan* appears as the epic poem, rich in content, with powerfully contrasted nuances, of the finally mature *Weltanschaung* (World Concept) of conscious man.

Then, after 1914, the black period of his life began; the decline of the revolutionary workers movement affected his profoundly sensitive spirit. Not allowing himself to become dejected, Gorter carried on the fight. He was undoubtedly aware of the fact that the situation could not be otherwise but, like so many of us, he was nonetheless consumed by sadness. When the war broke out, bringing in its wake the collapse of social democracy, he published *Der Imperialismus, der Weltkrieg und die Sozialdemokratie* ("Imperialism, the World War and Social Democracy") where he proved that this collapse had its origin in the reformism of the working class itself. The text was printed in German in Amsterdam; the state of emergency, however, almost

totally prevented its circulation in Germany. But even during these moments of maximally accentuated regression he did not lose his faith in the proletariat and its capacity for engendering a new revolutionary movement. And when the Russian Revolution broke out and, one year later, a revolutionary wave swept over Europe, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the movement. In Switzerland, where he was living for reasons of health, he was in permanent contact with the Russian embassy; it was there that he wrote his work *Die Weltrevolution* ("The World Revolution") in 1918. When the staff of the Russian embassy was expelled from Switzerland in November 1918, he left with them for Berlin, where he made contact with the emerging revolutionary movement. From then on he never ceased to cooperate with the German communist movement; on repeated occasions he clandestinely crossed the border to go to Berlin to participate in conferences and debates.

His presence in Germany was rendered all the more necessary by the fact that the German communist movement, which he supported with heart and soul, was the origin of yet another disappointment even more serious than the one he suffered in the Dutch party, because it was not expected this time, and also because of the fact that the revolution which had begun was destroyed not so much by the blows of an external power as by an internal weakness, a deviation from its own principles. Gorter was one of the first people to discern the danger of opportunism inherent in the Bolsheviks' tactics for western Europe, whose erroneous nature he proved in an Open Letter to Comrade Lenin. After a hazardous journey made all the more risky due to his poor health, he arrived in Russia where, during the course of personal interviews with Lenin and meetings with the Executive Committee of the Third International, he tried to convince them of the errors of their ways. But it did not take long for him to see and to understand why his efforts were in vain: Russia could not become anything but a bourgeois State. From that moment, Gorter offered his services to the

KAP. On the occasion of the internal conflicts that tore the KAP apart, he opted for the Essen tendency, to which he contributed a great deal as its spokesman; however, he often had to admit that the Berlin tendency acted in an almost exemplary way in practice and he assisted both fractions. Considering their differences as of secondary importance and their quarrels as obsolete, he made active contributions to efforts to achieve their reunification.

His health seriously deteriorated during these later years. As a consequence of repeated ordeals of overexertion, to which was added the terrible blow of his wife's death in 1916, and due also to the depression he suffered as a result of the disappointing evolution of the workers movement, he was afflicted with chronic bronchial asthma, of a nervous origin, which physically exhausted him. But the power of his spirit raised him to an ever higher state of lucidity and an increasingly broad and penetrating vision of the world. Gorter worked tirelessly to give expression to the new beauty which he felt; he plunged into an in-depth study of Marxism, the great poets of the past, communism and, in his final days, he said that he felt capable of creating an even more perfect work than anything he had written before. But his illness suddenly took a turn for the worse during a visit to Switzerland, and he died during his return to Brussels on September 15, 1927.

Gorter was a force of nature, full of youthful freshness, a being in total harmony both physically as well as morally. During his youth he ardently participated in almost every sport; cricket, tennis and sailing held no secrets from him and, even during his last years, he proved to be an indefatigable walker. Every page of his poetic work is testimony to the depth of his love for Nature. He could plod for hours, in fall and winter, across deserted beaches, absorbed in the infinite beauty of the waves and the strand; in Switzerland he spent entire days exploring mountains, eager for the solitude of snow-covered summits. A classicist and man of letters by his natural gifts, a notable expert in philosophical

matters, he was later capable of keeping abreast of the difficult questions of the natural sciences in order to develop his concept of the world from every angle. Such a man necessarily was compelled to subscribe to socialism in order to be in perfect harmony with the world. Henceforth he devoted himself to the working class and to communism. His poetic work, the most complete expression of his being, unfortunately can only be read by workers who understand Dutch. But among the Dutch workers, there are many who profess a fervent admiration for Gorter's poetry. In this recent period of the workers movement, Gorter stands out as a luminous figure, an example of the new humanity in the course of its transformation.

# The Personal Act (1933)

The burning of the Reichstag by Van Der Lubbe, reveals the most divergent positions. In the organs of the communist left such as (Spartacus, De Radencommunist), the burning is approved as an act of a communist revolutionary. To approve and applaud such an act means advocating its repetition. Hence it is necessarily good to fully appreciate its usefulness.

Perhaps the fire's meaning could only be to affect or to weaken the dominant class: the bourgeoisie. Here, there can be no question. The bourgeoisie is not in the least affected by the burning of the Reichstag; its domination is in no manner weakened. On the contrary, for the government, it was the occasion to considerably reinforce its terror against the worker's movement. The indirect consequences must still be emphasized.

But even if such an act affects and weakens the bourgeoisie, the only consequence is to develop for the workers the conviction that only such individual acts can liberate them. The full truth that they must acquire is that only mass action by the working class as a whole can defeat the bourgeoisie. This basic truth of revolutionary communism will, in such a case, be hidden from them. Their independent action as a class will be lost. Instead of concentrating all their forces on propaganda among the working masses, the revolutionary minorities will squander their forces in personal acts which, even when such acts are carried out by a dedicated group with many members, are not capable making the domination of the ruling class falter. With their considerable forces of

repression, the bourgeoisie could easily come after such a group. Rarely has there been a revolutionary minority group carrying out actions with more devotion, sacrifice, and energy than the Russian nihilists a half-century ago. At certain moments, it even appeared that by a series of well organized attendants, the nihilists would overthrow Tsarism. But a French detective, engaged to take over the anti-terrorist struggle in place of the incompetent Russian police, succeeded by his personal energy and his entirely western organization in destroying nihilism in only a few years. It was only afterwards that a mass movement developed and finally overthrew Tsarism.

Can such personal acts nevertheless have value as a protest against the abject electoralism, that turns aside the workers from their true fight?

A protest only has value if it arises from conviction, leaves a forceful impression, or develops consciousness. But who believes that a worker defending his interests by voting social democrat or communist, will express doubts about electoralism because someone has burned the Reichstag? This is a completely derisory argument, similar to what the bourgeoisie itself does to rid the workers of their illusions, making the Reichstag completely powerless, deciding to dissolve it, setting aside the decision process. German comrades said that this can only be positive since the confidence of the workers in parliamentarianism will receive a first-rate blow. Without doubt, but doesn't this depict matters in a far too simplistic way? In such a case, democratic illusions will be shed by another route. Then, where there is no right to a generalized vote or where Parliament is weak, the conquest of true democracy is advanced and workers can only then imagine themselves arriving there by their collective action. In fact, systematic propaganda seeking to explain from the start of each event an understanding of the real significance of parliament and class struggle, always remains the main point.

Can the personal act be a signal, giving the final push that sets in motion, by radical example, this immense struggle?

There is a certain current running in history where individual actions, in moments of tension, are like sparks on a powder keg. But the proletarian revolution is nothing like the explosion of a powder keg. Even if the Communist Party strives to convince itself and convince the world that the revolution can break out at any moment, we know that the proletariat must still form itself in a new manner to fight as a mass. A certain bourgeois romanticism can still be perceived in these visions. In past bourgeois revolutions, the bourgeoisie rose up with the people behind them and found themselves in confrontation against the sovereigns and their arbitrary oppression. An attendant on the person of a king or a minister could be the signal to revolt. The vision today in which a personal act could set the masses in motion reveals itself to be a bourgeois conception of a chief; not the leader of an elected party, but a chief who designates himself and, who by his actions leads the passive masses. The proletarian revolution finds nothing in this outdated romanticism of the leader: a class, impelled by massive social forces, must be the source of all initiative.

But the mass, after all, is composed of individuals, and the actions of the mass contain a certain number of personal actions. Certainly, it is here that we touch on the true value of the personal act. Separated from mass action, the act of an individual who thinks he can realize alone something great is useless. But as part of a mass movement, the personal act has the highest importance. Workers in struggle are not a regiment of marionettes identical in courage but composed of forces of different natures concentrated toward the same goal, their movement irresistible. In this body, the audacity of the bravest finds the time and place to express itself in personal acts of courage, when the clear comprehension of others leads them towards a suitable goal in order not to lose the gains. Likewise, in a rising movement, this

interaction of forces and acts is of great value when it is guided by a clear comprehension that animates, at this moment, the workers which is necessary to develop their combativity. But in this case, so much tenacity, audacity, and courage will be called for that it will not be necessary to burn a Parliament.

# Individual Acts (1933)

Many divergent positions have been taken up on the burning of the Reichstag by Van Der Lubbe. In the organs of the communist left (Spartacus, Radencommunist) it was approved as the act of a revolutionary communist. To approve and applaud such an act means calling for it to be repeated. That's why it's important to understand what use it had.

Its only meaning could be to hit, to weaken, the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. There can be no question of this here. The bourgeoisie hasn't been at all hurt by the burning of the Reichstag. Its rule hasn't in any way been weakened. On the contrary, the government has seized the opportunity to strengthen considerably its terror against the workers movement. The ultimate consequences of this have yet to be appreciated.

But even if such an act really did hit or weaken the bourgeoisie, the only consequence of this would be to encourage the workers to believe that such individual acts could liberate them. The great truth that they have to learn, that only the mass action of the entire working class can defeat the bourgeoisie, this basic truth of revolutionary communism, would be obscured from them. It would lead them away from autonomous class action. Instead of concentrating all their forces on propaganda within the working masses revolutionary minorities would exhaust their energies in individual acts which, even when carried out by a large and dedicated group, would in no way shake the domination of the ruling class. With its considerable auxiliary forces,

the bourgeoisie could easily master such a group. There has rarely been a minority group which carried out such actions with the devotion, sacrifice and energy of the Russian nihilists half-a-century ago. At certain moments it even seemed that, through a series of well-organized individual assassinations, they would succeed in overthrowing Tsarism. But a French policeman, called in to take over the anti-terrorist struggle in place of the incompetent Russian police, succeeded with his Western energy and organization to annihilate nihilism in a few years. It was only afterwards, with the development of the mass movement, that Tsarism was overthrown.

But doesn't such an act have a value as a demonstration against the abject electoralism which serves to derail the workers' struggles? A demonstration has value if it convinces people by giving an impression of strength, or if it develops consciousness. But are we really to believe that a worker who thinks he's defending his interests by voting social democrat or Communist is going to start doubting this because the Reichstag is burned down? All this is completely derisory compared to what the bourgeoisie itself does to undermine the workers' illusions—rendering the Reichstag completely impotent, dissolving it or removing it from the decision-making process.

Some German comrades have said that the act could only be positive because it would strike a blow at the workers' confidence in parliamentarism. Doubtless. But we can still ask whether this is looking at things in a rather simplistic way. Democratic illusions would only be introduced from another source. Where there's no right to vote, where parliament is impotent, the conquest of "real democracy" is put forward and the workers imagine that this is the only thing to fight for. In fact, systematic propaganda which uses each event to develop an understanding of the real meaning of parliament and the class struggle can never be side-stepped and is always the essential thing.

Can't individual acts be the signal which sets in motion a mass struggle by giving a radical example? It's a well known fact in history that the action of an individual in moments of tension can act as a spark to a powder keg. But the proletarian revolution has nothing in common with the explosion of a powder keg. Even if the Communist Party is trying to convince itself and everyone else that the revolution can break out at any moment, we know that the proletariat still has to form itself for new mass combats. These sorts of ideas reveal a certain bourgeois romanticism. In past bourgeois revolutions, the rising bourgeoisie, and behind it the people, were confronted with the personalities of sovereigns and their arbitrary oppression. An assassination of a king or a minister could be a signal for a revolt. The idea that in the present period an individual act could set the masses in movement is based on the bourgeois concept of the "chief", not an elected party leader, but a self-appointed chief, whose action mobilizes the passive masses. The proletarian revolution has nothing to do with this out-dated romanticism of the chief. All initiative has to come from the class, pushed forward by massive social forces.

But, after all, the masses are made up of individuals and mass actions contain a whole number of individual actions. Of course, and here we come to the real value of individual acts. Separated from mass action, the act of an individual who thinks he can accomplish great things on his own is useless. But as part of a mass movement, it's of the greatest importance. The class in struggle isn't a regiment of identical puppets marching in step and accomplishing great things through the blind force of its own movement. It is on the contrary a mass of multiple personalities, pushed forward by the same will, supporting itself, exhorting itself, giving itself courage. The irresistible strength of such a movement is based on many different strengths all converging towards the same goal. In this context, the most audacious bravery can express itself in individual acts of courage, since it is the clear understanding

of all the others which directs these acts towards a real goal, so that the fruits of such acts aren't lost. In an ascending movement, this interaction of strengths and acts is of the greatest value, when it's directed by a clear understanding by the workers about what needs to be done and about how to develop their combativity. But in these cases, it takes a lot more tenacity, audaciousness and courage than it takes to burn a parliament!

# Destruction as a Means of Struggle (1933)

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 descendants, 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.

# The theory of the collapse of capitalism (1934)

The idea that capitalism was in a final, its mortal, crisis dominated the first years after the Russian revolution. When the revolutionary workers' movement in Western Europe abated, the Third International gave up this theory, but it was maintained by the opposition movement, the KAPD, which adopted the theory of the mortal crisis of capitalism as the distinguishing feature between the revolutionary and reformist points of view. The question of the necessity and the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism, and the way in which this is to be understood, is the most important of all questions for the working class and its understanding and tactics. Rosa Luxemburg had already dealt with it in 1912 in her book *The Accumulation of Capital*, where she came to the conclusion that in a pure, closed capitalist system the surplus value needed for accumulation could not be realised and that therefore the constant expansion of capitalism through the trade with non-capitalist countries was necessary. This means that capitalism would collapse, that it would not be able to continue to exist any longer as an economic system, when this expansion was no longer possible. It is this theory, which was challenged as soon as the book was published from different sides, which the KAPD has often referred to. A quite different theory was developed in 1929 by Henryk Grossmann in his work *Das*

*Akkumulations und Zusammenbruchsgesetz des Kapitalistischen Systems* (The Law of Accumulation and Collapse of the Capitalist System). Grossman here deduces that capitalism must collapse for purely economic reasons in the sense that, independently of human intervention, revolutions, etc., it would be impossible for it to continue to exist as an economic system. The severe and lasting crisis which began in 1930 has certainly prepared people's minds for such a theory of mortal crisis. The recently published manifesto of the *United Workers of America* makes Grossman's theory the theoretical basis for a new direction for the workers' movement. It is therefore necessary to examine it critically. But to do this a preliminary explanation of Marx's position on this question and the past discussions connected with it cannot be avoided.

## 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:

$$\text{I } 4000c + 1000v + 1000s = 6000 \text{ (product)}$$

$$\text{II } 2000c + 500v + 500s = 3000 \text{ (product)}$$

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: 4000 $c$  for Department I and 2000 $c$  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:

$$\text{I } 4400c + 1100v + 1100s (= 550k + 550\text{acc} (= 440c + 110v)) = 6600$$

$$\text{II } 1600c + 400v + 400s (= 200k + 200\text{acc} (= 160c + 40v)) = 2400$$

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:

$$\text{I } 4840c + 1210v + 1210s (= 605k + 484\text{acc} + 121v) = 7260$$

$$\text{II } 1760c + 440v + 440s (= 220k + 176\text{acc} + 44v) = 2640$$

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:

$$\text{Year 1 } 200,000c + 100,000v + 100,000s (= 20,000c + 5,000v + 75,000k)$$

$$\text{Year 2 } 220,000c + 105,000c + 105,000s (= 22,000c + 5,250v + 77,750k)$$

$$\text{Year 3 } 242,000c + 110,250v + 110,250s (= 24,200c + 5,512v + 80,538k)$$

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.

## Grossman'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 per cent — 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 34<sup>th</sup> it almost disappears and in the 35<sup>th</sup> 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 35<sup>th</sup> 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).

n 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 30<sup>th</sup> year 3170:412, in the 34<sup>th</sup> year 4641:500, in the 35<sup>th</sup> year 5106:525, and in the 36<sup>th</sup>, 5616:551. In the 35<sup>th</sup> 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 schemes 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 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.

## Grossman 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 35<sup>th</sup> 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 35<sup>th</sup> 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".

[Translator's 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 Marrian 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 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 elemen”.

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.

# Party and Class (1936)

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 party 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)

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.

# Trade Unionism (1936)

How must the working class fight capitalism in order to win? This is the all important question facing the workers every day. What efficient means of action, what tactics can they use to conquer power and defeat the enemy? No science, no theory, could tell them exactly what to do. But spontaneously and instinctively, by feeling out, by sensing the possibilities, they found their ways of action. And as capitalism grew and conquered the earth and increased its power, the power of the workers also increased. New modes of action, wider and more efficient, came up beside the old ones. It is evident that with changing conditions, the forms of action, the tactics of the class struggle have to change also. Trade unionism is the primary form of labour movement in fixed capitalism. The isolated worker is powerless against the capitalistic employer. To overcome this handicap, the workers organise into unions. The union binds the workers together into common action, with the strike as their weapon. Then the balance of power is relatively equal, or is sometimes even heaviest on the side of the workers, so that the isolated small employer is weak against the mighty union. Hence in developed capitalism trade unions and employers' unions (Associations, Trusts, Corporations, etc.), stand as fighting powers against each other.

Trade unionism first arose in England, where industrial capitalism first developed. Afterward it spread to other countries, as a natural companion of capitalist industry. In the United States there were very special conditions. In the beginning, the abundance of free unoccupied

land, open to settlers, made for a shortage of workers in the towns and relatively high wages and good conditions. The American Federation of Labour became a power in the country, and generally was able to uphold a relatively high standard of living for the workers who were organised in its unions.

It is clear that under such conditions the idea of overthrowing capitalism could not for a moment arise in the minds of the workers. Capitalism offered them a sufficient and fairly secure living. They did not feel themselves a separate class whose interests were hostile to the existing order; they were part of it; they were conscious of partaking in all the possibilities of an ascending capitalism in a new continent. There was room for millions of people, coming mostly from Europe. For these increasing millions of farmers, a rapidly increasing industry was necessary, where, with energy and good luck, workmen could rise to become free artisans, small business men, even rich capitalists. It is natural that here a true capitalist spirit prevailed in the working class.

The same was the case in England. Here it was due to England's monopoly of world commerce and big industry, to the lack of competitors on the foreign markets, and to the possession of rich colonies, which brought enormous wealth to England. The capitalist class had no need to fight for its profits and could allow the workers a reasonable living. Of course, at first, fighting was necessary to urge this truth upon them; but then they could allow unions and grant wages in exchange for industrial peace. So here also the working class was imbued with the capitalist spirit.

Now this is entirely in harmony with the innermost character of trade unionism. Trade unionism is an action of the workers, which does not go beyond the limit of capitalism. Its aim is not to replace capitalism by another form of production, but to secure good living conditions within capitalism. Its character is not revolutionary, but conservative.

Certainly, trade union action is class struggle. There is a class antagonism in capitalism — capitalists and workers have opposing interests. Not only on the question of conservation of capitalism, but also within capitalism itself, with regard to the division of the total product. The capitalists attempt to increase their profits, the surplus value, as much as possible, by cutting down wages and increasing the hours or the intensity of labour. On the other hand, the workers attempt to increase their wages and to shorten their hours of work.

The price of labour power is not a fixed quantity, though it must exceed a certain hunger minimum; and it is not paid by the capitalists of their own free will. Thus this antagonism becomes the object of a contest, the real class struggle. It is the task, the function of the trade unions to carry on this fight.

Trade unionism was the first training school in proletarian virtue, in solidarity as the spirit of organised fighting. It embodied the first form of proletarian organised power. In the early English and American trade unions this virtue often petrified and degenerated into a narrow craft-corporation, a true capitalistic state of mind. It was different, however, where the workers had to fight for their very existence, where the utmost efforts of their unions could hardly uphold their standard of living, where the full force of an energetic, fighting, and expanding capitalism attacked them. There they had to learn the wisdom that only the revolution could definitely save them.

So there comes a disparity between the working class and trade unionism. The working class has to look beyond capitalism. Trade unionism lives entirely within capitalism and cannot look beyond it. Trade unionism can only represent a part, a necessary but narrow part, in the class struggle. And it develops aspects which bring it into conflict with the greater aims of the working class.

With the growth of capitalism and big industry the unions too must grow. They become big corporations with thousands of members,

extending over the whole country, with sections in every town and every factory. Officials must be appointed: presidents, secretaries, treasurers, to conduct the affairs, to manage the finances, locally and centrally. They are the leaders, who negotiate with the capitalists and who by this practice have acquired a special skill. The president of a union is a big shot, as big as the capitalist employer himself, and he discusses with him, on equal terms, the interests of his members. The officials are specialists in trade union work, which the members, entirely occupied by their factory work, cannot judge or direct themselves.

So large a corporation as a union is not simply an assembly of single workers; it becomes an organised body, like a living organism, with its own policy, its own character, its own mentality, its own traditions, its own functions. It is a body with its own interests, which are separate from the interests of the working class. It has a will to live and to fight for its existence. If it should come to pass that unions were no longer necessary for the workers, then they would not simply disappear. Their funds, their members, and their officials: all of these are realities that will not disappear at once, but continue their existence as elements of the organisation.

The union officials, the labour leaders, are the bearers of the special union interests. Originally workmen from the shop, they acquire, by long practice at the head of the organisation, a new social character. In each social group, once it is big enough to form a special group, the nature of its work moulds and determines its social character, its mode of thinking and acting. The officials' function is entirely different from that of the workers. They do not work in factories, they are not exploited by capitalists, their existence is not threatened continually by unemployment. They sit in offices, in fairly secure positions. They have to manage corporation affairs and to speak at workers meetings and discuss with employers. Of course, they have to stand for the workers, and to defend their interests and wishes against the capitalists. This

is, however, not very different from the position of the lawyer who, appointed secretary of an organisation, will stand for its members and defend their interests to the full of his capacity.

However, there is a difference. Because many of the labour leaders came from the ranks of workers, they have experienced for themselves what wage slavery and exploitation means. They feel as members of the working class and the proletarian spirit often acts as a strong tradition in them. But the new reality of their life continually tends to weaken this tradition. Economically they are not proletarians any more. They sit in conferences with the capitalists, bargaining over wages and hours, pitting interests against interests, just as the opposing interests of the capitalist corporations are weighed one against another. They learn to understand the capitalist's position just as well as the worker's position; they have an eye for "the needs of industry"; they try to mediate. Personal exceptions occur, of course, but as a rule they cannot have that elementary class feeling of the workers, who do not understand and weigh capitalist interests against their own, but will fight for their proper interests. Thus they get into conflict with the workers.

The labour leaders in advanced capitalism are numerous enough to form a special group or class with a special class character and interests. As representatives and leaders of the unions they embody the character and the interests of the unions. The unions are necessary elements of capitalism, so the leaders feel necessary too, as useful citizens in capitalist society. The capitalist function of unions is to regulate class conflicts and to secure industrial peace. So labour leaders see it as their duty as citizens to work for industrial peace and mediate in conflicts. The test of the union lies entirely within capitalism; so labour leaders do not look beyond it. The instinct of self-preservation, the will of the unions to live and to fight for existence, is embodied in the will of the labour leaders to fight for the existence of the unions. Their own existence is indissolubly connected with the existence of the unions.

This is not meant in a petty sense, that they only think of their personal jobs when fighting for the unions. It means that primary necessities of life and social functions determine opinions. Their whole life is concentrated in the unions, only here have they a task. So the most necessary organ of society, the only source of security and power is to them the unions; hence they must be preserved and defended by all possible means, even when the realities of capitalist society undermine this position. This happens when capitalism's expansion class conflicts become sharper.

The concentration of capital in powerful concerns and their connection with big finance renders the position of the capitalist employers much stronger than the workers'. Powerful industrial magnates reign as monarchs over large masses of workers; they keep them in absolute subjection and do not allow "their" men to go into unions. Now and then the heavily exploited wage slaves break out in revolt, in a big strike. They hope to enforce better terms, shorter hours, more humane conditions, the right to organise. Union organisers come to aid them. But then the capitalist masters use their social and political power. The strikers are driven from their homes; they are shot by militia or hired thugs; their spokesmen are railroaded into jail; their relief actions are prohibited by court injunctions. The capitalist press denounces their cause as disorder, murder and revolution; public opinion is aroused against them. Then, after months of standing firm and of heroic suffering, exhausted by misery and disappointment, unable to make a dent on the ironclad capitalist structure, they have to submit and to postpone their claims to more opportune times.

In the trades where unions exist as mighty organisations, their position is weakened by this same concentration of capital. The large funds they had collected for strike support are insignificant in comparison to the money power of their adversaries. A couple of lock-outs may completely drain them. No matter how hard the capitalist

employer presses upon the worker by cutting wages and intensifying their hours of labour, the union cannot wage a fight. When contracts have to be renewed, the union feels itself the weaker party. It has to accept the bad terms the capitalists offer; no skill in bargaining avails. But now the trouble with the rank and file members begins. The men want to fight; they will not submit before they have fought; and they have not much to lose by fighting. The leaders, however, have much to lose — the financial power of the union, perhaps its existence. They try to avoid the fight, which they consider hopeless. They have to convince the men that it is better to come to terms. So, in the final analysis, they must act as spokesmen of the employers to force the capitalists' terms upon the workers. It is even worse when the workers insist on fighting in opposition to the decision of the unions. Then the union's power must be used as a weapon to subdue the workers.

So the labour leader has become the slave of his capitalistic task of securing industrial peace — now at the cost of the workers, though he meant to serve them as best he could. He cannot look beyond capitalism, and within the horizon of capitalism with a capitalist outlook, he is right when he thinks that fighting is of no use. To criticise him can only mean that trade unionism stands here at the limit of its power.

Is there another way out then? Could the workers win anything by fighting? Probably they will lose the immediate issue of the fight; but they will gain something else. By not submitting without having fought, they rouse the spirit of revolt against capitalism. They proclaim a new issue. But here the whole working class must join in. To the whole class, to all their fellow workers, they must show that in capitalism there is no future for them, and that only by fighting, not as a trade union, but as a united class, they can win. This means the beginning of a revolutionary struggle. And when their fellow workers understand this lesson, when simultaneous strikes break out in other trades, when a wave of rebellion

goes over the country, then in the arrogant hearts of the capitalists there may appear some doubt as to their omnipotence and some willingness to make concessions.

The trade union leader does not understand this point of view, because trade unionism cannot reach beyond capitalism. He opposes this kind of fight. Fighting capitalism in this way means at the same time rebellion against the trade unions. The labor leader stands beside the capitalist in their common fear of the workers' rebellion.

When the trade unions fought against the capitalist class for better working conditions, the capitalist class hated them, but it had not the power to destroy them completely. If the trade unions would try to raise all the forces of the working class in their fight, the capitalist class would persecute them with all its means. They may see their actions repressed as rebellion, their offices destroyed by militia, their leaders thrown in jail and fined, their funds confiscated. On the other hand, if they keep their members from fighting, the capitalist class may consider them as valuable institutions, to be preserved and protected, and their leaders as deserving citizens. So the trade unions find themselves between the devil and the deep blue sea; on the one side persecution, which is a tough thing to bear for people who meant to be peaceful citizens; on the other side, the rebellion of the members, which may undermine the unions. The capitalist class, if it is wise, will recognize that a bit of sham fighting must be allowed to uphold the influence of the labor leaders over the members.

The conflicts arising here are not anyone's fault; they are an inevitable consequence of capitalist development. Capitalism exists, but it is at the same time on the way to ruin. It must be fought as a living thing, and at the same time, as a transitory thing. The workers must wage a steady fight for wages and working conditions, while at the same time communistic ideas, more or less clear and conscious, awaken in their minds. They cling to the unions, feeling that these are still

necessary, trying now and then to transform them into better fighting institutions. But the spirit of trade unionism, which is in its pure form a capitalist spirit, is not in the workers. The divergence between these two tendencies in capitalism and in the class struggle appears now as a rift between the trade union spirit, mainly embodied in their leaders, and the growing revolutionary feeling of the members. This rift becomes apparent in the opposite positions they take on various important social and political questions.

Trade unionism is bound to capitalism; it has its best chances to obtain good wages when capitalism flourishes. So in times of depression it must hope that prosperity will be restored, and it must try to further it. To the workers as a class, the prosperity of capitalism is not at all important. When it is weakened by crisis or depression, they have the best chance to attack it, to strengthen the forces of the revolution, and to take the first steps towards freedom.

Capitalism extends its dominion over foreign continents, seizing their natural treasures in order to make big profits. It conquers colonies, subjugates the primitive population and exploits them, often with horrible cruelties. The working class denounces colonial exploitation and opposes it, but trade unionism often supports colonial politics as a way to capitalist prosperity.

With the enormous increases of capital in modern times, colonies and foreign countries are being used as places in which to invest large sums of capital. They become valuable possessions as markets for big industry and as producers of raw materials. A race for getting colonies, a fierce conflict of interests over the dividing up of the world arises between the great capitalist states. In these politics of imperialism the middle classes are whirled along in a common exaltation of national greatness. Then the trade unions side with the master class, because they consider the prosperity of their own national capitalism to be dependent on its success in the imperialist struggle. For the working

class, imperialism means increasing power and brutality of their exploiters.

These conflicts of interests between the national capitalisms explode into wars. World war is the crowning of the policy of imperialism. For the workers, war is not only the destruction of all their feelings of international brotherhood, it also means the most violent exploitation of their class for capitalist profit. The working class, as the most numerous and the most oppressed class of society, has to bear all the horrors of war. The workers have to give not only their labour power, but also their health and their lives.

Trade unions, however, in war must stand upon the side of the capitalist. Its interests are bound up with national capitalism, the victory of which it must wish with all its heart. Hence it assists in arousing strong national feelings and national hatred. It helps the capitalist class to drive the workers into war and to beat down all opposition.

Trade unionism abhors communism. Communism takes away the very basis of its existence. In communism, in the absence of capitalist employers, there is no room for the trade union and labour leaders. It is true that in countries with a strong socialist movement, where the bulk of the workers are socialists, the labour leaders must be socialists too, by origin as well as by environment. But then they are right-wing socialists; and their socialism is restricted to the idea of a commonwealth where instead of greedy capitalists honest labour leaders will manage industrial production.

Trade unionism hates revolution. Revolution upsets all the ordinary relations between capitalists and workers. In its violent clashings, all those careful tariff regulations are swept away; in the strife of its gigantic forces the modest skill of the bargaining labour leaders loses its value. With all its power, trade unionism opposes the ideas of revolution and communism.

This opposition is not without significance. Trade unionism is a power in itself. It has considerable funds at its disposal, as material element of power. It has its spiritual influence, upheld and propagated by its periodical papers as mental element of power. It is a power in the hands of leaders, who make use of it wherever the special interests of trade unions come into conflict with the revolutionary interests of the working class. Trade unionism, though built up by the workers and consisting of workers, has turned into a power over and above the workers, just as government is a power over and above the people.

The forms of trade unionism are different for different countries, owing to the different forms of development in capitalism. Nor do they always remain the same in every country. When they seem to be slowly dying away, the fighting spirit of the workers is sometimes able to transform them, or to build up new types of unionism. Thus in England, in the years 1880–90, the “new unionism” sprang up from the masses of poor dockers and the other badly paid, unskilled workers, bringing a new spirit into the old craft unions. It is a consequence of capitalist development, that in founding new industries and in replacing skilled labour by machine power, it accumulates large bodies of unskilled workers, living in the worst of conditions. Forced at last into a wave of rebellion, into big strikes, they find the way to unity and class consciousness. They mould unionism into a new form, adapted to a more highly developed capitalism. Of course, when afterwards capitalism grows to still mightier forms, the new unionism cannot escape the fate of all unionism, and then it produces the same inner contradictions.

The most notable form sprang up in America, in the “Industrial Workers of the World.” The I.W.W. originated from two forms of capitalist expansion. In the enormous forests and plains of the West, capitalism reaped the natural riches by Wild West methods of fierce and brutal exploitation; and the worker-adventurers responded with as wild

and jealous a defence. And in the eastern states new industries were founded upon the exploitation of millions of poor immigrants, coming from countries with a low standard of living and now subjected to sweatshop labour or other most miserable working conditions .

Against the narrow craft spirit of the old unionism, of the A.F. of L., which divided the workers of one industrial plant into a number of separate unions, the I.W.W. put the principle: all workers of one factory, as comrades against one master, must form one union, to act as a strong unity against the employer. Against the multitude of often jealous and bickering trade unions, the I.W.W. raised the slogan: one big union for all the workers. The fight of one group is the cause of all. Solidarity extends over the entire class. Contrary to the haughty disdain of the well-paid old American skilled labour towards the unorganised immigrants, it was these worst-paid proletarians that the I.W.W. led into the fight. They were too poor to pay high fees and build up ordinary trade unions. But when they broke out and revolted in big strikes, it was the I.W.W. who taught them how to fight, who raised relief funds all over the country, and who defended their cause in its papers and before the courts. By a glorious series of big battles it infused the spirit of organisation and self-reliance into the hearts of these masses. Contrary to the trust in the big funds of the old unions, the Industrial Workers put their confidence in the living solidarity and the force of endurance, upheld by a burning enthusiasm. Instead of the heavy stone-masoned buildings of the old unions, they represented the principle of flexible construction, with a fluctuating membership, contracting in time of peace, swelling and growing in the fight itself. Contrary to the conservative capitalist spirit of trade unionism, the Industrial Workers were anti-capitalist and stood for Revolution. Therefore they were persecuted with intense hatred by the whole capitalist world. They were thrown into jail and tortured on false accusations; a new crime was even invented on their behalf: that of “criminal syndicalism.”

Industrial unionism alone as a method of fighting the capitalist class is not sufficient to overthrow capitalist society and to conquer the world for the working class. It fights the capitalists as employers on the economic field of production, but it has not the means to overthrow their political stronghold, the state power. Nevertheless, the I.W.W. so far has been the most revolutionary organisation in America. More than any other it contributed to rouse class consciousness and insight, solidarity and unity in the working class, to turn its eyes toward communism, and to prepare its fighting power.

The lesson of all these fights is that against big capitalism, trade unionism cannot win. And if at times it wins, such victories give only temporary relief. And yet, these fights are necessary and must be fought. To the bitter end? — no, to the better end.

The reason is obvious. An isolated group of workers might be equal to a fight against an isolated capitalist employer. But an isolated group of workers against an employer backed by the whole capitalist class is powerless. And such is the case here: the state power, the money power of capitalism, public opinion of the middle class, excited by the capitalist press, all attack the group of fighting workers.

But does the working class back the strikers? The millions of other workers do not consider this fight as their own cause. Certainly they sympathise, and may often collect money for the strikers, and this may give some relief, provided its distribution is not forbidden by a judge's injunction. But this easygoing sympathy leaves the real fight to the striking group alone. The millions stand aloof, passive. So the fight cannot be won (except in some special cases, when the capitalists, for business reasons, prefer to grant concessions), because the working class does not fight as one undivided unit.

The matter will be different, of course, when the mass of the workers really consider such a contest as directly concerning them; when they find that their own future is at stake. If they go into the fight themselves

and extend the strike to other factories, to ever more branches of industry, then the state power, the capitalist power, has to be divided and cannot be used entirely against the separate group of workers. It has to face the collective power of the working class.

Extension of the strike, ever more widely, into, finally, a general strike, has often been advised as a means to avert defeat. But to be sure, this is not to be taken as a truly expedient pattern, accidentally hit upon, and ensuring victory. If such were the case, trade unions certainly would have made use of it repeatedly as regular tactics. It cannot be proclaimed at will by union leaders, as a simple tactical measure. It must come forth from the deepest feelings of the masses, as the expression of their spontaneous initiative, and this is aroused only when the issue of the fight is or grows larger than a simple wage contest of one group. Only then will the workers put all their force, their enthusiasm, their solidarity, their power of endurance into it.

And all these forces they will need. For capitalism also will bring into the field stronger forces than before. It may have been defeated and taken by surprise by the unexpected exhibition of proletarian force and thus have made concessions. But then, afterwards, it will gather new forces out of the deepest roots of its power and proceed to win back its position. So the victory of the workers is neither lasting nor certain. There is no clear and open road to victory; the road itself must be hewn and built through the capitalist jungle at the cost of immense efforts.

But even so, it will mean great progress. A wave of solidarity has gone through the masses, they have felt the immense power of class unity, their self-confidence is raised, they have shaken off the narrow group egotism. Through their own deeds they have acquired new wisdom: what capitalism means and how they stand as a class against the capitalist class. They have seen a glimpse of their way to freedom.

Thus the narrow field of trade union struggle widens into the broad field of class struggle. But now the workers themselves must

change. They have to take a wider view of the world. From their trade, from their work within the factory walls, their mind must widen to encompass society as a whole. Their spirit must rise above the petty things around them. They have to face the state; they enter the realm of politics. The problems of revolution must be dealt with.

# General Remarks on the Question of Organisation (1938)

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.

# Lenin as Philosopher (1938)

## Introduction

The Russian Revolution was fought under the banner of Marxism. In the years of propaganda before the First World War the Bolshevik Party came forward as the champion of Marxist ideas and tactics. It worked along with the radical tendencies in the socialist parties of Western Europe, which were also steeped in Marxian theory, whereas the Menshevik Party corresponded rather to the reformist tendencies over here. In theoretical controversies the Bolshevik authors, besides the so-called Austrian and Dutch schools of Marxism, came forward as the defenders of rigid Marxist doctrines. In the Revolution the Bolsheviks, who now had adopted the name of Communist Party, could win because they put up as the leading principle of their fight the class war of the working masses against the bourgeoisie. Thus Lenin and his party, in theory and practice, stood as the foremost representatives of Marxism.

Then, however, a contradiction appeared. In Russia a system of state-capitalism consolidated itself, not by deviating from but by following Lenin's ideas (e.g. in his **State and Revolution**). A new dominating and exploiting class came into power over the working class. But at the same time Marxism was fostered, and proclaimed the fundamental basis of the Russian state. In Moscow a "Marx-Engels

Institute" was founded that collected with care and reverence all the well-nigh lost and forgotten works and manuscripts of the masters and published them in excellent editions. Whereas the Communist Parties, directed by the Moscow Comintern, refer to Marxism as their guiding doctrine, they meet with more and more opposition from the most advanced workers in Western Europe and America, most radically from the ranks of Council-communism. These contradictions, extending over all important problems of life and of the social struggle, can be cleared up only by penetrating into the deepest, i.e. the philosophical, principles of what is called Marxism in these different trends of thought.

Lenin gave an exposition of his philosophical ideas in his work **Materialism and Empirio-Criticism** that appeared in Russian in 1908, and was published in 1927 in German and in English translations. Some of the Russian socialist intellectuals about 1904 had taken an interest in modern Western natural philosophy, especially in the ideas of Ernst Mach, and tried to combine these with Marxism. A kind of "Machism", with Bogdanov, Lenin's most intimate collaborator, and Lunatcharsky as spokesmen, developed as an influential trend in the socialist party. After the first revolution the strife flared up again, connected as it was with all the various tactical and practical differences in the socialist movement. Then Lenin took a decisive stand against these deviations and, aided by Plechanov, the ablest representative of Marxian theory among the Russians, soon succeeded in destroying the influences of Machism in the socialist party.

In the Introduction to the German and English editions of Lenin's book, Deborin – at that time the official interpreter of Leninism, but afterwards disgraced – exalts the importance of the collaboration of the two foremost theoretical leaders for the definite victory of true Marxism over all anti-marxist, reformist trends.

"Lenin's book is not only an important contribution to philosophy, but it is also a remarkable document of an intra-party struggle which

was of utmost importance in strengthening the general philosophical foundations of Marxism and Leninism, and which to a great degree determined the subsequent growth of philosophical thought amongst the Russian Marxists ... Unfortunately, matters are different beyond the borders of the Soviet Union ... where Kantian scholasticism and positivistic idealism are in full bloom."

Since the importance of Lenin's book is so strongly emphasised here, it is necessary to make it the subject of a serious critical study. The doctrine of Party-Communism of the Third International cannot be judged adequately unless their philosophical basis is thoroughly examined.

Marx's studies on society, which for a century now have been dominating and shaping the workers' movement in increased measure, took their form from German philosophy. They cannot be understood without a study of the spiritual and political developments of the European world. Thus it is with other social and philosophical trends and with other schools of materialism developing besides Marxism. Thus it is, too, with the theoretical ideas underlying the Russian revolution. Only by comparing these different systems of thought as to their social origin and their philosophical contents can we arrive at a well-founded judgement.

## Chapter 1. Marxism

The evolution of Marx's ideas into what is now called Marxism can be understood only in connection with the social and political developments of the period in which they arose. It was the time when industrial capitalism made its entry into Germany. This brought about a growing opposition to the existing aristocratic absolutism. The ascending bourgeois class needed freedom of trade and commerce, favourable legislation, a government sympathetic to its interests,

freedom of press and assembly, in order to secure its needs and desires in an unhampered fight. Instead it found itself confronted with a hostile regime, an omnipotent police, and a press censorship which suppressed every criticism of the reactionary government. The struggle between these forces, which led to the revolution of 1848, first had to be conducted on a theoretical level, as a struggle of ideas and a criticism of the prevailing system of ideas. The criticism of the young bourgeois intelligentsia was directed mainly against religion and Hegelian philosophy.

Hegelian philosophy in which the self-development of the "Absolute Idea" creates the world and then, as developing world, enters the consciousness of man, was the philosophical guise suited to the Christian world of the epoch of the "Restoration" after 1815. Religion handed down by past generations served, as always, as the theoretical basis and justification for the perpetuation of old class relations. Since an open political fight was still impossible, the struggle against the feudal oligarchy had to be conducted in a veiled form, as an attack on religion. This was the task of the group of young intellectuals of 1840 among whom Marx grew up and rose to a leading position.

While still a student Marx admitted, although reluctantly, the force of the Hegelian method of thought, dialectics, and made it his own. That he chose for his doctor's thesis the comparison of the two great materialistic philosophers of ancient Greece, Democritus and Epicurus, seems to indicate, however, that in the deep recesses of subconsciousness Marx inclined to materialism. Shortly thereafter he was called upon to assume the editorship of a new paper founded by the oppositional Rheinish bourgeoisie in Cologne. Here he was drawn into the practical problems of the political and social struggle. So well did he conduct the fight that after a year of publication the paper was banned by the State authorities. It was during this period that Feuerbach made his final step towards materialism. Feuerbach brushed away Hegel's

fantastic system, turned towards the simple experiences of everyday life, and arrived at the conclusion that religion was a man-made product. Forty years later Engels still spoke fervently of the liberating effect that Feuerbach's work had on his contemporaries, and of the enthusiasm it aroused in Marx, despite critical reservations. To Marx it meant that now instead of attacking a heavenly image they had to come to grips with earthly realities. Thus in 1843 in his essay *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law) he wrote:

"As far as Germany is concerned the criticism of religion is practically completed; and the criticism of religion is the basis of all criticism ... The struggle against religion is indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion ... Religion is the moan of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness, the demand to abandon the illusions about their condition is a demand to abandon a condition which requires illusions. The criticism of religion therefore contains potentially the criticism of the Vale of Tears whose aureole is religion. Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers which adorned the chain, not that man should wear his fetters denuded of fanciful embellishment, but that he should throw off the chain and break the living flower ... Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of Law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

The task confronting Marx was to investigate the realities of social life. In collaboration with Engels during their stay in Paris and Brussels, he made a study of the French Revolution and French socialism, as well as of English economy and the English working-class movement, which led towards further elaboration of the doctrine known as

“Historical Materialism”. As the theory of social development by way of class struggles we find it expounded in **La misère de la philosophie** (written in 1846 against Proudhon’s **Philosophie de le misère**), in **The Communist Manifesto** (1848), and in the oft-quoted preface to **Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie** (1859).

Marx and Engels themselves refer to this system of thought as materialism, in opposition to the “idealism” of Hegel and the Young Hegelians. What do they understand by materialism? Engels, discussing afterwards the fundamental theoretical problems of Historical Materialism in his **Anti-Dühring** and in his booklet on Feuerbach, states in the latter publication:

“The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being... Those who asserted the primacy of the spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world-creation in some form or other, comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.”

That not only the human mind is bound up with the material organ of the brain, but that, also, man with his brain and mind is intimately connected with the rest of the animal kingdom and the inorganic world, was a self-evident truth to Marx and Engels. This conception is common to all “schools of materialism.” What distinguishes Marxist materialism from other schools must be learned from its various polemic works dealing with practical questions of politics and society. Then we find that to Marx materialistic thought was a working method. It was meant to explain all phenomena by means of the material world, the existing realities. In his writings he does not deal with philosophy, nor does he formulate materialism in a system of philosophy; he is utilising it as a method for the study of the world, and thus demonstrates its validity. In the essay quoted above, for example, Marx does not demolish the

Hegelian philosophy of Law by philosophical disputations, but through an annihilating criticism of the real conditions in Germany.

In the materialist method philosophical sophistry and disputations around abstract concepts are replaced by the study of the real world. Let us take a few examples to elucidate this point. The statement "Man proposes, God disposes" is interpreted by the theologian from the point of view of the omnipotence of God. The materialist searches for the cause of the discrepancy between expectations and results, and finds it in the social effects of commodity exchange and competition. The politician debates the desirability of freedom and of socialism; the materialist asks: from what individuals or classes do these demands spring, what specific content do they have, and to what social need do they correspond? The philosopher, in abstract speculations about the essence of time, seeks to establish whether or not absolute time exists. The materialist compares clocks to see whether simultaneousness or succession of two phenomena can be established unmistakably.

Feuerbach had preceded Marx in using the materialist method, insofar as he pointed out that religious concepts and ideas are derived from material conditions. He saw in living man the source of all religious thoughts and concepts. "Der Mensch ist, was er isst" (Man is what he eats) is a well-known German pun summarising his doctrine. Whether his materialism would be valid, however, depended on whether he would be successful in presenting a clear and convincing explanation of religion. A materialism that leaves the problem obscure is insufficient and will fall back into idealism. Marx pointed out that the mere principle of taking living man as the starting point is not enough. In his theses on Feuerbach in 1845 he formulated the essential difference between his materialistic method and Feuerbach's as follows:

"Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence (das menschliche Wesen). But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the

social relationships" (Thesis 6). "His work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis. The fact, however, that the secular foundation lifts itself above itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is only to be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictions of this secular basis. The latter itself, therefore, must first be understood in its contradictions, and then, by the removal of the contradiction, must be revolutionised in practice" (Thesis 4).

In short, man can be understood only as a social being. From the individual we must proceed to society, and then the social contradictions out of which religion came forth, must be dissolved. The real world, the material, sensual world, where all ideology and consciousness have their origin, is the developing human society – with nature in the background, of course, as the basis on which society rests and of which it is a part transformed by man.

A presentation of these ideas may be found in the manuscript of **Die Deutsche Ideologie** (**The German Ideology**), written in 1845 but not published. The part that deals with Feuerbach was first published in 1925 by Rjazanov, then chief of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow; the complete work was not published until 1932. Here the theses on Feuerbach are worked out at greater length. Although it is manifest that Marx wrote it down quite hurriedly, he nevertheless gave a brilliant presentation of all the essential ideas concerning the evolution of society, which later found their short expression, practically, in the proletarian propaganda pamphlet, **The Communist Manifesto** and, theoretically, in the preface to **Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie** (**Critique of Political Economy**).

**The German Ideology** is directed first of all against the dominant theoretical view which regarded consciousness as the creator, and ideas developing from ideas as the determining factors of human history. They are treated here contemptuously as "the phantoms formed in

the human brain" that are "necessary sublimates of their material, empirically verifiable life process bound to material premises." It was essential to put emphasis on the real world, the material and empirically-given world as the source of all ideology. But it was also necessary to criticise the materialist theories that culminated in Feuerbach. As a protest against ideology, the return to biological man and his principal needs is correct but it is not possible to find a solution to the question of how and why religious ideas originate if we take the individual as an abstract isolated being. Human society in its historical evolution is the dominant reality controlling human life. Only out of society can the spiritual life of man be explained. Feuerbach, in his attempt to find an explanation of religion by a return to the "real" man did not find the real man, because he searches for him in the individual, the human being generally. From his approach the world of ideas cannot be explained. Thus he was forced to fall back on the ideology of universal human love. "Insofar as Feuerbach is a materialist," Marx said, "he does not deal with history, and insofar as he considers history, he is not a materialist."

What Feuerbach could not accomplish was accomplished by the Historical Materialism of Marx: an explanation of man's ideas out of the material world. A brilliant survey of the historical development of society finds its philosophical summary in the sentence: "Men, developing their material production and their material intercourse along with this, their real existence, alter their thinking and the products of their thinking." Thus, as relation between reality and thinking, materialism is in practice proven to be right. We know reality only through the medium of the senses. Philosophy, as theory of knowledge, then finds its basis in this principle: the material, empirically given world is the reality which determines thought.

The basic problem in the theory of knowledge (epistemology) was always: what truth can be attributed to thinking. The term "criticism of

knowledge" (*Erkenntniskritik*) used by professional philosophers for this theory of knowledge, already implies a viewpoint of doubt. In his second and fifth theses on Feuerbach Marx refers to this problem and again points to the practical activity of man as the essential content of his life:

"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but a practical question. In practice man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking" (Thesis 2). "Feuerbach, not satisfied with abstract thinking, appeals to sensuous perception (*Anschauung*), but he does not conceive sensuousness (*die Sinnlichkeit*) as a practical human-sensuous activity" Thesis 5).

Why practical? Because man in the first place must live. His bodily structure, his faculties and his abilities, and all his activity are adapted to this very end. With these he must assert himself in the external world, i.e. in nature, and as an individual in society. To these abilities belongs the activity of the organ of thought, the brain, and the faculty of thinking itself. Thinking is a bodily faculty. In every phase of life man uses his power of thought to draw conclusions from his experiences, on which expectations and hopes are built, and these conclusions regulate his behaviour and his actions. The correctness of his conclusions, the truth of his thinking, is shown by the very fact of his existence, since it is a condition for his survival. Because thinking is an efficient adaptation to life, it embodies truth, not for every conclusion, but in its general character. On the basis of his experiences man derives generalisations and rules, natural laws, on which his expectations are based. They are generally correct, as is witnessed by his survival. Sometimes, however, false conclusions may be drawn, with failure and destruction in their wake. Life is a continuous process of learning, adaptation, development. Practice is the unsparing test of the correctness of thinking.

Let us first consider this in relation to natural science. In the practice of this science, thought finds its purest and most abstract form. This is why philosophical scientists take this form as the subject of their deductions and pay little attention to its similarity to the thinking of everybody in his everyday activity. Yet thinking in the study of nature is only a highly developed special field in the entire social labour process. This labour process demands an accurate knowledge of natural phenomena and its integration into "laws of nature", in order to utilise them successfully in the field of technics. The determination of these laws through observation of special phenomena is the task of specialists. In the study of nature it is generally accepted that practice, experiment, is the test of truth. Here, too, we find that the observed regularities, formulated as laws of nature, are generally fairly dependable guides to human practice; though they are frequently not entirely correct and often balk expectation, they are improved constantly through the progress of science. If, therefore, man at times was referred to as the "legislator of nature" it must be added that nature often disregards his laws and summons him to make better ones.

The practice of life, however, comprises much more than the scientific study of nature. The relation of the scientist to the world, despite his experiments, remains observational. To him the world is an external thing to look at. But in reality man deals with nature in his practical life by acting upon it and making it part of his existence. Man does not stand against nature as to an external alien world. By the toil of his hands man transforms the world, to such an extent that the original natural substance is hardly discernible, and in this process transforms himself too. Thus man himself builds his new world: human society, embedded in nature transformed into a technical apparatus. Man is the creator of this world. What meaning, then, has the question of whether his thinking embodies truth? The object of his thinking is what he

himself produces by his physical and mental activities, and which he controls through his brain.

This is not a question of partial truths. Engels in his booklet on Feuerbach referred to the synthesising of the natural dye alizarin (contained in madder) as a proof of the truth of human thinking. This, however, proves only the validity of the chemical formula employed; it cannot prove the validity of materialism as against Kant's "Thing-in-itself." This concept, as may be seen from Kant's preface to his **Criticism of Pure Reason**, results from the incapacity of bourgeois philosophy to understand the earthly origin of moral law. The "Thing-in-itself" is not refuted by chemical industry but by Historical Materialism explaining moral law through society. It was Historical Materialism that enabled Engels to see the fallacy of Kant's philosophy, to prove the fallaciousness of which he then offered other arguments. Thus, to repeat, it is not a question of partial truths in a specific field of knowledge, where the practical outcome affirms or refutes them. The point in question is a philosophical one, namely, whether human thought is capable of grasping the deepest truth of the world. That the philosopher in his secluded study, who handles exclusively abstract philosophical concepts, which are derived in turn from abstract scientific concepts themselves formulated outside of practical life – that he, in the midst of this world of shadows, should have his doubts, is easily understood. But for human beings, who live and act in the practical everyday world, the question cannot have any meaning. The truth of thought, says Marx, is nothing but the power and mastery over the real world.

Of course this statement implies its counterpart: thinking cannot embody truth where the human mind does not master the world. When the products of man's hand – as Marx expounded in **Das Kapital** – grow into a power over him, which he no longer controls and which in the form of commodity exchange and capital confronts him as an

independent social being, mastering man and even threatening to destroy him, then his mind submits to the mysticism of supernatural beings and he doubts the ability of his thinking to distinguish truth. Thus in the course of past centuries the myth of supernatural heavenly truth unknowable to man overshadowed the materialistic practice of daily experiences. Not until society has evolved to a state where man will be able to comprehend all social forces and will have learned to master them – in communist society in short – will his thinking entirely correspond to the world. But already before, when the nature of social production as a fundamental basis of life and future development has become clear to man, when the mind – be it only theoretically at first – actually masters the world, our thinking will be fully true. That means that by the science of society as formulated by Marx, because now his thesis is fulfilled, materialism gains permanent mastery and becomes the only conformable philosophy. Thus Marxian theory of society in principle means a transformation of philosophy.

Marx, however, was not concerned with pure philosophy.

"Philosophers have interpreted the world differently, but what matters is to change it," he says in his last thesis on Feuerbach. The world situation pressed for practical action. At first inspired by the rising bourgeois opposition to absolutism, then strengthened by the new forces that emanated from the struggle of the English and French working class against the bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels, through their study of social realities, arrived at the conclusion that the proletarian revolution following on the heels of the bourgeois revolution would bring the final liberation of mankind. From now onward their activity was devoted to this revolution, and in "The Communist Manifesto" they laid down the first directions for the workers' class struggle.

Marxism has since been inseparably connected with the class fight of the proletariat. If we ask what Marxism is, we must first of all understand that it does not encompass every thing Marx ever

thought and wrote. The views of his earlier years, for instance, such as quoted above, are representative only in part; they are phases in a development leading toward Marxism. Neither was it complete at once; whereas the role of the proletarian class struggle and the aim of communism is already outlined in **The Communist Manifesto**, the theory of capitalism and surplus value is developed much later. Moreover, Marx's ideas themselves, developed with the change of social and political conditions. The character of the revolution and the part played by the State in 1848, when the proletariat had only begun to appear, differed in aspect from that of later years at the end of the century, or today. Essential, however, are Marx's new contributions to science. There is first of all the doctrine of Historical Materialism, the theory of the determination of all political and ideological phenomena, of spiritual life in general, by the productive forces and relations. The system of production, itself based on the state of productive forces, determines the development of society, especially through the force of the class struggle. There is, furthermore, the presentation of capitalism as a temporary historical phenomenon, the analysis of its structure by the theory of value and surplus value, and the explanation of its revolutionary tendencies through the proletarian revolution towards communism. With these theories Marx has enriched human knowledge permanently. They constitute the solid foundation of Marxism as a system of thought. From them further conclusions may be drawn under new and changed circumstances.

Because of this scientific basis, however, Marxism is more than a mere science. It is a new way of looking at the past and the future, at the meaning of life, of the world, of thought; it is a spiritual revolution, it is a new world-view, a new life-system. As a system of life Marxism is real and living only through the class that adheres to it. The workers who are imbued with this new outlook, become aware of themselves as the class of the future, growing in number and strength and consciousness,

striving to take production into their own hands and through the revolution to become masters of their own fate. Hence Marxism as the theory of proletarian revolution is a reality, and at the same time a living power, only in the minds and hearts of the revolutionary working class.

Thus Marxism is not an inflexible doctrine or a sterile dogma of imposed truths. Society changes, the proletariat grows, science develops. New forms and phenomena arise in capitalism, in politics, in science, which Marx and Engels could not have foreseen or surmised. Forms of thought and struggle, that under former conditions were necessary must under later conditions give way to other ones. But the method of research which they framed remains up to this day an excellent guide and tool towards the understanding and interpretation of new events. The working class, enormously increased under capitalism, today stands only at the threshold of its revolution and, hence, of its Marxist development; Marxism only now begins to get its full significance as a living force in the working class. Thus Marxism itself is a living theory which grows, with the increase of the proletariat and with the tasks and aims of its fight.

## Chapter 2. Middle-Class Materialism

Returning now to the political scene out of which Marxism emerged, it must be noted that the German revolution of 1848 did not bring full political power to the bourgeoisie. But after 1850 capitalism developed strongly in France and Germany. In Prussia the Progressive Party began its fight for parliamentarism, whose inner weakness became evident later when the government through military actions met the demands of the bourgeoisie for a strong national State. Movements for national unity dominated the political scene of Central Europe. Everywhere,

with the exception of England where it already held power, the rising bourgeoisie struggled against the feudal absolutist conditions.

The struggle of a new class for power in State and society is at the same time always a spiritual struggle for a new world view. The old powers can be defeated only when the masses rise up against them or, at least, do not follow them any longer. Therefore it was necessary for the bourgeoisie to make the working masses its followers and win their adherence to capitalist society. For this purpose the old ideas of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants had to be destroyed and supplanted with new bourgeois ideologies. Capitalism itself furnished the means to this end.

The natural sciences are the spiritual basis of capitalism. On the development of these sciences depends the technical progress that drives capitalism forward. Science, therefore, was held in high esteem by the rising bourgeois class. At the same time this science freed them from the conventional dogmas embodying the rule of feudalism. A new outlook on life and on the world sprang up out of the scientific discoveries, and supplied the bourgeoisie with the necessary arguments to defy the pretensions of the old powers. This new world outlook it disseminated among the masses. To the peasant farm and the artisan workshop belong the inherited biblical faith. But as soon as the sons of the peasants or the impoverished artisans become industrial workers their mind is captured by capitalist development. Even those who remain in pre-capitalistic conditions are lured by the more liberal outlook of capitalist progress and become susceptible to the propaganda of new ideas.

The spiritual fight was primarily a struggle against religion. The religious creed is the ideology of past conditions; it is the inherited tradition which keeps the masses in submission to the old powers and which had to be defeated. The struggle against religion was imposed by the conditions of society; hence it had to take on varying forms

with varying conditions. In those countries where the bourgeoisie had already attained full power, as for instance in England, the struggle was no longer necessary and the bourgeoisie paid homage to the established church. Only among the lower middle class and among the workers did more radical trends of thought find some adherence. In countries where industry and the bourgeoisie had to fight for emancipation they proclaimed a liberal, ethical Christianity in opposition to the orthodox faith. And where the struggle against a still powerful royal and aristocratic class was difficult, and required the utmost strength and exertion, the new world view had to assume extreme forms of radicalism and gave rise to middle-class materialism. This was so to a great extent in Central Europe; so it is natural that most of the popular propaganda for materialism (Moleschott, Vogt, Büchner), originated here, though it found an echo in other countries. In addition to these radical pamphlets, a rich literature popularising the modern scientific discoveries appeared, supplying valuable weapons in the struggle to free the masses of the citizens, the workers, and the peasants, from the spiritual fetters of tradition, and to turn them into followers of the progressive bourgeoisie. The middle-class intelligentsia – professors, engineers, doctors – were the most zealous propagandists of the new enlightenment.

The essence of natural science was the discovery of laws operating in nature. A careful study of natural phenomena disclosed recurring regularities which allowed for scientific predictions. The 17th century had already known the Galilean law of falling bodies and gravity, Kepler's laws of the planetary motions, Snell's law of the refraction of light, and Boyle's law of the gas pressure. Towards the end of the century came the discovery of the law of gravitation by Newton, which more than all preceding discoveries exerted a tremendous influence in the philosophical thought of the 18th and 19th centuries. Whereas the others were rules that were not absolutely correct, Newton's law of

gravitation proved to be the first real exact law strictly dominating the motions of the heavenly bodies, which made possible predictions of the phenomena with the same precision with which they could be observed. From this the conception developed that all natural phenomena follow entirely rigid definite laws. In nature causality rules: gravity is the cause of bodies falling, gravitation causes the movements of the planets. All occurring phenomena are effects totally determined by their causes, allowing for neither free will, nor chance nor caprice.

This fixed order of nature disclosed by science was in direct contrast to the traditional religious doctrines in which God as a despotic sovereign arbitrarily rules the world and deals out fortune and misfortune as he sees fit, strikes his enemies with thunderbolts and pestilence and rewards others with miracles. Miracles are contradictory to the fixed order of nature; miracles are impossible, and all reports about them in the Bible are fables. The biblical and religious interpretations of nature belong to an epoch in which primitive agriculture prevailed under the overlordship of absolute despots. The natural philosophy of the rising bourgeoisie, with its natural laws controlling all phenomena, belongs to a new order of state and society where the arbitrary rule of the despot is replaced by laws valid for all.

The natural philosophy of the Bible, which theology asserts to be absolute, divine, truth is the natural philosophy of ignorance that has been deceived by outward appearances, that saw an immovable earth as the centre of the universe, and held that all matter was created and was perishable. Scientific experience showed, on the contrary, that matter which apparently disappeared (as for instance in burning) actually changes into invisible gaseous forms. Scales demonstrated that a reduction of the total weight did not occur in this process and that, therefore, no matter disappeared. This discovery was generalised into a new principle; matter cannot be destroyed, its quantity always remains constant, only its forms and combinations change. This holds good for

each chemical element; its atoms constitute the building stones of all bodies. Thus science with its theory of the conservation of matter, of the eternity of nature, opposed the theological dogma of the creation of the world some 6,000 years ago.

Matter is not the only persistent substance science discovered in the transient phenomena. Since the middle of the 19th century the law known as the conservation of energy came to be regarded as the fundamental axiom of physics. Here, too, a fixed and far reaching order of nature was observed; in all phenomena changes of the form of energy take place: heat and motion, tension and attraction, electrical and chemical energy; but the total quantity never changes. This principle led to an understanding of the development of cosmic bodies, the sun and the earth, in the light of which all the assertions of theology appeared like the talk of a stuttering child.

Of even greater consequence were the scientific discoveries concerning man's place in the world. Darwin's theory of the origin of species, which showed the evolution of man from the animal kingdom, was in complete contradiction to all religious doctrines. But even before Darwin, discoveries in biology and chemistry revealed the organic identity of all human and living creatures with non-organic nature. The protoplasm, the albuminous substance of which the cells of all living beings are composed and to which all life is bound, consists of the same atoms as all other matter. The human mind, which was elevated into a part of divinity by the theological doctrine of the immortal soul, is closely bound up with the physical properties of the brain; all spiritual phenomena are the accompaniment to or the effect of material occurrences in the brain cells.

Middle-class materialism drew the most radical conclusions from these scientific discoveries. Everything spiritual is merely the product of material processes; ideas are the secretion of the brain, just as bile is the secretion of the liver. Let religion – said Büchner – go on talking about

the fugacity of matter and the immortality of the mind; in reality it is the other way around. With the least injury of the brain everything spiritual disappears; nothing at all remains of the mind when the brain is destroyed, whereas the matter, its carrier, is eternal and indestructible. All phenomena of life, including human ideas, have their origin in the chemical and physical processes of the cellular substance; they differ from non-living matter only in their greater complexity. Ultimately all their processes must be explained by the dynamics and movements of the atoms.

These conclusions of natural-science materialism, however, could not be upheld to their utmost consequences. After all, ideas are different from bile and similar bodily secretions; mind cannot be considered as a form of force or energy, and belongs in a quite different category. If mind is a product of the brain which differs from other tissues and cells only in degree of complexity, then, fundamentally, it must be concluded that something of mind, some sensation, is to be found in every animal cell. And because the cellular substance is only an aggregate of atoms, more complex but in substance not different from other matter, the conclusion must be that something of what we call mind is already present in the atom: in every smallest particle of matter there must be a particle of the "spiritual substance." This theory of the "atom-soul" we find in the works of the prominent zoologist Ernst Haeckel, energetic propagandist of Darwinism and courageous combater of religious dogmatism. Haeckel did not consider his philosophical views as materialism but called them monism – strangely enough since he extends the duality of mind-matter down to the smallest elements of the world.

Materialism could dominate the ideology of the bourgeois class only for a short time. Only so long as the bourgeoisie could believe that its society of private property, personal liberty, and free competition, through the development of industry, science and technique, could

solve the life problems of all mankind – only so long could the bourgeoisie assume that the theoretical problems could be solved by science, without the need to assume supernatural and spiritual powers. As soon, however, as it became evident that capitalism could not solve the life problems of the masses, as was shown by the rise of the proletarian class struggle, the confident materialist philosophy disappeared. The world was seen again full of insoluble contradictions and uncertainties, full of sinister forces threatening civilisation. So the bourgeoisie turned to various kinds of religious creeds, and the bourgeois intellectuals and scientists submitted to the influence of mystical tendencies. Before long they were quick to discover the weaknesses and shortcomings of materialist philosophy, and to make speeches on the “limitations of science” and the insoluble “world-riddles.”

Only a small number of the more radical members of the lower and middle classes, who clung to the old political slogans of early capitalism, continued to hold materialism in respect. Among the working class it found a fertile ground. The adherents of anarchism always were its most convinced followers. Socialist workers embraced the social doctrines of Marx and the materialism of natural science with equal interest. The practice of labour under capitalism, their daily experience and their awakening understanding of social forces contributed greatly towards undermining traditional religion. Then, to solve their doubts, the need for scientific knowledge grew, and the workers became the most zealous readers of the works of Büchner and Haeckel. Whilst Marxist doctrine determined the practical, political and social ideology of the workers, a deeper understanding asserted itself only gradually; few became aware of the fact that middle-class materialism had long since been outdated and surpassed by Historical Materialism. This, by the way, concurs with the fact that the working-class movement had not yet reached beyond capitalism, that in practice

the class struggle only tended to secure its place within capitalist society, and that the democratic solutions of the early middle class movements were accepted as valid for the working class also. The full comprehension of revolutionary Marxist theory is possible only in connection with revolutionary practice.

Wherein then, do middle-class materialism and Historical Materialism stand opposed to one another?

Both agree insofar as they are materialist philosophies, that is, both recognise the primacy of the experienced material world; both recognise that spiritual phenomena, sensation, consciousness, ideas, are derived from the former. They are opposite in that middle-class materialism bases itself upon natural science, whereas Historical Materialism is primarily the science of society. Bourgeois scientists observe man only as an object of nature, the highest of the animals, determined by natural Laws. For an explanation of man's life and action, they have only general biological Laws, and in a wider sense, the laws of chemistry, physics, and mechanics. With these means little can be accomplished in the way of understanding social phenomena and ideas. Historical Materialism, on the other hand, lays bare the specific evolutionary laws of human society and shows the interconnection between ideas and society.

The axiom of materialism that the spiritual is determined by the material world, has therefore entirely different meanings for the two doctrines. For middle-class materialism it means that ideas are products of the brain, are to be explained out of the structure and the changes of the brain substance, finally out of the dynamics of the atoms of the brain. For Historical Materialism, it means that the ideas of man are determined by his social conditions; society is his environment which acts upon him through his sense organs. This postulates an entirely different kind of problem, a different approach, a different line of thought, hence, also a different theory of knowledge.

For middle class materialism the problem of the meaning of knowledge is a question of the relationship of spiritual phenomena to the physico-chemical-biological phenomena of the brain matter. For Historical Materialism it is a question of the relationship of our thoughts to the phenomena which we experience as the external world. Now man's position in society is not simply that of an observing being; he is a dynamic force which reacts upon his environment and changes it. Society is nature transformed through labour. To the scientist, nature is the objectively given reality which he observes, which acts on him through the medium of his senses. To him the external world is the active and dynamic element, whilst the mind is the receptive element. Thus it is emphasised that the mind is only a reflection, an image of the external world, as Engels expressed it when he pointed out the contradiction between the materialist and idealist philosophies. But the science of the scientist is only part of the whole of human activity, only a means to a greater end. It is the preceding, passive part of his activity which is followed by the active part; the technical elaboration, the production, the transformation of the world by man.

Man is in the first place an active being. In the Labour process he utilises his organs and aptitudes in order to constantly build and remake his environment. In this procedure he not only invented the artificial organs we call tools, but also trained his physical and mental aptitudes so that they might react effectively to his natural environment as instruments in the preservation of life. His main organ is the brain whose function, thinking, is as good a physical activity as any other. The most important product of brain activity, of the efficient action of the mind upon the world is science, which stands as a mental tool next to the material tools and, itself a productive power, constitutes the basis of technology and so an essential part of the productive apparatus.

Hence Historical Materialism looks upon the works of science, the concepts, substances, natural Laws, and forces, although formed out

of the stuff of nature, primarily as the creations of the mental Labour of man. Middle-class materialism, on the other hand, from the point of view of the scientific investigator, sees all this as an element of nature itself which has been discovered and brought to light by science.

Natural scientists consider the immutable substances, matter, energy, electricity, gravity, the Law of entropy, etc., as the basic elements of the world, as the reality that has to be discovered. From the viewpoint of Historical Materialism they are products which creative mental activity forms out of the substance of natural phenomena.

This is one fundamental difference in the method of thinking. Another difference lies in dialectics which Historical Materialism inherited from Hegel. Engels has pointed out that the materialist philosophy of the 18th-century disregarded evolution; it is evolution that makes dialectic thinking indispensable. Evolution and dialectics since have often been regarded as synonymous; and the dialectic character of Historical Materialism is supposed to be rendered by saying that it is the theory of evolution. Evolution, however, was well known in the natural science of the 19th century. Scientists were well acquainted with the growth of the cell into a complete organism, with the evolution of animal species as expressed in Darwinism, and with the theory of evolution of the physical world known as the law of entropy. Yet their method of reasoning was undialectic. They believed the concepts they handled to be fixed objects, and considered their identities and opposites as absolutes. So the evolution of the world as well as the progress of science brought out contradictions, of which many examples have been quoted by Engels in his **Anti-Dühring**. Understanding in general and science in particular segregate and systematise into fixed concepts and rigid laws what in the real world of phenomena occurs in all degrees of flux and transition. Because language separates and defines groups of phenomena by means of names, all items falling into a group, as specimens of the concept, are considered similar and

unchangeable. As abstract concepts, they differ sharply, whereas in reality they transform and merge into one another. The colours blue and green are distinct from each other but in the intermediary nuances no one can say where one colour ends and the other begins. It cannot be stated at what point during its life cycle a flower begins or ceases to be a flower. That in practical life good and evil are not absolute opposites is acknowledged every day, just as that extreme justice may become extreme injustice. Judicial freedom in capitalist development manifests itself as actual slavery. Dialectic thinking is adequate to reality in that in handling the concepts it is aware that the finite cannot fully render the infinite, nor the static the dynamic, and that every concept has to develop into new concepts, even into its opposite. Metaphysical, undialectical thinking, on the other hand, leads to dogmatic assertions and contradictions because it views conceptions formulated by thought as fixed, independent entities that make up the reality of the world. Natural science proper, surely, does not suffer much from this shortcoming. It surmounts difficulties and contradictions in practice insofar as it continually revises its formulations, increases their richness by going into finer details, improves the qualitative distinctions by mathematical formulas, completes them by additions and corrections, thereby bringing the picture ever closer to the original, the world of phenomena. The lack of dialectic reasoning becomes disturbing only when the scientist passes from his special field of knowledge towards general philosophical reasonings, as is the case with middle-class materialism.

Thus, for instance, the theory of the origin of species often leads to the notion that the human mind, having evolved from the animal mind, is qualitatively identical with the latter and has only increased in quantity. On the other hand, the qualitative difference between the human and the animal mind, a fact of common experience, was raised by theological doctrine, in enunciating the immortality of the soul, into

an absolute anti-thesis. In both cases there is a lack of dialectic thinking according to which a similarity in original character, when through the process of growth the increasing quantitative difference turns into qualitative difference – the so-called inversion of quantity into quality – requires new names and characteristics, without leading to complete antithesis and loss of affinity.

It is the same metaphysical, non dialectic thinking to compare thought, because it is the product of brain processes with such products of other organs as bile; or to assume that mind, because it is a quality of some material substance, must be a characteristic quality of all matter. And especially, to think that because mind is something other than matter, it must belong to an absolutely and totally different world without any transition, so that a dualism of mind and matter, reaching down to the atoms, remains sharp and unbridgeable. To dialectic thinking mind simply is a concept incorporating all those phenomena we call spiritual, which, thus, cannot reach beyond their actual appearance in the lowest living animals. There the term mind becomes questionable, because the spiritual phenomena disappear gradually into mere sensibility, into the more simple forms of life. "Mind" as a characteristic existing quality, a separate something, which either is or is not there, does not exist in nature; mind is just a name we attach to a number of definite phenomena, some perceived clearly, others uncertainly, as spiritual.

Life itself offers a close analogy. Proceeding from the smallest microscopic organisms to still smaller invisible bacteria and viruses, we finally come to highly complicated albuminous molecules that fall within the sphere of chemistry. Where in this succession living matter ceases to exist and dead matter begins cannot be determined; phenomena change gradually, become simplified, are still analogous and yet already different. This does not mean that we are unable to ascertain demarcation lines; it is simply the fact that nature knows of

no boundaries. A condition of quality "life", which either is or is not present, does not exist in nature: again life is a mere name, a concept we form in order to comprehend the endless variety of gradations in life phenomena. Because middle-class materialism deals with life and death, matter and mind, as if they were genuine realities existing in themselves, it is compelled to work with hard and sharp opposites, whereas nature offers an immense variety of more or less gradual transitions.

Thus the difference between middle-class materialism and Historical Materialism reaches down to basic philosophical views. The former, in contradiction to the comprehensive and perfectly realistic Historical Materialism is illusionary and imperfect – just as the bourgeois class movement, of which it was the theory, represented an imperfect and illusionary emancipation, in contrast to the complete and real emancipation by way of the proletarian class struggle.

The difference between the two systems of thought shows itself practically in their position towards religion. Middle-class materialism intended to overcome religion. However, a certain view arisen out of social life cannot be vanquished and destroyed merely by refuting it with argumentation; this means posing one point of view against another: and every argument finds a counter-argument. Only when it is shown why, and under what circumstances such a view was necessary, can it be defeated by establishing the transient character of these conditions. Thus the disproof of religion by natural science was effective only insofar as the primitive religious beliefs were concerned, where ignorance about natural laws, about thunder and lightning, about matter and energy, led to all kinds of superstition. The theory of bourgeois society was able to destroy the ideologies of primitive agricultural economy. But religion in bourgeois society is anchored in its unknown and uncontrollable social forces; middle-class materialism was unable to deal with them. Only the theory of the

workers' revolution can destroy the ideologies of bourgeois economy. Historical Materialism explains the social basis of religion and shows why for certain times and classes it was a necessary way of thought. Only thus was its spell broken. Historical Materialism does not fight religion directly; from its higher vantage point it understands and explains religion as a natural phenomenon under definite conditions. But through this very insight it undermines religion and foresees that with the rise of a new society religion will disappear. In the same way Historical Materialism is able to explain the temporary appearance of materialist thought among the bourgeoisie, as well as the relapse of this class into mysticism and religious trends. In the same way, too, it explains the growth of materialist thought among the working class as being not due to any anti-religious argument but to the growing recognition of the real forces in capitalist society.

## Chapter 3. Dietzgen

Middle-class materialism, when it came up in Western Europe in connection with the fight of the middle class for emancipation, was inevitable in practice; but as theory it was a retrogression compared with Historical Materialism. Marx and Engels were so far ahead that they saw it only as a backsliding into obsolete ideas of the 18th-century enlightenment. Because they saw so very clearly the weaknesses of the bourgeois political fight in Germany – while underrating the vitality of the capitalist system – they did not give much attention to the accompanying theory. Only occasionally they directed at it some contemptuous words, to refute any identification of the two kinds of materialism. During their entire lifetime their attention was concentrated upon the antithesis of their theory to the idealist systems of German philosophy, especially Hegel. Middle-class materialism, however, was somewhat more than a mere repetition of 18th-century

ideas; the enormous progress of the science of nature in the 19th century was its basis and was a source of vigour. A criticism of its foundations had to tackle problems quite different from those of post-Hegelian philosophy. What was needed was a critical examination of the fundamental ideas and axioms which were universally accepted as the results of natural science and which were in part accepted by Marx and Engels too.

Here lies the importance of the writings of Joseph Dietzgen. Dietzgen, an artisan, a tanner living in Rhineland, who afterwards went to America and there took some part in the working-class movement, was a self-made socialist philosopher and author. In social and economic matters he considered himself a pupil of Marx, whose theory of value and capital he entirely comprehended. In philosophy he was an independent original thinker, who set forth the philosophical consequences of the new world view. Marx and Engels, though they honourably mentioned him as "the philosopher of the proletariat" did not agree with everything he wrote; they blamed his repetitions, often judged him confused, and it is doubtful whether they ever understood the essence of his arguments, far removed from their own mode of thinking. Indeed, whereas Marx expresses the new truth of his views as precise statements and sharp logical arguments, Dietzgen sees his chief aim in stimulating his readers to think for themselves on the problem of thinking. For this purpose he repeats his arguments in many forms, exposes the reverse of what he stated before, and assigns to every truth the limits of its truth, fearing above all that the reader should accept any statement as a dogma. Thus he teaches practical dialectics. Whereas in his later writings he is often vague, his first work **The nature of human brain work** (1869), and his later **A socialist's excursions into the field of epistemology** (1877), as well as some smaller pamphlets are brilliant contributions to the theory of knowledge. They form an essential part in the entirety of the world-view that we denote by the name of Marxism.

The first problem in the science of human knowledge: the origin of ideas, was answered by Marx in the demonstration that they are produced by the surrounding world. The second, adjoining problem, how the impressions of the surrounding world are transformed into ideas, was answered by Dietzgen. Marx stated what realities determine thought; Dietzgen established the relation between reality and thought. Or, in the words of Herman Gorter, Marx pointed out what the world does to the mind, Dietzgen pointed out what the mind does itself.

Dietzgen proceeds from the experiences of daily life, and especially from the practice of natural science. "Systematisation is the essence, is the general expression of all activity of science. Science seeks only by our understanding to bring the objects of the world into order and system." Human mind takes from a group of phenomena what is common to them (e.g. from a rose, a cherry, a setting sun their colour), leaves out their specific differences, and fixes their general character (red) in a concept; or it expresses as a rule what repeats itself (e.g. stones fall to the earth). The object is concrete, the spiritual concept is abstract. "By means of our thinking we have, potentially, the world twofold, outside as reality, inside, in our head, as thoughts, as ideas, as an image. Our brains do not grasp the things themselves but only their concept, their general image. The endless variety of things, the infinite wealth of their characters, finds no room in our mind". For our practical life indeed, in order to foresee events and make predictions, we do not want all the special cases but only the general rule. The antithesis of mind and matter, of thought and reality, of spiritual and material, is the antithesis of abstract and concrete, of general and special.

This, however, is not an absolute antithesis. The entire world, the spiritual as well as the visible and tangible world, is object to our thinking. Things spiritual do exist, they too are really existing, as thoughts; thus they too are materials for our brain activity of forming concepts. The spiritual phenomena are assembled in the concept of

mind. The spiritual and the material phenomena, mind and matter together, constitute the entire real world, a coherent entity in which matter determines mind and mind, through human activity, determines matter. That we call this total world a unity means that each part exists only as a part of the whole, is entirely determined by the action of the whole, that, hence, its qualities and its special character consists in its relations to the rest of the world. Thus also mind, i.e. all things spiritual, is a part of the world's totality, and its nature consists in the totality of its relations to the world's whole, which we then, as the object of thinking, oppose to it under the name material, outer, or real world. If now we call this material world primary and the mind dependent, it means for Dietzgen simply that the entirety is primary and the part secondary. Such a doctrine where spiritual and material things, entirely interdependent, form one united world, may rightly be called monism.

This distinction between the real world of phenomena and the spiritual world of concepts produced by our thinking is especially suitable to clear up the nature of scientific conceptions. Physics has discovered that the phenomena of light can be explained by rapid vibrations propagated through space, or, as the physicists said, through space-filling ether. Dietzgen quotes a physicist stating that these waves are the real nature of light whereas all that we see as light and colour is only an appearance. "The superstition of philosophical speculation here" Dietzgen remarks "has led us astray from the path of scientific induction, in that waves rushing through the ether with a velocity of 40,000 (German) miles per second, and constituting the true nature of light are opposed to the real phenomena of light and colour. The perversion becomes manifest where the visible world is denoted as a product of the human mind, and the ether vibrations, disclosed by the intellect of the most acute thinkers, as the corporeal reality." It is quite the reverse, Dietzgen says: the coloured world of phenomena is the real

world, and the ether waves are the picture constructed by the human mind out of these phenomena.

It is clear that in this antagonism we have to do with different meanings about the terms truth and reality. The only test to decide whether our thoughts are truth is always found in experiment, practice, experience. The most direct of experiences is experience itself; the experienced world of phenomena is the surest of all things, the most indubitable reality. Surely we know phenomena that are only appearances. This means that the evidences of different senses are not in accordance and have to be fitted in a different way in order to get a harmonious world-picture. Should we assume the image behind the mirror, which we can see but cannot touch, as a common reality, then such a confused knowledge would bring practical failure. The idea that the entire world of phenomena should be nothing but appearance could make sense only if we assumed another source of knowledge – e.g. a divine voice speaking in us – to be brought in harmony with the other experiences.

Applying now the same test of practice to the physicist we see that his thinking is correct also. By means of his vibrating ether he not only explained known phenomena but even predicted in the right way a number of unsuspected new phenomena. So his theory is a good, a true theory. It is truth because it expresses what is common to all these experiences in a short formula that allows of easy deduction of their endless diversity. Thus the ether waves must be considered a true picture of reality. The ether itself of course cannot be observed in any way; observation shows only phenomena of light.

How is it then, that the physicists spoke of the ether and its vibrations as a reality? Firstly as a model, conceived by analogy. From experience we know of waves in water and in the air. If now we assume such waves in another, finer substance filling the universe, we may transfer to it a number of well-known wave phenomena, and we

find these confirmed. So we find our world of reality growing wider. With our spiritual eyes we see new substances, new particles moving invisibly because they are beyond the power of our best microscopes, but conceivable after the model of our visible coarser substances and particles.

In this way, however, with ether as a new invisible reality, the physicists landed into difficulties. The analogy was not perfect: the world-filling ether had to be assigned qualities entirely different from water or air; though called a substance it deviated so completely from all known substances that an English physicist once compared it somehow to pitch. When it was discovered that light waves were electromagnetic vibrations, it ensued that the ether had to transmit electric and magnetic phenomena too. For this role, a complicated structure had to be devised, a system of moving, straining, and spinning contrivances, that might be used as a coarse model, but which nobody would call the true reality of this finest of fluids filling space between the atoms. The thing became worse when in the beginning of the 20th century the theory of relativity came up and denied the existence of ether altogether. Physicists then grew accustomed to deal with a void space, equipped however with qualities expressed in mathematical formulas and equations. With the formulas the phenomena could be computed in the right way; the mathematical symbols were the only thing remaining. The models and images were non-essential, and the truth of a theory does not mean anything more than that the formulas are exact.

Things became worse still when phenomena were discovered that could be represented only by light consisting of a stream of so called quanta, separated particles hurrying through space. At the same time the theory of vibrations held the field too, so that according to needs one theory or the other had to be applied. Thus two strictly contradictory theories both were true, each to be used within its group of phenomena.

Now at last physicists began to suspect that their physical entities, formerly considered the reality behind the phenomena, were only images, abstract concepts, models more easily to comprehend the phenomena. When Dietzgen half a century before wrote down his views which were simply a consequence of Historical Materialism, there was no physicist who did not firmly believe in the reality of world ether. The voice of a socialist artisan did not penetrate into the university lecture rooms. Nowadays it is precisely the physicists who assert that they are dealing with models and images only, who are continually discussing the philosophical basis of their science, and who emphasise that science aims solely at relations and formulas through which future phenomena may be predicted from former ones.

In the word phenomenon "that which appears", there is contained an oppositeness to the reality of things; if we speak of "appearings" there must be something else that appears. Not at all, says Dietzgen; phenomena appear (or occur), that is all. In this play of words we must not think, of course, of what appears to me or to another observer; all that happens, whether man sees it or not, is a phenomenon, and all these happenings form the totality of the world, the real world of phenomena. "Sense perception shows an endless transformation of matter ... The sensual world, the universe at any place and any time is a new thing that did not exist before. It arises and passes away, passes and arises under our hands. Nothing remains the same, lasting is only perpetual change, and even the change varies ... The (middle class) materialist, surely, asserts the permanency, eternity, indestructibility of matter ... Where do we find such eternal, imperishable formless matter? In the real world of phenomena we meet only with forms of perishable matter ... Eternal and imperishable matter exists practically, in reality, only as the sum total of its perishable phenomena." In short, matter is an abstraction.

Whereas philosophers spoke of the essence of things, physicists spoke of matter, the lasting background behind the changing phenomena. Reality, they say, is matter; the world is the totality of matter. This matter consists of atoms, the invariable ultimate building stones of the universe, that by their various combinations impose the impression of endless change. On the model of surrounding hard objects, as an extension of the visible world of stones, grams, and dust, these still smaller particles were assumed to be the constituents of the entire world, of the fluid water as well as of the formless air. The truth of the atomic theory has stood the test of a century of experience, in an endless number of good explanations and successful predictions. Atoms of course are not observed phenomena themselves: they are inferences of our thinking. As such they share the nature of all products of our thinking their sharp limitation and distinction, their precise equality belongs to their abstract character. As abstractions they express what is general and common in the phenomena, what is necessary for predictions.

To the physicist, of course, atoms were no abstractions but real small invisible particles, sharply limited, exactly alike for every chemical element, with precise qualities and precise mass. But modern science destroyed also this illusion. Atoms, firstly, have been dissolved into still smaller particles, electrons, protons, neutrons, forming complicated systems, some of them inaccessible to any experiment, mere products of the application of logic. And these smallest elements of the world cannot be considered as precisely defined particles finding themselves at definite points in space. Modern physical theory assigns to each of them the character of a wave motion extending over infinite space. When you ask the physicist what it is that moves in such waves his answer consists in pointing to a mathematical equation. The waves are no waves of matter, of course; that which moves cannot even be called a substance, but is rendered most truly by the concept of

probability; the electrons are probability-waves. Formerly a particle of matter in its invariable weight presented a precisely defined quantity, its mass. Now mass changes with the state of motion and cannot be separated accurately from energy; energy and mass change into one another. Whereas formerly these concepts were neatly separated and the physical world was a clear system without contradiction, proudly proclaimed the real world, physics nowadays, when it assumes its fundamental concepts matter, mass, energy as fixed, well separated entities, is plunged into a crowd of unsolvable contradictions. The contradiction is cleared up when we simply consider them as what they are: abstractions serviceable to render the ever extending world of phenomena.

The same holds for the forces and laws of nature. Here Dietzgen's expositions are not adequate and somewhat confused, probably because at the time the German physicists used the word "Kraft" indiscriminately for force and for energy. A simple practical case, such as gravity, may easily clear up the matter. Gravity, physicists said, is the cause of falling. Here cause is not something preceding the effects and different from it; cause and effect are simultaneous and express the same thing in different words. Gravity is a name that does not contain anything more than the phenomena themselves; in denoting them by this word we express the general, the common character of all the phenomena of falling bodies. More essential than the name is the law; in all free movements on earth there is a constant downward acceleration. Writing the law as a mathematical formula we are able to compute the motions of all falling or thrown bodies. It is not necessary now to keep the phenomena all in our head; to know future cases it is sufficient to know the law, the formula. The law is the abstract concept our mind constructed out of the phenomena. As a law it is a precise statement that is assumed to hold good absolutely and universally, whereas the

phenomena are diversified and always show deviations which we then ascribe to other, accessory, causes.

Newton extended the law of gravity to the celestial motions. The orbit of the moon was "explained" by showing that it was pulled by the same force that made stones fall onto earth; so the unknown was reduced to the known. His law of universal gravitation is expressed by a mathematical formula through which astronomers are able to compute and predict the celestial phenomena; and the result of countless predictions shows the truth of the law. Scientists now called the gravitation the "cause" of all these motions; they saw it as a reality floating in space, a kind of mysterious imp, a spiritual being called a "force" directing the planets in their course; the law was a command somehow present in nature which the bodies had to obey. In reality there is nothing of the sort; "cause" means the short summary or compendium, "effect" means the diverse multitude of phenomena. The formula binding the acceleration of each particle to its distance from the other ones, expresses in a short form exactly the same course of things as does a lengthy description of the actual motions. Gravitation as a separate something pulling and steering the bodies does not exist in nature but only in our head. As a mysterious command permeating space it has no more real existence than has Snell's law of refraction as a command to the light rays on how they have to go. The course of the light rays is a direct mathematical consequence of the different velocity of light in different substances; instead of by the command of a law it can equally well be represented by the principle that light, as it were an intelligent being, chooses the quickest route to reach the aim. Modern science, in an analogous way, in the theory of relativity renders the motions in space not by gravitational force, but by prescribing the shortest road (the "geodesic") in the distorted four-dimensional space-time. Now again physicists came to consider this warped space as a "reality" behind the phenomena. And again it must be stated that, like

Newton's gravitation, it is only a mental abstraction, a set of formulas, better than the former, hence more true, because it represents more phenomena which the old law could not explain.

What is called "causality" in nature, the reign of natural laws—sometimes one even speaks of the "law of causality," i.e. in nature the law holds that laws hold – simply comes down to the fact that the regularities we find in the phenomena are expressed in the form of prescripts absolutely valid. If there are limitations, exceptions, conditions, they are expressly stated as such, and we try to represent them by correcting the law; this shows that its character is meant to be absolute. We are confident that it holds for future use; and if it fails, as often happens, or does not hold precisely, we represent this by additional "causes."

We often speak of the inexorable course of events, or of the necessity in nature; or we speak of "determinism," as if this course had been determined and fixed by somebody in advance. All these human names chosen to express the antithesis to the arbitrariness and free choice in human actions, denoting a kind of compulsion, are a source of much confusion and cannot render exactly the character of nature. Rather we say that the entire nature at this moment depends entirely on what it was a moment before. Or perhaps better still: that nature in its totality and history is a unity, remaining identically itself in all its variations. All parts are interrelated as parts of one whole, and the laws of nature are the humanly imperfect expressions of these interrelations. Necessity can be ascribed to them solely in a partial imperfect degree; absolute necessity may be affirmed for the entirety of nature only. Phenomena may be imperfectly rendered by our laws; but we are convinced that they go on in a way which can be ultimately reduced to simple description, and could not be otherwise than they are.

The significance of Marxism is often expressed, by saying that it presents, for the first time, a natural science of society. Hence society,

just as nature, is determined by natural laws; society develops not by chance or incidentally but according to an overall necessity. And since society is human activity, then human action and choice and will are not arbitrary, not chance, but determined by social causes. What this means will now be clear. The totality of the world, consisting of nature and society, is a unity, at any moment determined by what it was before, each part entirely determined by the action of the rest. It remains the same identical world, in which the happenings of one part, of mankind or part of it, depend entirely on the surrounding world, nature and society together. Here too we try to find regularities, rules and laws, and we devise names and concepts; but seldom do we ascribe to them a separate reality. Whereas a physicist easily believes in gravitation as a real something floating in space around the sun and the planets, it is more difficult to believe in "progress" or "liberty" hovering round us and floating over society as real beings that conduct man like a ruling fate. They too are abstractions constructed by the mind out of partial relations and dependencies. With their "necessity" it is as with all necessity in nature. Its basis is the necessity that man must eat to live. In this popular saying the fundamental connection of man with the entirety of the world is expressed.

Through the immense complication of social relations "laws" of society are much more difficult to discern, and they cannot now be put into the form of exact formulas. Still more than in nature they may be said to express not the future but our expectation about the future. It is already a great thing that, whereas former thinkers were groping in the dark, now some main lines of development have been discovered. The importance of Marxism as a science of society is not so much the truth of the rules and expectations it formulated, but rather what is called its method: the fundamental conviction that everything in the world of mankind is directly connected with the rest. Hence for every

social phenomenon we have to look for the material and social factors of reality on which it depends.

## Chapter 4. Mach

In the later part of the 19th century, middle-class society turned away more and more from materialism. The bourgeoisie, through the development of capitalism, asserted its social mastery; but the rise of the working-class movements proclaiming as its aim the annihilation of capitalism, led to misgivings as to the durability of the existing social system. World and future appeared full of unsolvable problems. Since the visible, material forces threatened mischief, the ruling class, to quiet its apprehensions and assure its self-reliance, turned to the belief in the superior rule of spiritual powers. Mysticism and religion gained the upper hand, and still more so in the 20th century, after the First World War.

Natural scientists form a part of middle-class society; they are in continual contact with the bourgeoisie and are influenced by its spiritual trends. At the same time, through the progress of science, they have to deal with new problems and contradictions appearing in their concepts. It is not clear philosophical insight that inspires the criticism of their theories, but rather the immediate needs of their practical study of nature. This criticism then takes its form and colour from the anti-materialist trends in the ruling class. Thus modern natural philosophy exhibits two characters: critical reflection over the principles of science, and a critical mood towards materialism. Just as in the time of Hegel, valuable progress in the theory of knowledge is garbed in mystical and idealistic forms.

Critics of the prevailing theories came forward, in the last part of the 19th century, in different countries: e.g. Karl Pearson in England, Gustav Kirchhoff and Ernst Mach in Germany, Henri Poincaré in

France, all exhibiting, though in different ways, the same general trend of thought. Among them the writings of Mach have doubtless exerted the greatest influence upon the ideas of the next generation.

Physics, he says, should not proceed from matter, from the atoms, from the objects; these are all derived concepts. The only thing we know directly is experience, and all experience consists in sensations, sense impressions (*Empfindungen*). By means of our world of concepts, in consequence of education and intuitive custom, we express every sensation as the action of an object upon ourselves as subject: I see a stone. But freeing ourselves from this custom we perceive that a sensation is a unit in itself, given directly without the distinction of subject and object. Through a number of similar sensations I come to the distinction of an object, and I know of myself too only by a totality of such sensations. Since object and subject are built up of sensations it is better not to use a name that points to a person experiencing them. So we prefer the neutral name of “elements”, as the simplest basis of all knowledge.

Ordinary thinking here finds the paradox that the hard immutable stone, the prototype of the solid “thing” should be formed by, should “consist of” such transient subjective stuff as sensations. On closer examination, however, we see that what constitutes the thing, its qualities, are simply this and nothing else. First its hardness is nothing but the totality of a number of often painful sensations; and secondly its immutability is the sum total of our experiences that on our returning to the same spot the same sensations repeat themselves. So we expect them as a fixed interconnection in our sensations. In our knowledge of the thing there is nothing that has not somehow the character of a sensation. The object is the sum total of all sensations at different times that, through a certain constancy of place and surroundings considered as related, are combined and denoted by a name. It is no more; there is no reason to assume with Kant a “thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*) beyond

this sensation-mass; we cannot even express in words what we would have to think of it. So the object is formed entirely by sensations; it consists merely of sensations. Mach opposes his views to the current physical theory by the words:

“Not bodies produce sensations, but element-complexes (sensation-complexes) constitute the bodies. When the physicist considers the bodies as the permanent reality, the ‘elements’ as the transient appearance, he does not realise that all ‘bodies’ are only mental symbols for element-complexes (sensation-complexes)” (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.23).

The same holds for the subject. What we denote by “I myself” is a complex of recollections and feelings, former and present sensations and thoughts connected by continuity of memory, bound to a special body, but only partly permanent.

“What is primary is not myself but the elements ... The elements constitute the myself ... The elements of consciousness of one person are strongly connected, those of different persons are only weakly and passingly connected. Hence everybody thinks he knows only of himself as an indivisible and independent unity” (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.19).

In his work **Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung** (1883) (**The Development of Mechanics**) he writes along the same lines:

“Nature consists of the elements given by the senses. Primitive man first takes out of them certain complexes of these elements that present themselves with a certain stability and are most important to him. The first and oldest words are names for ‘things’. Here abstraction is made from the surroundings, from the continual small changes of these complexes, which are not heeded because they are not important. In nature there is no invariable thing. The thing is an abstraction, the name is a symbol for a complex of elements of which we neglect the changes. That we denote the entire complex by one word, one symbol,

is done because we want to awaken at once all impressions that belong together... The sensations are no 'symbols of things'. On the contrary the 'thing' is a mental symbol for a sensation-complex of relative stability. Not the things, the bodies, but colours, sounds, pressures, times (what we usually call sensations) are the true elements of the world. The entire process has an economical meaning. In picturing facts we begin with the ordinary more stable and habitual complexes, and afterwards for correction add what is unusual" (p.454).

In this treatment of the historical development of the science of mechanics he comes close to the method of Historical Materialism. To him the history of science is not a sequence of geniuses producing marvellous discoveries. He shows how the practical problems are first solved by the mental methods of common life, until at last they acquire their most simple and adequate theoretical expression. Ever again the economic function of science is emphasised.

"The aim of all science is to substitute and to save experiences through the picturing and the forecastings of facts by thoughts, because these pictures are more easily at hand than the experiences themselves and in many respects may stand for them" (p. 452). "When we depict facts by thoughts we never imitate them exactly, but only figure those sides that are important for us; we have an aim that directly or indirectly arose out of practical interests. Our pictures are always abstractions. This again shows am economic trend" (p.454).

Here we see science, specialised as well as common knowledge, connected with the necessities of life, as an implement of existence.

"The biological task of science is to offer a most perfect orientation to man in the full possession of his senses" (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.29).

For man, in order to react efficiently to the impressions of his surroundings in each situation, it is not necessary to remember all former cases of analogous situations with their results. He has only to

know what results generally, as a rule, and this determines his actions. The rule, the abstract concept is the instrument ready at hand that saves the mental consideration of all former cases. What natural law states is not what will happen and must happen in nature, but what we expect will happen; and that is the very purpose they have to serve.

The formation of abstract concepts, of rules and laws of nature, in common life as well as in science, is an intuitive process, intended to save brain work, aiming at economy of thinking. Mach shows in a number of examples in the history of science how every progress consists in greater economy, in that a larger field of experiences is compiled in a shorter way, so that in the predictions a repetition of the same brain operations is avoided. "With the short lifetime of man and ms limited memory, notably knowledge is only attainable by the utmost economy of thinking." So the task of science consists in "representing facts as completely as possible by a minimum of brainwork" (**Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung**, p.461).

According to Mach the principle of economy of thinking determines the character of scientific investigation. What science states as properties of things and laws about atoms are in reality relations between sensations. The phenomena between which the law of gravitation establishes relations, consist in a number of visual auditory or tactile impressions; the law says that they occur not by chance, and predicts how we may expect them. Of course we cannot express the law in this form; it would be inappropriate, unsuitable to practice because of its complexity. But as a principle, it is important to state that every law of nature deals with relations between phenomena. If now contradictions appear in our conceptions about atoms and world ether, they lie not in nature but in the forms we choose for our abstractions in order to have them available in the most tractable way. The contradiction disappears when we express the results of our research as relations between observed quantities, ultimately between sensations.

The unconcerned scientific view is easily obscured if a point of view fit for a limited aim is made the basis of all considerations. This is the case, says Mach, "when all experiences are considered as the effects of an outer world upon our consciousness. An apparently inextricable tangle of metaphysical difficulties results. The phantom disappears directly if we take matters in their mathematical form, and make it clear to ourselves that the establishment of functions and relations alone avails, and that the mutual dependence of experiences is the only thing we wish to know" (*Analyse der Empfindungen*, p.28). It might seem that Mach here expresses some doubts about the existence of an outer world independent of man. In countless other sentences, however, he speaks in a clear way of surrounding nature in which we have to live and which we have to investigate. It means that such an outer world as is accepted by physics and by ordinary opinion, the world of matter and forces as producing the phenomena, leads us into contradictions. The contradictions can be removed only if we return to the phenomena and instead of speaking words and abstract terms express our results as relations between observations. This is what was afterwards called Mach's principle: if we ask whether a statement has a meaning and what is its meaning, we have to look for what experiments may test it. It has shown its importance in modern times, first in discussions on time and space in the theory of relativity, and then in the understanding of atomic and radiation phenomena. Mach's aim was to find a broader field of interpretation for physical phenomena. In daily life the solid bodies are most adequate sensation-complexes, and mechanics, the science of their motions, was the first well developed part of physics. But this reason does not justify our establishing the form and science of atoms as the pattern for the entire world. Instead of explaining heat, light, electricity, chemistry, biology, all in terms of such small particles, every realm should develop its own adequate concepts.

Yet there is a certain ambiguity in Mach's expressions on the outer world, revealing a manifest propensity towards subjectivism, corresponding to the general mystical trend in the capitalist world. Especially in later years he liked to discover cognate trends everywhere, and gave praise to idealistic philosophies that deny the reality of matter. Mach did not elaborate his views into a concise coherent system of philosophy with all consequences well developed. His aim was to give critical thoughts, to stimulate new ideas, often in paradoxes sharply pointed against prevailing opinions, without caring whether all his statements were mutually consistent and all problems solved. His was not a philosopher's mind constructing a system, but a scientist's mind, presenting his ideas as a partial contribution to the whole, feeling as part of a collectivity of investigators, sure that others will correct his errors and will complete what he left unachieved. "The supreme philosophy of a natural scientist" he says elsewhere "is to be content with an incomplete world view and to prefer it to an apparently complete but unsatisfactory system" (**Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung**, p.437).

Mach's tendency to emphasise the subjective side of experience appears in that the immediately given elements of the world, which we call phenomena, are denoted as sensations. Surely this means at the same time a deeper analysis of the phenomena; in the phenomenon that a stone falls are contained a number of visual sensations combined with the memory of former visual and spatial sensations. Mach's elements, the sensations, may be called the simplest constituents of the phenomena. But when he says: "Thus it is true that the world consists of our sensations" (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.10) he means to point to the subjective character of the elements of the world. He does not say "my" sensations; solipsism (the doctrine that I myself only am existing) is entirely foreign to him and is expressly refuted; "I myself" is itself a

complex of sensations. But where he speaks of fellow-men in relation to the world of sensations, he is not entirely clear.

"Just as little as I consider red and green as belonging to an individual body, so little I make an essential difference – from this point of view of general orientation – between my sensations and another's sensations. The same elements are mutually connected in many 'myselfs' as their nodal points. These nodal points, however, are nothing perennial, they arise and disappear and change continually"

(*Analyse der Empfindungen*, p.294).

Here it must be objected that "red" and "green" as belonging to more bodies are not the simple sensational elements of experience, but themselves already abstract concepts. It seems that Mach here replaces the abstract concepts body and matter by other abstract concepts, qualities and colours, that as realities appear in my and in another's sensations. And when he calls my sensation and another's analogous sensation the same element, this word is taken in another sense.

Mach's thesis that the world consists of our sensations, expresses the truth that we knew of the world only through our sensations; they are the materials out of which we build our world; in this sense the world, including myself, "consists" of sensations only. At the same time, the emphasis upon the subjective character of sensations reveals the same middle-class trend of thought that we mind in other contemporary philosophies. It is even more evident when he points out that these views may tend to overcome dualism, this eternal philosophical antithesis of the two worlds of matter and mind. The physical and the psychical world for Mach consist of the same elements, only in a different arrangement. The sensation green in seeing a leaf, with other sensations is an element of the material leaf; the same sensation, with others of my body, my eye, my reminiscences, is an element of "myself," of my psyche.

"Thus I see no antithesis of the physical and the psychical, but I see a simple identity relative to these elements. In the sensual realm of my consciousness every object is physical and psychical at the same time" (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p36). "Not the stuff is different in both realms, but the tendency of the research" (p.14).

Thus dualism has disappeared; the entire world is a unity, consisting of the self-same elements; and these elements are not atoms but sensations. And in **Erkenntnis und Irrtum** he adds in a footnote

"There is no difficulty in building up every physical happening out of sensations, i.e. psychical elements; but there is no possibility of seeing how out of the usual physical elements, masses and motions, any psychical happening might be constructed ... We have to consider that nothing can be object of experience or science that cannot be in some way a part of consciousness" (p.12).

Here, in this footnote added later, in 1905, the well considered equivalence of both worlds, physical and psychical, the careful neutral characterising of the elements, is given up by calling them psychical, and the anti-materialistic spirit of the bourgeoisie breaks through. Since it is not our aim to criticise and to contest but only to set forth Mach's views we shall not enter into the tautology of the last sentence, that only what is in consciousness can be conscious and that hence the world is spiritual.

The new insight that the world is built up out of sensations as its elements, meets with difficulties, Mach says, because in our uncritical youth we took over a world view that had grown intuitively in the thousands of years of human development. We may break its spell by critically repeating the process through conscious philosophic reasoning. Starting with the most simple experiences, the elementary sensations, we construct the world step by step: ourselves, the outer world, our body as part of the outer world, connected with our own feeling, actions and reminiscences. Thus, by analogy, we recognise

fellow-men as kindred, and so their sensations, disclosed by their sayings, may be used as additional material in constructing the world. Here Mach stops; further steps toward an objective world are not made.

That this is no accidental incompleteness is shown by the fact that we find the same thing with Carnap, one of the leading thinkers in modern philosophy of science. In his work **Der logische Aufbau der Welt** (**The logical construction of the world**) he sets himself the same task, but more thoroughly: if we start with knowing nothing, having however our full capacity of thinking, how can we establish (“constitute”) the world with all its contents? I start with “my sensations” and make them into a system of “sayings” and “objects” (“object” is the name given to everything about which we may utter a saying); thus I establish physical and psychical “objects” and construct “the world” as an ordered system of my sensations. The problem of dualism of body and mind, of material and spiritual, finds here the same answer as with Mach: both consist of the same materials, the sensations, only ordered in a different way. The sensations of fellow-men, according to their statements, lead to a physical world exactly corresponding to mine. So we call it the “intersubjective world,” common to all subjects; this is the world of natural science. Here Carnap stops, satisfied that dualism has been removed, and that any quest about the reality of the world is now shown to be meaningless, because “reality” cannot be tested in another way than by our experience, our sensations. So the chain of progressive constitutings is broken off here.

It is easy to see the limitedness of this world structure. It is not finished. The world thus constituted by Mach and by Carnap is a momentary world supposed unchanging. The fact that the world is in continuous evolution is disregarded. So we must go on past where Carnap stopped. According to our experience people are born and die; their sensations arise and disappear, but the world remains. When my sensations out of which the world was constituted, cease with my

death, the world continues to exist. From acknowledged scientific facts I know that long ago there was a world without man, without any living being. The facts of evolution, founded on our sensations condensed into science, establish a previous world without any sensations. Thus from an intersubjective world common to all mankind, constituted as a world of phenomena by science, we proceed to the constitution of an objective world. Then the entire world view changes. Once the objective world is constituted, all phenomena become independent of observing man, as relations between parts of the world. The world is the totality of an infinite number of parts acting upon another; every part consists in the totality of its actions and reactions with the rest, and all these mutual actions are the phenomena, the object of science.

Man also is part of the world; we too are the totality of our mutual interactions with the rest, the outer world. Our sensations are now seen in a new light; they are the actions of the world upon us, only a small part of all happenings in the world but, of course, the only ones immediately given to us. When now man is building up the world out of his sensations, it is a reconstruction in the mind of an already objectively existing world. Again we have the world twofold, with all the problems of epistemology, the theory of knowledge. How they may be solved without metaphysics is shown by Historical Materialism.

If one asks why two such prominent philosophers of science omitted this obvious step toward the constitution of an objective world, the answer can only be found in their middle-class world view. Their instinctive tenet is anti-materialistic. By adhering to the intersubjective world they have won a monistic world system, the physical world consisting of psychical elements, so that materialism is refuted. We have here an instructive example how class views determine science and philosophy.

Summarising Mach's ideas we distinguish two steps. First the phenomena are reduced to sensations expressing their subjective

character. Through the desire to find direct reality only in the sensations as psychical entities, he does not proceed by precise deductions to an objective world that obviously is matter of fact, though in a mystical vague way. Then comes a second step from the world of phenomena to the physical world. What physics, and by the popular dispersion of science also common opinion, assumes as the reality of the world – matter, atoms, energy, natural laws, the forms of space and time. myself – are all abstractions from groups of phenomena. Mach combines both steps into one by saying that things are sensation-complexes.

The second step corresponds to Dietzgen; the similarity here is manifest. The differences are accounted for by their different class views. Dietzgen stood on the basis of dialectic materialism, and his expositions were a direct consequence of Marxism. Mach, borne by the incipient reaction of the bourgeoisie, saw his task in a fundamental criticism of physical materialism by asserting dominance to some spiritual principle. There is a difference, moreover, in personality and aims. Dietzgen was a comprehensive philosopher, eager to find out how our brains work; the practice of life and science was to him material for the knowledge of knowledge. Mach was a physicist who by his criticisms tries to improve the ways in which brains worked in scientific investigations. Dietzgen's aim was to give clear insight into the role of knowledge in social development, for the use of the proletarian struggle. Mach's aim was an amelioration of the practice of physical research, for the use of natural science.

Speaking of practice, Mach expresses himself in different ways. At one time he sees no utility in employing the ordinary abstractions: "We know only of sensations, and the assumption of those nuclei (particles of matter) and their mutual actions as the assigned origins of sensations, shows itself entirely futile and superfluous" (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.10). Another time he does not wish to discredit the common view of unsophisticated "naive realism," because it renders

great services to mankind in their common life. It has grown as a product of nature, whereas every philosophical system is an ephemeral product of art, for temporary aims. So we have to see “why and to what purposes we usually take one point of view, and why and to what purpose we temporarily give it up. No point of view holds absolutely; each imports for special aims only” (**Analyse der Empfindungen**, p.30).

In the practical application of his views upon physics Mach met with little success. His campaign was chiefly directed against matter and atoms dominating physical science. Not simply because they are and should be acknowledged as abstractions: “Atoms we can observe nowhere, they are as every substance products of thought” (**Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung**, p.463). But because they are impractical abstractions. They mean an attempt to reduce all physics to mechanics, to the motion of small particles, “and it is easy to see that by mechanical hypotheses a real economy of scientific thought cannot be achieved” (**Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung**, p.469). But his criticism of heat as a form of motion of small particles, already in 1873, and of electricity as a streaming fluid, found no echo among physicists. On the contrary these explanations developed in ever wider applications, and their consequences were confirmed ever again; atomic theory could boast of ever more results and was extended even to electricity in the theory of electrons. Hence the generation of physicists that followed him, while sympathising with his general views and accepting them, did not follow him in ms special applications. Only in the new century, when atomic and electronic theory had progressed in a brilliant display, and when the theory of relativity arose, there appeared a host of glaring contradictions in which Mach’s principles showed themselves the best guides in clearing up the difficulties.

## Chapter 5. Avenarius

The title of Lenin's work **Materialism and Empirio-Criticism** imposes the necessity to treat here the Zürich philosopher Richard Avenarius, because empirio-criticism was the name he gave to his doctrine, in many parts touching upon Mach's views. In his chief work **Kritik der reinen Erfahrung (Criticism of pure experience)** he starts from simple experience, considers carefully what is certain about it, and then tests critically what man derived and assumed about the world and himself, what is tenable and justifiable in it and what is not.

In the natural world view, he explains, I find the following things. I find myself with thoughts and feelings within a surrounding world; to these surroundings belong fellow-men acting and speaking as I do, whom therefore I assume to be similar to myself. Strictly speaking, the interpretation of the movements and sounds connected with fellow-man as having a meaning just as mine is an assumption, not a real experience. But it is a necessary assumption without which a reasonable world view would be impossible: "the empiriocritical basic assumption of human equality." Then this is my world: first my own statements, e.g. "I see (or touch) a tree" (I call this an observation); I find it, repeatedly, back at the same spot, I describe it as an object in space; I call it "world," distinct from myself, or "outer world." Moreover I have remembrances (I call them ideas), somehow analogous to observations. Secondly there are fellow-men as part of the world. Thirdly there are statements of the fellow-men dealing with the same world; he speaks to me of the tree he, too, is seeing; what he says clearly depends on the "world." So far all is simple and natural, there is nothing more to have thoughts about, nothing of inner and outer, of soul and body.

Now, however, I say: my world is object of the observation of my fellow-man; he is the bearer of the observation, it is part of hmm; I put

it into him, and so I do with his other experiences, thoughts, feelings, of which I know through his sayings. I say that he has an "impression" of the tree, that he makes himself a "conception" of the tree. An impression, a conception, a sensation of another person, however, is imperceptible to me; it finds no place in my world of experience. By so doing I introduce something that has a new character, that can never be experience to me, that is entirely foreign to all that so far was present. Thus my fellow-man has now got an inner world of observations, feelings, knowledge, and an outer world that he observes and knows. Since I stand to him as he stands to me I too have an inner world of sensations and feelings opposite to that which I call the "outer" world. The tree I saw and know is split into a knowledge and an object. This process is called "introjection" by Avenarius; something is introduced, introjected into man that was not present in the original simple empirical world conception.

Introjection has made a cleavage in the world. It is the philosophical fall of man. Before the fall he was in a state of philosophical innocence; he took the world as simple, single, as the senses show it; he did not know of body and soul, of mind and matter, of good and evil. The introjection brought dualism with all its problems and contradictions. Let us look at its consequences already at the lowest state of civilisation. On the basis of experience introjection takes place not only into fellow-man but also into fellow-animals, into fellow-things, into trees, rocks, etc: this is animism. We see a man sleeping; awakened he says he was elsewhere; so part of him rested here, part left the body temporarily. If it does not return, the first part is rotting away, but the other part appears in dreams, ghostly. So man consists of a perishable body and a non-perishing spirit. Such spirits also live in trees, in the air, in heaven. At a higher stage of civilisation the direct experience of spirits disappears; what is experienced is the outer world of senses; the inner spiritual world is super-sensual. "Experience as things and experience as

knowledge now stand against one another, incomparable as a material and a spiritual world" (*Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, p.110).

In this short summary of Avenarius's exposure of his views we omitted one thing that to him is an essential link in the chain. To the sayings of the fellow-man belongs not only himself and his body, but belongs in particular his brain. In my experience, Avenarius says, I have three dependencies: between the sayings of man and his outer world, between his brain and the outer world, and between his brain and his sayings. The second is a physical relation, part of the law of energy; the other two belong to logic.

Avenarius now proceeds first to criticise and then to eliminate introjection. That actions and sayings of fellow-men are related to the outer world is my experience. When I introduce it as ideas into him, it is into his brain that I introduce them. But no anatomical section can disclose them. "We cannot find any characteristic in the thought or in the brain to show that thought is a part or character of the brain" (*Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, p.125). Man can say truly: I have brain; i.e. to the complex called "myself" brain belongs as a part; he can say truly: I have thoughts, i.e. to the complex "myself" thoughts belong as a part. But that does not imply that my brain have these thoughts. "Thought is thought of myself, but not therefore thought of my brain" (*Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, p.131) "Brain is no lodging or site, no producer, no instrument or organ, no bearer or substratum, etc., of thinking ... Thinking is no resident or commander, no other side, no product either, not even a physiological function of the brain" (*Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, p.132).

This imposing enumeration of usual psychological statements discloses why the brain was introduced. To refute our introduction of a mental world into fellow-man, Avenarius emphasises that its place would then be the brain, and the brain when anatomically dissected does not show it. Elsewhere he says: introjection means that my

thinking puts itself at the place of fellow-man, hence my thinking combines with his brain, which can be done only in fantasy, not really. As arguments to serve as the basis of a philosophical system they are rather artificial and unconvincing. What is true and important is the disclosure of the fact of introjection, the demonstration that in our assumption that the world of fellow-man is the same kind of thing as my own, I introduce a second world of fantasy of another character, entirely outside my experience. It corresponds point for point with my own; its introduction is necessary; but it means a doubling of the world, or rather a multiplication of worlds not directly accessible to me, no possible part of my world of experience.

Now Avenarius sees as his task the building up of a world-structure free from introjection, by means of the simple data of experience. In his exposition he finds it necessary to introduce a special system of new names, characters and figures with algebraic expressions to designate our ordinary concepts. The laudable intention is this; not to be led astray by instinctive associations and meanings connected with ordinary language. But the result is an appearance of profoundness with an abstruse terminology that needs to be back-translated into our usual terms if we want to understand its meanings, and is a source of easy misunderstandings. His argument expressed thus by himself in a far more intricate way, may be summarised as follows:

We find ourselves, a relative constant, amidst a changing multitude of units denoted as "trees," "fellow-men," etc., which show many mutual relations, "Myself" and "surroundings" are found both at the same time in the same experience; we call them "central-part" and "counter-part" (*Zentralglied und Gegenglied*). That my fellow-man has thoughts, experiences and a world just as I have, is expressed in the statement that part of my surroundings is central-part itself. When in his brain variations take place (they belong to my world of experience), then phenomena occur in his world; his sayings about them are

determined by processes in his brains. In my world of experience the outer world determines the change in his brain (a neurological fact); not my observed tree determines his observation (situated in another world), but the changes caused by the tree in his brain (both belonging to my world) determine his observation. Now my scientific experience declares my brain and his brain to change in the same way through impressions of the outer world; hence the resulting "his world" and my world must be of the same stuff. So the natural world conception is restored without the need of introjection. The argument comes down to this that our practice of assuming similar thoughts and conceptions as our own in fellow-men, which should be illicit notwithstanding our spiritual intercourse, should become valid as soon as we make a detour along the material brains. To which must be remarked that neurology may assume as a valid theory that the outer world produces the same changes in my brain and in another man's; but that, strictly keeping to my experience, I have never observed it and never can observe it.

Avenarius's ideas have nothing in common with Dietzgen; they do not deal with the connection between knowledge and experience. They are cognate to Mach's in that both proceed from experience, dissolve the entire world into experience and believe thus to have done away with dualism.

"If we keep 'complete experience' free from all adulteration, our world-conception will be free from all metaphysical dualism. To these eliminated dualisms belong the absolute antithesis of 'body' and 'mind,' of 'matter' and 'spirit,' in short of physical and psychical" (p.118). "Things physical, matter in its metaphysical absolute sense finds no place in purified 'complete experience,' because 'matter' in this conception is only an abstractum, indicating the entirety of counterparts when abstraction is made of all 'central-parts'" (**Bemerkungen zum Begriff des Gegenstandes der Psychologie**, p.119).

This is analogous to Mach; but it is different from Mach in being built out into a finished and closed system. The equality of the experience of fellow-man, settled by Mach in a few words, is a most difficult piece of work to Avenarius. The neutral character of the elements of experience is pointed out with more precision by Avenarius; they are not sensations, nothing psychical, but simply something "found present" (*Vorgefundenes*).

So he opposes prevailing psychology, that formerly dealt with the "soul," afterwards with "psychic functions," because it proceeds from the assumption that the observed world is an image within us. This, he says, is not a "thing found present," and neither can it be disclosed from what is "found present."

"Whereas I leave the tree before me as something seen in the same relation to me, as a thing 'found present' to me, prevailing psychology puts the tree as 'something seen' into man, especially into his brain" (**Bemerkungen zum Begriff des Gegenstandes der Psychologie**, p.45 Note). Introjection created this false object of psychology; it changed "before me" into "in me," what is "found present" into what is "imagined" it made "part of (real) surroundings" into "part of (ideal) thinking."

For Avenarius, instead, the material changes in the brain are the basis of psychology. He proceeds from the thesis taken over from the special science of physiology that all action of the surroundings produces changes in the brain and that these produce thoughts and sayings – and this certainly lies outside direct experience. It is a curious fact that Mach and Carnap too speak of observing (ideally, not really) the brain (by physical or chemical methods, or by a "brain-mirror") to see what happens there in connection with sensations and thoughts. It seems that middle-class theory of knowledge cannot do without having recourse to this materialist conception. Avenarius is the most radical in this respect; for him psychology is the science of the dependence of

behaviour upon the brain; what belongs to the actions of man is not psychical but physiological, mere brain processes. When we speak of ideas and ideologies, empirio-criticism speaks of changes in the central nervous system. The study of the great world-moving ideas in the history of mankind turns into the study of their nervous systems. Thus empirio-criticism stands close to middle-class materialism that also, in the problem of the determination of ideas by the surrounding world, appeals to brain-matter. In comparing Avenarius with Haeckel we should rather call him Haeckel reversed. Both can understand mind only as an attribute of the brain; since mind and matter, however, are fundamentally disparate, Haeckel attributes a particle of mind to every atom, whereas Avenarius entirely dispenses with the mind as a special something. But therefore the world for him takes instead the somewhat shadowy character – frightening to materialists and opening the gate to ideological interpretations – of consisting of “my experience” only.

Right as Avenarius may be that it is not strictly expedience, the equalisation of fellow-men with ourselves and the identity of their world with ours is an inevitably natural affair, whatever kind of spiritual or material terms are used to express it. The point is again that middle-class philosophy wants to criticise and correct human thinking instead of trying to understand it as a natural process.

In this context a general remark must be made. The essential character in Mach and Avenarius, as in most modern philosophers of science, is that they start from personal experience. It is their only basis of certainty; to it they go back when asked what is true. When fellow-men enter into the play, a kind of theoretical uncertainty appears, and with difficult reasonings their experience must be reduced to ours. We have here an effect of the strong individualism of the middle-class world. The middle-class individual in his strong feeling of personality has lost social consciousness; he does not know how entirely he is a social being. In everything of himself, in his body, his mind, his

life, his thoughts, his feeling, in his most simple experiences he is a product of society, human society made them all what they are. What is considered a purely personal sensation: I see a tree – can enter into consciousness only through the distinctness given to it by names. Without the inherited words to indicate things and species, actions and concepts, the sensation could not be expressed and conceived. Out of the indistinctive mass of the world of impressions the important parts come forward only when they are denoted by sounds and thus become separated from the unimportant mass. When Carnap constructs the world without using the old names, he still makes use of his capacity of abstract thinking. Abstract thinking, however, by means of concepts, is not possible without speech; speech and abstract thinking developed together as a product of society.

Speech could never have originated without human society for which it is an organ of mutual communication. It could develop in a society only, as an instrument in the practical activity of man. This activity is a social process that as the deepest foundation underlies all my experiences. The activity of fellow-man, inclusive his speaking, I experience as co-natural with my activity because they are parts of one common activity; thus we know our similarity. Man is first an active being, a worker, To live he must eat, i.e. he must seize and assimilate other things; he must search, fight, conquer. This action upon the world, a life-necessity, determines his thinking and feeling, because it is his chief life content and forms the most essential part of his experiences. It was from the first a collective activity, a social labour process.

Speech originated as part of this collective process, as an indispensable mediator in the common work, and at the same time as an instrument of reflexive thinking needed in the handling of tools, themselves products of collective working. In such a way the entire world of experience of man bears a social character. The simple “natural world view” taken by Avenarius and other philosophers as their starting point, is not the

spontaneous view of a primitive single man but, in philosophical garb, the outcome of a highly developed society.

Social development has, through the increasing division of labour, dissected and separated what before was a unit. Scientists and philosophers have the special task of investigating and reasoning so that their science and their conceptions may play their role in the total process of production-now the role chiefly of supporting and strengthening the existing social system. Cut off from the root of life, the social process of labour, they hang in the air and have to resort to artificial reasonings to find a basis. Thus the philosopher starts with imagining himself the only being on earth and suspiciously asks whether he can demonstrate his own existence; till he is happily reassured by Descartes "I think, so I exist." Then along a chain of logical deductions he proceeds to ascertain the existence of the world and of fellow-men; and so the self-evident comes out along a wide detour – if it comes out. For the middle-class philosopher does not feel the necessity to follow up to the last consequences, to materialism, and he prefers to stay somewhere in-between, expressing the world in ideological terms.

So this is the difference: middle-class philosophy looks for the source of knowledge in personal meditation, Marxism finds it in social labour. All consciousness, all spiritual life of man, even of the most lonely hermit, is a collective product, has been made and shaped by the working community of mankind. Though in the form of personal consciousness – because man is a biological individual – it can exist only as part of the whole. People can have experiences only as social beings; though the contents are personally different, in their essence experiences are super-personal, society being their self-evident basis. Thus the objective world of phenomena which logical thought constructs out of the data of experience, is first and foremost, by its origin already, collective experience of mankind.

## Chapter 6. Lenin

How Mach's idea could acquire importance in the Russian socialist movement, may be understood from social conditions. The young Russian intelligentsia, owing to the barbarous pre-capitalist conditions, had not yet, as in Western Europe, found its social function in the service of a bourgeoisie. So it had to aspire for the downfall of Czarism, and to join the socialist party. At the same time it stood in spiritual intercourse with the Western intellectuals and so took part in the spiritual trends of the Western world. Thus it was inevitable that efforts should be made to combine them with Marxism.

Of course Lenin had to oppose these tendencies. Marxian theory, indeed, can gain nothing essential from Mach. Insofar as a better understanding of human thinking is needed for socialists, this can be found in Dietzgen's work. Mach was significant because he deduced analogous ideas out of the practices of natural science, for the use of scientists. In what he has in common with Dietzgen, the reduction of the world to experience, he stopped midway and gave, imbued with the anti-materialist trends of his time, a vague idealistic form to his views. This could not be grafted upon Marxism. Here Marxist criticism was needed.

### The Criticism

Lenin, however in attacking Mach, from the start presents the antagonism in a wrong way. Proceeding from a quotation of Engels, he says:

"But the question here is not of this or that formulation of materialism, but of the opposition of materialism to idealism, of the difference between the two fundamental lines in philosophy. Are we to proceed from things to sensation and thought? Or are we to proceed from thought and sensation to things? The first line, i.e., the materialist

line, is adopted by Engels. The second line, i.e., the idealist line, is adopted by Mach" (33-4).

It is at once clear that this is not the true expression of the antithesis. According to materialism the material world produces thought, consciousness, mind, all things spiritual. That, on the contrary, the spiritual produces the material world, is taught by religion, is found with Hegel, but is not Mach's opinion. The expression "to proceed from ... to" is used to intermix two quite different meanings. Proceeding from things to sensations and thought means: things create thoughts. Proceeding – not from thoughts to things, as Lenin wrongly imputes to Mach but – from sensations to things, means that only through sensations we arrive at the knowledge of things. Their entire existence is built up out of sensations; to emphasise this truth Mach says: they consist of sensations.

Here the method followed by Lenin in his controversy makes its appearance he tries to assign to Mach opinions different from the real ones. Especially the doctrine of solipsism. Thus he continues:

"No evasions, no sophisms (a multitude of which we shall yet encounter) can remove the clear and indisputable fact that Ernst Mach's doctrine of things as complexes of sensations in subjective idealism and a simple rehash of Berkeleyanism. If bodies are 'complexes of sensations,' as Mach says, or 'combinations of sensations,' as Berkeley said, it inevitably follows that the whole world is but my idea. Starting from such a premise it is impossible to arrive at the existence of other people besides oneself: it is the purest solipsism. Much as Mach, Avenarius, Petzoldt and the others may abjure solipsism, they cannot in fact escape solipsism without falling into howling logical absurdities."

(34)

Now, if anything can be asserted beyond any doubt about Mach and Avenarius, it is that their opinions are not solipsism fellow-men similar to myself, deduced with more or less stringent logic, are the basis of

their world conception. Lenin, however, manifestly does not care about what Mach really thinks, but about what he should think if his logic were identical with Lenin's.

"From which there is only one possible inference, namely that the 'world consists only of my sensations.' The word 'our' employed by Mach instead of 'my' is employed illegitimately." (36)

That indeed is an easy way of arguing: what I write down as the opinion of my adversary he replaces unjustifiably by what he wrote down himself. Lenin, moreover, knows quite well that Mach speaks of the objective reality of the world, and himself gives numerous quotations to that effect. But he does not let himself be deceived as so many others were deceived by Mach.

"Similarly, even Mach ... frequently strays into a materialist interpretation of the word experience ... (171). Here nature is taken as primary and sensation and experience as products. Had Mach consistently adhered to his point of view in the mental questions of epistemology ... Mach's special 'philosophy' is here thrown overboard, and the author instinctively accepts the customary standpoint of the scientists." (172)

Would it not have been better if he had tried to understand in what sense it was that Mach assumes that things consist of sensations?

The "elements" also are an object of difficulty to Lenin. He summarises Mach's opinion on the elements in six theses, among which we find, in numbers 3 and 4:

"Elements are divided into the physical and the psychical: the latter is that which depends on the human nerves and the human organism generally; the former does not depend on them: the connection of physical elements and the connection of psychical elements, it is declared, do not exist separately from each other they exist only in conjunction." (49)

Anybody, even if acquainted only superficially with Mach, can see how he is rendered here in an entirely wrong and meaningless way. What Mach really says is this: every element, though described in many words, is an inseparable unity, which can be part of a complex that we call physical, but which combined with different other elements can form a complex that we call psychical. When I feel the heat of a flame, this sensation together with others on heat and thermometers and with visible phenomena combines into the complex "flame" or "heat," treated in physics. Combined with other sensations of pain and pleasure, with remembrances and with observations on nerves, the context belongs to physiology or psychology. "None (of these connections) is the only existing one, both are present at the same time" says Mach. For they are the same elements in different combinations. Lenin makes of this that the connections are not independent and only exist together. Mach does not separate the elements themselves as physical and psychical ones, nor does he distinguish a physical and psychical part in them the same element is physical in one context, psychical in another. If Lenin renders these ideas in such a sloppy and unintelligible way it is no wonder that he cannot make any sense out of it, and speaks of "an incoherent jumble of antithetical philosophical points of view." (49) If one does not take the pains or is unable to unravel the real opinions of his adversary and only snatches up some sentences to interpret them from one's own point of view, he should not wonder that nonsense comes out. This cannot be called a marxian criticism of Mach.

In the same faulty way he renders Avenarius. He reproduces a small summary by Avenarius of a first division of the elements: what I find present I partly call outer world (e.g. I see a tree), partly not (I remember a tree, trunk of a tree). Avenarius denotes them as thing-like (sachhaft) and thoughtlike (gedankenhaft) elements. Thereupon Lenin indignantly exclaims:

"At first we are assured that the 'elements' are something new, both physical and psychical at the same time then a little correction is surreptitiously inserted: instead of the crude, materialist differentiation of matter (bodies, things) and the psychical (sensations, recollections, fantasies) we are presented with the doctrine of 'recent positivism' regarding elements substantial and elements mental." (53)

Clearly he does not suspect how completely he misses the point.

In a chapter superscribed with the ironical title *Does man think with his brain?* Lenin quotes Avenarius's statement that the brain is not the lodging, the site, etc. of thinking; thinking is no resident, no product, etc. of the brain. Hence: man does not think with his brain. Lenin has not perceived that Avenarius further on expresses clearly enough, though garbled in his artificial terminology, that the action of the outer world upon the brain produces what we call thoughts; manifestly Lenin had not the patience to unravel Avenarius's intricate language. But to combat an opponent you have to know his point ignorance is no argument. What Avenarius contradicts is not the role of the brain but that we call the product thought when we assign to it, as a spiritual being, a site in the brain and say it is living in the brain, is commanding the brain, or is a function of the brain. The material brain, as we saw, occupies precisely the central place of his philosophy. Lenin, however, considers this only as a "mystification":

"Avenarius here acts on the advice of the charlatan in Turgenev: denounce most of all those vices which you yourself possess. Avenarius tries to pretend that he is combating idealism... While distracting the attention of the reader by attacking idealism, Avenarius is in fact defending idealism, albeit in slightly different words; thought is not a function of the brain: the brain is not the organ of thought; sensations are – not functions of the nervous system, oh, no: sensations are – 'elements' ." (92-3)

The critic rages here against a self-mystification without any basis. He finds "idealism" in that Avenarius, proceeds from elements, and elements are sensations. Avenarius, however, does not proceed from sensations but from what simple unsophisticated man finds present; things, surroundings, a world, fellow-men, remembrances. Man does not find present sensations, he finds present a world. Avenarius tries to construct a description of the world without the common language of matter and mind and its contradictions. He finds trees present, and human brains, and – so he believes – changes in the brains produced by the trees, and actions and talk of fellow-men determined by these changes. Of all this Lenin manifestly has no inkling. He tries to make "idealism" of Avenarius's system by considering Avenarius's starting point, experience, to be sensations, something psychical, according to his own materialist view. His error is that he takes the contradistinction materialism-idealism in the sense of middle-class materialism, with physical matter as its basis. Thus he shuts himself off completely from any understanding of modern views that proceed from experience and phenomena as the given reality.

Lenin now brings forward an array of witnesses to declare that the doctrines of Mach and Avenarius are idealism or solipsism. It is natural that the host of professional philosophers, in compliance with the tendency of bourgeois thinking to proclaim the rule of mind over matter, try to interpret and emphasise the anti-materialist side of their ideas; they too know materialism only as the doctrine of physical matter. What, we may ask, is the use of such witnesses? When disputed facts have to be ascertained, witnesses are necessary. When, however, we deal with the understanding of somebody's opinions and theories, we have to read and render carefully what he himself has written to expound them; this is the only way to find out similarities and differences, truth and error. For Lenin, however, matters were different. His book was part of a law-suit, an act of impeachment; as

such it required an array of witnesses. An important political issue was at stake; Machism threatened to corrupt the fundamental doctrines, the theoretical unity of the Party; so its spokesmen had to do away with them. Mach and Avenarius formed a danger for the Party; hence what mattered was not to find out what was true and valuable in their teachings in order to widen our own views. What mattered was to discredit them, to destroy their reputation, to reveal them as muddleheads contradicting themselves, speaking confused fudge, trying to hide their real opinions and not believing their own assertions.

All the middle-class philosophical writers, standing before the newness of these ideas, look for analogies and relationships of Mach and Avenarius with former philosophic systems; one welcomes Mach as fitting in with Kant, another sees a likeness to Hume, or Berkeley, or Fichte. In this multitude and variety of systems it is easy to find out connections and similarities everywhere. Lenin registers all such contradictory judgements and in this way demonstrates Mach's confusion. The like with Avenarius. For instance:

"And it is difficult to say who more rudely unmasks Avenarius the mystifier – Smith by his straightforward and clear refutation, or Schuppe by his enthusiastic opinion of Avenarius's crowning work. The kiss of Wilhelm Schuppe in philosophy is no better than the kiss of Peter Struve or Menshikov in politics." (73)

If we now read Schuppe's Open Letter to Avenarius, in which in flattering words he expresses his agreement, we find that he did not at all grasp the essence of Avenarius's opinion; he takes the "myself" as the starting point instead of the elements found present, out of which Avenarius constructs the "myself". He misrepresents Avenarius in the same way as Lenin does, with this difference, that what displeased Lenin pleased him. In his answer Avenarius, in the courteous words usual among scholars, testifies to his satisfaction at the assent of such a famous thinker, but then again expounds the real contents of his

doctrine. Lenin neglects the contents of these explanations which refute his conclusions, and quotes only the compromising courtesies.

### Natural Science

Over against Mach's ideas Lenin puts the materialistic views, the objective reality of the material world, of matter, light ether, laws of nature, such as natural science and human common sense accept. These last are two respectable authorities; but in this case their weight is not very great. Lenin sneeringly quotes Mach's own confession that he found little consent among his colleagues. A critic, however, who brings new ideas cannot be refuted by the statement that it is the old criticised ideas that are generally accepted. And as to common sense, i.e. the totality of opinions of uninstructed people: they usually represent the dicta of science of a former period, that gradually, by teaching and popular books, seeped down the masses. That the earth revolves around the sun, that the world consists of indestructible matter, that matter consists of atoms, that the world is eternal and infinite – all this has gradually penetrated into the minds, first of the educated classes, then of the masses. When science proceeds to newer and better views, all this old knowledge can, as "common sense," be brought forward against them.

How unsuspectingly Lenin leans upon these two authorities – and even in a wrong way – is seen when he says:

"For every scientist who has not been led astray by professorial philosophy, as well as for every materialist, sensation is indeed the direct connection between consciousness and the external world: it is the transformation of the energy of external excitation into a state of consciousness. This transformation has been, and is, observed by each of us a million times on every hand." (45)

This "observing" is of the same kind as when one should say: we see a thousand times that our eye sees and that light falls upon the retina. In reality we do not see our seeing and our retina; we see objects and infer

the retina and the seeing. We do not observe energy and its transitions we observe phenomena, and out of these phenomena physicists have abstracted the concept of energy. The transformation of energy is a summarised physical expression for the many phenomena in which one measured quantity decreased, another increased. They are all good expedient concepts and inferences, reliable in the prediction of future phenomena, and so we call them true. Lenin takes this truth in such an absolute way that he thinks he expresses an observed fact “adopted by every materialist,” when he pronounces what is actually a physical theory. Moreover his exposition is wrong. That energy of the light-impression is converted into consciousness may have been the belief of middle-class materialists, but science does not know of it. Physical science says that energy transforms exclusively, and completely, into other energy; the energy of the light-impression is transformed into other forms: chemical, electrical, heat-energy; but consciousness is not known in physics as a form of energy.

This confounding of the real, observed world and the physical concepts permeates Lenin’s work on every page. Engels denoted materialists as those who considered nature the original thing. Lenin speaks of a “materialism which regards nature, matter, as primary” (38). And in another place: “matter is the objective reality given to us in sensations” (144-5). To Lenin nature and physical matter are identical; the name matter has the same meaning as objective world. In this he agrees with middle-class materialism that in the same way considers matter as the real substance of the world. Thus his angry polemics against Mach can be easily understood. To Mach matter is an abstract concept formed out of the phenomena – or more strictly: sensations. So Lenin, now finding the denial of the reality of matter, then reading the simple statement of the reality of the world, sees only confusion; and he pretends, now, that Mach is a solipsist and denies the existence

of the world, and then scornfully remarks that Mach throws his own philosophy to the winds and returns to scientific views.

With the laws of nature the case is analogous. Mach's opinion that cause and effect as well as natural laws do not factually exist in nature, but are man-made expressions of observed regularities, is asserted by Lenin to be identical with Kant's doctrine.

"... It is man who dictates laws to nature and not nature that dictates laws to man! The important thing is not the repetition of Kant's doctrine of apriorism ... but the fact that reason, mind, consciousness are here primary, and nature secondary. It is not reason that is a part of nature, one of its highest products, the reflection of its processes, but nature that is a part of reason, which 'thereby is stretched from the ordinary, simple human reason known to us all to a 'stupendous,' as Dietzgen puts it, mysterious, divine reason. The Kantian-Machian formula, that 'man gives laws to nature,' is a fideist formula." (185)

This confused tirade, entirely missing the point, can only be understood if we consider that for Lenin "nature" consists not only in matter but also in natural laws directing its behaviour, floating somehow in the world as commanders who must be obeyed by the things. Hence to deny the objective existence of these laws means to him the denial of nature itself; to make man the creator of natural laws means to him to make human mind the creator of the world. How then the logical salto is made to the deity as the creator must remain an enigma to the unsophisticated reader.

Two pages earlier he writes:

"The really important epistemological question that divides the philosophical trends is ... whether the source of our knowledge of these connections is objective natural law or properties of our mind, its innate faculty of apprehending certain a priori truths, and so forth. This is what so irrevocably divides the materialists Feuerbach, Marx and Engels from the agnostic (Humeans) Avenarius and Mach." (183)

That Mach should ascribe to the human mind the power to disclose certain aprioristic truths is a new discovery or rather fantasy of Lenin. Where Mach deals with the practice of the mind to abstract general rules from experience and to assign to them unlimited validity, Lenin, captivated by traditional philosophical ideas, thinks of disclosing aprioristic truths. Then he continues:

"In certain parts of his works, Mach ... frequently 'forgets' his agreement with Hume and his own subjectivist theory of causality and argues 'simply' as a scientist, i.e., from the instinctive materialist standpoint. For instance, in his **Mechanik**, we read of the 'uniformity ... which natures teaches us to mind in its phenomena.' But if we do find uniformity in the phenomena of nature, does this mean that uniformity exists objectively outside our mind? No. On the question of the uniformity of nature Mach also delivers himself thus: ... 'That we consider ourselves capable of making predictions with the help of such a law only proves that there is sufficient uniformity in our environment, but it does not prove the necessity of the success of our predictions' (*Wärmelehre*, p.383). It follows that we may and ought to look for a necessity apart from the uniformity of our environment, i.e., of nature." (183)

The embroilment in this tangle of sentences, further embellished by courtesies here omitted is understandable only when conformity of nature is identical for Lenin with the necessity of success of our prophecies; when, hence, he cannot distinguish between regularities as they occur in various degrees of clearness in nature, and the apodictic expression of exact natural law. And he proceeds:

"Where to look for it is the secret of idealist philosophy which is afraid to recognise man's perceptive faculty as a simple reflection of nature." (184)

In reality there is no necessity, except in our formulation of natural law; and then in practice ever again we find deviations, which, again,

we express in the form of additional laws. Natural law does not determine what nature necessarily will do, but what we expect her to do. The silly remark that our mind should simply reflect nature we may leave undiscussed now. His concluding remark:

“In his last work, **Erkenntnis und Irrtum**, Mach even defines a law of nature as a ‘limitation of expectation’ (2. Auflage, S.450ff.)! Solipsism claims its own.” (184)

This lacks all sense since the determination of our expectation by natural law is a common affair of all scientists. The embodiment of a number of phenomena in a short formula, a natural law, is denoted by Mach as “economy of thinking”; he exalts it into a principle of research. We might expect that such a reducing of abstract theory to the practice of (scientific) labour should find sympathy among Marxists. In Lenin, however, it meets with no response, and he exposes his lack of understanding in some drolleries:

“That it is more ‘economical’ to ‘think’ that only I and my sensations exist is unquestionable, provided we want to introduce such an absurd conception into epistemology. Is it ‘more economical’ to ‘think’ of the atom as indivisible, or as composed of positive and negative electrons? Is it ‘more economical’ to think of the Russian bourgeois revolution as being conducted by the liberals or as being conducted against the liberals? One has only to put the question in order to see the absurdity, the subjectivism of applying the category of ‘the economy of thought’ here.” (196-7)

And he opposes to it his own view:

“Human thought is ‘economical’ only when it correctly reflects objective truth, and the criterion of this correctness is practice, experiment and industry. Only by denying objective reality, that is, by denying the foundations of Marxism, can one seriously speak of economy of thought in the theory of knowledge.” (197)

How simple and evident that looks. Let us take an example. The old, ptolemaic world-system placed the earth as resting in the centre of the world, with the sun and the planets revolving around it, the latter in epicycles, a combination of two circles. Copernicus placed the sun in the centre and had the earth and the planets revolving around it in simple circles. The visible phenomena are exactly the same after both theories, because we can observe the relative motions only, and they are absolutely identical. Which, then, pictures the objective world in the right way? Practical experience cannot distinguish between them; the predictions are identical. Copernicus pointed to the fixed stars which by the parallax could give a decision; but in the old theory we could have the stars making a yearly circle just as the planets did; and again both theories give identical results. But then everybody will say: it is absurd to have all those thousands of bodies describe similar circles, simply to keep the earth at rest. Why absurd? Because it makes our world-picture needlessly complicated. Here we have it – the Copernican system is chosen and stated to be true because it gives the most simply world system. This example may suffice to show the naïvité of the idea that we choose a theory because after the criterion of experience it pictures reality rightly.

Kirchhoff has formulated the real character of scientific theory in the same way by his well-known statements that mechanics, instead of “explaining” motions by means of the “forces” producing them, has the task “to describe the motions in nature in the most complete and simple way.” Thus the fetishism of forces as causes, as a kind of working imps, was removed; they are a short form of description only. Mach of course pointed to the analogy of Kirchhoff’s views and his own. Lenin, to show that he does not understand anything of it, because he is entirely captivated in this fetishism, calls out in an indignant tone: “Economy of thought, from which Mach in 1872 inferred that sensations alone exist ... is declared to be ... equivalent to the simplest description (of an

objective reality, the existence of which it never occurred to Kirchhoff to doubt!" (198)

It must be remarked, besides, that thinking never can picture reality completely; theory is an approximate picture that renders only the main features, the general traits of a group of phenomena.

After having considered Lenin's ideas on matter and natural laws, we take as a third instance space and time.

"Behold now the 'teachings' of 'recent positivism' on this subject. We read in Mach: 'Space and time are well ordered (wohlgeordnete) systems of series of sensations' (**Mechanik**, 3. Auflage, p.498). This is palpable idealist nonsense, such as inevitably follows from the doctrine that bodies are complexes of sensations. According to Mach, it is not man with his sensations that exists in space and time, but space and time that exist in man, that depend upon man and are generated by man. He feels that he is falling into idealism, and 'resists' by making a host of reservations and ... burying the question under lengthy disquisitions ... on the mutability of our conceptions of space and time. But this does not save him, and cannot save him, for one can really overcome the idealist position on this question only by recognising the objective reality of space and time. And this Mach will not do at any price. He constructs his epistemological theory of time and space on the principle of relativism, and that is all. Resisting the idealist conclusions which inevitably follow from his premises, Mach argues against Kant and insists that our conception of space is derived from experience (**Erkenntnis und Irrtum**, 2. Auflage, p.530, 385). But if objective reality is not given us in experience (as Mach teaches) ..." (206)

What is the use of going on quoting? It is all a sham battle, because we know that Mach assumes the reality of the world; and all phenomena, constituting the world, take place in space and time. And Lenin could have been warned that he was on a false track, by a number of sentences he knows and partly quotes, where Mach discusses the

mathematical investigations on multi-dimensional spaces. There Mach says: "That which we call space is a special real case among more general imagined cases ... The space of vision and touch is a threefold manifold, it has three dimensions ... The properties of given space appear directly as objects of experience ... About the given space only experience can teach us whether it is finite, whether parallel lines intersect, etc... To many divines who do not know where to place hell, and to spiritists, a fourth dimension might be very convenient." But "such a fourth dimension would still remain a thing of imagination." These quotations may suffice. What has Lenin to say to all this, besides a number of groundless squibs and invectives?

"But how does he (Mach) dissociate himself from them in his theory of knowledge? By stating that three-dimensional space alone is real! But what sort of defence is it against the theologians and their like when you deny objective reality to space and time?" (211)

What difference might there be between real space and objective reality of space? At any rate he sticks to his error.

What, then, is that sentence of Mach that was the basis of this fantasy? In the last chapter of his **Mechanik**, Mach discusses the relation between different branches of science. There he says: "First we perceive that in all experiences on spatial and temporal relations we have more confidence, and a more objective and real character is ascribed to them, than to experiences on colour, heat or sound ... Yet, looking more exactly, we cannot fail to see that sensations of space and time are sensations just as those of colour, sound or smell; only, in the former we are more trained and clear than in the latter. Space and time are well-ordered systems of series of sensations ..." Mach proceeds here from experience; our sensations are the only source of knowledge; our entire world, including all we know about space and time, is built up out of them. The question of what is the meaning of absolute space and time is to Mach a meaningless question; the only sensible question is how

space and time appear in our experience. Just as with bodies and matter we can form a scientific conception of time and space only through abstraction out of the totality of our experiences. With the space-and-time pattern in which we insert these experiences we are versed, as most simple and natural, from early youth. How it then appears in experimental science cannot be expressed in a better way than by the words of Mach: well-ordered systems of series of experiences.

What, contrariwise, Lenin thinks of space and time, transpires from the following quotation:

"In modern physics, he says, Newton's idea of absolute time and space prevails (pp.442-4), of time and space as such. This idea seems 'to us' senseless, Mach continues – apparently not suspecting the existence of materialists and of a materialist theory of knowledge. But in practice, he claims, this view was harmless (unschädlich, p.442) and therefore for a long time escaped criticism." (208)

Hence, according to Lenin, "materialism" accepts Newton's doctrine, the basis of which is that there exists an absolute space and an absolute time. This means that the place in space is fixed absolutely without regard to other things, and can be ascertained without any doubt. When Mach says that this is the point of view of contemporary physicists he surely represents his colleagues as too old-fashioned; in his time already it was rather generally accepted that motion and rest were relative conceptions, that the place of a body is always the place relative to other bodies, and that the idea of absolute position has no sense.

Still there was a certain doubt whether or not space-filling world ether did not offer a frame for absolute space; motion or rest relative to world-ether could be rightly called then absolute motion or rest. When, however, physicists tried to determine it by means of the propagation of light, they could find nothing but relativity. Such was the case with Michelson's famous experiment in 1889, arranged in such a way that

in its result nature should indicate the motion of our earth relative to the ether. But nothing was found; nature remained mute. It was as if she said: your query has no sense. To explain the negative result it was assumed that there always occurred additional phenomena that just cancelled the expected effect – until Einstein in 1905 in his theory of relativity combined all facts in such a way that the result was self-evident. Also within the world-occupying ether – absolute position was shown to be a word without meaning. So gradually the idea of ether itself was dropped, and all thought of absolute space disappeared from science.

With time it seemed to be different; a moment in time was assumed to be absolute. But it was the very ideas of Mach that brought about a change here. In the place of talk of abstract conceptions, Einstein introduced the practice of experiment. What are we doing when we fix a moment in time? We look at a clock, and we compare the different clocks, there is no other way. In following this line of argument Einstein succeeded in refuting absolute time and demonstrating the relativity of time. Einstein's theory was soon universally adopted by scientists, with the exception of some anti-semitic physicists in Germany who consequently were proclaimed luminaries of national-socialist "German" physics.

The latter development could not yet be known to Lenin when he wrote his book. But it illustrates the character of such expositions as where he writes:

"The materialist view of space and time has remained 'harmless,' i.e., compatible, as heretofore, with science, while the contrary view of Mach and Co. was a 'harmful' capitulation to the position of fideism."  
(210)

Thus he denotes as materialist the belief that the concepts of absolute space and absolute time, which science once wanted as its theory but had to drop afterwards, are the true reality of the world.

Because Mach opposes their reality and asserts for space and time the same as for every concept, viz. that we can deduce them only from experience, Lenin imputes to him “idealism leading to ‘fideism’.”

### **Materialism**

Our direct concern here is not with Mach but with Lenin. Mach occupies considerable space here because Lenin’s criticism of Mach discloses his own philosophical views. From the side of Marxism there is enough to criticise in Mach; but Lenin takes up the matter from the wrong end. As we have seen he appeals to the old forms of physical theory, diffused into popular opinion, so as to oppose them against the modern critique of their own foundations. We found, moreover, that he identifies the real objective world with physical matter, as middle class materialism did formerly. He tries to demonstrate it by the following arguments:

“If you hold that it is given, a philosophical concept is needed for this objective reality, and this concept has been worked out long, long ago. This concept is matter. Matter is a philosophical category designating the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them.” (144)

Fine; with the first sentence we all can agree. When then, however, we would restrict the character of reality to physical matter, we contradict the first given definition. Electricity too is objective reality; is it physical matter? Our sensations show us light; it is reality but not matter, and the concepts introduced by the physicists to explain its phenomena, first the world ether, then the photons, can not easily be denoted as a kind of matter. Is not energy quite as real as is physical matter? More directly than the material things, it is their energy that shows itself in all experience and produces our sensations. For that reason Ostwald, half a century ago, proclaimed energy the only real substance of the world; and he called this “the end of scientific

materialism," And finally, what is given to us in our sensations, when fellow-men speak to us, is not only sound coming from lips and throat, not only energy of air vibrations, but besides, more essentially, their thoughts, their ideas. Man's ideas quite as certainly belong to objective reality as the tangible objects; things spiritual constitute the real world just as things called material in physics. If in our science, needed to direct our activity, we wish to render the entire world of experience, the concept of physical matter does not suffice; we need more and other concepts; energy, mind, consciousness.

If according to the above definition matter is taken as the name for the philosophical concept denoting objective reality, it embraces far more than physical matter. Then we come to the view repeatedly expressed in former chapters, where the material world was spoken of as the name for the entire observed reality. This is the meaning of the word material, matter in Historical Materialism, the designation of all that is really existing in the world, "including mind and fancies," as Dietzgen said. It is not, therefore, that the modern theories of the structure of matter provoke criticism of his ideas, as Lenin indicates above on the same page, but the fact that he identifies physical matter at all with the real world.

The meaning of the word matter in Historical Materialism, as pointed out here, is of course entirely foreign to Lenin; contrary to his first definition he will restrict it to physical matter. Hence his attack on Dietzgen's "confusion":

"Thinking is a function of the brain, says Dietzgen. 'My desk as a picture in my mind is identical with my idea of it But my desk outside of my brain is a separate object and distinct from my idea.' These perfectly clear materialistic propositions are, however, supplemented by Dietzgen thus: 'Nevertheless, the non-sensible idea is also sensible, material, i.e., real...' This is obviously false. That both thought and matter are 'real,' i.e., exist, is true. But to say that thought is material is

to make a false step, a step towards confusing materialism and idealism. As a matter of fact this is only an inexact expression of Dietzgen." (290)

Here Lenin repudiates his own definition of matter as the philosophical expression of objective reality. Or is perhaps objective reality something different from really existing? What he tries to express but cannot without "inexactness of expression" – is this: that thought may really exist, but the true genuine reality is only found in physical matter.

Middle-class materialism, identifying objective reality with physical matter, had to make every other reality, such as all things spiritual, an attribute or property of this matter. We cannot wonder, therefore, that we find with Lenin similar ideas. To Pearson's sentence: "It is illogical to assert that all matter has consciousness" he remarks:

"It is illogical to assert that all matter is conscious but it is logical to assert that all matter possesses a property which is essentially akin to sensation, the property of reflection." (98)

And still more distinctly he avers against Mach:

"As regards materialism, ... we have already seen in the case of Diderot what the real views of the materialists are. These views do not consist in deriving sensation from the movement of matter or in reducing sensation to the movement of matter, but in recognising sensation as one of the properties of matter in motion. On this question Engels shared the standpoint of Diderot." (40)

Where Engels may have said so, is not indicated. We may doubt whether Lenin's conviction that Engels on this point agreed with him and Diderot, rests on precise statements. In his **Anti-Dühring** Engels expressed himself in another way: "Life is the form of existence of albuminous substances"; i.e. life is not a property of all matter but appears only in such complicated molecular structures as albumen. So it is not probable that he should have considered sensitiveness, which we know as a property of living matter only, a property of all matter, Such

generalisations of properties observed only in special cases, to matter in general, belong to the undialectic middle-class frame of mind.

The remark may be inserted here that Plechanov exhibits ideas analogous to Lenin's. In his **Grundprobleme des Marxismus** he criticises the botanist France on the subject of the "spirituality of matter," the "doctrine that matter in general and organic matter especially always has a certain sensitivity." Plechanov then expresses his own view in the words: "France considers this contradictory to materialism. In reality it is the transfer of Feuerbach's materialistic doctrine. We may assert with certainty that Marx and Engels would have given attention to this trend of thought with the greatest interest." This is a cautious assertion testifying that Marx and Engels in their writings never showed any interest in this trend of thought. France as a limited-minded naturalist knows only the antithesis of views in middle-class thinking; he assumes that materialists believe in matter only, hence the doctrine that in all matter there is something spiritual is, to him, no materialism at all. Plechanov, on the other hand, considers it a small modification of materialism that makes it more resistant.

Lenin was quite well aware of the concordance of his views with middle-class materialism of the 19th century. For him "materialism" is the common basis of Marxism and middle-class materialism. After having expounded that Engels in his booklet on Feuerbach charged these materialists with three things – that they remained with the materialist doctrine of the 18th century, that their materialism was mechanical, and that in the realm of social science, they held fast to idealism and did not understand Historical Materialism – he proceeds:

"Exclusively for these three things and exclusively within these limits, does Engels refute both the materialism of the eighteenth century and the doctrines of Büchner and Co.! On all other, more elementary, questions of materialism (questions distorted by the Machians) there is

and can be no difference between Marx and Engels on the one hand and all these old materialists on the other." (286)

That this is an illusion of Lenin's has been demonstrated in the preceding pages these three things carry along as their consequences an utter difference in the fundamental epistemological ideas. And in the same way, Lenin continues, Engels was in accordance with Dühring in his materialism:

"For Engels ... Dühring was not a sufficiently steadfast, clear and consistent materialist." (288)

Compare this with the way Engels finished Dühring off in words of scornful contempt.

Lenin's concordance with middle-class materialism and his ensuing discordance with Historical Materialism is manifest in many consequences. The former waged its main war against religion; and the chief reproach Lenin raises against Mach and his followers is that they sustain fideism. We met with it in several quotations already; in hundreds of places all through the book we find fideism as the opposite of materialism. Marx and Engels did not know of fideism; they drew the line between materialism and idealism. In the name fideism emphasis is laid upon religion. Lenin explains whence he took the word. "In France, those who put faith above reason are called fideists (from the Latin *fides*, faith)." (306)

This oppositeness of religion to reason is a reminiscence from pre-marxian times, from the emancipation of the middle-class, appealing to "reason" in order to attack religious faith as the chief enemy in the social struggle; "free thinking" was opposed to "obscurantism." Lenin, in continually pointing to fideism as the consequence of the contested doctrines indicates that also to him in the world of ideas religion is the chief enemy.

Thus he scolds Mach for saying that the problem of determinism cannot be settled empirically: in research, Mach says every scientist must be determinist but in practical affairs he remains indeterminist.

"Is this not obscurantism ... when determinism is confined to the field of 'investigation,' while in the field of morality, social activity, and all fields other than 'investigation' the question is left to a 'subjective estimate'." (223) ... "And so things have been amicably divided: theory for the professors, practice for the theologians!" (224)

Thus every subject is seen from the point of view of religion. Manifestly it was unknown to Lenin that the deeply religious Calvinism was a rigidly deterministic doctrine, whereas the materialist middle class of the 19th century put their faith into free will, hence proclaimed indeterminism. At this point a real Marxian thinker would not have missed the opportunity of explaining to the Russian Machists that it was Historical Materialism that opened the way for determinism in the field of society; we have shown above that the theoretical conviction that rules and laws hold in a realm – this means determinism – can find a foundation only when we succeed in establishing practically such laws and connections. Further, that Mach because he belonged to the middle class and was bound to its fundamental line of thought, by necessity was indeterminist in his social views; and that in this way his ideas were backward and incompatible with Marxism. But nothing of the sort is found in Lenin; that ideas are determined by class is not mentioned; the theoretical differences hang in the air. Of course theoretical ideas must be criticised by theoretical arguments. When, however, the social consequences are emphasised with such vehemence, the social origins of the contested ideas should not have been left out of consideration. This most essential character of Marxism does not seem to exist for Lenin.

So we are not astonished that among former authors it is especially Ernst Haeckel who is esteemed and praised by Lenin. In a final chapter

inscribed “Ernst Haeckel and Ernst Mach” he compares and opposes them. “Mach ... betrays science into the hands of fideism by virtually deserting to the camp of philosophical idealism” (422). But “every page” in Haeckel’s work “is a slap in the face of the ‘sacred’ teachings of all official philosophy and theology.” Haeckel “instantly, easily and simply revealed ... that there is a foundation. This foundation is natural-scientific materialism.” (423).

In his praise it does not disturb him that the writings of Haeckel combine, as generally recognised, popular science with a most superficial philosophy – Lenin himself speaks of his “philosophical naïvité” and says “that he does not enter into an investigation of philosophical fundamentals.” What is essential to him is that Haeckel was a dauntless fighter against prominent religious doctrines.

“The storm provoked by Ernst Haeckel’s **The Riddle of the Universe** in every civilised country strikingly brought out, on the one hand, the partisan character of philosophy in modern society and, on the other, the true social significance of the struggle of materialism against idealism and agnosticism. The fact that the book was sold in hundreds of thousands of copies, that it was immediately translated into all languages and that it appeared in special cheap editions, clearly demonstrates that the book ‘has found its way to the masses’, that there are numbers of readers whom Ernst Haeckel at once won over to his side. This popular little book became a weapon in the class struggle. The professors of philosophy and theology in every country of the world set about denouncing and annihilating Haeckel in every possible way.” (423)

What class-fight was this? Which class was here represented by Haeckel against which other class? Lenin is silent on this point. Should his words be taken to imply that Haeckel, unwittingly, acted as a spokesman of the working class against the bourgeoisie? Then it must be remarked that Haeckel was a vehement opponent to socialism, and

that in his defence of Darwinism he tried to recommend it to the ruling class by pointing out that it was an aristocratic theory, the doctrine of the selection of the best, most fit to refute “the utter nonsense of socialist levelling”. What Lenin calls a tempest raised by the **Weltraetsel** was in reality only a breeze within the middle class, the last episode of its conversion from materialism to idealistic world conception. Haeckel’s **Weltraetsel** was the last flare up, in a weakened form, of middle-class materialism, and the idealist, mystic, and religious tendencies were so strong already among the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals that from all sides they could pounce upon Haeckel’s book and show up its deficiencies. What was the importance of the book for the mass of its readers among the working class we have indicated above. When Lenin speaks here of a class fight he demonstrates how little he knew of the class fight in countries of developed capitalism, and saw it only as a fight for and against religion.

### Plechanov’s Views

The kinship with middle-class materialism revealed in Lenin’s book is not simply a personal deviation from Marxism. Analogous views are found in Plechanov, at the time the acknowledged first and prominent theorist of Russian socialism. In his book **Grundprobleme des Marxismus (Fundamental Problems of Marxism)**, first written in Russian, with a German translation in 1910, he begins by broadly treating the concordance between Marx and Feuerbach. What usually is called Feuerbach’s Humanism, he explains, means that Feuerbach proceeds from man to matter. “The words of Feuerbach quoted above on the ‘human head’ show that the question of ‘brain matter’ was answered at the time in a materialist sense. And this point of view was also accepted by Marx and Engels. It became the basis of their philosophy.” Of course Marx and Engels assumed that human thoughts are produced in the brain, just as they assumed that the earth revolved around the sun. Plechanov, however, proceeds: “When we deal with

this thesis of Feuerbach, we get acquainted at the same time with the philosophical side of Marxism." He then quotes the sentences of Feuerbach: 'Thinking comes from being, but being comes not from thinking. Being exists in itself and by itself, existence has its basis in itself;" and he concludes by adding "Marx and Engels made this opinion on the relation between being and thinking the basis of their materialist conception of history." Surely; but the question is what they mean by "being". In this colourless word many opposing concepts of later times are contained undistinguished. All that is perceptible to us we call being; from the side of natural science it can mean matter, from the side of social science the same word can mean the entire society. To Feuerbach it was the material substance of man: "man is what he eats"; to Marx it is social reality, i.e. a society of people, tools, production-relations, that determines consciousness.

Plechanov then speaks of the first of Marx's theses on Feuerbach; he says that Marx here "completes and deepens Feuerbach's ideas"; he explains that Feuerbach took man in his passive relations, Marx in his active relation to nature. He points to the later statement in ***Das Kapital***: "Whilst man works upon outside nature and changes it, he changes at the same time his own nature," and he adds: "The profundity of this thought becomes clear in the light of Marx's theory of knowledge ... It must be admitted, though, that Marx's theory of knowledge is a direct offspring of Feuerbach's or, more rightly, represents Feuerbach's theory of knowledge which, then, has been deepened by Marx in a masterly way." And again, on the next page, he speaks of "modern materialism, the materialism of Feuerbach, Marx and Engels." What must be admitted, rather, is that the ambiguous sentence: being determines thought, is common to them, and that the materialist doctrine that brain produces thought is the most unessential part of Marxism and contains no trace yet of a real theory of knowledge.

The essential side of Marxism is what distinguished it from other materialist theories and what makes them the expression of different class struggles. Feuerbach's theory of knowledge, belonging to the fight for emancipation of the middle class, has its basis in the lack of science of society as the most powerful reality determining human thinking. Marxian theory of knowledge proceeds from the action of society, this self-made material world of man, upon the mind, and so belongs to the proletarian class struggle. Certainly Marx's theory of knowledge descended, historically, from Hegel and Feuerbach; but equally certainly it grew into something entirely different from Hegel and Feuerbach. It is a significant indication of the point of view of Plechanov that he does not see this antagonism and that he assigns the main importance to the trivial community of opinion – which is unimportant for the real issue – that thoughts are produced by the brain.

## Chapter 7. The Russian Revolution

The concordance of Lenin and Plechanov in their basic philosophical views and their common divergence from Marxism points to their common origin out of the Russian social conditions. The name and garb of a doctrine or theory depend on its spiritual descent; they indicate the earlier thinker to whom we feel most indebted and whom we think we follow. The real content, however, depends on its material origin and is determined by the social conditions under which it developed and has to work. Marxism itself says that the main social ideas and spiritual trends express the aims of the classes, i.e. the needs of social development, and change with the class struggles themselves. So they cannot be understood isolated from society and class struggle. This holds for Marxism itself.

In their early days Marx and Engels stood in the first ranks of the middle-class opposition, not yet disjoined into its different social trends,

against absolutism in Germany. Their development towards Historical Materialism, then, was the theoretical reflex of the development of the working class towards independent action against the bourgeoisie. The practical class-antagonism found its expression in the theoretical antagonism. The fight of the bourgeoisie against feudal dominance was expressed by middle-class materialism, cognate to Feuerbach's doctrine, which used natural science to fight religion as the consecration of the old powers. The working class in its own fight has little use for natural science, the instrument of its foe: its theoretical weapon in social science, the science of social development. To fight religion by means of natural science has no significance for the workers; they know, moreover, that its roots will be cut off anyhow first by capitalist development, then by their own class struggle. Neither have they any use for the obvious fact that thoughts are produced by the brain. They have to understand how ideas are produced by society. This is the content of Marxism, as it grows among the workers as a living and stirring power, as the theory expressing their growing power of organisation and knowledge. When in the second half of the 19th century capitalism gained complete mastery in Western and Central Europe as well as in America, middle-class materialism disappeared. Marxism was the only materialist class-view remaining.

In Russia, however, matters were different. Here the fight against Czarism was analogous to the former fight against absolutism in Europe. In Russia too church and religion were the strongest supports of the system of government: they held the rural masses, engaged in primitive agrarian production, in complete ignorance and superstition. The struggle against religion was here a prime social necessity. Since in Russia there was no significant bourgeoisie that as a future ruling class could take up the fight, the task fell to the intelligentsia during scores of years it waged a strenuous fight for enlightenment of the masses against Czarism. Among the Western bourgeoisie, now reactionary

and anti-materialist, it could find no support whatever in this struggle. It had to appeal to the socialist workers, who alone sympathised with it, and it took over their acknowledged theory, Marxism. Thus it came about that even intellectuals who were spokesmen of the first rudiments of a Russian bourgeoisie, such as Peter Struve and Tugan Baranovski, presented themselves as Marxists. They had nothing in common with the proletarian Marxism of the West: what they learned from Marx was the doctrine of social development with capitalism as the next phase. A power for revolution came up in Russia for the first time when the workers took up the fight, first by strikes only, then in combination with political demands. Now the intellectuals found a revolutionary class to join up with, in order to become its spokesmen in a socialist party.

Thus the proletarian class struggle in Russia was at the same time a struggle against Czarist absolutism, under the banner of socialism. So Marxism in Russia, developing as the theory of those engaged in the social conflict, necessarily assumed another character than in Western Europe. It was still the theory of a fighting working class, but this class had to fight first and foremost for what in Western Europe had been the function and work of the bourgeoisie, with the intellectuals as its associates. So the Russian intellectuals, in adapting the theory to this local task, had to find a form of Marxism in which criticism of religion stood in the forefront. They found it in an approach to earlier forms of materialism, and in the first writings of Marx from the time when in Germany the fight of the bourgeoisie and the workers against absolutism was still undivided.

This appears most clearly in Plechanov, the “father of Russian Marxism.” At the time that in Western countries theorists occupied themselves with political problems, he turned his attention to the older materialists. In his **Beiträge zur Geschichte des Materialismus** (**Contributions to the History of Materialism**) he treats the French materialists of the 18th century, Helvetius, Lamettrie, and compares

them with Marx, to show how many valuable and important ideas were already contained in their works. Hence we understand why in his **Grundprobleme des Marxismus** he stresses the concordance between Marx and Feuerbach and emphasises the viewpoints of middle-class materialism.

Yet Plechanov was strongly influenced by the Western, especially the German workers', movement. He was known as the herald of the Russian working-class struggle, which he predicted theoretically at a time when practically there was hardly any trace. He was esteemed as one of the very few who occupied themselves with philosophy; he played an international role and took part in the discussions on Marxism and reformism. Western socialists studied his writings without perceiving at the time the differences hidden within them. Thus he was determined by Russian conditions less exclusively than Lenin.

Lenin was the practical leader of the Russian revolutionary movement. Hence in his theoretical ideas its practical conditions and political aims are shown more clearly. The conditions of the fight against Czarism determined the basic views exposed in his book. Theoretical, especially philosophic views are not determined by abstract studies and chance reading in philosophical literature, but by the great life-tasks which, imposed by the needs of practical activity, direct the will and thought of man. To Lenin and the Bolshevik party the first life-task was the annihilation of Czarism and of the backward barbarous social system of Russia. Church and religion were the theoretical foundations of that system, the ideology and glorification of absolutism, expression and symbol of the slavery of the masses. Hence a relentless fight against them was needed; the struggle against religion stood in the centre of Lenin's theoretical thought; any concession however small to "fideism" was an attack on the life-nerve of the movement. As a fight against absolutism, landed property, and clergy, the fight in Russia was very similar to the former fight of bourgeoisie and intellectuals in

Western Europe; so the thoughts and fundamental ideas of Lenin must be similar to what had been propagated in middle-class materialism, and his sympathies went to its spokesmen. In Russia, however, it was the working class who had to wage the fight; so the fighting organisation had to be a socialist party, proclaiming Marxism as its creed, and taking from Marxism what was necessary for the Russian Revolution: the doctrine of social development from capitalism to socialism, and the doctrine of class war as its moving force. Hence Lenin gave to his materialism the name and garb of Marxism, and assumed it to be the real – i.e. peculiarly working-class as contrasted with middle-class – Marxism.

This identification was supported by still another circumstance. In Russia capitalism had not grown up gradually from small-scale production in the hands of a middle class, as it had in Western Europe. Big industry was imported from outside as a foreign element by Western capitalism, exploiting the Russian workers. Moreover Western financial capital, by its loans to Czarism, exploited the entire agrarian Russian people, who were heavily taxed to pay the interests. Western capital here assumed the character of colonial capital, with the Czar and his officials as its agents. In countries exploited as colonies all the classes have a common interest in throwing off the yoke of the usurious foreign capital, to establish their own free economic development, leading as a rule to home capitalism. This fight is waged against world-capital, hence often under the name of socialism; and the workers of the Western countries, who stand against the same foe, are the natural allies. Thus in China Sun Yat-Sen was a socialist; since, however, the Chinese bourgeoisie whose spokesman he was, was a numerous and powerful class, his socialism was “national” and he opposed the “errors” of Marxism.

Lenin, on the contrary, had to rely on the working class, and because his fight had to be implacable and radical, he espoused the most radical

ideology of the Western proletariat fighting world-capitalism, viz. Marxism. Since, however, the Russian revolution showed a mixture of two characters, middle-class revolution in its immediate aims, proletarian revolution in its active forces, the appropriate bolshevist theory too had to present two characters, middle-class materialism in its basic philosophy, proletarian evolutionism in its doctrine of class fight. This mixture was termed Marxism. But it is clear that Lenin's Marxism, as determined by the special Russian attitude toward capitalism, must be fundamentally different from the real Marxism growing as their basic view in the workers of the countries of big capitalism. Marxism in Western Europe is the world view of a working class confronting the task of converting a most highly developed capitalism, its own world of life and action, into communism. The Russian workers and intellectuals could not make this their object; they had first to open the way for a free development of a modern industrial society. To the Russian Marxists the nucleus of Marxism is not contained in Marx's thesis that social reality determines consciousness, but in the sentence of young Marx, inscribed in big letters in the Moscow People's House, that religion is the opium of the people.

It may happen that in a theoretical work there appear not the immediate surroundings and tasks of the author, but more general and remote influences and wider tasks. In Lenin's book, however, nothing of the sort is perceptible. It is a manifest and exclusive reflection of the Russian Revolution at which he was aiming. Its character so entirely corresponds to middle-class materialism that, if it had been known at the time in Western Europe – but only confused rumours on the internal strifes of Russian socialism penetrated here – and if it could have been rightly interpreted, one could have predicted that the Russian revolution must somehow result in a kind of capitalism based on a workers' struggle.

There is a widespread opinion that the bolshevist party was marxist, and that it was only for practical reasons that Lenin, the great scholar and leader of Marxism, gave to the revolution another direction than what Western workers called communism – thereby showing his realistic marxian insight. The critical opposition to the Russian and C.P. politics tries indeed to oppose the despotic practice of the present Russian government – termed Stalinism – to the “true” Marxist principles of Lenin and old bolshevism. Wrongly so. Not only because in practice these politics were inaugurated already by Lenin. But also because the alleged Marxism of Lenin and the bolshevist party is nothing but a legend. Lenin never knew real Marxism. Whence should he have taken it? Capitalism he knew only as colonial capitalism; social revolution he knew only as the annihilation of big land ownership and Czarist despotism. Russian bolshevism cannot be reproached for having abandoned the way of Marxism: for it was never on that way. Every page of Lenin’s philosophical work is there to prove it; and Marxism itself, by its thesis that theoretical opinions are determined by social relations and necessities, makes clear that it could not be otherwise. Marxism, however, at the same time shows the necessity of the legend; every middle-class revolution, requiring working-class and peasant support, needs the illusion that it is something different, larger, more universal. Here it was the illusion that the Russian revolution was the first step of world revolution liberating the entire proletarian class from capitalism; its theoretical expression was the legend of Marxism.

Of course Lenin was a pupil of Marx; from Marx he had learnt what was most essential for the Russian revolution, the uncompromising proletarian class struggle. Just as for analogous reasons, the social-democrats were pupils of Marx. And surely the fight of the Russian workers, in their mass actions and their soviets, was the most important practical example of modern proletarian warfare. That, however, Lenin did not understand Marxism as the theory of proletarian revolution,

that he did not understand capitalism, bourgeoisie, proletariat in their highest modern development, was shown strikingly when from Russia, by means of the Third International, the world revolution was to be started, and the advice and warnings of Western Marxists were entirely disregarded. An unbroken series of blunders, failures, and defeats, of which the present weakness of the workers' movement was the result, showed the unavoidable shortcoming of the Russian leadership.

Returning now to the time that Lenin wrote his book we have to ask what then was the significance of the controversy on Machism. The Russian revolutionary movement comprised wider circles of intellectuals than Western socialism; so part of them came under the influence of anti-materialist middle-class trends. It was natural that Lenin should sharply take up the fight against such tendencies. He did not look upon them as would a Marxist who understands them as a social phenomenon, explaining them out of their social origin, and thus rendering them ineffectual; nowhere in his book do we find an attempt at or a trace of such an understanding. To Lenin materialism was the truth established by Feuerbach, Marx and Engels, and the middle-class materialists; but then stupidity, reaction, money-interests of the bourgeoisie and the spiritual power of theology had brought about a revulsion in Europe. Now this corruption threatened to assail bolshevism too; so it had to be opposed with the utmost vigour.

In this action Lenin of course was entirely right. To be sure, it was not a question of the truth of Marx or Mach, nor whether out of Mach's ideas something could be used in Marxism. It was the question whether middle-class materialism or middle-class idealism, or some mixture, would afford the theoretical basis for the fight against Czarism. It is clear that the ideology of a self-contented, already declining bourgeoisie can never fit in with a rising movement, not even with a rising middle class itself. It would have led to weakness, where unfolding of the utmost vigour was necessary. Only the rigour of materialism could

make the Party hard, such as was needed for a revolution. The tendency of Machism, somehow parallel to revisionism in Germany, was to break the radicalism of struggle and the solid unity of the party, in theory and in practice. This was the danger that Lenin saw quite clearly. "When I read it (Bogdanov's book) I became exceedingly provoked and enraged," he wrote to Gorky, February 1908. Indeed, we perceive this in the vehemence of his attack upon the adversary, in every page of the work; it seems to have been written in a continuous fury. It is not a fundamental discussion clearing the ideas, as was, for example Engels's book against Dühring; it is the war-pamphlet of a party leader who has to ward off by any means the danger to his party. So it could not be expected that he should try really to understand the hostile doctrines; in consequence of his own unmarxian thinking he could only misinterpret and misrepresent them. The only thing needed was to knock them down, to destroy their scientific credit, and thus to expose the Russian Machists as ignorant parrots of reactionary blockheads.

And he succeeded. His fundamental views were the views of the bolshevist party at large, as determined by its historical task. As so often, Lenin had felt exactly the practical exigencies. Machism was condemned and expelled from the party. As a united body the party could take its course again, in the van of the working class, towards the revolution.

The words of Debordin quoted in the beginning thus are only partially true. We cannot speak of a victory of Marxism, when there is only question of a so-called refutation of middle-class idealism through the ideas of middle-class materialism. But doubtless Lenin's book was an important feature in the history of the Party, determining in a high degree the further development of philosophic opinions in Russia. Hereafter the revolution, under the new system of state capitalism – a combination of middle class materialism and the marxian doctrine of social development, adorned with some dialectic terminology – was, under the name "Leninism," proclaimed the official State-philosophy.

It was the right doctrine for the Russian intellectuals who, now that natural science and technics formed the basis of a rapidly developing production system under their direction, saw the future open up before them as the ruling class of an immense empire.

## Chapter 8. The Proletarian Revolution

The publication first of a German, then of an English translation of Lenin's work shows that it was meant to play a wider role than its function in the old Russian party conflict. It is presented now to the younger generation of socialists and communists in order to influence the international workers' movement. So we ask what can the workers in capitalist countries learn from it? Of the refuted philosophical ideas it gives a distorted view; and under the name of Marxism another theory, middle class materialism is expounded. It does not aim at bringing the reader to a clear independent judgement in philosophical questions; it intends to instruct him that the Party is right, and that he has to trust and to follow the party leaders. What way is it that this party leader shows to the international proletariat? Let us read Lenin's view of the world-contest of the classes in his final sentences: "... behind the epistemological scholasticism of empirio-criticism it is impossible not to see the struggle of parties in philosophy, a struggle which in the last analysis rejects the tendencies and ideology of the antagonistic classes in modern society ... The contending parties are essentially ... materialism and idealism. The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of fideism, which stands fully armed, commands vast organisations and steadily continues to exercise influence on the masses, turning the slightest vacillation in philosophical thought to its own advantage. The objective class role played by empirio-criticism entirely consists in rendering faithful service to the fideists in their struggle against materialism in general and Historical Materialism in particular." (371)

Nothing here of the immense power of the foe, the bourgeoisie, master of all the riches of the world, against which the working class hardly can make any progress. Nothing of its spiritual power over the minds of the workers, still strongly dominated by middle-class culture and hardly able to overcome it in a continuous struggle for knowledge. Nothing of the new powerful ideologies of nationalism and imperialism threatening to gain a hold over the workers too, and indeed, soon afterwards, dragging them along into the world war. No, the Church, the organisation of "fideism" in full armour, that is to Lenin the most dangerous hostile power. The fight of materialism against religious belief is to him the theoretical fight accompanying the class struggle. The limited theoretical opposition between the former and the later ruling class appears to him the great world fight of ideas which he connects with the proletarian class fight, the essence and ideas of which lie far outside his view. Thus in Lenin's philosophy the Russian scheme is transferred upon Western Europe and America, the anti-religious tendency of a rising bourgeoisie is transferred to the rise of the proletariat. Just as among German reformists at that time the division was made between "reaction" and "progress" and not according to class but according to political ideology – thus confusing the workers – so here it is made according to religious ideology, between reactionaries and free-thinkers, instead of establishing its class-unity against bourgeoisie and State, to get mastery over production, the Western proletarian class is invited to take up the fight against religion. If this book and these ideas of Lenin had been known in 1918 among Western Marxists, surely there would have been a more critical attitude against his tactics for world revolution.

The Third International aims at a world revolution after the model of the Russian revolution and with the same goal. The Russian economic system is state capitalism, there called state-socialism or even communism, with production directed by a state bureaucracy under

the leadership of the Communist Party. The state officials, forming the new ruling class, have the disposal over the product, hence over the surplus-value, whereas the workers receive wages only, thus forming an exploited class. In this way it has been possible in the short time of some dozens of years to transform Russia from a primitive barbarous country into a modern state of rapidly increasing industry on the basis of advanced science and technics. According to Communist Party ideas, a similar revolution is needed in the capitalist countries, with the working class again as the active power, leading to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the organisation of production by a state bureaucracy. The Russian revolution could be victorious only because a well-disciplined united bolshevist party led the masses, and because in the party the clear insight and the unyielding assurance of Lenin and his friends showed the right way. Thus, in the same way, in world revolution the workers have to follow the Communist Party, leave to it the lead and afterwards the government; and the party members have to obey their leaders in rigid discipline. Essential are the qualified capable party leaders, the proficient, experienced revolutionaries; what is necessary for the masses is the belief that the party and its leaders are right.

In reality, for the working class in the countries of developed capitalism, in Western Europe and America, matters are entirely different. Its task is not the overthrow of a backward absolutist monarchy. Its task is to vanquish a ruling class commanding the mightiest material and spiritual forces the world ever knew. Its object cannot be to replace the domination of stockjobbers and monopolists over a disorderly production by the domination of state officials over a production regulated from above. Its object is to be itself master of production and itself to regulate labour, the basis of life. Only then is capitalism really destroyed. Such an aim cannot be attained by an ignorant mass, confident followers of a party presenting itself as an

expert leadership. It can be attained only if the workers themselves, the entire class, understand the conditions, ways and means of their fight; when every man knows from his own judgement, what to do. They must, every man of them, act themselves, decide themselves, hence think out and know for themselves. Only in this way will a real class organisation be built up from below, having the form of something like workers' councils. It is of no avail that they have been convinced that their leaders know what is afoot and have gained the point in theoretical discussion – an easy thing when each is acquainted with the writings of his own party only. Out of the contest of arguments they have to form a clear opinion themselves. There is no truth lying ready at hand that has only to be imbibed; in every new case truth must be contrived by exertion of one's own brain.

This does not mean, of course, that every worker should judge on scientific arguments in fields, that can be mastered only by professional study. It means, first, that all workers should give attention not only to their direct working and living conditions but also to the great social issues connected with their class struggle and the organisation of labour; and should know how to take decisions here. But it implies, secondly, a certain standard of argument in propaganda and political strife. When the views of the opponent are rendered in a distorted way because the willingness or the capacity to understand them is lacking, then in the eyes of the believing adherents you may score a success; but the only result – intended indeed in party strife – is to bind them with stronger fanaticism to the party. For the workers however, what is of importance is not the increase of power of a party but the increase of their own capacity to seize power and to establish their mastery over society. Only when, in arguing and discussing, the opponent is given his full pound, when in weighing arguments against one another each solid opinion is understood out of social class relations, will the

participant hearers gain such well-founded insight as is necessary for a working class to assure its freedom.

The working class needs Marxism for its liberation. Just as the results of natural science are necessary for the technical construction of capitalism, so the results of social science are necessary for the organisational construction of communism. What was needed first was political economy, that part of Marxism that expounds the structure of capitalism, the nature of exploitation, the class-antagonism, the tendencies of economic development. It gave, directly, a solid basis to the spontaneously arising fight of the workers against the capitalist masters. Then, in the further struggle, by its theory of the development of society from primitive economy through capitalism to communism, it gave confidence and enthusiasm through the prospect of victory and freedom. When the not yet numerous workers took up their most difficult fight, and the hopeless indifferent masses had to be roused, this insight was the first thing needed.

When the working class has grown more numerous, more powerful, and society is full of the proletarian class struggle, another part of Marxism has to come to the forefront. That they should know that they are exploited and have to fight, is not the main point any more; they must know how to fight, how to overcome their weakness, how to build up their unity and strength. Their economic position is so easy to understand, their exploitation so manifest that their unity in struggle, their common will to seize power over production should presumably result at once. What hampers them is chiefly the power of the inherited and confused ideas, the formidable spiritual power of the middle-class world, enveloping their minds into a thick cloud of beliefs and ideologies, dividing them, and making them uncertain and confused. The process of enlightenment, of clearing up and vanquishing this world of old ideas and ideologies is the essential process of building the working-class power, is the progress of revolution. Here that part of

Marxism is needed that we call its philosophy, the relation of ideas to reality.

Among these ideologies the least significant is religion. As the withered husk of a system of ideas reflecting conditions of a far past, it has only an imaginary power as a refuge for all, who are frightened by capitalist development. Its basis has been continually undermined by capitalism itself. Middle-class philosophy then put up in its place the belief in all those lesser idols, deified abstractions, such as matter, force causality in nature, liberty and progress in society. In modern times these now forsaken idols have been replaced by new, more powerful objects of veneration: state and nation. In the struggle of the old and the new bourgeoisies for world power, nationalism, now the most needed ideology, rose to such power as to carry with it even broad masses of the workers. Most important are, besides such spiritual powers as democracy, organisation, union, party, because they have their roots in the working class itself as results of their life practice, their own struggle. Just because there is connected with them the remembrance of passionate exertion, of devoted sacrifices, of feverish concern with victory or defeat, their merit – which is bound as a class tool to those particular past times and conditions – is exalted to the belief in their absolute excellence. That makes the transition to new necessities under new conditions difficult. The conditions of life frequently compel the workers to take up new forms of fight; but the old traditions can hamper and retard it in a serious way. In the continuous contest between inherited ideology and practical needs, it is essential for the workers to understand that their ideas are not independently existing truths but generalisations of former experiences and necessities; that human mind always has the tendency to assign to such ideas an unlimited validity, as absolutely good or bad, venerated or hated, and thus makes the people slaves to superstition; but that by understanding limits and conditions, superstition is vanquished and thought is made

free. And, conversely, what is recognised as the lasting interest, as the essential basis of the fight for his class, must be unerringly kept in mind – though without being deified – as the brilliant guiding star in all action. This – besides its use as explanation of daily experience and class struggle – is the significance of Marxian philosophy, the doctrine of the connection of world and mind, as conceived by Marx, Engels, and Dietzgen; this gives strength to the working class to accomplish its great task of self-liberation.

Lenin's book, on the other hand, tries to impose upon the readers, the author's belief in the reality of abstractions. So it cannot be helpful in any way for the workers' task. And as a matter of fact its publication in Western languages was not meant to be that. Workers aiming at the self-liberation of their class stand beyond the horizon of the Communist Party. What the Communist Party can see is the competitor, the rival party, the Second International trying to keep the leadership over the working class. As Deborin was quoted in the Preface, the aim of the publication was to win social-democracy, corrupted by middle class idealistic philosophy, back to materialism – or else to browbeat it by the more captivating radical terms of materialism – as a theoretical contribution to the Red Front. For the rising class-movement of the workers it matters little which of these unmarxian party-lines of thought should get the upper hand.

But in another way Lenin's philosophy may be of importance for their struggle. The aim of the Communist Party – which is called world-revolution – is to bring to power, by means of the fighting force of the workers, a layer of leaders who then establish planned production by means of State-Power; in its essence it coincides with the aims of social democracy. The social ideals growing up in the minds of the intellectual class now that it feels its increasing importance in the process of production: a well-ordered organisation of production for use under the direction of technical and scientific experts – are hardly

different. So the Communist Party considers this class its natural allies which it has to draw into its circle. By an able theoretical propaganda it tries to detach the intelligentsia from the spiritual influences of the declining bourgeoisie and of private capitalism, and to win them for the revolution that will put them into their proper place as a new leading and ruling class. Or, in philosophical terms, to win them for materialism. A revolution cannot be made with the meek, softening ideology of a system of idealism, but only under the inspiring daring radicalism of materialist thought. For this the foundation is afforded by Lenin's book. On this basis an extensive literature of articles, reviews, and books has already been published, first in German and then in still greater numbers in English, in Europe and in America, with the collaboration of well-known Russian scholars and Western scientists sympathising with the Communist Party. The contents of these writings make clear at first sight that they are not destined for the working class but for the intellectuals of these countries. Leninism is here expounded before them – under the name of Marxism, or "dialectics" – and they are told that it is the fundamental all-embracing world-doctrine, in which the special sciences must be seen as subordinate parts. It is clear that with real Marxism, as the theory of the real proletarian revolution, such a propaganda would have no chance; but with Leninism, as a theory of middle-class revolution installing a new ruling class, it might be successful.

There is of course this difficulty, that the intellectual class is too limited in number, too heterogeneous in social position, hence too feeble to be able single-handed to seriously threaten capitalist domination. Neither are the leaders of the Second and the Third International a match for the power of the bourgeoisie, even if they could impose themselves by strong and dear politics instead of being rotten through opportunism. When, however, capitalism is tumbling into a heavy economic or political crisis which rouses the masses, when the working

class has taken up the fight and succeeds in shattering capitalism in a first victory – then their time will come. Then they will intervene and slide themselves in as leaders of the revolution, nominally to give their aid by taking part in the fight, in reality to deflect the action in the direction of their party aims. Whether or not the beaten bourgeoisie will then rally with them to save of capitalism what can be saved, in any case their intervention comes down to cheating the workers, leading them off from the road to freedom.

Here we see the possible significance of Lenin's book for the future working-class movement. The Communist Party, though it may lose ground among the workers, tries to form with the socialists and the intellectual class a united front, ready at the first major crisis of capitalism to take in its hands the power over and against the workers. Leninism and its philosophical textbook then will serve, under the name of Marxism, to overawe the workers and to impose upon the intellectuals, as the leading system of thought by which the reactionary spiritual powers are beaten. Thus the fighting working class, basing itself upon Marxism, will find Lenin's philosophical work a stumbling-block in its way, as the theory of a class that tries to perpetuate its serfdom.

# Religion (1947)

Religion is the oldest and most deeply rooted of the ideologies which still play a role today. Religion has always been the form in which men have expressed the consciousness that their life was dominated by superior and incomprehensible forces. In religion was expressed the idea that there is a deep unity between Man and the world, between Man and nature, and between men and other men. With the evolution of labour, of the various modes of production, and of knowledge about nature, as well as with changes in society and the evolution of the relations between people, religious ideas changed.

Today's religious ideas were mainly formed four centuries ago during the violent class struggle which the period of the Reformation knew. This struggle — a struggle of the rising bourgeoisie and commercial capital against the mediaeval domination by landed property, a struggle of the peasants against their exploitation by the nobles and clergy — also assumed a religious form. At that time nature, like society, was badly understood and the profound sense of submissiveness which resulted led to the idea that a supernatural force ruled both the world and humanity. But the content of this idea varied with the environment, the poverty and the basic needs of the believer: it took one form for the rich and the petty bourgeois, another for the prince and the prelate, and yet another for the proletariat of the towns. Organisation into sects with different beliefs and creeds which expressed the class interests and antagonisms of that time recalls the organisation into political parties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Changes of belief,

the setting up of new churches were forms of passionate social struggle. When in 1752 the Dutch towns rose against Spain and put William of Orange at their head, they did so by abandoning the Catholic and joining the Calvinist church.

The forms and names which the various creeds took — the way in which religion presented itself — then as later, was of course linked to mediaeval and primitive forms of Christianity. But their basic content, their essential character, was determined by the birth of bourgeois society, of commodity-production. The forces which dominated the life of Man were no longer natural forces — for these had already been mastered to a certain extent by the new form of labour which was developing — but were still unknown social forces. The producers were forced to transform the commodities they produced into money. But for a producer to know if he could sell his commodities and how many depended on something beyond his control, on the market and its prices, determined by social production as a whole and competition. However hardworking or capable he was he could just as easily become impoverished and even be eliminated as succeed and become rich. This power which dominated him was the commodity transformed into money and concentrated in the form of capital. He was no longer the master of his fate. "Man proposes, but God disposes." But it was no longer as it had been previously, where it was the inner being which a physical power could raise or bring down which was involved; now it concerned the most minor activities of the mind, of thought, of calculations, of the will, of passion; it was a question of a mental force dominating social activity. This society is a single unit; despite the differences between peoples and races, trade connects its various parts and makes them a homogeneous whole. Consequently there is only one god, a pure all-powerful mind, who reigns over the world and decides the fate of men as he pleases. Thus do the religious ideas of the

bourgeois express the basic experience which their world has of the social forces which dominate it.

But the influence of the bourgeois mode of production is just as great on the moral consciousness of men as on their spiritual conceptions. The free producers are independent of each other; it is everyone for himself in unbridled competition. Egoism is the first condition of existence: let someone make a mistake in this implacable struggle of each against all and all against each and he risks being crushed. The producers nevertheless form a coherent whole: they have need of each other and work to satisfy their mutual needs. They are linked by buying and selling: despite all the struggles they engage in, they form a community. But community means that each member's will is limited by obligatory rules. No regular exchange of commodities could take place if everyone lets himself be guided purely by personal egoism: the mutual exchanges demand conformity to certain rules of behaviour and a knowledge of what is permitted and what is not. Without such norms defining honesty and good faith no lasting trade would be possible. It goes without saying that these rules are not always respected by everybody. On the contrary, if personal interest or the needs of self-preservation demand it, they are violated, to a greater or lesser extent as the case may be. But this is done knowingly and this general norm, considered as an eternal moral imperative, is still kept in mind. This conflict between personal interest and the common social interest, between the act and the rule, is the manifestation in the sphere of ethics of the internal ambiguity of the bourgeois world. The moral law — according to Kant — does not rule because it is obeyed but precisely because it is not. This law is not a practical fact but the internal consciousness of what ought to be done. In bourgeois society the idea predominates that in this world people can only survive by sinning against the rules of morality. And it is indeed a sin which we are talking about for the spiritual forces, whose origin in society is not understood,

are felt as divine emanations: the moral law is an order that has come from God. And any offence against this law is an offence against God.

One problem dominates all the religious thought of past centuries: how can the sinner redeem himself before God, how can he obtain his salvation, how can he avoid the punishment he has merited. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century critics posed the following very logical question: why does Man need a remission of his supposed sins since the Creator himself must alone be responsible for what he created? And they justly mocked the strange lucubrations of a clever theology which sought to make all this intelligible. But they forgot the incontestable fact that the idea of sin was at this time very well established and could not have been eradicated from people's minds by arguments. This proves that this notion had a deeply rooted social origin; it drew its strength, both at the time of the Reformation and in the later periods, from the contradictions of the bourgeoisie, i.e. from the contradictions of bourgeois production.

The religious struggles of the century of the Reformation, the ideological form which the class struggle took at that time, were expressed theologically in the discussion about Grace. In the countries of the South where the bourgeoisie was not very strong, where absolute monarchs reigned and where the central power and apparatus of a mediaeval Catholic church was maintained, indeed strengthened through re-organisation, this church declared that salvation could not be obtained without it and required a total submission to the clergy. The bourgeoisie of Western Europe, on the other hand, whose strength was continually growing and who were ready to conquer the new world which was opening up before them, affirmed their freedom by means of the Protestant doctrine which saw Grace as a result of personal faith without having to have recourse to priests. In Germany where the inevitable resistance to the exploitation of Rome coincided with the beginning of an economic decline, this faith took the form of Lutheranism, of a submission to the orders of the

princes. The poor peasants, exploited to death, and the proletarians scarcely felt themselves to be God's creatures, but rather victims in this world; they considered themselves charged with a sacred duty: to establish the Kingdom of God, that of equality and justice, on Earth. All these religious differences were embodied in as many theological doctrines which reflected the differences and antagonisms between classes and social groups: but these religious differences were in fact not understood as this by those involved; they did not perceive their social origin, even though in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during a desperate class struggle, wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions followed one another.

When these struggles died down order was re-established; the differences and antagonisms lost their sharpness; the churches became rigidified into small groups; they became dogmatic; their new members always came from the same families: people entered through birth. In fact the dividing line between the different churches were the results of past struggles and wars, and their stability and cohesion were the result of the tradition and solidarity of their members. But within each small group new class antagonisms developed: the centuries which followed saw rich and poor, landowners and farmers, bourgeois and workers living together in each church. In the period immediately after the Reformation, however, class differences only appeared in the form of beliefs and the struggle for these beliefs. But, for the rich bourgeois, religion was no longer so important; it played a much weaker role for them than for the petty bourgeois and the impoverished and oppressed peasants and they were consequently much more tolerant. Among the latter it took impassioned and fanatical forms (as for example the German Pietists, the Dutch Reformed Church and the English Methodists) which sometimes led to a split in the original church.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the struggle of the bourgeoisie for power sometimes took the form of an ideological struggle against

traditional religion. The power of the princes, nobles and clergy was in fact supported by a religious doctrine, by the authority of a church (the Catholic Church in fact) which guaranteed the sacred character of the old institutions. The church, as in France before the 1789 Revolution, was often the biggest landowner; the expropriation of its land and its redistribution to the peasants — a precondition for capitalist exploitation — was a prime source of wealth for the bourgeoisie. They appealed to and favoured the development of the natural sciences since these were the basis of industrial technology and machinery, but they also used them in their ideological struggle. For the laws of nature which were discovered showed that it was impossible to retain the primitive ideas of traditional religion and sacred truths. Thus in using the new knowledge against the old teachings they pursued their then interest, and they sought to remove the vast mass of petty bourgeois and peasants from the influence of the church and to line them up on their side. By making these masses pass from a belief in the church to a belief in science, they undermined the political power of the dominant class and strengthened their own.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the struggle against traditional religion led in all countries to a retreat of obscurantism and to undeniable progress; but in ways which differed according to the particular situation. Where, as in England, a rich bourgeoisie reigned, these showed themselves prudent and tolerant since they did not want to break their links with the nobility and the church and consequently it was the petty bourgeoisie and the workers who waged the most fierce and radical struggle in the spiritual sphere. But where, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie had still to raise itself and met an obstinate resistance (as in Germany) the anti-religious struggle immediately took extreme radical forms. Scientists and intellectuals in general placed themselves in the front line of propagandists: a wave of books and articles aimed at popularising scientific discoveries spread. And it was precisely because the practical,

political struggle of the German bourgeoisie was so noticeably weak that the theoretical side had to develop. It did this with very different results ranging from benign and liberal Christianity to the most total atheism.

The struggle waged by the bourgeoisie whether for or against religion remained on the ideological level: that of Truth, of general and abstract concepts. In this form it had nothing to do with social objectives. It goes without saying that the bourgeoisie could hardly have revealed its social objective, that of installing the domination of capitalist exploitation; it had to disguise this behind ideas, ideals, those of a political and abstract legal liberty. Thus the struggle between religion and science remained in appearance on the level of ideas. The most radical opponents of religion, most often from the petty bourgeoisie, called themselves "freethinkers", wishing to show thus that they were free of the dogmas and old teachings of the churches and that they sought the truth, by their own thought, in the most complete of liberties. But the idea that men's thought was determined by society, that religious and anti-religious conceptions were born in fact from the mode of production, could not occur to them, since their own knowledge did not extend beyond the natural sciences. But they were to get a good illustration of this, to experience it live, through the intermediary of the fate of their own doctrine.

For the majority of the bourgeois class in fact atheism was not the best theory. It is possible that in their first enthusiasm they believed that, with the coming of the bourgeois order, an era of general well-being, of universal happiness, would commence and that all the problems of everyday life would be solved and that consequently no supernatural or unknown power could dispose of Man's fate; humanity in solving, thanks to science and its technical applications, the practical problems of material life would at the same time solve problems of theory. But this was only a passing illusion. For, in the end, at the bottom of their

subconscious remained the idea that with the struggle of men against each other, with competition, no man was in fact the master of his fate. And it was soon revealed that other new forces were at work in this new world. Periodic commercial and industrial crises, unforeseeable and mysterious catastrophes, brutally interrupted progress. The irresistible growth of industry reduced workers and artisans to the most atrocious poverty: the uprisings of the starving in England already showed the beginning of the organised class struggle. From the depths of these insurgent masses new ideas sprung forth which, like a new "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsim" traced in letters of fire by a prophetic hand, announced to the bourgeoisie their future decline. But the bourgeoisie could not reach a clear, scientific understanding of the true character of society for this would at the same time have revealed their own exploiting and slavist character and would have taught them that their mode of production was transitory. That would have meant that they would have had to sacrifice themselves, with the result that the internal strength to continue the struggle would have been lacking. But the bourgeoisie did feel itself a young enough force to continue to fight to conquer the world and impose its domination on the working masses. A class which feels itself capable of waging a practical struggle cannot do this without the theoretical conviction that it is right and will win; so it constructs a suitable theory and disseminates it. This is why the bourgeoisie had to draw their strength from an instinctive belief that it was not material forces which dominated the world and their own future, but transcendental spiritual forces. Thus the bourgeoisie as a class had to allow religion to survive; the religious way of thinking was completely adapted to their social situation. But this religion was of course quite a different thing from the traditional doctrine of the church. The intolerant and intransigent dogmas were succeeded by more flexible, more rational ideas and the vague feeling that instead of God the avenger, terrifying Jehovah, there reigned in heaven a tolerant

and debonair god, sometimes even so vague and so little existing that he transformed himself into a simple moral ideal.

But to the extent that the workers' movement later arose as a threat, the bourgeoisie more and more turned back to religion. Mystical ideas got more and more of a hold on the general thought and output of its spokesmen. Certainly from time to time one saw some signs of rationalism resurging, especially at the time when the big bourgeoisie felt itself strong enough to conquer the universe with its industry and its capital; but, strengthened by violent world crises and destructive wars, the feeling of uncertainty, of anguish in the face of the future, developed in the bourgeoisie and, with this, mystical and religious tendencies grew.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there appeared within the working class a completely different materialist conception, connected with its way of life and class position. It was different from the atheism which had played a role in the struggle of the bourgeoisie. Atheism is opposed to theism, to belief in God; for it, the essential problem is: does there exist a God who rules the world. Materialism does not deal with this problem; it is interested in the forces which really dominate the world: these are material forces, that is real and observable forces. For the forces which dominate the workers are visible and clearly identifiable: they are social forces. As soon as the workers reach an understanding of their class position they realise that their common fate is determined by capitalism; they realise that their exploitation is the result of the necessity for capital to accumulate by making profits; they realise that through the struggle which they wage in increasing numbers they will become capable of overthrowing capital and abolishing exploitation. Their thought moves within the realities of the world; the old question of whether or not there exists a God who rules the world does not arise for them. It is meaningless, just as is the question posed in the Middle Ages of how many angels can dance on a pinhead. Religious questions and

problems have no interest for the workers since they play no role in the questions which really move them to act. And because they play no role, religious questions and problems disappear from the consciousness of the workers and finally disappear altogether.

This then is the difference between atheism and materialism. Atheism essentially attacks religion, considering it the main cause of ignorance and oppression, and fights it because it sees in it the most dangerous enemy of progress. Materialism sees religion as a product of social relations and consequently does not interest itself at all in religious questions as such, but in so doing does not any the less undermine religion. Materialism has to deal with religion from the theoretical point of view alone, to show that it is an important historical phenomenon, and thus to understand and explain it. In practice, however, atheism and materialism have existed side by side in the workers' movement. It often happens in fact that a worker brought up in a religious tradition, begins to think on the basis of his personal experience of reality, i.e. in a materialist way, and then notes that his previous beliefs disappear. In this period of doubt and internal contradiction, he has recourse to atheist works and to books popularising science in order to triumph over tradition by coming to understand.

Atheism has only once played an important role: during the Russian revolution. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia was an immense country peopled by uncultivated and poverty-stricken peasants, just freed from serfdom, living in a quite primitive poverty and subjected to the cruel and incompetent despotism of the Tsar and the landed nobility. West European capitalism exploited the country as a sort of colony: the starving peasants had to pay heavy taxes which went to repay the debts contracted by the Tsar for his war policy and his wasteful expenditure. Nevertheless in some large towns were to be found a constantly increasing number of factories managed by foreigners which employed

a working class population recruited from the peasantry and deprived of all rights. The struggle against Absolutism and to obtain a more liberal political structure was waged by small groups of intellectuals who, as in Western Europe, were the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie and fought on their side. But here in Russia, where no powerful bourgeoisie existed, the first struggles — the most well known being those of the Nihilists — were brutally crushed. It was only at the beginning of the century when the workers' movement with its strikes was born that the activities of the intellectuals acquired a solid basis. The revolutionary intellectuals then became the spokesmen, propagandists and educators of the working class. And to this end they turned to the workers' movement of Western Europe and particularly to Social Democracy. They borrowed the ideas and theories of the Social Democrats and in particular the Marxist theory of the class struggle and the economic development of capitalism. They dedicated themselves body and soul to the struggle, carrying out unrelenting propaganda for the workers to organise into the "Bolshevik party" and to thus undermine the Tsarist regime. And when the Tsarist regime collapsed, worn out by two unsuccessful wars, this party took power in 1917 in the course of a workers' and peasants' revolution.

The character of the Bolshevik party, its doctrine, ideas and propaganda were thus ambiguous. They had to accomplish a task which in Western Europe had been the work of the bourgeois revolution: to wage the struggle against royal absolutism, against the domination of the nobles and the church and to clear the way for industrial development and the education of the people. But here the force which had to accomplish this task was the working class which had already shown signs of socialist tendencies going beyond capitalism. But the corresponding socialist doctrine was influenced by ideas connected with the struggle of the nascent bourgeoisie against the princes, nobles and the church. Russian religion had a nature even more

ignorantly and primitively bigoted than in western Europe, resting even more on a flowery liturgy and on the worship of images, the miracle-working icons. The spiritual struggle had to be largely directed against this ignorance on which Tsarism rested and to do this recourse had to be had explicitly to atheist and anti-religious propaganda. This is why the writings of the "young Marx," i.e. his works before 1846, dating from a time when their author was one of the leading fighters for a mainly bourgeois German revolution, provided arguments and slogans of prime importance for this struggle.

When, once in power, the Bolsheviks began to organise industry and had to consolidate their domination over the peasant masses, anti-religious and atheist propaganda became even more significant and important. It was an essential part, even the basis, of the intense campaign to educate the people. The illiterate muzhiks were not affected much by arguments drawn from the natural sciences, but the fact that the atheist propagandists were not reduced to dust by lightning seemed to them a sufficient proof to get them to burn the images of the saints and to let the priests die of hunger. The young peasants willingly attended the agricultural and professional schools to acquire the new knowledge. There thus appeared in Russia a new generation, brought up outside of all religion.

Under Bolshevik rule industry, with its central planning and its organisation based on scientific techniques, developed at an impressive speed, despite the difficulty of changing old habits of work, adapting them to the pace of machines. Agriculture too underwent a transformation, imposed by force, which made it a network of big mechanised enterprises. A large bureaucracy of political and technical leaders became master of the State, the means of production and the products. And, despite the name of Communism which is frequently attributed to this regime, and which is in fact false, the working class does not rule industry: it receives low wages which are fixed by higher

authorities and is in fact exploited, the surplus value being at the disposal of the government which applies it to further develop the productive apparatus and for its own use. In this economic system, State capitalism, the bureaucracy plays the role of a new ruling class, a role in many respects the same as that played by the bourgeoisie in Western Europe.

The harsh oppression which this system imposed on the mass of workers and the often fierce struggle which the peasants waged against the setting up of large agricultural enterprises and for the defence of private property led to opposition which, in the absence of political freedom, frequently took ideological forms. In many cases a revival of religion occurred. For, aware of its impotence in the face of the central power, this opposition had to take a form hostile to the official doctrine of the leaders of the regime and, as religious belief was the only means of active opposition and collective protest, this led to a strengthening of former ignorance. And in retaliation this opposition led to campaigns against religion.

Such is the basis of the revival of religion which is often pointed out in Russia. This development proves the groundlessness of the atheist theory which sees religion as the outcome of a tradition resulting from the trickery of the priests which is forcibly imposed upon children, and which should consequently disappear with this practice and with the study of scientific truth. In fact religion rests on a mode of production and cannot disappear until working humanity is free and the master of its labour, of its fate, or when it sees this possibility. It can thus be said, as regards Russia, that to the extent that State capitalism, by permanently developing production, either places the masses before the necessity to take their fate completely into their own hands by a more and more determined struggle for their liberation or, on the other hand, leads to a strengthening of the dictatorship, atheist ideology will either

be transformed into conscious materialism or will retreat before a return of religious beliefs.

For the first time in human history there appears a life without religion amongst the working masses; but this is not a question of an aggressive anti-religious attitude, of a struggle against religion as such. Important fractions of the working class in fact remain on the surface and quite formally faithful to churches and religious forms. But in reality they have learned to consider the phenomena of the world and the happenings of life as governed by natural forces, to such an extent that traditional religious ideas and beliefs take second place. This is the reason why the materialist conception, while it progresses in thinking, does not do so in full consciousness, nor in an absolute manner, nor everywhere. Where the workers' labour power is permanently pitted against terrifying natural forces which are not properly dominated as a result of the weakness of capitalism, and which threaten them with death (as is the case for example with miners and fishermen), it is natural that their consciousness remains full of religious ideas and belief. Further, where the church, whose strange collection of political positions is known, chooses the workers' side and puts its strength at their disposal in the struggle against capital as if it were its own cause, for dozens of years the workers feel linked to it, even if the church's position later comes to change. The development of the materialist conception is thus itself subject to variations of historical conditions.

This type of phenomenon first appeared during the ardent struggle which Chartism waged. The English workers, who were the first to do so, had to find their own way, both practically and theoretically. Their struggle coincided with that of the bourgeoisie against landed property; this is why bourgeois radicalism had such an influence on the English workers. It is only the more remarkable that, amidst traditional ideas, there can be found in the Chartist press new radical, atheist, materialist ideas already expressed with considerable force.

Certainly a good part of these came from the past being inherited from a radical tradition — rationalist thought. After 1848, however, when the English bourgeoisie had achieved its aims and had made itself, thanks to its industry and trade, masters of the world, it recuperated for its own account almost the entire traditional doctrine of the Church; and when the working class itself had, thanks to the trade union movement and the winning of the right to vote, taken its place in capitalism and received its share of the profits of monopoly capital — in other words when it in fact accepted capitalism — it adapted its ideas to this new situation. It set about adopting the ideas of the bourgeoisie: its modes of thought were bourgeois, but ones which followed those of the radical petty bourgeoisie. This happened, for example, with its acceptance of religious tradition, of the ruling belief, which most often took the form of adhesion to the petty-bourgeois, non-conformist church (Low Church) as opposed to the official Anglican Church (High Church).

It was quite different in Germany where, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and the workers' movement were born simultaneously. The accelerated development of large-scale industry and the agreement between the bourgeoisie and the landed proprietors who then held power meant that the workers had to fight these two enemies at the same time; as a result there was a rapid growth of Social-Democracy. The German working class benefited from an important advantage in the formation of its new conception of the world, that of having available the scientific studies of Karl Marx. These uncovered the forces and tendencies of the social development which governed the birth and future decline of the capitalist mode of production and thus showed the working class what were its task and destiny. Marx, in the course of his historical studies, at the same time perfected a method, historical materialism, which not only uncovered the relation of dependence between the course of history and the economic development of society, but which also traced the way which

leads to a naturalist conception of all mental phenomena which until then had been tied to religious and mystical theories. Thanks to this method, the materialist ideas of the Social Democratic workers were able to develop without hindrance and to grow stronger. They were expressed in a whole literature. But this did not occur without struggle or discussion. For modes of both religious and atheist thought had been inherited from the bourgeois world. And it often happens that when the bourgeoisie renounces its former fighting positions, these are taken up by the petty bourgeoisie and the workers who do not want to accept this "betrayal of principles" and who continue the old tradition. It was thus with atheism which had come to be considered a basic and radical principle. But atheism only considered the ideological forms without paying attention to the deeper fundamental differences between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution. It had little influence on Marxist ideas, as was reflected in practice in the programme of the Social Democratic Party where it could be read that religion is a private matter (*Religion ist Privatsache*). This point of view, however, had the result not only of correctly limiting the Party's aims to the economic transformation of the mode of production, but of serving as an open door through which all sorts of opportunist ideas could pour through into propaganda. In the end it became and remained a matter of controversy in the political discussions within the Party.

Later, when in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reformism, connected with prosperity, came to dominate thinking more and more consciously, bourgeois points of view progressively took over in all spheres. The bourgeoisie, its power strengthened, forced the working class to espouse its cause in the struggle for world domination; this is why certainty as to the coming of Socialism waned. This new doubt led to a revival of religious feelings amongst the workers. In Germany the acceptance of the leadership of the bourgeoisie resulted in a receding of independent and materialist ideas. It was the same everywhere.

But as soon as the working class comes to wage its struggle for power, to conquer the factories, to master production, all this will change. This struggle more than ever demands an ever clearer consciousness of the economic aim. Unity of action is more than ever needed. The workforce must form coherent units of action: ideological divergences such as exist in the trade union movement cannot be admitted. The workforce discusses its action as the unit which will carry out the task; if religious divergences were to be admitted the unity of this whole would be threatened and all practical action would become impossible. This is why such divergences must be entirely kept out of the discussions amongst members of a factory. For it is here that the most ardent, the deepest and the most self-aware social struggle develops, which no longer disguises itself under ideological tinsel. A clear consciousness takes hold of the combatants. All deviation from the direction which leads to the objective must be ceaselessly corrected, since it means a weakening and defeat.

It is probable, however, that, even during such a struggle, religion will play a role since it still dominates the thought of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants. The bourgeoisie will try to organise these classes and to range them against the workers. It will first of all appeal to the instinct of property, thus disguising its exploiting interest. But it will also try to give this fight an ideological form and will present it as a clash between belief and unbelief. And this will make the class struggle harsher; it will become more cruel as a blind fanaticism comes to dominate and to replace all discussion on the subject in the interests of these classes. But, here again, the strength of the working class lies in their putting the economic aim to the forefront, viz., the organisation of work by the working and producing classes themselves, thus excluding all domination by the interests of the exploiters. It is thus that all trace of the oppression of former modes of thought will disappear since, with the collective management of production, the basis and condition for

a genuine expansion of the thought and cultural life of all will appear. Finally, if the economic necessities force these classes to collaborate with the working class, if their participation in the work of uniting promises them emancipation from all capitalist exploitation, so that the old class relations disappear, it must be expected that a new cultural life which will replace former religious convictions will flourish for them also.

Thus, in all probability, the sources which, in the history of mankind have up until now fed the forces of religion will dry up. No natural power will any longer be able to frighten Man; no natural catastrophe, no storm, no floods, no earthquake or epidemic will be able to put his existence in danger. By ever more accurate predictions, by an ever greater development of the sciences and of an ever more wonderful technology, the dangers will be limited to the maximum: no human life will be wasted. Science and its applications will make mankind the master of natural forces which it will use for its own needs. No powerful or not understood social force will be able to attack or frighten mankind: they will master their fate by organising their work and at the same time master all the mental forces of the will and passion. The anguish of having to go before a supreme judge who will decide the fate of each person for eternity — an anguish which has been responsible for centuries for so many terrors for defenceless mankind — will disappear as soon as co-operation between men and sacrifice for the community are no longer fettered by moral laws. Thus all the functions which religion fulfilled in men's thought and feelings will be filled by other ways of thinking and feeling.

But will not an eternal function of religion remain: to give consolation and certainty in the moments of dying and death? The certainty of being able to ensure one's life by one's work, the disappearance of many of the causes of premature death, poverty, illness and accident have no influence on the biological fact that every living being has a temporary existence. The significance of this fact,

however, and its influence on mankind's ideas is strongly dependent on social relations. Belief in the survival of the mind, of the soul, the psychological basis of all religion (which can already be seen forming among primitive peoples on the basis of dreams), is, in its present form, a product of the bourgeois mode of production. The very strong sentiment of individual personality which has its roots in individual work carried on under one's own responsibility, in the separation from the other's activity, reduces this belief to the need to believe, to be convinced, that the individual, in his real, i.e. mental, essence is eternal. Each individual was isolated — or loosely held by the very lax links which unite the members of any grouping — in the struggle for life. Around each individual there existed, however, a small group, such as the family, a sort of small isolated and independent fortified town at war with other towns. Thus the biological links between couples and between parents and children became the only solid links between men, both on the economic and material level and on the mental. The breaking of these links, whether expectedly or unexpectedly, was in everybody's eyes the greatest of all catastrophes: the worries which the dying had for those they left behind, the loneliness of the latter, which was often aggravated by economic ruin, were only feebly compensated by the presence of parents and friends, who were themselves preoccupied mainly by their own struggle to live. This is why, thanks to a belief in a new meeting in eternity for those who were separating, and to a faith in the providence to which Man had to submit in order to be able to bear the caprices of fate, religion served for centuries as a consolation.

With the establishment of the new mode of production many of the reasons for believing will disappear and particularly those we have just examined. The feeling of individuality will be profoundly changed by the feeling of solidarity which will develop, to which one will dedicate oneself and from which one will derive one's greatest strength. Then,

there will no longer be any need for the illusion of believing in the eternal life of the individual or the soul: it is in fact the community to which one belongs which is eternal. Everything which has been produced by Man, everything to which he has dedicated the best of his forces survives within this community. His mental being is eternal insofar as it forms part of the mentality of all mankind and has no need to survive as some spectre separated from it. Links of solidarity, much stronger than those which in the past united the members of the same family will unite all men. There will no longer be any need to worry about the economic consequences of death, nor to concern oneself for the survivors — worries which, formerly, often made dying more distressing. And the pain of having to leave for ever will weaken since the strengthened links of human fraternity will no longer retreat before feelings of isolation and loneliness. Death will lose its frightening character for a generation which will have learned, in the course of a fierce struggle for its freedom, to sacrifice its own life. And the feeling of love for the community which will thenceforth dominate will grow stronger in the community of work in which the free producers will be grouped together. For the fortunate generation in which the new mankind will be born, each individual life will only be the temporary form taken by a social life which will more and more develop.

# Public Ownership and Common Ownership (1947)

The acknowledged aim of socialism is to take the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class and place them into the hands of the workers. This aim is sometimes spoken of as public ownership, sometimes as common ownership of the production apparatus. There is, however, a marked and fundamental difference.

Public ownership is the ownership, i.e. the right of disposal, by a public body representing society, by government, state power or some other political body. The persons forming this body, the politicians, officials, leaders, secretaries, managers, are the direct masters of the production apparatus; they direct and regulate the process of production; they command the workers. Common ownership is the right of disposal by the workers themselves; the working class itself — taken in the widest sense of all that partake in really productive work, including employees, farmers, scientists — is direct master of the production apparatus, managing, directing, and regulating the process of production which is, indeed, their common work.

Under public ownership the workers are not masters of their work; they may be better treated and their wages may be higher than under private ownership; but they are still exploited. Exploitation does not mean simply that the workers do not receive the full produce of their

labor; a considerable part must always be spent on the production apparatus and for unproductive though necessary departments of society. Exploitation consists in that others, forming another class, dispose of the produce and its distribution; that they decide what part shall be assigned to the workers as wages, what part they retain for themselves and for other purposes. Under public ownership this belongs to the regulation of the process of production, which is the function of the bureaucracy. Thus in Russia bureaucracy as the ruling class is master of production and produce, and the Russian workers are an exploited class.

In Western countries we know only of public ownership (in some branches) of the capitalist State. Here we may quote the well-known English "socialist" writer G. D. H. Cole, for whom socialism is identical with public ownership. He wrote

"The whole people would be no more able than the whole body of shareholders in a great modern enterprise to manage an industry ... It would be necessary, under socialism as much 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" (p. 674).

"There is no reason to suppose that socialisation of any industry would mean a great change in its managerial personnel" (p. 676 in *An Outline of Modern Knowledge* ed. By Dr W. Rose, 1931).

In other words: the structure of productive work remains as it is under capitalism; workers subservient to commanding directors. It clearly does not occur to the "socialist" author that "the whole people" chiefly consists of workers, who were quite able, being producing personnels, to manage the industry, that consists of their own work.

As a correction to State-managed production, sometimes workers' control is demanded. Now, to ask control, supervision, from a superior indicates the submissive mood of helpless objects of exploitation.

And then you can control another man's business; what is your own business you do not want controlled, you do it. Productive work, social production, is the genuine business of the working class. It is the content of their life, their own activity. They themselves can take care if there is no police or State power to keep them off. They have the tools, the machines in their hands, they use and manage them. They do not need masters to command them, nor finances to control the masters.

Public ownership is the program of "friends" of the workers who for the hard exploitation of private capitalism wish to substitute a milder modernized exploitation. Common ownership is the program of the working class itself, fighting for self liberation.

We do not speak here, of course, of a socialist or communist society in a later stage of development, when production will be organized so far as to be no problem any more, when out of the abundance of produce everybody takes according to his wishes, and the entire concept of "ownership" has disappeared. We speak of the time that the working class has conquered political and social power, and stands before the task of organizing production and distribution under most difficult conditions. The class fight of the workers in the present days and the near future will be strongly determined by their ideas on the immediate aims, whether public or common ownership, to be realized at that time.

If the working class rejects public ownership with its servitude and exploitation, and demands common ownership with its freedom and self-rule, it cannot do so without fulfilling conditions and shouldering duties. Common ownership of the workers implies, first, that the entirety of producers is master of the means of production and works them in a well planned system of social production. It implies secondly that in all shops, factories, enterprises the personnel regulate their own collective work as part of the whole. So they have to create the organs by means of which they direct their own work, as personnel, as well as

social production at large. The institute of State and government cannot serve for this purpose because it is essentially an organ of domination, and concentrates the general affairs in the hands of a group of rulers. But under Socialism the general affairs consist in social production; so they are the concern of all, of each personnel, of every worker, to be discussed and decided at every moment by themselves. Their organs must consist of delegates sent out as the bearers of their opinion, and will be continually returning and reporting on the results arrived at in the assemblies of delegates. By means of such delegates that at any moment can be changed and called back the connection of the working masses into smaller and larger groups can be established and organization of production secured.

Such bodies of delegates, for which the name of workers' councils has come into use, form what may be called the political organization appropriate to a working class liberating itself from exploitation. They cannot be devised beforehand, they must be shaped by the practical activity of the workers themselves when they are needed. Such delegates are no parliamentarians, no rulers, no leaders, but mediators, expert messengers, forming the connection between the separate personnel of the enterprises, combining their separate opinions into one common resolution. Common ownership demands common management of the work as well as common productive activity; it can only be realized if all the workers take part in this self-management of what is the basis and content of social life; and if they go to create the organs that unite their separate wills into one common action.

Since such workers' councils doubtlessly are to play a considerable role in the future organization of the workers' fights and aims, they deserve keen attention and study from all who stand for uncompromising fight and freedom for the working class.

# Theses On The Fight Of The Working Class Against Capitalism (1947)

**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 regulation 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 bolding 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, bases 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 right 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

COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ANTON PANNEKOEK

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.

# Strikes (1948)

In the workers' movement two chief forms of fight are distinguished, often denoted as the political and the economic field of fight. The former centred about elections for parliamentary or analogous bodies, the latter consisted in strikes for higher wages and better working conditions. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a common opinion among socialists that the former had a fundamental importance, was revolutionary, because it set up the aim of conquering political power, and thereby revolutionising the structure of society, abolishing capitalism and introducing a socialist system. Whereas the latter was only a means of reform, to maintain or improve the standard of life within capitalism, hence accepting this system as the basis of society.

That this distinction could not be entirely right was soon shown by the practice of parliamentarism. Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*, had already indicated some measures of reform preparing for the future revolution. In later times the socialist parliamentarians were working and struggling continually for reforms; the socialist parties to which they belonged, put up an elaborate program of "immediate demands"; and they could win increasing numbers of voters. First, and most manifestly, in Germany; then in other European countries. The final aim of a socialist revolution gradually receded to the background. What, under the name of fighting for socialism, this political fight really achieved, was to secure for the working class a certain acknowledged place in capitalist society, with certain standards of working and living

conditions, of course never really secure, always unstable but existing somehow, always disputed and always in need of defense.

Both these forms of fight, trade-unionism with its strikes as well as parliamentary socialism were now instruments of reform only — for a large part handled by the same persons, union leaders sitting in parliament. And reformist doctrine asserted that by their activity, by accumulated reform in parliament and "industrial democracy" in the shops, they would gradually transform capitalism into socialism.

But capitalism had its own ways. What Marx had expounded in his economic studies, the concentration of capital, came true in a far mightier degree than perhaps its author had surmised. The growth and development of capitalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has brought about numbers of new social phenomena and economic conditions. Every socialist who stands for uncompromising class fight, has to study these changes attentively, because it is on them that depends how the workers have to act to win victory and freedom; many old conceptions of revolution can now take more distinct shape. This development increased the power of capital enormously, gave to small groups of monopolists dominance over the entire bourgeoisie, and tied State power ever faster to big business. It strengthened in this class the instincts of suppression, manifest in the increase of reactionary and fascist trends. It made the trade unions ever more powerless over against capital, less inclined to fight; their leaders ever more became mediators and even agents of capital, whose job it is to impose the unsatisfactory capital-dictated working conditions upon the unwilling workers. The strikes ever more take the form of wild strikes, breaking out against the will of the union leaders, who then, by seizing the leadership, as soon as possible quell the fight. Whereas in the field of politics all is collaboration and harmony of the classes — in the case of the C. P. accompanied by a semblance of revolutionary talk, such wild

strikes become ever more the only real bitter class-fight of the workers against capital.

After the war these tendencies are intensified. Reconstruction, reparation of the devastation or shortness of productive forces, means capitalist reconstruction. Capitalist reconstruction implies more rapid accumulation of capital, more strenuous increase of profits, depression of the standard of life of the workers. State power acquires now an important function in organizing business life. In the devastated Europe it takes the supreme lead; its officials become the directors of a planned economy, regulating production and consumption. Its special function is to keep the workers down, and stifle all discontent by physical or spiritual means. In America, where it is subjected to big business, this is its chief function. The workers have now over against them the united front of State power and capitalist class, which usually is joined by union leaders and party leaders, who aspire to sit in conference with the managers and bosses and having a vote in fixing wages and working conditions. And, by this capitalist mechanism of increasing prices, the standard of life of the workers goes rapidly downward.

In Europe, in England, Belgium, France, Holland — and in America too, we see wild strikes flaring up, as yet in small groups, without clear consciousness of their social role and without further aims, but showing a splendid spirit of solidarity. They defy their "Labor" government in England, and are hostile to the Communist Party in government, in France and Belgium. The workers begin to feel that State power is now their most important enemy; their strikes are directed against this power as well as against the capitalist masters. Strikes become a political factor; and when strikes break out of such extent that they lay flat entire branches and shake social production to its core, they become first-rate political factors. The strikers themselves may not be aware of it -neither are most socialists-they may have no intention to be revolutionary, but they are. And gradually consciousness will come up of what they are

doing intuitively, out of necessity; and it will make the actions more direct and more efficient.

So the roles are gradually reversed. Parliamentary action deteriorates into a mere quarrel of politicians, and serves to fool the people, or at best to patch up dirty old capitalism. At the same time mass strikes of the workers tend to become most serious attacks against State power, that fortress of capitalism, and most efficient factors in increasing the consciousness and social power of the working class. Surely it is still a long way to the end; so long as we see workers going on strike and returning to work simply at the command of an ambitious chief, they are not yet ripe for great actions of self-liberation. But looking backward on the developments and changes in the past half-century we cannot fail to recognize the importance of these genuine proletarian class-fights for our ideas of social revolution. How thereby the propaganda-tasks for socialists are widened, may be considered another time.

# Workers' Councils (1948)

## Preface to 1950 Edition

The main part of this book has been written during the war under the occupation of Holland by the Germans, the first three parts 1942; the fourth 1944; a fifth part was added after the war, 1947. The author, who during many years attentively observed, and sometimes actively took part in, the workers' movement, gives here a summary of what from these experiences and study may be derived as to methods and aims of the workers' fight for freedom. A somewhat different Dutch version was published in Holland, 1946. The English version was printed at Melbourne serially, as an addition to the monthly "Southern Advocate for Workers' Councils," during the years 1947–49. Owing to many difficulties the publication in book-form was delayed until 1950.

J. A. Dawson

## Preface (As it appeared in the original Dutch Edition)

This book has been written in the war years 1941–42 under the occupation of Holland by the Germans. The author, who during many years attentively observed and sometimes actively took part in the workers' movement, gives here a summary of what from these experiences and study may be derived as to methods and aims of the workers' fight for freedom. What a century of workers' struggles

presents to us is neither a series of ever again failing attempts at liberalism, nor a steadfast forward march of the workers following a fixed plan of old well-tried tactics. With the development of society we see arise new forms of fight, and this development imposed by the growth of capitalism and the growth of the working class, must go on in ever mightier display.

The first part of the book shows the task which the workers have to perform and the fight they have to wage. The following parts treat the social and spiritual trends arising in the bourgeoisie that determine the conditions under which the workers had and have to fight. All the discourses are based on the deep connection between production system and class-fight elucidated in Marxian theory.

The Editor.

## Part 1 — The Task

### 1. Labor

In the present and coming times, now that Europe is devastated and mankind is impoverished by world war, it impends upon the workers of the world to organize industry, in order to free themselves from want and exploitation. It will be their task to take into their own hands the management of the production of goods. To accomplish this great and difficult work, it will be necessary to fully recognize the present character of labor. The better their knowledge of society and of the position of labor in it, the less difficulties, disappointments and setbacks they will encounter in this striving.

The basis of society is the production of all goods necessary to life. This production, for the most important part, takes place by means of highly developed technics in large factories and plants by complicated machines. This development of technics, from small tools that could be

handled by one man, to big machines handled by large collectives of workers of different kind, took place in the last centuries. Though small tools are still used as accessories, and small shops are still numerous, they hardly play a role in the bulk of the production.

Each factory is an organization carefully adapted to its aims; an organization of dead as well as of living forces, of instruments and workers. The forms and the character of this organization are determined by the aims it has to serve. What are these aims?

In the present time, production is dominated by capital. The capitalist, possessor of money, founded the factory, bought the machines and the raw materials, hires the workers and makes them produce goods that can be sold. That is, he buys the labor power of the workers, to be spent in their daily task, and he pays to them its value, the wages by which they can procure what they need to live and to continually restore their labor power. The value a worker creates in his daily work in adding it to the value of the raw materials, is larger than what he needs for his living and receives for his labor power. The difference that the capitalist gets in his hands when the product is sold, the surplus-value, forms his profit, which in so far as it is not consumed, is accumulated into new capital. The labor power of the working class thus may be compared with an ore mine, that in exploitation gives out a produce exceeding the cost bestowed on it. Hence the term exploitation of labor by capital. Capital itself is the product of labor; its bulk is accumulated surplus-value.

Capital is master of production; it has the factory, the machines, the produced goods; the workers work at its command; its aims dominate the work and determine the character of the organization. The aim of capital is to make profit. The capitalist is not driven by the desire to provide his fellow-men with the necessities of life; he is driven by the necessity of making money. If he has a shoe factory he is not animated by compassion for the painful feet of other people; he is animated by

the knowledge that his enterprise must yield profit and that he will go bankrupt if his profits are insufficient. Of course, the normal way to make profit is to produce goods that can be sold at a good price, and they can be sold, normally, only when they are necessary and practical consumption-goods for the buyers. So the shoe-maker, to produce profits for himself, has to produce well-fitting shoes, better or cheaper shoes than others make. Thus, normally, capitalist production succeeds in what should be the aim of production, to provide mankind with its life necessities. But the many cases, where it is more profitable to produce superfluous luxuries for the rich or trash for the poor, or to sell the whole plant to a competitor who may close it, show that the primary object of present production is profit for the capital.

This object determines the character of the organization of the work in the shop. First it establishes the command by one absolute master. If he is the owner himself, he has to take care that he does not lose his capital; on the contrary he must increase it. His interest dominates the work; the workers are his "hands," and they have to obey. It determines his part and his function in the work. Should the workers complain of their long hours and fatiguing work, he points to his task and his solicitudes that keep him busy till late in the night after they have gone home without concerning themselves any more. He forgets to tell, what he hardly understands himself, that all his often strenuous work, all his worry that keeps him awake at night, serves only the profit, not the production itself. It deals with the problems of how to sell his products, how to outrival his competitors, how to bring the largest possible part of the total surplus-value into his own coffers. His work is not a productive work; his exertions in fighting his competitors are useless for society. But he is the master and his aims direct the shop.

If he is an appointed director he knows that he is appointed to produce profit for the shareholders. If he does not manage to do so, he is dismissed and replaced by another man. Of course, he must be a

good expert, he must understand the technics of his branch, to be able to direct the work of production. But still more he must be expert in profit-making. In the first place he must understand the technics of increasing the net-profit, by finding out how to produce at least cost, how to sell with most success and how to beat his rivals. This every director knows. It determines the management of business. It also determines the organization within the shop.

The organization of the production within the shop is conducted along two lines, of technical and of commercial organization. The rapid development of technics in the last century, based upon a wonderful growth of science, has improved the methods of work in every branch. Better technics is the best weapon in competition, because it secures extra profit at the cost of the rivals. This development increased the productivity of labor, it made the goods for use and consumption cheaper, more abundant and more varied, it increased the means of comfort, and, by lowering the cost of living, i.e., the value of labor power, enormously raised the profit of capital. This high stage of technical development brought into the factory a rapidly increasing number of experts, engineers, chemists, physicists, well versed by their training at universities and laboratories in science. They are necessary to direct the intricate technical processes, and to improve them by regular application of new scientific discoveries. Under their supervision act skilled technicians and workers. So the technical organization shows a carefully regulated collaboration of various kinds of workers, a small number of university-trained specialists, a larger number of qualified professionals and skilled workers, besides a great mass of unskilled workers to do the manual work. Their combined efforts are needed to run the machines and to produce the goods.

The commercial organization has to conduct the sale of the product. It studies markets and prices, it advertises, it trains agents to stimulate buying. It includes the so-called scientific management, to cut down

costs by distributing men and means; it devises incentives to stimulate the workers to more strenuous efforts; it turns advertising into a kind of science taught even at universities. It is not less, it is even more important than technics to the capitalist masters; it is the chief weapon in their mutual fight. From the view-point of providing society with its life necessities, however, it is an entirely useless waste of capacities.

But also the forms of technical organization are determined by the same motive of profit. Hence the strict limitation of the better paid scientific experts to a small number, combined with a mass of cheap unskilled labor. Hence the structure of society at large, with its low pay and poor education for the masses, with its higher pay—so much as higher education demands for the constant filling of the ranks—for a scientifically trained minority.

These technical officials have not only the care of the technical processes of production. Under capitalism they have also to act as taskmasters of the workers. Because under capitalism production of goods is inseparably connected with production of profit, both being one and the same action, the two characters of the shop-officials, of a scientific leader of production and of a commanding helper of exploitation, are intimately combined. So their position is ambiguous. On the one hand they are the collaborators of the manual workers, by their scientific knowledge directing the process of transformation of the materials, by their skill increasing the profits; they also are exploited by capital. On the other hand they are the underlings of capital, appointed to hustle the workers and to assist the capitalist in exploiting them.

It may seem that not everywhere the workers are thus exploited by capital. In public-utility enterprises, for instance, or in co-operative factories. Even if we leave aside the fact that the former, by their profit, often must contribute to the public funds, thus relieving the taxes of the propertied class, the difference with other business is not essential. As a rule co-operatives have to compete with private enterprises; and public

utilities are controlled by the capitalist public by attentive criticism. The usually borrowed capital needed in the business demands its interest, out of the profits. As in other enterprises there is the personal command of a director and the forcing up of the tempo of the work. There is the same exploitation as in every capitalist enterprise. There may be a difference in degree; part of what otherwise is profit may be used to increase the wages and to improve the conditions of labor. But a limit is soon reached. In this respect they may be compared with private model enterprises where sensible broad-minded directors try to attach the workers by better treatment, by giving them the impression of a privileged position, and so are rewarded by a better output and increased profit. But it is out of the question that the workers here, or in public utilities or co-operatives, should consider themselves as servants of a community, to which to devote all their energy. Directors and workers are living in the social surroundings and the feelings of their respective classes. Labor has here the same capitalist character as elsewhere; it constitutes its deeper essential nature under the superficial differences of somewhat better or worse conditions.

Labor under capitalism in its essential nature is a system of squeezing. The workers must be driven to the utmost exertion of their powers, either by hard constraint or by the kinder arts of persuasion. Capital itself is in a constraint; if it cannot compete, if the profits are inadequate, the business will collapse. Against this pressure the workers defend themselves by a continual instinctive resistance. If not, if they willingly should give way, more than their daily labor power would be taken from them. It would be an encroaching upon their funds of bodily power, their vital power would be exhausted before its time, as to some extent is the case now; degeneration, annihilation of health and strength, of themselves and their offspring, would be the result. So resist they must. Thus every shop, every enterprise, even outside the times of sharp conflict, of strikes or wage reductions, is the scene of a constant

silent war, of a perpetual struggle, of pressure and counter-pressure. Rising and falling under its influence, a certain norm of wages, hours and tempo of labor establishes itself, keeping them just at the limit of what is tolerable and intolerable (if intolerable the total of production is effected). Hence the two classes, workers and capitalists, while having to put up with each other in the daily course of work, in deepest essence, by their opposite interests, are implacable foes, living, when not fighting, in a kind of armed peace.

Labor in itself is not repulsive. Labor for the supplying of his needs is a necessity imposed on man by nature. Like all other living beings, man has to exert his forces to provide for his food. Nature has given them bodily organs and mental powers, muscles, nerves and brains, to conform to this necessity. Their wants and their means are harmoniously adapted to one another in the regular living of their life. So labor, as the normal use of their limbs and capacities, is a normal impulse for man and animal alike. In the necessity of providing food and shelter there is, to be sure, an element of constraint. Free spontaneousness in the use of muscles and nerves, all in their turn, in following every whim, in work or play, lies at the bottom of human nature. The constraint of his needs compels man to regular work, to suppression of the impulse of the moment, to exertion of his powers, to patient perseverance and self-restraint. But this self-restraint, necessary as it is for the preservation of oneself, of the family, of the community, affords the satisfaction of vanquishing impediments in himself or the surrounding world, and gives the proud feeling of reaching self-imposed aims. Fixed by its social character, by practice and custom in family, tribe or village, the habit of regular work grows into a new nature itself, into a natural mode of life, a harmonious unity of needs and powers, of duties and disposition. Thus in farming the surrounding nature is transformed into a safe home through a lifelong heavy or placid toil. Thus in every people, each in its individual way, the old

handicraft gave to the artisans the joy of applying their skill and fantasy in the making of good and beautiful things for use.

All this has perished since capital became master of labor. In production for the market, for sale, the goods are commodities which besides their utility for the buyer, have exchange-value, embodying the labor implemented; this exchange-value determines the money they bring. Formerly a worker in moderate hours—leaving room for occasional strong exertion—could produce enough for his living. But the profit of capital consists in what the worker can produce in surplus to his living. The more value he produces and the less the value of what he consumes, the larger is the surplus-value seized by capital. Hence his life-necessities are reduced, his standard of life is lowered as much as possible, his hours are increased, the tempo of his work is accelerated. Now labor loses entirely its old character of pleasant use of body and limbs. Now labor turns into a curse and an outrage. And this remains its true character, however mitigated by social laws and by trade-union action, both results of the desperate resistance of the workers against their unbearable degradation. What they may attain is to turn capitalism from a rude abuse into a normal exploitation. Still then labor, being labor under capitalism, keeps its innermost character of inhuman toil: the workers, compelled by the threat of hunger to strain their forces at foreign command, for foreign profit, without genuine interest, in the monotonous fabrication of uninteresting or bad things, driven to the utmost of what the overworked body can sustain, are used up at an early age. Ignorant economists, unacquainted with the nature of capitalism, seeing the strong aversion of the workers from their work, conclude that productive work, by its very nature, is repulsive to man, and must be imposed on unwilling mankind by strong means of constraint.

Of course, this character of their work is not always consciously felt by the workers. Sometimes the original nature of work, as an impulsive

eagerness of action, giving contentment, asserts itself. Especially in young people, kept ignorant of capitalism and full of ambition to show their capacities as fully-qualified workers, feeling themselves moreover possessor of an inexhaustible labor-power. Capitalism has its well-advised ways of exploiting this disposition. Afterwards, with the growing solicitudes and duties for the family, the worker feels caught between the pressure of the constraint and the limit of his powers, as in tightening fetters he is unable to throw off. And at last, feeling his forces decay at an age that for middle-class man is the time of full and matured power, he has to suffer exploitation in tacit resignation, in continuous fear of being thrown away as a worn-out tool.

Bad and damnable as work under capitalism may be, still worse is the lack of work. Like every commodity, labor-power sometimes finds no buyer. The problematic liberty of the worker to choose his master goes hand in hand with the liberty of the capitalist to engage or to dismiss his workers. In the continuous development of capitalism, in the founding of new enterprises and the decline or collapse of old ones, the workers are driven to and fro, are accumulated here, dismissed there. So they must consider it good luck even, when they are allowed to let themselves be exploited. Then they perceive that they are at the mercy of capital. That only with the consent of the masters they have access to the machines that wait for their handling.

Unemployment is the worst scourge of the working class under capitalism. It is inherent in capitalism. As an ever returning feature it accompanies the periodical crises and depressions, which during the entire reign of capitalism ravaged society at regular intervals. They are a consequence of the anarchy of capitalist production. Each capitalist as an independent master of his enterprise is free to manage it at his will, to produce what he thinks profitable or to close the shop when profits are failing. Contrary to the careful organization within the factory there is a complete lack of organization in the totality of social

production. The rapid increase of capital through the accumulated profits, the necessity to find profits also for the new capital, urges a rapid increase of production flooding the market with unsaleable goods. Then comes the collapse, reducing not only the profits and destroying the superfluous capital, but also turning the accumulated hosts of workers out of the factories, throwing them upon their own resources or on meagre charity. Then wages are lowered, strikes are ineffective, the mass of the unemployed presses as a heavy weight upon the working conditions. What has been gained by hard fight in times of prosperity is often lost in times of depression. Unemployment was always the chief impediment to a continuous raising of the life standard of the working class.

There have been economists alleging that by the modern development of big business this pernicious alternation of crises and prosperity would disappear. They expected that cartels and trusts, monopolizing as they do large branches of industry, would bring a certain amount of organization into the anarchy of production and smooth its irregularities. They did not take into account that the primary cause, the yearning for profit, remains, driving the organized groups into a fiercer competition, now with mightier forces. The incapacity of modern capitalism to cope with its anarchy was shown in a grim light by the world crisis of 1930. During a number of long years production seemed to have definitely collapsed. Over the whole world millions of workers, of farmers, even of intellectuals were reduced to living on the doles, which the governments by necessity, had to provide: From this crisis of production the present war crisis took its origin.

In this crisis the true character of capitalism and the impossibility to maintain it, was shown to mankind as in a searchlight. There were the millions of people lacking the means to provide for their life necessities. There were the millions of workers with strong arms, eager to work; there were the machines in thousands of shops, ready to whirl and to

produce an abundance of goods. But it was not allowed. The capitalist ownership of the means of production stood between the workers and the machines. This ownership, affirmed if necessary by the power of police and State, forbade the workers to touch the machines and to produce all that they themselves and society needed for their existence. The machines had to stand and rust, the workers had to hang around and suffer want. Why? Because capitalism is unable to manage the mighty technical and productive powers of mankind to conform to their original aim, to provide for the needs of society.

To be sure, capitalism now is trying to introduce some sort of organization and planned production. Its insatiable profit-hunger cannot be satisfied within the old realms; it is driven to expand over the world, to seize the riches, to open the markets, to subject the peoples of other continents. In a fierce competition each of the capitalist groups must try to conquer or to keep to themselves the richest portions of the world. Whereas the capitalist class in England, France, Holland made easy profits by the exploitation of rich colonies, conquered in former wars, German capitalism with its energy, its capacities, its rapid development, that had come too late in the division of the colonial world, could only get its share by striving for world-power, by preparing for world war. It had to be the aggressor, the others were the defenders. So it was the first to put into action and to organize all the powers of society for this purpose; and then the others had to follow its example.

In this struggle for life between the big capitalist powers the inefficiency of private capitalism could no longer be allowed to persist. Unemployment now was a foolish, nay, a criminal waste of badly needed manpower. A strict and careful organization had to secure the full use of all the labor power and the fighting power of the nation. Now the untenability of capitalism showed itself just as grimly from another side. Unemployment was now turned into its opposite, into compulsory

labor. Compulsory toil and fighting at the frontiers where the millions of strong young men, by the most refined means of destruction mutilate, kill, exterminate, "wipe out" each other, for the world-power of their capitalist masters. Compulsory labor in the factories where all the rest, women and children included, are assiduously producing ever more of these engines of murder, whereas the production of the life necessities is constricted to the utmost minimum. Shortage and want in everything needed for life and the falling back to the poorest and ugliest barbarism is the outcome of the highest development of science and technics, is the glorious fruit of the thinking and working of so many generations! Why? Because notwithstanding all delusive talk about community and fellowship, organized capitalism, too, is unable to handle the rich productive powers of mankind to their true purpose, using them instead for destruction.

Thus the working class is confronted with the necessity of itself taking the production in hand. The mastery over the machines, over the means of production, must be taken out of the unworthy hands that abuse them. This is the common cause of all producers, of all who do the real productive work in society, the workers, the technicians, the farmers. But it is the workers, chief and permanent sufferers from the capitalist system, and, moreover, majority of the population, on whom it impends to free themselves and the world from this scourge. They must manage the means of production. They must be masters of the factories, masters of their own labor, to conduct it at their own will. Then the machines will be put to their true use, the production of abundance of goods to provide for the life necessities of all.

This is the task of the workers in the days to come. This is the only road to freedom. This is the revolution for which society is ripening. By such a revolution the character of production is entirely reversed; new principles will form the basis of society. First, because the exploitation ceases. The produce of the common labor [will belong to] all those who

take part in the work. No surplus-value to capital any more; ended is the claim of superfluous capitalists to a part of the produce.

More important still than the cessation of their share in the produce is the cessation of their command over the production. Once the workers are masters over the shops the capitalists lose their power of leaving in disuse the machines, these riches of mankind, precious product of the mental and manual exertion of so many generations of workers and thinkers. With the capitalists disappears their power to dictate what superfluous luxuries or what rubbish shall be produced. When the workers have command over the machines they will apply them for the production of all that the life of society requires.

This will be possible only by combining all the factories, as the separate members of one body, into a well organized system of production. The connection that under capitalism is the fortuitous outcome of blind competition and marketing, depending on purchase and sale, is then the object of conscious planning. Then, instead of the partial and imperfect attempts at organization of modern capitalism, that only lead to fiercer fight and destruction, comes the perfect organization of production, growing into a world-wide system of collaboration. For the producing classes cannot be competitors, only collaborators.

These three characteristics of the new production mean a new world. The cessation of the profit for capital, the cessation of unemployment of machines and men, the conscious adequate regulation of production, the increase of the produce through efficient organization give to each worker a larger quantity of product with less labor. Now the way is opened for a further development of productivity. By the application of all technical progress the produce will increase in such a degree that abundance for all will be joined to the disappearance of toil.

## **2. Law and Property**

Such a change in the system of labor implies a change of Law.

Not, of course, that new laws must first be enacted by Parliament or Congress. It concerns changes in the depth of society [in the customs and practice of society], far beyond the reach of such temporary things as Parliamentary acts. It relates to the fundamental laws, not of one country only, but of human society, founded on man's convictions of Right and Justice.

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These laws are not immutable. To be sure, the ruling classes at all times have tried to perpetuate the existing Law by proclaiming that it is based on nature, founded on the eternal rights of man, or sanctified by religion. This, for the sake of upholding their prerogatives and dooming the exploited classes to perpetual slavery. Historical evidence, on the contrary, shows that law continually changed in line with the changing feelings of right and wrong.

The sense of right and wrong, the consciousness of justice in men, is not accidental. It grows up, irresistibly, by nature, out of what they experience as the fundamental conditions of their life. Society must live; so the relations of men must be regulated in such a way—it is this that law provides for—that the production of life-necessities may go on unimpeded. Right is what is essentially good and necessary for life. Not only useful for the moment, but needed generally; not for the life of single individuals, but for people at large, for the community; not for personal or temporal interests, but for the common and lasting weal.

If the life-conditions change, if the system of production develops into new forms, the relations between men change, their feeling of what is right or wrong changes with them, and the law has to be altered.

This is seen most clearly in the laws regulating the right of property. In the original savage and barbarian state the land was considered as belonging to the tribe that lived on it, hunting or pasturing. Expressed in our terms, we should say that the land was common property of the tribe that used it for its living and defended it against other tribes. The self-made weapons and tools were accessories of the individual, hence were a kind of private property, though not in our conscious and exclusive sense of this word, in consequence of the strong mutual bonds amongst the tribesmen. Not laws, but use and custom regulated their mutual relations. Such primitive peoples, even agricultural peoples in later times (as the Russian peasants of before 1860) could not conceive the idea of private ownership of a tract of land, just as we cannot conceive the idea of private ownership of a quantum of air.

These regulations had to change when the tribes settled and expanded, cleared the forests and dissolved into separate individuals (i.e., families), each working a separate lot. They changed still more when handicraft separated from agriculture, when from the casual work of all, it became the continual work of some: when the products became commodities, to be sold in regular commerce and to be consumed by others than the producers. It is quite natural that the farmer who worked a piece of land, who improved it, who did his work at his own will, without interference from others, had the free disposal of the land and the tools; that the produce was his; that land and produce were his property. Restrictions might be needed for defense, in mediaeval times, in the form of possible feudal obligations. It is quite natural that the artisan, as the only one who handled his tools, had the exclusive disposal of them, as well as of the things he made; that he was the sole owner.

Thus private ownership became the fundamental law of a society founded on small-scale working-units. Without being expressly formulated it was felt as a necessary right that whoever exclusively handled the tools, the land, the product, must be master of them, must have the free disposal of them. Private ownership of the means of production belongs as its necessary juridical attribute to small trade.

It remained so, when capitalism came to be master of industry. It was even more consciously expressed, and the French Revolution proclaimed liberty, equality and property the fundamental Rights of the citizen. It was private ownership of the means of production simply applied, when, instead of some apprentices, the master-craftsman hired a larger number of servants to assist him, to work with his tools and to make products for him to sell. By means of exploiting the labor-power of the workers, the factories and machines, as private property of the capitalist, became the source of an immense and ever growing increase of capital. Here private ownership performed a new function in society. As capitalist ownership, it ascertained power and increasing wealth to the new ruling class, the capitalists, and enabled them strongly to develop the productivity of labor and to expand their rule over the earth. So this juridical institute, notwithstanding the degradation and misery of the exploited workers, was felt as a good and beneficent, even necessary institution, promising an unlimited progress of society.

This development, however, gradually changed the inner character of the social system. And thereby again the function of private ownership changed. With the joint-stock companies the twofold character of the capitalist factory-owner, that of directing the production and that of pocketing the surplus-value, is splitting up. Labor and property, in olden times intimately connected, are now separated. Owners are the shareholders, living outside the process of production, idling in distant country-houses and maybe gambling at the exchange. A shareholder has no direct connection with the work. His property

does not consist in tools for him to work with. His property consists simply in pieces of paper, in shares of enterprises of which he does not even know the whereabouts. His function in society is that of a parasite. His ownership does not mean that he commands and directs the machines: this is the sole right of the director. It means only that he may claim a certain amount of money without having to work for it. The property in hand, his shares, are certificates showing his right—guaranteed by law and government, by courts and police—to participate in the profits; titles of companionship in that large Society for Exploitation of the World, that is capitalism.

The work in the factories goes on quite apart from the shareholders. Here the director and the staff have the care all day, to regulate, to run about, to think of everything, the workers are working and toiling from morning till evening, hurried and abused. Everybody has to exert himself to the utmost to render the output as large as possible. But the product of their common work is not for those who did the work. Just as in olden times burgesses were ransacked by gangs of wayside robbers, so now people entirely foreign to the production come forward and, on the credit of their papers (as registered owners of share scrip), seize the chief part of the produce. Not violently; without having to move as much as a finger they find it put on their banking account, automatically. Only a poor wage or a moderate salary is left for those who together did the work of production; all the rest is dividend taken by the shareholders. Is this madness? It is the new function of private ownership of the means of production. It is simply the praxis of old inherited law, applied to the new forms of labor to which it does no longer fit.

Here we see how the social function of a juridical institute, in consequence of the gradual change of the forms of production, turns into the very reverse of its original aim. Private ownership, originally a means to give everybody the possibility of productive work, now

has turned into the means to prevent the workers from the free use of the instruments of production. Originally a means to ascertain to the workers the fruits of their labor, it now turned into a means to deprive the workers of the fruits of their labor for the benefit of a class of useless parasites.

How is it, then, that such obsolete law still holds sway over society? First, because the numerous middle-class and small-business people, the farmers and independent artisans cling to it, in the belief that it assures them their small property and their living; but with the result that often, with their mortgaged holdings, they are the victims of usury and bank-capital. When saying: I am my own master, they mean: I have not to obey a foreign master; community in work as collaborating equals lies far outside their imagination. Secondly and chiefly, however, because the power of the State, with its police and military force, upholds old law for the benefit of the ruling class, the capitalists.

In the working class, now, the consciousness of this contradiction is arising as a new sense of Right and Justice. The old right, through the development of small trade into big business, has turned into wrong, and it is felt as a wrong. It contradicts the obvious rule that those who do the work and handle the equipment must dispose of it in order to arrange and execute the work in the best way. The small tool, the small lot could be handled and worked by a single person with his family. So that person had the disposal of it, was the owner. The big machines, the factories, the large enterprises can only be handled and worked by an organized body of workers, a community of collaborating forces. So this body, the community, must have the disposal of it, in order to arrange the work according to their common will. This common ownership does not mean an ownership in the old sense of the word, as the right of using or misusing at will. Each enterprise is, but part, the total productive apparatus of society; so the right of each body or community

of producers is limited by the superior right of society, and has to be carried out in regular connection with the others.

Common ownership must not be confounded with public ownership. In public ownership, often advocated by notable social reformers, the State or another political body is master of the production. The workers are not masters of their work, they are commanded by the State officials, who are leading and directing the production. Whatever may be the conditions of labor, however human and considerate the treatment, the fundamental fact is that not the workers themselves, but the officials dispose of the means of production, dispose of the product, manage the entire process, decide what part of the produce shall be reserved for innovations, for wear, for improvements, for social expenses, what part has to fall to the workers what part to themselves. In short, the workers still receive wages, a share of the product determined by the masters. Under public ownership of the means of production, the workers are still subjected to and exploited by a ruling class. Public ownership is a middle-class program of a modernized and disguised form of capitalism. Common ownership by the producers can be the only goal of the working class.

Thus the revolution of the system of production is intimately bound up with a revolution of Law. It is based on a change in the deepest convictions of Right and Justice. Each production-system consists of the application of a certain technique, combined with a certain Law regulating the relations of men in their work, fixing their rights and duties. The technics of small tools combined with private ownership means a society of free and equal competing small producers. The technics of big machines, combined with private ownership, means capitalism. The technics of big machines, combined with common ownership, means a free collaborating humanity. Thus capitalism is an intermediate system, a transitional form resulting from the application of the old Law to the new technics. While the technical development

enormously increased the powers of man, the inherited law that regulated the use of these powers subsisted nearly unchanged. No wonder that it proved inadequate, and that society fell to such distress. This is the deepest sense of the present world crisis. Mankind simply neglected in time to adapt its old law to its new technical powers. Therefore it now suffers ruin and destruction.

Technique is a given power. To be sure, its rapid development is the work of man, the natural result of thinking over the work, of experience and experiment, of exertion and competition. But once established, its application is automatic, outside our free choice, imposed like a given force of nature. We cannot go back, as poets have wished, to the general use of the small tools of our forefathers. Law, on the other hand, must be instituted by man with conscious design. Such as it is established, it determines freedom or slavery of man towards man and towards his technical equipment.

When inherited law, in consequence of the silent growth of technics, has turned into a means of exploitation and oppression, it becomes an object of contest between the social classes, the exploiting and the exploited class. So long as the exploited class dutifully acknowledges existing law as Right and Justice, so long its exploitation remains lawful and unchallenged. When then gradually in the masses arises a growing consciousness of their exploitation, at the same time new conceptions of Right awaken in them. With the growing feeling that existing law is contrary of justice, their will is roused to change it and to make their convictions of right and justice the law of society. This means that the sense of being wronged is not sufficient. Only when in great masses of the workers this sense grows into such clear and deep convictions of Right that they permeate the entire being, filling it with a firm determination and a fiery enthusiasm, will they be able to develop the powers needed for revolving the social structure. Even then this will be only the preliminary condition. A heavy and lengthy struggle to

overcome the resistance of the capitalist class defending its rule with the utmost power, will be needed to establish the new order.

### 3. Shop Organization

Thus the idea of their common ownership of the means of production is beginning to take hold of the minds of the workers. Once they feel the new order, their own mastery over labor to be a matter of necessity and of justice, all their thoughts and all their actions will be consecrated to its realization. They know that it cannot be done at once; a long period of fight will be unavoidable. To break the stubborn resistance of the ruling classes the workers will have to exert their utmost forces. All the powers of mind and character, of organization and knowledge, which they are capable of mustering must be developed. And first of all they have to make clear to themselves what it is they aim at, what this new order means.

Man, when he has to do a work, first conceives it in his mind as a plan, as a more or less conscious design. This distinguishes the actions of man from the instinctive actions of animals. This also holds, in principle, for the common struggles, the revolutionary actions of social classes. Not entirely, to be sure; there is a great deal of unpremeditated spontaneous impulse in their outbursts of passionate revolt. The fighting workers are not an army conducted after a neatly conceived plan of action by a staff of able leaders. They are a people gradually rising out of submissiveness and ignorance, gradually coming to consciousness of their exploitation, again and again driven to fight for better living conditions, by degrees developing their powers. New feelings spring up in their hearts, new thoughts arise in their heads, how the world might and should be. New wishes, new ideals, new aims fill their mind and direct their will and action. Their aims gradually take a more concise shape. From the simple strife for better working conditions, in the beginning, they grow into the idea of a fundamental reorganization of society. For several generations already the ideal of a

world without exploitation and oppression has taken hold of the minds of the workers. Nowadays the conception of the workers themselves master of the means of production, themselves directing their labor, arises ever more strongly in their minds.

This new organization of labor we have to investigate and to clarify to ourselves and to one another, devoting to it the best powers of our mind. We cannot devise it as a fantasy; we derive it from the real conditions and needs of present work and present workers. It cannot, of course, be depicted in detail; we do not know the future conditions that will determine its precise forms. Those forms will take shape in the minds of the workers then facing the task. We must content ourselves for the present to trace the general outlines only, the leading ideas that will direct the actions of the working class. They will be as the guiding stars that in all the vicissitudes of victory and adversity in fight, of success and failure in organization, keep the eyes steadily directed towards the great goal. They must be elucidated not by minute descriptions of detail, but chiefly by comparing the principles of the new world with the known forms of existing organizations.

When the workers seize the factories to organize the work an immensity of new and difficult problems arises before them. But they dispose of an immensity of new powers also. A new system of production never is an artificial structure erected at will. It arises as an irresistible process of nature, as a convulsion moving society in its deepest entrails, evoking the mightiest forces and passions in man. It is the result of a tenacious and probably long class struggle. The forces required for construction can develop and grow up in this fight only.

What are the foundations of the new society? They are the social forces of fellowship and solidarity, of discipline and enthusiasm, the moral forces of self-sacrifice and devotion to the community, the spiritual forces of knowledge, of courage and perseverance, the firm organization that binds all these forces into a unity of purpose, all

of them are the outcome of the class fight. They cannot purposely be prepared in advance. Their first traces arise spontaneously in the workers out of their common exploitation; and then they grow incessantly through the necessities of the fight, under the influence of experience and of mutual inducement and instruction. They must grow because their fullness brings victory, their deficiency defeat. But even after a success in fighting attempts at new construction must fail, so long as the social forces are insufficient, so long as the new principles do not entirely occupy the workers' hearts and minds. And in that case, since mankind must live, since production must go on, other powers, powers of constraint, dominating and suppressing forces, will take the production in their hands. So the fight has to be taken up ever anew, till the social forces in the working class have reached such a height as to render them capable of being the self-governing masters of society.

The great task of the workers is the organization of production on a new basis. It has to begin with the organization within the shop. Capitalism, too, had a carefully planned shop-organization; but the principles of the new organization are entirely different. The technical basis is the same in both cases; it is the discipline of work imposed by the regular running of the machines. But the social basis, the mutual relations of men, are the very opposite of what they were. Collaboration of equal companions replaces the command of masters and the obedience of servants. The sense of duty, the devotion to the community, the praise or blame of the comrades according to efforts and achievements, as incentives take the place of fear for hunger and perpetual risk of losing the job. Instead of the passive utensils and victims of capital, the workers are now the self-reliant masters and organizers of production, exalted by the proud feeling of being active co-operators in the rise of a new humanity.

The ruling body in this shop-organization is the entirety of the collaborating workers. They assemble to discuss matters and in

assembly take their decisions. So everybody who takes part in the work takes part in the regulation of the common work. This is all self-evident and normal, and the method seems to be identical to that followed when under capitalism groups or unions of workers had to decide by vote on the common affairs. But there are essential differences. In the unions there was usually a division of task between the officials and the members; the officials prepared and devised the proposals and the members voted. With their fatigued bodies and weary minds the workers had to leave the conceiving to others; it was only in part or in appearance that they managed their own affairs. In the common management of the shop, however, they have to do everything themselves, the conceiving, the devising, as well as the deciding. Devotion and emulation not only play their role in everybody's work-task, but are still more essential in the common task of regulating the whole. First, because it is the all-important common cause, which they cannot leave to others. Secondly, because it deals with the mutual relations in their own work, in which they are all interested and all competent, which therefore commands their profound considerations, and which thorough discussion must settle. So it is not only the bodily, but still more the mental effort bestowed by each in his participation in the general regulation that is the object of competition and appreciation. The discussion, moreover, must bear another character than in societies and unions under capitalism, where there are always differences of personal interest. There in his deeper consciousness everybody is concerned with his own safeguarding, and discussions have to adjust and to smooth out these differences in the common action. Here, however, in the new community of labor, all the interests are essentially the same, and all thoughts are directed to the common aim of effective co-operative organization.

In great factories and plants the number of workers is too large to gather in one meeting, and far too large for a real and thorough

discussion. Here decisions can only be taken in two steps, by the combined action of assemblies of the separate sections of the plant, and assemblies of central committees of delegates. The functions and the practice of these committees cannot exactly be ascertained in advance now; they are entirely new, an essential part of the new economic structure. When facing the practical needs the workers will develop the practical structure. Yet something of their character may, in general lines, be derived by comparing them with bodies and organizations known to us.

In the old capitalist world central committees of delegates are a well-known institution. We have them in parliaments, in all kinds of political bodies and in leading boards of societies and unions. They are invested with authority over their constituents, or even rule over them as their masters. As such it is in line with a social system of a working mass of people exploited and commanded by a ruling minority. Now, however, the task is to build up a form of organization for a body of collaborating free producers, actually and mentally controlling their common productive action, regulating it as equals after their own will—a quite different social system. Again in the old world we have union councils administering the current affairs after the membership, assembling at greater intervals, have fixed the general policy. What these councils then have to deal with are the trifles of the day, not vital questions. Now, however, basis and essence of life itself are concerned, the productive work, that occupies and has to occupy everybody's mind continually, as the one and greatest object of their thoughts.

The new conditions of labor make these shop-committees something quite different from everything we know in the capitalist world. They are central, but not ruling bodies, they are no governing board. The delegates constituting them have been sent by sectional assemblies with special instructions; they return to these assemblies to report on the discussion and its result, and after further deliberation the same

or other delegates may go up with new instructions. In such a way they act as the connecting links between the personnels of the separate sections. Neither are the shop-committees bodies of experts to provide the directing regulations for the non-expert multitude. Of course, experts will be necessary, single or in bodies, to deal with the special technical and scientific problems. The shop-committees, however, have to deal with the daily proceedings, the mutual relations, the regulation of the work, where everybody is expert and at the same time an interested party. Among other items it is up to them to put into practice what special experts suggest. Nor are the shop-committees the responsible bodies for the good management of the whole, with the consequence that every member could shift his part of responsibility upon the impersonal collectivity. On the contrary, whereas this management is incumbent upon all in common, single persons may be consigned special tasks which to fulfill with their entire capacity, in full responsibility, whilst they carry all the honors for the achievement.

All members of the personnel, men and women, younger and older, who take part in the work, as equal companions take their part in this shop-organization, in the actual work as well as in the general regulation. Of course, there will be much difference in the personal tasks, easier or more difficult according to force and capacities, different in character according to inclination and abilities. And, of course, the differences in general insight will give a preponderance to the advice of the most intelligent. At first, when as an inheritance of capitalism there are large differences in education and training, the lack of good technical and general knowledge in the masses will be felt as a heavy deficiency. Then the small number of highly trained professional technicians and scientists must act as technical leaders, without thereby acquiring a commanding or socially leading position, without gaining privileges other than the estimation of their companions and the moral authority that always attaches to capacity and knowledge.

The organization of a shop is the conscious arrangement and connection of all the separate procedures into one whole. All these interconnections of mutually adapted operations may be represented in a well-ordered scheme, a mental image of the actual process. As such it was present in the first planning and in the later improvements and enlargements. This image must be present in the minds of all the collaborating workers; they all must have a thorough acquaintance with what is their own common affair. Just as a map or a graph fixes and shows in a plain, to everyone intelligible picture the connections of a complicated totality, so here the state of the total enterprise, at every moment, in all its developments must be rendered visible by adequate representations. In numerical form this is done by bookkeeping. Bookkeeping registers and fixes all that happens in the process of production: what raw materials enter the shop, what machines are procured, what product they yield, how much labor is bestowed upon the products, how many hours of work are given by every worker, what products are delivered. It follows and describes the flow of materials through the process of production. It allows continually to compare, in comprehensive accounts, the results with the previous estimates in planning. So the production in the shop is made into a mentally controlled process.

Capitalist management of enterprises also knows mental control of the production. Here, too, the proceedings are represented by calculation and bookkeeping. But there is this fundamental difference that capitalist calculation is adapted entirely to the viewpoint of production of profit. It deals with prices and costs as its fundamental data; work and wages are only factors in the calculation of the resulting profit on the yearly balance account. In the new system of production, on the other hand, hours of work is the fundamental datum, whether they are still expressed, in the beginning, in money units, or in their own true form. In capitalist production calculation and bookkeeping

is a secret of the direction, the office. It is no concern of the workers; they are objects of exploitation, they are only factors in the calculation of cost and produce, accessories to the machines. In the production under common ownership the bookkeeping is a public matter; it lies open to all. The workers have always a complete view of the course of the whole process. Only in this way they are able to discuss matters in the sectional assemblies and in the shop-committees, and to decide on what has to be done. The numerical results are made visible, moreover, by statistical tables, by graphs and pictures that display the situation at a glance. This information is not restricted to the personnel of the shop; it is a public matter, open to all outsiders. Every shop is only a member in the social production, and also the connection of its doings with the work outside is expressed in the book-keeping. Thus insight in the production going on in every enterprise is a piece of common knowledge for all the producers.

#### **4. Social Organization**

Labor is a social process. Each enterprise is part of the productive body of society. The total social production is formed by their connection and collaboration. Like the cells that constitute a living organism, they cannot exist isolated and cut off from the body. So the organization of the work inside the shop is only one-half of the task of the workers. Over it, a still more important task, stands the joining of the separate enterprises, their combination into a social organization.

Whereas organization within the shop already existed under capitalism, and had only to be replaced by another, based on a new foundation, social organization of all the shops into one whole is, or was until recent years, something entirely new, without precedent. So utterly new, that during the entire nineteenth century the establishing of this organization, under the name of "socialism" was considered the main task of the working class. Capitalism consisted of an unorganized mass of independent enterprises—"a jostling crowd of separate

private employers," as the program of the Labor Party expresses it—connected only by the chance relations of market and competition, resulting in bankruptcies, overproduction and crisis, unemployment and an enormous waste of materials and labor power. To abolish it, the working class should conquer the political power and use it to organize industry and production. This State-socialism was considered, then, as the first step into a new development.

In the last years the situation has changed in so far that capitalism itself has made a beginning with State-run organization. It is driven not only by the simple wish to increase productivity and profits through a rational planning of production. In Russia there was the necessity of making up for the backwardness of economic development by means of a deliberate rapid organization of industry by the bolshevist government. In Germany it was the fight for world power that drove to State control of production and State-organization of industry. This fight was so heavy a task that only by concentrating into the hands of the State the power over all productive forces could the German capitalist class have a chance of success. In national-socialist organization property and profit—though strongly cut for State needs—remain with the private capitalist, but the disposal over the means of production, their direction and management has been taken over by the State officials. By an efficient organization the unimpaired production of profits is secured for capital and for the State. This organization of the production at large is founded on the same principles as the organization within the factory, on the personal command of the general director of society, the Leader, the head of the State. Wherever Government takes control over industry, authority and constraint take the place of the former freedom of the capitalist producers. The political power of the State officials is greatly strengthened by their economic power, by their command over the means of production, the foundation of society.

The principle of the working class is in every respect the exact opposite. The organization of production by the workers is founded on free collaboration: no masters, no servants. The combination of all the enterprises into one social organization takes place after the same principle. The mechanism for this purpose must be built up by the workers.

Given the impossibility to collect the workers of all the factories into one meeting, they can only express their will by means of delegates. For such bodies of delegates in later times the name of workers' councils has come into use. Every collaborating group of personnel designates the members who in the council assemblies have to express its opinion and its wishes. These took an active part themselves in the deliberations of this group, they came to the front as able defenders of the views that carried the majority. Now they are sent as the spokesmen of the group to confront these views with those of other groups in order to come to a collective decision. Though their personal abilities play a role in persuading the colleagues and in clearing problems, their weight does not lay in their individual strength, but in the strength of the community that delegated them. What carries weight are not simple opinions, but still more the will and the readiness of the group to act accordingly. Different persons will act as delegates according to the different questions raised and the forthcoming problems.

The chief problem, the basis of all the rest, is the production itself. Its organization has two sides, the establishment of general rules and norms and the practical work itself. Norms and rules must be established for the mutual relations in the work, for the rights and duties. Under capitalism the norm consisted in the command of the master, the director. Under State-capitalism it consisted in the mightier command of the Leader, the central government. Now, however, all producers are free and equal. Now in the economic field of labor the same change takes place as occurred in former centuries in the

political field, with the rise of the middle class. When the rule of the citizens came in place of the rule of the absolute monarch, this could not mean that for his arbitrary will the arbitrary will of everybody was substituted. It meant that, henceforward, laws established by the common will should regulate the public rights and duties. So now, in the realm of labor, the command of the master gives way to rules fixed in common, to regulate the social rights and duties, in production and consumption. To formulate them will be the first task of the workers' councils. This is not a difficult task, not a matter of profound study or serious discordance. For every worker these rules will immediately spring up in his consciousness as the natural basis of the new society: everyone's duty to take part in the production in accordance with his forces and capacities, everyone's right to enjoy his adequate part of the collective product.

How will the quantities of labor spent and the quantities of product to which he is entitled be measured? In a society where the goods are produced directly for consumption there is no market to exchange them; and no value, as expression of the labor contained in them establishes itself automatically out of the processes of buying and selling. Here the labor spent must be expressed in a direct way by the number of hours. The administration keeps book [records] of the hours of labor contained in every piece or unit quantity of product, as well as of the hours spent by each of the workers. In the averages over all the workers of a factory, and finally, over all the factories of the same category, the personal differences are smoothed out and the personal results are intercompared.

In the first times of transition when there is much devastation to be repaired, the first problem is to build up the production apparatus and to keep people alive. It is quite possible that the habit, imposed by war and famine, of having the indispensable foodstuffs distributed without distinction is simply continued. It is most probable that, in those times

of reconstruction, when all the forces must be exerted to the utmost, when, moreover, the new moral principles of common labor are only gradually forming, the right of consumption will be coupled to the performance of work. The old popular saying that whoever does not work shall not eat, expresses an instinctive feeling of justice. Here it is not only the recognition that labor is the basis of all human life, but also the proclaiming that now there is an end to capitalist exploitation and to appropriating the fruits of foreign labor by property titles of an idle class.

This does not mean, of course, that now the total produce is distributed among the producers, according to the time given by each. Or, expressed in another way, that every worker receives, in the form of products, just the quantity of hours of labor spent in working. A considerable part of the work must be spent on the common property, on the perfection and enlargement of the productive apparatus. Under capitalism part of the surplus-value served this purpose; the capitalist had to use part of his profit, accumulated into new capital, to innovate, expand and modernize his technical equipment, in his case driven by the necessity not to be outflanked by his competitors. So the progress in technics took place in forms of exploitation. Now, in the new form of production, this progress is the common concern of the workers. Keeping themselves alive is the most immediate, but building the basis of future production is the most glorious part of their task. They will have to settle what part of their total labor shall be spent on the making of better machines and more efficient tools, on research and experiment, for facilitating the work and improving the production.

Moreover, part of the total time and labor of society must be spent on non-productive, though necessary activities, on general administration, on education, on medical service. Children and old people will receive their share of the produce without corresponding achievements. People incapable of work must be sustained; and

especially in the first time there will be a large number of human wrecks left by the former capitalist world. Probably the rule will prevail that the productive work is the task of the younger part of the adults; or, in other words, is the task of everybody during that period of his life when both the tendency and the capacity for vigorous activity are greatest. By the rapid increase of the productivity of labor this part, the time needed to produce all the life necessities, will continually decrease, and an increasing part of life will be available for other purposes and activities.

The basis of the social organization of production consists in a careful administration, in the form of statistics and bookkeeping. Statistics of the consumption of all the different goods, statistics of the capacity of the industrial plants, of the machines, of the soil, of the mines, of the means of transport, statistics of the population and the resources of towns, districts and countries, all these present the foundation of the entire economic process in wellordered rows of numerical data. Statistics of economic processes were already known under capitalism; but they remained imperfect because of the independence and the limited view of the private business men, and they found only a limited application. Now they are the starting point in the organization of production; to produce the right quantity of goods, the quantity used or wanted must be known. At the same time statistics as the compressed result of the numerical registration of the process of production, the comprehensive summary of the bookkeeping, expresses the course of development.

The general bookkeeping, comprehending and encompassing the administrations of the separate enterprises, combines them all into a representation of the economic process of society. In different degrees of range it registers the entire process of transformation of matter, following it from the raw materials at their origin, through all the factories, through all the hands, down to the goods ready for consumption. In uniting the results of co-operating enterprises

of a sort into one whole it compares their efficiency, it averages the hours of labor needed and directs the attention to the ways open for progress. Once the organization of production has been carried out the administration is the comparatively simple task of a network of interconnected computing offices. Every enterprise, every contingent group of enterprises, every branch of production, every township or district, for production and for consumption, has its office, to take care of the administration, to collect, to treat and to discuss the figures and to put them into a perspicuous form easy to survey. Their combined work makes the material basis of life a mentally dominated process. As a plain and intelligible numerical image the process of production is laid open to everybody's views. Here mankind views and controls its own life. What the workers and their councils devise and plan in organized collaboration is shown in character and results in the figures of bookkeeping. Only because they are perpetually before the eyes of every worker the direction of social production by the producers themselves is rendered possible.

This organization of economic life is entirely different from the forms of organization developed under capitalism; it is more perfect and more simple. The intricacies and difficulties in capitalist organization, for which the much glorified genius of big business men was needed, always dealt with their mutual struggle, with the arts and tricks of capitalist warfare to subdue or annihilate the competitors. All this has disappeared now. The plain aim, the providing for the life necessities of mankind, makes the entire structure plain and direct. Administration of large quantities, fundamentally, is hardly more difficult or more complicated than that of small quantities; only a couple of cyphers has to be put behind the figures. The rich and multiform diversity of wants and wishes that in small groups of people is hardly less than in large masses, now, by their massal character, can be secured more easily and more completely.

The function and the place numerical administration occupies in society depends on the character of this society. Financial administration of States was always necessary as part of the central government, and the computing officials were subordinate servants of the kings or other rulers. Where in modern capitalism production is subjected to an encompassing central organization, those who have the central administration in their hands will be the leading directors of economy and develop into a ruling bureaucracy. When in Russia the revolution of 1917 led to a rapid expansion of industry and hosts of workers still permeated by the barbarous ignorance of the villages crowded into the new factories they lacked the power to check the rising dominance of the bureaucracy then organizing into a new ruling class. When in Germany, 1933, a sternly organized party conquered the State power, as organ of its central administration it took in hand the organization of all the forces of capitalism.

Conditions are entirely different when the workers as masters of their labor and as free producers organize production. The administration by means of bookkeeping and computing is a special task of certain persons, just as hammering steel or baking bread is a special task of other persons, all equally useful and necessary. The workers in the computing offices are neither servants nor rulers. They are not officials in the service of the workers' councils, obediently having to perform their orders. They are groups of workers, like other groups collectively regulating their work themselves, disposing of their implements, performing their duties, as does every group, in continual connection with the needs of the whole. They are the experts who have to provide the basical data of the discussions and decisions in the assemblies of workers and of councils. They have to collect the data, to present them in an easily intelligible form of tables, of graphs, of pictures, so that every worker at every moment has a clear image of the state of things. Their knowledge is not a private property giving them

power; they are not a body with exclusive administrative knowledge that thereby somehow could exert a deciding influence. The product of their labor, the numerical insight needed for the work's progress, is available to all. This general knowledge is the foundation of all the discussions and decisions of the workers and their councils by which the organization of labor is performed.

For the first time in history the economic life, in general and in detail, lies as an open book before the eyes of mankind. The foundations of society, under capitalism a huge mass hidden in the dark depths, dimly lighted here and there by statistics on commerce and production, now has entered into the full daylight and shows its detailed structure. Here we dispose of a science of society consisting of a well-ordered knowledge of facts, out of which leading causal relations are readily grasped. It forms the basis of the social organization of labor, just as the knowledge of the facts of nature, condensed they too into causal relations, forms the basis of the technical organization of labor. As a knowledge of the common simple facts of daily life it is available to everyone and enables him to survey and grasp the necessities of the whole as well as his own part in it. It forms the spiritual equipment through which the producers are able to direct the production and to control their world.

### **5. Objections**

The principles of the new structure of society appear so natural and self-evident, that there may seem to be little room for doubts or objections. The doubts come from the old traditions that fill the minds with cobwebs, so long as the fresh storm wind of social activity does not blow through them. The objections are raised by the other classes that up till now are leading society. So first we have to consider the objections of the bourgeoisie, the ruling class of capitalists.

One might say that the objections of the members of the capitalist class do not matter. We cannot convince them, nor is this necessary.

Their ideas and convictions, as well as our own, are class ideas, determined by class conditions different from ours by the difference in life conditions and in social function. We have not to convince them by reasoning, but to beat them by power.

But, we should not forget that capitalist power to a great extent is spiritual power, power over the minds of the workers. The ideas of the ruling class dominate society and permeate the minds of the exploited classes. They are fixed there, fundamentally, by the inner strength and necessity of the system of production; they are actually implanted there by education and propaganda, by the influence of school, church, press, literature, broadcasting and film. As long as this holds, the working class, lacking consciousness of its class position, acquiescing in exploitation as the normal condition of life, does not think of revolt and cannot fight. Minds submissive to the doctrines of the masters cannot hope to win freedom. They must overcome the spiritual sway of capitalism over their minds before they actually can throw off its yoke. Capitalism must be beaten theoretically before it can be beaten materially. Because then only the absolute certainty of the truth of their opinions as well as of the justice of their aims can give such confidence to the workers as is needed for victory. Because then only hesitation and misgivings will lame the forces of the foe. Because then only the wavering middle groups, instead of fighting for capitalism, may to a certain degree conceive the necessity of social transformation and the benefit of the new order.

So we have to face the objections raised from the side of the capitalist class. They proceed directly from its view of the world. For the bourgeoisie, capitalism is the only possible and natural system of society, or at least, since more primitive forms preceded, its most developed final form. Hence all the phenomena presented by capitalism are not considered as temporary but as natural phenomena, founded on the eternal nature of man. The capitalist class sees the

deep aversion of the workers against their daily labor; and how they only resign themselves to it by dire necessity. It concludes that man in the great mass is naturally averse to regular productive work and for that reason is bound to remain poor—with the exception of the energetic, industrious and capable minority, who love work and so become leaders, directors and capitalists. Then it follows that, if the workers should be collectively masters of the production, without the competitive principle of personal reward for personal exertion, the lazy majority will do as little as possible, trying to live upon what a more industrious minority performs; and universal poverty would inevitably be the result. All the wonderful progress, all the abundance capitalism has brought in the last century will then be lost, when the stimulus of personal interest is removed; and mankind will sink back into barbarism.

To refute such objections it is sufficient to point out that they form the natural viewpoint from the other side of society, from the side of the exploiting class. Never in history were the old rulers able to acknowledge the capability of a new rising class; they expected an inevitable failure as soon as it should try to manage the affairs; and the new class, conscious of its forces, could show these only in conquering and after having conquered power. Thus now the workers grow conscious of the inner strength of their class; their superior knowledge of the structure of society, of the character of productive labor shows them the futility of the capitalist point of view. They will have to prove their capacities, certainly. But not in the form of standing a test beforehand. Their test will be their fight and victory.

This is no arguing with the capitalist class, but to the fellow workers. The middle class ideas still permeating large masses of them consist chiefly in doubt and disbelief in their own forces. As long as a class does not believe in themselves, they cannot expect that other groups should believe in them. This lack of self-confidence, the chief weakness now,

cannot be entirely removed under capitalism with its many degrading and exhausting influences. In times of emergency, however, world crisis and impending ruin, compelling the working class to revolt and fight, will also, once it has won, compel it to take control of production. Then the command of dire need treads under foot the implanted timorous diffidence of their own forces, and the imposed task rouses unexpected energies. Whatever hesitation or doubt may be in their minds this one thing the workers know for certain: that they, better than the idle people of property, know what work is, that they can work, and that they will work. The futile objections of the capitalist class will collapse with this class itself.

More serious objections are raised from other sides. From such as consider themselves and are considered as friends, as allies or spokesmen of the working class. In later capitalism there is a widespread opinion, among intellectuals and social reformers, among trade union leaders and social democrats, that capitalist production for profit is bad and has to disappear, and that it has to make place for some kind of socialist system of production. Organization of production, they say, is the means of producing abundance for all. The capitalist anarchy of the totality of production must be abolished by imitating the organized order within the factory. Just as in a well-directed enterprise the perfect running of every detail and the highest efficiency of the whole is secured by the central authority of the director and the staff, so in the still more complicated social structure the right interaction and connection of all its parts can only be secured by a central leading power.

The lack of such a ruling power, they say, is what must be objected to the system of organization by means of workers' councils. They argue that nowadays production is not the handling of simple tools, easily to survey by everybody, as in the bygone days of our ancestors, but the application of the most abstract sciences, accessible only to capable and

well instructed minds. They say that a clear-sighted view on an intricate structure and its capable management demand talents that only few are gifted with; that it fails to see that the majority of people are dominated by narrow selfishness, and that they lack the capacities and even the interest to take up these large responsibilities. And should the workers in stupid presumption reject the leadership of the most capable, and try to direct production and society by their own masses, then, however industrious they may be, their failure would be inevitable; every factory would soon be a chaos, and decline would be the result. They must fail because they cannot muster a leading power of sufficient authority to impose obedience and thus to secure a smooth running of the complicated organization.

Where to find such a central power? They argue, we have it already in State government. Till now Government restricted its functions to political affairs; it will have to extend them to economic affairs—as already it is compelled to do in some minor cases—to the general management of production and distribution. For is not war against hunger and misery equally, and even more important than war against foreign enemies?

If the State directs the economic activities it acts as the central body of the community. The producers are master of the production, not in small groups separately, but in such a way that in their totality, as the entire class, as the whole people they are master. Public ownership of the means of production, for their most important part, means State ownership, the totality of the people being represented by the State. By the democratic State, of course, where people choose their rulers. A social and political organization where the masses choose their leaders, everywhere, in the factories, in the unions, in the State, may be called universal democracy. Once chosen, these leaders of course must be strictly obeyed. For only in this way, by obedience to the commandment

of able leaders of production, the organization, can work smoothly and satisfactorily.

Such is the point of the spokesmen of State socialism. It is clear that this plan, of social organization is entirely different from a true disposal by the producers over the production. Only in name are the workers masters of their labor, just as only in name are the people masters of the State. In the so-called democracies, so-called because parliaments are chosen by universal suffrage, the governments are not at all delegates designated by the population as executors of its will. Everybody knows that in every country the government is in the hands of small, often hereditary or aristocratic groups of politicians and high officials. The parliamentarians, their body of supporters, are not selected by the constituents as mandataries to perform their will. The voters, practically, have only to choose between two sets of politicians, selected, presented and advertised to them by the two main political parties, whose leaders, according to the result, either form the ruling cabinet, or as "loyal opposition" stand in abeyance for their turn. The State officials, who manage the affairs, are not selected by the people either; they are appointed from above, by the government. Even if shrewd advertising calls them servants of the people, in reality they are its rulers, its masters. In the system of State socialism it is this bureaucracy of officials that, considerably enlarged, directs production. They dispose of the means of production, they have the upper command of labor. They have to take care that everything runs well, they administrate the process of production and determine the partition of the produce. Thus the workers have got new masters, who assign to them their wages and keep at their own disposal the remainder of the produce. This means that the workers are still exploited; State socialism may quite as well be called State capitalism, according to the emphasis laid on its different sides, and to the greater or smaller share of influence of the workers.

State socialism is a design for reconstructing society on the basis of a working class such as the middle class sees it and knows it under capitalism. In what is called a socialistic system of production the basic fabric of capitalism is preserved, the workers running the machines at the command of the leaders; but it is provided with a new improved upper story, a ruling class of humane reformers instead of profit-hungry capitalists. Reformers who as true benefactors of mankind apply their capacities to the ideal task of liberating the working masses from want and misery.

It is easily understood that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the workers only began to resist and to fight, but were not yet able to win power over society, this socialist ideal found many adherents. Not only among socially minded of the middle class who sympathised with the suffering masses, but also among the workers themselves. For here loomed up before them a vision of liberation from their yoke by the simple expression of their opinion in voting, by the use of the political power of their ballot to put into government their redeemers instead of their oppressors. And certainly, if it were only a matter of placid discussion and free choice between capitalism and socialism on the part of the masses, then socialism would have a good chance.

But reality is different. Capitalism is in power and it defends its power. Can anybody have the illusion that the capitalist class would give up its rule, its domination, its profit, the very basis of its existence, hence its existence itself, at the result of a vote? Or still more, to a campaign of publicity arguments, of public opinion demonstrated in mass meetings or street processions? Of course it will fight, convinced of its right. We know that even for reforms, for every minor reform in capitalism there had to be fighting. Not to the utmost, to be sure; not or seldom by civil war and bloodshed. Because public opinion, in the bulk of the middle class, aroused by the determined resistance of the workers, saw that in their demands capitalism itself, in its essence, was

not engaged, that profit as such was not endangered. Because it was felt that, on the contrary, capitalism would be consolidated rather, reform appeasing the workers and attaching them more firmly to the existing system.

If, however, the existence of the capitalist class itself, as a ruling and exploiting class is at stake, the entire middle class stands behind it. If its mastery, its exploitation, its profit is threatened, not by a sham revolution of outward appearances, but by a real revolution of the foundations of society, then we may be sure that it will resist with all its powers. Where, then, is the power to defeat it? The irrefutable arguments and the good intentions of noble-minded reformers, all these are not able to curb, still less to destroy its solid force. There is only one power in the world capable of vanquishing capitalism: the power of the working class. The working class can not be freed by others; it can only be freed by itself.

But the fight will be long and difficult. For the power of the capitalist class is enormous. It is firmly entrenched in the fabric of State and government, having all their institutes and resources at its disposal, their moral authority as well as their physical means of suppression. It disposes of all the treasures of the earth, and can spend unlimited amounts of money to recruit, pay and organize defenders, and to carry away public opinion. Its ideas and opinions pervade the entire society, fill up books and papers and dominate the minds of even the workers. Here lies the chief weakness of the masses. Against it the working class, certainly, has its numbers, already forming the majority of the population in capitalist countries. It has its momentous economic function, its direct hold over the machines, its power to run or stop them. But they are of no avail as long as their minds are dependent on and filled by the masters' ideas, as long as the workers are separate, selfish, narrow-minded, competing individuals. Number and economic importance alone are as the powers of a sleeping giant; they must first

be awakened and activated by practical fight. Knowledge and unity must make them active power. Through the fight for existence, against exploitation and misery, against the power of the capitalist class and the State, through the fight for mastery over the means of production, the workers must acquire the consciousness of their position, the independence of thought, the knowledge of society, the solidarity and devotion to their community, the strong unity of class that will enable them to defeat capitalist power.

We cannot foresee what whirls of world politics will arouse them. But we can be sure that it is not a matter of years only, of a short revolutionary fight. It is a historical process that requires an entire epoch of ups and downs, of fights and lulls, but yet of unceasing progress. It is an intrinsic transformation of society, not only because the power relations of the classes are reversed, because property relations are changed, because production is reorganized on a new basis, but chiefly—decisive basis of all these things—because the working class itself in its deepest character is transformed. From obedient subjects they are changed into free and self-reliant masters of their fate, capable to build and manage their new world.

It was the great socialist humanitarian Robert Owen who has taught us that for a true socialist society the character of man must change; and that it is changed by environment and education. It was the great communist scientist Karl Marx who, completing the theory of his predecessor, has taught us that mankind itself has to change its environment and has to educate itself, by fighting, by the class-fight against exploitation and oppression. The theory of State socialism by reform is an arid mechanical doctrine in its belief that for a social revolution a change of political institutions, of outer conditions of life is sufficient, without the inner transformation of man that turns submissive slaves into proud and spirited fighters. State socialism was the political program of social-democracy, utopian, because it pretended

to bring about a new system of production by simply converting people through propaganda to new political opinions. Social-democracy was not able, nor was it willing to lead the working class into a real revolutionary fight. So it went down when the modern development of big capitalism made socialism won by the ballot an obsolete illusion.

Yet socialist ideas still have their importance, though in a different way now. They are widespread all over society, among socially feeling middle-class people as well as among the masses of the workers. They express the longing for a world without exploitation, combined, in the workers, with the lack of confidence in their own power. This state of mind will not disappear at once after the first successes have been won; for it is then that the workers will perceive the immensity of their task, the still formidable powers of capital, and how all the traditions and institutions of the old world are barring their way. When thus they stand hesitating, socialism will point to what appears to be an easier road, not beset with such insurmountable difficulties and endless sacrifices. For just then, in consequence of their success, numbers of socially-minded reformers will join their ranks as capable allies and friends, putting their capacities in the service of the rising class, claiming, of course, important positions, to act and to lead the movement after their ideas. If the workers put them in office, if they install or support a socialist government, then the powerful existing machinery of the State is available for the new purpose and can be used to abolish capitalist exploitation and establish freedom by law. How far more attractive this mode of action than implacable class war! Yes, indeed; with the same result as what happened in revolutionary movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the masses who fought down the old regime in the streets, were thereupon invited to go home, to return to their work and put their trust in the self-appointed "provisional government" of politicians that was prepared to take matters in hand.

The propaganda of the socialist doctrine has the tendency to throw doubts into the minds of the workers, to raise or to strengthen distrust in their own powers, and to dim the consciousness of their task and their potentialities. That is the social function of socialism now, and at every moment of workers' success in the coming struggles. From the hard fight for freedom brilliant ahead, the workers are to be lured by the soft shine of a mild new servitude. Especially when capitalism should receive a severe blow, all who distrust and fear the unrestricted freedom of the masses, all who wish to preserve the distinction of masters and servants, of higher and lower, will rally round this banner. The appropriate catchwords will readily be framed: "order" and "authority" against "chaos," "socialism" and "organization" against "anarchy." Indeed, an economic system where the workers are themselves masters and leaders of their work, to middle-class thinking is identical with anarchy and chaos. Thus the only role socialism can play in future will be to act as an impediment standing in the way of the workers' fight for freedom.

To summarize: the socialist plan of reconstruction, brought forward by reformers, must fail, first because they have no means to produce the forces to vanquish the power of capitalism. Second, because only the workers themselves can do that. Exclusively by their own fight they can develop into the mighty power needed for such a task. It is this fight that socialism tries to forestall. And once the workers have beaten down capitalist power and won freedom, why should they give it up and submit to new masters?

There is a theory to explain why indeed they should and they must. The theory of actual inequality of men. It points out that nature itself makes them different: a capable, talented and energetic minority rises out of an incapable, stupid and slow majority. Notwithstanding all theories and decrees instituting formal and legal equality, the talented

energetic minority takes the lead and the incapable majority follows and obeys.

It is not for the first time that a ruling class tries to explain, and so to perpetuate, its rule as the consequences of an inborn difference between two kinds of people, one destined by nature to ride, the other to be ridden. The landowning aristocracy of former centuries defended their privileged position by boasting their extraction from a nobler race of conquerors that had subdued the lower race of common people. Big capitalists explain their dominating place by the assertion that they have brains and other people have none. In the same way now especially the intellectuals, considering themselves the rightful rulers of tomorrow, claim their spiritual superiority. They form the rapidly increasing class of university-trained officials and free professions, specialized in mental work, in study of books and of science, and they consider themselves as the people most gifted with intellect. Hence they are destined to be leaders of the production, whereas the ungifted mass shall execute the manual work, for which no brains are needed. They are no defenders of capitalism; not capital, but intellect should direct labor. The more so, since now society is such a complicated structure, based on abstract and difficult science, that only the highest intellectual acumen is capable of embracing, grasping and handling it. Should the working masses, from lack of insight, fail to acknowledge this need of superior intellectual lead, should they stupidly try to take the direction into their own hands, chaos and ruin will be the inevitable consequence.

Now it must be remarked that the term intellectual here does not mean possessor of intellect. Intellectuals is the name for a class with special functions in social and economic life, for which mostly university training is needed. Intellect, good understanding, is found in people of all classes, among capitalists and artisans, among farmers and workers. What is found in the "intellectuals" is not a superior intelligence, but a special capacity of dealing with scientific abstractions

and formulas, often merely of memorizing them, and combined, usually, with a limited notion of other realms of life. In their self-complacency appears a narrow intellectualism ignorant of the many other qualities that play an important role in all human activities. A rich and varied multitude of dispositions, different in character and in degree, is in man: here theoretical power of abstraction, there practical skill, here acute understanding, there rich fantasy, here rapidity of grasping, there deep brooding, here patient perseverance of purpose, there rash spontaneity, here indomitable courage in action and fight, there all-embracing ethical philanthropy. All of them are necessary in social life; in turns, according to circumstances, they occupy the foremost place in the exigencies of practice and labor. It were silly to distinguish some of them as superior, others as inferior. Their difference implies the predilection and qualification of people for the most varied kinds of activity. Among them the capacity for abstract or scientific studies, under capitalism often degenerated to a limited training, takes its important place in attending to and directing the technical processes: but only as one among many other capacities. Certainly for these people there is no reason to look down upon the nonintellectual masses. Has not the historian Trevelyan, treating the times of nearly three centuries ago, spoken of "the wealth of imagination, the depth of emotion, the vigor and variety of intellect that were to be found among the poor ... once awakened to the use of their minds"?

Of course in all of these qualities some people are more gifted than others; men and women of talent or genius excel their fellow-beings. Probably they are even more numerous than it appears now under capitalism, with its neglect, misuse and exploitation of human qualities. Free humanity will employ their talents to the best use; and the consciousness to promote with their greater force the common cause, will give them a greater satisfaction than any material privilege in a world of exploitation could do.

Let us consider the claim of the intellectual class, the domination of spiritual over manual work. Must not the mind rule over the body, the bodily activities? Certainly. Human mind is the highest product of nature; his spiritual capacities elevate man above the animals. Mind is the most valuable asset of man; it makes him lord of the world. What distinguishes human work from the activities of the animals is this very rule of the mind, the thinking out, the meditating and planning before the performing. This domination of theory, of the powers of the mind over practical work grows ever stronger, through the increasing complication of the process of production and its increasing dependence on science.

This does not mean, however, that spiritual workers should hold sway over manual workers. The contradistinction between spiritual and manual work is not founded in nature, but in society; it is an artificial class-distinction. All work, even the most simple, is spiritual as well as manual. For all kinds of work, till by repetition it has become automatic, thinking is necessary; this combination of thinking and acting is the charm of all human activity. Also under the natural division of labor, as a consequence of differences in predilection and capacity, this charm remains. Capitalism, however, has vitiated these natural conditions. To increase profit it has exaggerated the division of labor to the extreme of one-sided specializing. Three centuries ago already, in the beginning of the manufactory-system, the endless repetition of always the same limited manipulations turned labor into a monotonous routine where, through undue training of some limbs and faculties at the cost of others, body and mind were crippled. In the same way capitalism now, in order to increase productivity and profit, has separated the mental and the manual part of work and made each of them the object of specialized training at the cost of other capacities. It made the two sides that together constitute natural labor, the exclusive task of separate trades and different social classes. The manual workers, fatigued by long hours

of spiritless work in dirty surroundings, are not able to develop the capacities of their minds. The intellectuals, on the other hand, through their theoretical training, kept aloof from the practical work and the natural activity of the body, must resort to artificial substitutes. In both groups full human endowment is crippled. Assuming this capitalistic degeneration to be permanent human nature, one of these classes now claims superiority and domination over the other.

By yet another line of argument the claim of the intellectual class for spiritual and, hence, social leadership is supported. Learned writers have pointed out that the entire progress of humanity is due to some few geniuses. It was this limited number of discoverers, of inventors, of thinkers, that built up science, that improved technics, that conceived new ideas and opened new ways, where then the masses of their fellow-men followed and imitated them. All civilization is founded upon this small number of eminent brains. So the future of mankind, the further progress of culture depends on the breeding and selection of such superior people and would be endangered by a general levelling.

Suppose the assertion to be true, the retort, with becoming irony, could be that the result of these superior brains, this pitiful world of ours, is indeed in keeping with such a narrow basis, and nothing to boast of. Could those great precursors witness what has been made of their discoveries they would not be very proud. Were we not able to do better, we should despair of humanity.

But the assertion is not true. Whoever makes a detailed study of any of the great discoveries in science, technics or what else is surprised by the great number of names associated with it. In the later popular and abridged historical text books, however, the source of so many superficial misconceptions, only a few prominent names are preserved and exalted, as if theirs was the sole credit. So these were coined exceptional geniuses. In reality every great progress proceeded from a social surrounding pregnant with it, where from all sides the

new ideas, the suggestions, the glimpses of insight sprang up. None of the great men, extolled in history, because they took the decisive and salient steps, could have done so but for the work of a large number of precursors on whose achievements his are based. And besides, these most talented thinkers, praised in later centuries as the authors of the world's progress, were not at all the spiritual leaders of their time. They were often unknown to their contemporaries, quietly working in retirement; they mostly belonged to the subjected class, sometimes even they were persecuted by the rulers. Their present-day equivalents are not those noisy claimants for intellectual leadership, but silent workers again, hardly known, derided perhaps or persecuted. Only in a society of free producers, who are able to appreciate the importance of spiritual achievements and eager to apply them to the well-being of all, the creative genius will be recognized and estimated by his fellow-men at the full value.

Why is it that from the life work of all these men of genius in the past nothing better than present capitalism could result? What they were able to do was to lay the scientific and technical foundations of high productivity of labor. By causes beyond them it became the source of immense power and riches for the ruling minority that succeeded in monopolizing the fruits of this progress. A society of freedom and abundance for all, however, cannot be brought about by any superiority of some few eminent individuals whatever. It does not depend on the brains of the few, but on the character of the many. As far as it depends on science and technics to create abundance, they are already sufficient. What is lacking is the social forces that bind the masses of the workers into a strong unity of organization. The basis of the new society is not what knowledge they can adopt and what technics they can imitate from others, but what community feeling and organized activity they can raise in themselves. This new character cannot be infused by others, it cannot proceed from obedience to any masters. It can only sprout

from independent action, from the fight for freedom, from revolt against the masters. All the genius of superior individuals is of no avail here.

The great decisive step in the progress of mankind, the transformation of society now impending, is essentially a transformation of the working masses. It can be accomplished only by the action, by the revolt, by the effort of the masses themselves; its essential nature is self-liberation of mankind. From this viewpoint it is clear that here no able leadership of an intellectual elite can be helpful. Any attempt to impose it could only be obnoxious, retarding as it does the necessary progress, hence acting as a reactionary force. Objections from the side of the intellectuals, based on the present inadequateness of the working class, in practice will find their refutation when world conditions compel the masses to take up the fight for world revolution.

## **6. Difficulties**

More essential difficulties in the reconstruction of society arise out of the differences in outlook that accompany differences in development and size of the enterprises.

Technically and economically society is dominated by big enterprise, by big capital. The big capitalists themselves, however, are only a small minority of the propertied class. They have behind them, to be sure, the entire class of rentiers and shareholders. But these, as mere parasites, cannot give a solid support in the struggle of the classes. So big capital would be in an awkward position were it not backed by the small bourgeoisie, by the entire class of smaller business men. In its domination of society it takes advantage of the ideas and the moods growing out of the world of small trade, occupying the minds alike of masters and workers in these trades. The working class has to give good consideration to these ideas, because its task and its goal, conceived on the basis of the developments of big capitalism, are conceived and judged in these circles after the familiar conditions of small trade.

In small capitalistic business the boss as a rule is the owner, sometimes the sole owner; or if not, the shareholders are some few friends or relatives. He is his own director and usually the best technical expert. In his person the two functions of technical leader and profit-making capitalist are not separated and hardly to be distinguished even. His profit seems to proceed not from his capital, but from his labor, not from exploitation of the workers, but from the technical capacities of the employer. His workers, either engaged as a few skilled assistants or as unskilled hands, are quite well aware of the generally larger experience and expertness of the boss. What in large enterprise, with its technical leadership by salaried officials, is an obvious measure of practical efficiency—the exclusion of all property interests—would here take the retrogressive form of the removal of the best technical expert and of leaving the work to the less expert or incompetent.

It must be clear that here there is no question of a real difficulty impeding the technical organization of industry. It is hardly to be imagined that the workers in the small shop should want to expel the best expert, even the former boss, if he is honestly willing with all his skill to co-operate in their work, on the foot of equality. Is not this contrary to basis and doctrine of the new world, the exclusion of the capitalist? The working class, when reorganizing society on a new basis, is not bound to apply some theoretical doctrine; but, to direct its practical measures, it possesses a great leading principle. The principle, living touchstone of practicability to the clear-sighted minds, proclaims that those who do the work must regulate the work, and that all who collaborate practically in the production dispose of the means of production, with the exclusion of all property or capital interests. It is on the basis of this principle that the workers will face all problems and difficulties in the organization of production and will find a solution.

Surely the technically backward branches of production exercised in small trade will present special, but not essential difficulties.

The problem of how to organize them by means of self-governing associations, and to connect them with the main body of social organization must be solved mainly by the workers engaged in these branches, though collaboration from other sides may come to their aid. Once the political and social power is firmly in the hands of the working class and its ideas of reconstruction dominate the minds, it seems obvious that everybody who is willing to co-operate in the community of labor will be welcome and will find the place and the task appropriate to his capacities. Besides, in consequence of the increasing community feeling and the desire for efficiency in work, the units of production will not remain the isolated dwarfish shops of former times.

The essential difficulties are situated in the spiritual disposition, the mode of thinking produced by the conditions of small trade in all who are engaged here, masters as well as artisans and workers. It prevents them to see the problem of big capitalism and big enterprise as the real and main issue. It is easily understood, however, that the conditions of small trade, the basis of their ideas, cannot determine a transformation of society that takes its origin and its driving force from big capitalism. But it is equally clear that such a disparity of general outlook may be an ample source of discord and strife, of misunderstandings and difficulties. Difficulties in the fight, and difficulties in the constructive work. In small-trade circumstances social and moral qualities develop in another way than in big enterprises; organization does not dominate the minds in the same degree. Whereas the workers may be more headstrong and less submissive, the impulses of fellowship and solidarity are less also. So propaganda has to play a greater role here; not in the sense of impressing a theoretical doctrine, but in its pure sense of exposing wider views on society in general, so that the ideas are determined not by the narrow experience of their own conditions but by the wider and essential conditions of capitalist labor at large.

This holds good still more for agriculture, with its larger number and greater importance of small enterprises. There is a material difference, besides, because here the limited amount of soil brought into being one more parasite. Its absolute necessity for living room and foodstuff production enables the owners of the soil to levy tribute from all who want to use it; what in political economy is called rent. So here we have from olden times an ownership not based on labor, and protected by State power and law; an ownership consisting only in certificates, in titles, assuring claims on an often big part of the produce of society. The farmer paying rent to the landowner or interest to the real-estate bank, the citizen, whether capitalist or worker, paying in his house-rent high prices for barren soil, they are all exploited by landed property. A century ago, in the time of small capitalism, the difference between the two forms of income, the idle income of the landowner as contrasted with the hard-won earnings of business man, worker and artisan, was so strongly felt as undue robbery, that repeatedly projects were proposed to abolish it, by nationalization of the soil. Later on, when capitalist property ever more took on the same form of certificates commanding income without labor, land reform became silent. The antagonism between capitalist and landowner, between profit and rent disappeared; landed property is now simply one of the many forms of capitalist property.

The farmer tilling his own soil combines the character of three social classes, and his earnings are indiscriminately composed of wages for his own labor, profit from directing his farm and exploiting the farm hands, and rent from his ownership. Under the original conditions partly still living as tradition of an idealized past, the farmer produced nearly all the necessities for himself and his family on his own or on rented soil. In modern times agriculture has to provide foodstuffs for the industrial population also, which gradually everywhere, and increasingly in the capitalist countries, forms the majority. In return

the rural classes receive the products of industry, which they need for ever more purposes. This is not entirely a home affair. The bulk of the world's need of grain is supplied by large enterprises, on virgin soil in the new continents, on capitalist lines; while it exhausted the untouched fertility of those vast plains, it depressed by its cheap competition the rent of European landed property, causing agrarian crises. But also in the old European lands agrarian production nowadays is production of commodities, for the market; the farmers sell the chief part of their products and buy what they need for living. So they are subject to the vicissitudes of capitalist competition, now pressed down by low prices, mortgaged or ruined, then profiteering by favorable conditions. Since every increase of rent tends to be petrified in higher land prices, rising product prices make the former owner a rentier, whereas the next owner, starting with heavier expenses, suffers ruin in the case of falling prices. So the economic position of the agricultural class in general is weakened. On the whole their condition and their outlook on modern society is similar in a way to that of small capitalists or independent business people in industry.

There are differences, however, due to the limited amount of soil. Whereas in industry or commerce whoever has a small capital can venture to start a business and fight against competitors, the farmer cannot enter the lists when others occupy the land he needs. To be able to produce he must first have the soil. In capitalist society free disposal of the soil is only possible as ownership; if he is not landowner he can only work and apply his knowledge and capacity by suffering himself to be exploited by the possessor of the soil. So ownership and labor are intimately connected in his mind; this lies at the root of the often criticized property-fanaticism of the farmers. Ownership enables him to gain his living during all his years by heavy toiling. By letting or selling his property, hence living on the idle landowner's rent, ownership also enables him in his old age to enjoy the sustenance which every worker

should be entitled to after a life of toil. The continuous struggle against the variable forces of nature and climate, with technics only slightly beginning to be directed by modern science, hence strongly dependent on traditional methods and personal capacity, is aggravated by the pressure from capitalist conditions. This struggle has created a strong stubborn individualism, that makes the farmers a special class with a special mentality and outlook, foreign to the ideas and aims of the working class.

Still, modern development has worked a considerable change here also. The tyrannical power of the great capitalist concerns, of landed estate banks and railway magnates on whom the farmers depend for credit and for transport, squeezed and ruined them, and sometimes brought them to the verge of rebellion. On the other hand, the necessity of securing some of the advantages of large enterprise for small-scale business did much to enforce co-operation, as well for the buying of fertilizers and materials as for procuring the necessary foodstuffs for the accumulated city population. Here the demand for a uniform standardized product, in dairy production for instance, exacts rigid prescripts and control, to which the individual farms have to submit. So the farmers are taught a bit of community feeling, and their rugged individualism has to make many concessions. But this inclusion of their work into a social entirety assumes the capitalist form of subjection to a foreign master-power, thus stinging their feelings of independence.

All these conditions determine the attitude of the rural class to the workers' reorganization of society. The farmers, though as independent managers of their own enterprises comparable to industrial capitalists, usually take part themselves in the productive work, which depends in a high degree on their professional skill and knowledge. Though pocketing rent as landowners, their existence is bound up with their strenuous productive activity. Their management and control over the soil in their character of producers, of workers, in common with the

laborers, is entirely in accordance with the principles of the new order. Their control over the soil in their character of landowners is entirely contrary to these principles. They never learnt, though, to distinguish between these totally different sides of their position. Moreover, the disposal over the soil as producers, according to the new principle, is a social function, a mandate of society, a service to provide their fellow-people with foodstuffs and raw materials, whereas old tradition and capitalist egotism tend to consider it an exclusive personal right.

Such differences in outlook may give rise to many dissensions and difficulties between the producing classes of industry and of agriculture. The workers must adhere with absolute strictness to the principle of exclusion of all the exploitation-interests of ownership; they admit only interests based on productive work. Moreover, for the industrial workers, the majority of the population, being cut off from the agrarian produce means starvation, which they cannot tolerate. For the highly industrial countries of Europe, certainly, the transoceanic traffic, the interchange with other food-producing continents, here plays an important role. But there is no doubt that in some way a common organization of the industrial and the agricultural production in each country must be established.

The point is that between the industrial workers and the farmers, between the city and the country, there are considerable differences in outlook and ideas, but no real differences or conflicts of interest. Hence there will be many difficulties and misunderstandings, sources of dissent and strife, but there will be no war to the knife as between working class and capital. Though so far mostly the farmers, led by traditional political and narrow social slogans, as defenders of property interests stood on the side of capital against the workers—and this may still be so in future—the logic of their own real interests must finally place them over against capital. This, however, is not sufficient. As small business men they may be satisfied to be freed from pressure

and exploitation through a victory of the workers with or without their help. But then, according to their ideas, it will be a revolution that makes them absolute and free private possessors of the soil, similar to former middle-class revolutions. Against this tendency the workers in intensive propaganda have to oppose the new principles: production a social function, the community of all the producers master of their work; as well as their firm will to establish this community of industrial and agricultural production. Whereas the rural producers will be their own masters in regulating and directing their work on their own responsibility, its interlocking with the industrial part of production will be a common cause of all the workers and their central councils. Their continual mutual intercourse will provide agriculture with all technical and scientific means and methods of organization available, to increase the efficiency and productivity of the work.

The problems met with in the organization of agricultural production are partly of the same kind as in industry. In big enterprises, such as the large estates for corn, wheat, and other mass production with the aid of motorized machines, the regulation of the work is made by the community of the workers and their councils. Where for careful treatment in detail small production units are necessary, co-operation will play an important role. The number and diversity of small-scale farms will offer the same kind of problems as small-scale industry, and their managing will be the task of their self-governing associations. Such local communities of similar and yet individually different farms will probably be necessary to relieve social management as a whole from dealing and reckoning with every small unit separately. All these forms of organization cannot be imagined before hand; they will be devised and built by the producers when they stand before the necessities of practice.

## **7. Council Organization**

The social system considered here might be called a form of communism, only that name, by the world-wide propaganda of the "Communist Party" is used for its system of State socialism under party dictatorship. But what is a name? Names are ever misused to fool the masses, the familiar sounds preventing them from critically using their brains and clearly recognizing reality. More expedient, therefore, than looking for the right name will it be to examine more closely the chief characteristic of the system, the council organization.

The Workers' Councils are the form of self-government which in the times to come will replace the forms of government of the old world. Of course not for all future; none such form is for eternity. When life and work in community are natural habit, when mankind entirely controls its own life, necessity gives way to freedom and the strict rules of justice established before dissolve into spontaneous behavior. Workers' councils are the form of organization during the transition period in which the working class is fighting for dominance, is destroying capitalism and is organizing social production. In order to know their true character it will be expedient to compare them with the existing forms of organization and government as fixed by custom as self-evident in the minds of the people.

Communities too large to assemble in one meeting always regulate their affairs by means of representatives, of delegates. So the burgesses of free medieval towns governed themselves by town councils, and the middle class of all modern countries, following the example of England, have their Parliaments. When speaking of management of affairs by chosen delegates we always think of parliaments; so it is with parliaments especially that we have to compare the workers' councils in order to discern their predominant features. It stands to reason that with the large differences between the classes and between their aims, also their representative bodies must be essentially different.

At once this difference strikes the eye: Workers' councils deal with labor, have to regulate production, whereas parliaments are political bodies, discussing and deciding laws and State affairs. Politics and economy, however, are not entirely unrelated fields. Under capitalism State and Parliament took the measures and enacted the laws needed for the smooth course of production; such as the providing for safety in traffic and dealings, for protection of commerce and industry, of business and travel at home and abroad, for administration of justice, for coinage and uniform weights and measures. And its political work, too, not at first sight connected with economic activity, dealt with general conditions in society, with the relations between the different classes, constituting the foundation of the system of production. So politics, the activity of Parliaments may, in a wider sense, be called an auxiliary for production.

What, then, under capitalism, is the distinction between politics and economy? They compare together as the general regulation compares with the actual practice. The task of politics is to establish the social and legal conditions under which productive work may run smoothly; the productive work itself is the task of the citizens. Thus there is a division of labor. The general regulations, though necessary foundations, constitute only a minor part of social activity, accessory to the work proper, and can be left to a minority of ruling politicians. The productive work itself, basis and content of social life, consists in the separate activities of numerous producers, completely filling their lives. The essential part of social activity is the personal task. If everybody takes care of his own business and performs his task well, society as a whole runs well. Now and then, at regular intervals, on the days of parliamentary election, the citizens have to pay attention to the general regulations. Only in times of social crisis, of fundamental decisions and severe contests, of civil strife and revolution, has the mass of the citizens had to devote their entire time and forces to these general regulations.

Once the fundamentals decided, they could return to their private business and once more leave these general affairs to the minority of experts, to lawyers and politicians, to Parliament and Government.

Entirely different is the organization of common production by means of workers' councils. Social production is not divided up into a number of separate enterprises each the restricted life-task of one person or group; now it forms one connected entirety, object of care for the entirety of workers, occupying their minds as the common task of all. The general regulation is not an accessory matter, left to a small group of specialists; it is the principal matter, demanding the attention of all in conjunction. There is no separation between politics and economy as life activities of a body of specialists and of the bulk of producers. For the one community of producers politics and economy have now coalesced into the unity of general regulation and practical productive labor. Their entirety is the essential object for all.

This character is reflected in the practice of all proceedings. The councils are no politicians, no government. They are messengers, carrying and interchanging the opinions, the intentions, the will of the groups of workers. Not, indeed, as indifferent messenger boys passively carrying letters or messages of which they themselves know nothing. They took part in the discussions, they stood out as spirited spokesmen of the prevailing opinions. So now, as delegates of the group, they are not only able to defend them in the council meeting, but at the same time they are sufficiently unbiased to be accessible to other arguments and to report to their group opinions more largely adhered to. Thus they are the organs of social intercourse and discussion.

The practice of parliaments is exactly the contrary. Here the delegates have to decide without asking instructions from their voters, without binding mandate. Though the M.P., to keep their allegiance, may deign to speak to them and to expound his line of conduct, he does so as the master of his own deeds. He votes as honor and conscience

dictate him, according to his own opinions. Of course; for he is the expert in politics, the specialist in legislative matters and cannot let himself be directed by instructions from ignorant people. Their task is production, private business, his task is politics, the general regulations. He has to be guided by high political principles and must not be influenced by the narrow selfishness of their private interests. In this way it is made possible that in democratic capitalism politicians, elected by a majority of workers, can serve the interests of the capitalist class.

In the labor movement also the principles of parliamentarism took a footing. In the mass organizations of the unions, or in such gigantic political organizations as the German Social-Democratic Party, the officials on the boards as a kind of government got power over the members, and their annual congresses assumed the character of parliaments. The leaders proudly called them so, parliaments of labor, to emphasize their importance; and critical observers pointed to the strife of factions, to the demagogic of leaders, and to the intrigue behind the scenes as indications of the same degeneration as appeared in the real parliaments. Indeed, they were parliaments in their fundamental character. Not in the beginning, when the unions were small, and devoted members did all the work themselves, mostly gratuitously. But with the increase of membership there came the same division of labor as in society at large. The working masses had to give all their attention to their separate personal interests, how to find and keep their job, the chief contents of their life and their mind; only in a most general way they had, moreover, to decide by vote over their common class and group interests. It was to the experts, the union officials and party leaders, who knew how to deal with capitalist bosses and State secretaries, that the detailed practice was left. And only a minority of local leaders was sufficiently acquainted with these general interests to be sent as delegates to the congresses, where notwithstanding the often binding mandates, they actually had to vote after their own judgment.

In the council organization the dominance of delegates over the constituents has disappeared because its basis, the division of labor, has disappeared. Now the social organization of labor compels every worker to give his entire attention to the common cause, the totality of production. The production of the necessities for life as the basis of life, as before entirely occupies the mind. Not in the form, now, as care for the own enterprise, the own job, in competition with others. Life and production now can be secured only by collaboration, by collective work with the companions. So this collective work is uppermost in the thoughts of everybody. Consciousness of community is the background, the basis of all feeling and thinking.

This means a total revolution in the spiritual life of man. He has now learnt to see society, to know community. In former times, under capitalism, his view was concentrated on the small part related with his business, his job, himself and his family. This was imperative, for his life, his existence. As a dim, unknown background society hovered behind his small visible world. To be sure, he experienced its mighty forces that determined luck or failure as the outcome of his labor; but guided by religion he saw them as the working of supernatural Supreme Powers. Now, on the contrary, society comes into the full light, transparent and knowable; now the structure of the social process of labor lies open before man's eyes. Now his view is directed to the entirety of production; this is imperative, for his life, his existence. Social production is now the object of conscious regulation. Society is now a thing handled, manipulated by man, hence understood in its essential character. Thus the world of the workers' councils transforms the mind.

To parliamentarism, the political system of the separate business, the people were a multitude of separate persons; at the best, in democratic theory, each proclaimed to be endowed with the same natural rights. For the election of delegates they were grouped according to residence in constituencies. In the times of petty-capitalism a certain community

of interests might be assumed for neighbors living in the same town or village. In later capitalism this assumption ever more became a fiction. Artisans, shopkeepers, capitalists, workers living in the same quarter of a town have different and opposed interests; they usually give their vote to different parties, and chance majorities win. Though parliamentary theory considers the man elected as the representative of the constituency, it is clear that all these voters do not belong together as a group that sends him as its delegate to represent its wishes.

Council organization, in this respect, is quite the contrary of parliamentarism. Here the natural groups, the collaborating workers, the personnels of the factories act as unities and designate their delegates. Because they have common interests and belong together in the praxis of daily life, they can send some of them as real representatives and spokesmen. Complete democracy is realized here by the equal rights of everyone who takes part in the work. Of course, whoever stands outside the work does not have a voice in its regulation. It cannot be deemed a lack of democracy that in this world of self-rule of the collaborating groups all that have no concern with the work—such as remained in plenty from capitalism: exploiters, parasites, rentiers—do not take part in the decisions.

Seventy years ago Marx pointed out that between the rule of capitalism and the final organization of a free humanity there will be a time of transition in which the working class is master of society but in which the bourgeoisie has not yet disappeared. He called this state of things the dictatorship of the proletariat. At that time this word had not yet the ominous sound of modern systems of despotism, nor could it be misused for the dictatorship of a ruling party, as in later Russia. It meant simply that the dominant power over society was transferred from the capitalist to the working class. Afterwards people, entirely confined within the ideas of parliamentarism, tried to materialize this conception by taking away the franchise for political bodies from the

propertied classes. It is clear that, violating as it did the instinctive feeling of equal rights, it was in contrast to democracy. We see now that council organization puts into practice what Marx theoretically anticipated but for what at that time the practical form could not yet be imagined. When production is regulated by the producers themselves, the formerly exploiting class automatically is excluded from taking part in the decisions, without any artificial stipulation. Marx's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat now appears to be identical with the labor democracy of council organization.

This labor democracy is entirely different from political democracy of the former social system. The so-called political democracy under capitalism was a mock democracy, an artful system conceived to mask the real domination of the people by a ruling minority. Council organization is a real democracy, the democracy of labor, making the working people master of their work. Under council organization political democracy has disappeared, because politics itself disappeared and gave way to social economy. The activity of the councils, put in action by the workers as the organs of collaboration, guided by perpetual study and strained attention to circumstances and needs, covers the entire field of society. All measures are taken in constant intercourse, by deliberation in the councils and discussion in the groups and the shops, by actions in the shops and decisions in the councils. What is done under such conditions could never be commanded from above and proclaimed by the will of a government. It proceeds from the common will of all concerned; because it is founded on the labor experience and knowledge of all, and because it deeply influences the life of all. Measures can be executed only in such a way that the masses put them into practice as their own resolve and will; foreign constraint cannot enforce them, simply because such a force is lacking. The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their

will upon the masses; they have no organs of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves. Wherever the use of power is needed, against disturbances or attacks upon the existing order, it proceeds from the collectivities of the workers in the shops and stands under their control.

Governments were necessary, during the entire period of civilization up to now, as instruments of the ruling class to keep down the exploited masses. They also assumed administrative functions in increasing measure; but their chief character as power structures was determined by the necessity of upholding class domination. Now that the necessity has vanished, the instrument, too, has disappeared. What remains is administration, one of the many kinds of work, the task of special kinds of workers; what comes in its stead, the life spirit of organization, is the constant deliberation of the workers, in common thinking attending to their common cause. What enforces the accomplishment of the decisions of the councils is their moral authority. But moral authority in such a society has a more stringent power than any command or constraint from a government.

When in the preceding time of governments over the people political power had to be conceded to the people and their parliaments a separation was made between the legislative and the executive part of government, sometimes completed by the judicial as a third independent power. Law-making was the task of parliaments, but the application, the execution, the daily governing was reserved to a small privileged group of rulers. In the labor community of the new society this distinction has disappeared. Deciding and performing are intimately connected; those who have to do the work have to decide, and what they decide in common they themselves have to execute in common. In the case of great masses, the councils are their organs of deciding. Where the executive task was entrusted to central bodies these must have the power of command, they must be governments; where

the executive task falls to the masses themselves this character is lacking in the councils. Moreover, according to the varied problems and objects of regulation and decision, different persons in different combinations will be sent out and gather. In the field of production itself every plant has not only to organize carefully its own extensive range of activities, it has also to connect itself horizontally with similar enterprises, vertically with those who provide them with materials or use their products. In the mutual dependence and interconnection of enterprises, in their conjunction to branches of production, discussing and deciding councils will cover ever wider realms, up to the central organization of the entire production. On the other hand the organization of consumption, the distribution of all necessaries to the consumer, will need its own councils of delegates of all involved, and will have a more local or regional character.

Besides this organization of the material life of mankind there is the wide realm of cultural activities, and of those not directly productive which are of primary necessity for society, such as education of the children, or care for the health of all. Here the same principle holds, the principle of self-regulation of these fields of work by those who do the work. It seems altogether natural that in the care for universal health, as well as in the organization of education, all who take part actively, here the physicians, there the teachers, by means of their associations regulate and organize the entire service. Under capitalism, where they had to make a job and a living out of the human disease or out of drilling children, their connection with society at large had the form either of competitive business or of regulation and command by Government. In the new society, in consequence of the much more intimate connection of health with labor, and of education with labor, they will regulate their tasks in close touch and steady collaboration of their organs of intercourse, their councils, with the other workers' councils.

It must be remarked here that cultural life, the domain of arts and sciences; by its very nature is so intimately bound up with individual inclination and effort, that only the free initiative of people not pressed down by the weight of incessant toil can secure its flowering. This truth is not refuted by the fact that during the past centuries of class society princes and governments protected and directed arts and sciences, aiming of course to use them as utensils for their glory and the preservation of their domination. Generally speaking, there is a fundamental disparity for the cultural as well as for all the non-productive and productive activities, between organization imposed from above by a ruling body and organization by the free collaboration of colleagues and comrades. Centrally directed organization consists in regulation as much as possible uniform all over the realm; else it could not be surveyed and conducted from one centre. In the self-regulation by all concerned the initiative of numerous experts, all poring over their work, perfecting it by emulating, imitating, consulting each other in constant intercourse, must result in a rich diversity of ways and means. Dependent on the central command of a government, spiritual life must fall into dull monotony; inspired by the free spontaneity of massal human impulse it must unfold into brilliant variety. The council principle affords the possibility of finding the appropriate forms of organization.

Thus council organization weaves a variegated net of collaborating bodies through society, regulating its life and progress according to their own free initiative. And all that in the councils is discussed and decided draws its actual power from the understanding, the will, the action of working mankind itself.

### 8. Growth

When in the difficult fight against capital, in which the workers' councils came up and developed, victory is won by the working class, it takes up its task, the organization of production.

We know, of course, that victory will not be one event, finishing the fight and introducing a then following period of reconstruction. We know that social fight and economic construction will not be separated, but will be associated as a series of successes in fight and starts of new organization, interrupted perhaps by periods of stagnation or social reaction. The workers' councils growing up as organs of fight will at the same time be organs of reconstruction. For clear understanding, however, we will distinguish these two tasks, as if they were separate things, coming one after another. In order to see the true character of the transformation of society we must treat it, in a schematical way, as a uniform, continuous process starting "the day after the victory."

As soon as the workers are master of the factories, master of society, they will set the machines running. They know that this cannot wait; to live is the first necessity, and their own life, the life of society depends on their labor. Out of the chaos of crumbling capitalism the first working order must be created by means of the councils. Endless difficulties will stand in their way; resistance of all kinds must be overcome, resistance by hostility, by misunderstanding, by ignorance. But new unsuspected forces have come into being, the forces of enthusiasm, of devotion, of insight. Hostility must be beaten down by resolute action, misunderstanding must be taken away by patient persuading, ignorance must be overcome by incessant propaganda and teaching. By making the connection of the shops ever stronger, by including ever wider realms of production, by making ever more precise accounts and estimates in the plannings, the regulation of the process of production continually progresses. In this way step by step social economy is growing into a consciously dominated organization able to secure life necessities to all.

With the realization of this program the task of the workers' councils is not finished. On the contrary, this is only the introduction to their real, more extensive and important work. A period of rapid

development now sets in. As soon as the workers feel themselves master of their labor, free to unfold their forces, their first impulse will be the determinate will to do away with all the misery and ugliness, to finish with the shortcomings and abuses, to destroy all poverty and barbarism that as inheritances of capitalism disgrace the earth. An enormous backwardness must be made up for; what the masses got lagged far behind what they might and should get under existing conditions. With the possibility of fulfilling them, their wants will be raised to higher standards; the height of culture of a people is measured by the extent and the quality of its life exigencies. By simply using the available means and methods of working, quantity and quality of homes, of food, of clothing for all can be raised to a level corresponding to the existing productivity of labor. All productive force that in the former society was wasted or used for luxury of the rulers can now be used to satisfy the higher wants of the masses. Thus, first innovation of society, a general prosperity will arise.

But also the backwardness in the methods of production will from the beginning have the attention of the workers. They will refuse to be harrowed and fatigued with primitive tools and obsolete working methods. If the technical methods and the machines are improved by the systematic application of all known inventions of technics and discoveries of science, the productivity of labor can be increased considerably. This better technics will be made accessible to all; the including in productive work of the many who before had to waste their forces in the bungling of petty trade, because capitalism had no use for them, or in personal service of the propertied class, now helps to lower the necessary hours of labor for all. So this will be a time of supreme creative activity. It has to proceed from the initiative of the expert producers in the enterprises; but it can take place only by continual deliberation, by collaboration, by mutual inspiration and emulation. So the organs of collaboration, the councils, are put into (unceasing) action.

In this new construction and organization of an ever more excellent productive apparatus the workers' councils, as the connecting strings of society, will rise to the full height of their faculties. Whereas the abundance of life necessities, the universal prosperity, represents the passive side of the new life, the innovation of labor itself as its active side makes life a delight of glorious creative experience.

The entire aspect of social life changes. Also in its outer appearance, in surroundings and utensils, showing in their increasing harmony and beauty the nobleness of the work that shaped them new. What William Morris said, speaking of the crafts of olden times with their simple tools: that the beauty of their products was due to work being a joy for man—hence it was extinguished in the ugliness of capitalism—again asserts itself; but now on the higher stage of mastery over the most perfect technics. William Morris loved the tool of the craftsman and hated the machine of the capitalist. For the free worker of the future the handling of the perfectly constructed machine, providing a tension of acuteness, will be a source of mental exaltation, of spiritual rejoicing, of intellectual beauty.

Technics make man a free master of his own life and destiny. Technics, in a painful process of growth during many thousands of years of labor and fight developed to the present height, put an end to all hunger and poverty, to all toiling and slavery. Technics put all the forces of nature at the service of mankind and its needs. The growth of the science of nature opens to man new forms and new possibilities of life so rich and manifold that they far surpass what we can imagine to-day. But technics alone cannot perform that. Only technics in the hands of a humanity that has bound itself consciously by strong ties of brotherhood into a working community controlling its own life. Together, indissolvably connected, technics as material basis and visible power, the community as ethical basis and consciousness, they determine the entire renovation of labor.

And now, with his work, man himself is changing. A new feeling is taking hold of him, the feeling of security. Now at last the gnawing solicitude for life falls off from mankind. During all the past centuries, from original savageness till modern civilization, life was not secure. Man was not master over his subsistence. Always, also in times of prosperity, and for the wealthiest even, behind the illusion of perpetual welfare, in the subconsciousness lurked a silent solicitude for the future. As a permanent oppression this anxiety was sunk in the hearts, weighed heavily upon the brain and hampered the unfolding of free thinking. For us, who ourselves live under this pressure, it is impossible to imagine what a deep change in outlook, in world vision, in character, the disappearance of all anxiety about life will bring about. Old delusions and superstitions that in past times had to uphold mankind in its spiritual helplessness, now are dropped. Now that man feels certain that he truly is master of his life, their place is taken by knowledge accessible to all, by the intellectual beauty of an all-encompassing scientific world view.

Even more than in labor itself, the innovation of life will appear in the preparing of future labor, in the education and training of the next generation. It is clear that, since every organization of society has its special system of education adapted to its needs, this fundamental change in the system of production must be accompanied immediately by a fundamental change in education. In the original small-trade economy, in the farmer and artisan world, the family with its natural division of labor was the basic element of society and of production. Here the children grew up and learned the methods of working by gradually taking their part in the work. Afterwards, under capitalism, the family lost its economic basis, because productive labor ever more was transferred to the factories. Labor became a social process with broader theoretical basis; so a broader knowledge and a more intellectual education was necessary for all. Hence schools were

founded, as we know them: masses of children, educated in the isolated small homes without any organic connection with labor, flocking into the schools to learn such abstract knowledge as is needed for society, here again without direct connection with living labor. And different of course according to social classes. For the children of the bourgeoisie, for the future officials and intellectuals a good theoretical and scientific training, enabling them to direct and rule society. For the children of the farmers and the working class an indispensable minimum: reading, writing, computing, needed for their work, completed by history and religion, to keep them obedient and respectful towards their masters and rulers. Learned writers of pedagogy text books, unacquainted with the capitalistic basis of these conditions which they assume to be lasting, vainly try to explain and to smooth out the conflicts proceeding from this separation of productive labor and education, from the contradiction between narrow family isolation and the social character of production.

In the new world of collaborate production these contradictions have disappeared, and harmony between life and labor is restored, now on the wide base of society at large. Now again education of the youth consists in learning the working methods and their foundation by gradually taking part in the productive process. Not in family isolation; now that the material provision of life necessities has been taken over by the community, besides its function as productive, the family loses that of consumption unit. Community life, corresponding to the strongest impulses within the children themselves, will take much larger place; out of the small homes they enter into the wide air of society. The hybridical combination of home and school gives way to communities of children, for a large part regulating their own life under careful guidance of adult educators. Education, instead of passively imbibing teachings from above, is chiefly personal activity, directed towards and connected with social labor. Now the social feelings, as

an inheritance of primeval times living in all, but extremely strong in children, can develop without being suppressed by the need of egotism of the capitalist struggle for life.

Whereas the forms of education are determined by community and self-activity, its contents are given by the character of the production system, towards which it prepares. This production system was ever more, especially in the last century, based upon the application of science to technics. Science gave man mastery over the forces of nature; this mastery has made possible the social revolution and affords the basis of the new society. The producers can be master of their labor, of production, only if they master these sciences. Hence the growing generation must be instructed in the first place in the science of nature and its application. No longer, as under capitalism, will science be a monopoly of a small minority of intellectuals, and the uninstructed masses be restricted to subordinate activities. Science in its full extent will be open to all. Instead of the division between one-sided manual and one-sided mental work as specialities of two classes, now comes the harmonious combination of manual and mental work for everybody. This will be necessary also for the further development of the productivity of labor, depending as it does on the further progress of its foundations, science and technics. Now it is not merely a minority of trained intellectuals, but it is all the good brains of the entire people, all prepared by the most careful education, that occupy themselves with the creation of knowledge and its application in labor. Then may be expected a tempo of progress in the development of science and technics, compared to which the much praised progress under capitalism is only a poor commencement.

Under capitalism there is a distinctive difference between the tasks of the young and of the adults. Youth has to learn, the adults have to work. It is clear that as long as labor is toiling in foreign service [for a purpose in opposition to the well-being and comfort of the workers]

to produce the highest profit for capital, every capacity, once acquired, must be used up to the limits of time and force. No time of a worker should be wasted for learning ever new things. Only an exceptional adult had the possibility, and still less had the duty regularly to instruct himself during his further life. In the new society this difference disappears. Now in youth the learning consists in taking part, in increasing rate with the years, in the productive work. And now with the increase of productivity and the absence of exploitation ever more leisure is available to the adults for spiritual activities. It enables them to keep apace with the rapid development of the methods of work. This indeed is necessary for them. To take part in the discussions and decisions is only possible if they can study the problems of technics that continually incite and stimulate their attention. The grand development of society through the unfolding of technics and science, of security and abundance, of power over nature and life, can only be ascertained by the growth of capability and knowledge of all the partners. It gives new contents of thrilling activity to their life, it elevates existence and makes it a conscious delight of eager participation in the spiritual and practical progress of the new world.

Added to these sciences of nature are now the new sciences of society that were lacking under capitalism. The special feature of the new system of production is that man now dominates the social forces which determine his ideas and impulses. Practical domination must find its expression in theoretical domination, in knowledge of the phenomena and the determining forces of human action and life, of thinking and feeling. In former times, when through ignorance about society their social origin was unknown, their power was ascribed to the supernatural character of spirit, to a mysterious power of the mind, and the disciplines dealing with them, the so-called humanities, were labeled spiritual sciences: psychology, philosophy, ethics, history, sociology, aesthetics. As with all science their beginnings were full of

primitive mysticism and tradition; but contrary to the sciences of nature their rise to real scientific height was obstructed by capitalism. They could not find a solid footing because under capitalism they proceeded from the isolated human being with its individual mind, because in those times of individualism it was not known that man is essentially a social being, that all his faculties emanate from society and are determined by society. Now, however, that society lies open to the view of man, as an organism of mutually connected human beings, and that the human mind is understood as their main organ of interconnection, now they can develop into real sciences.

And the practical importance of these sciences for the new community is no less than that of the sciences of nature. They deal with the forces lying in man, determining his relations to his fellow men and to the world, instigating his actions in social life, appearing in the events of history past and present. As mighty passions and blind impulses they worked in the great social fights of mankind, now eliciting man to powerful deeds, then by equally blind traditions keeping him in apathetic submissivity, always spontaneous, ungoverned, unknown. The new science of man and society discloses these forces and so enables man to control them by conscious knowledge. From masters driving him through passive instincts they become servants, ruled by self-restraint, directed by him towards his well-conceived purposes.

The instruction of the growing generation in the knowledge of these social and spiritual forces, and its training in consciously directing them will be one of the chief educational tasks of the new society. Thus the young will be enabled to develop all endowments of passion and willpower, of intelligence and enthusiasm, and to apply them in efficient activity. It is an education of character as well as of knowledge. This careful education of the new generation, theoretical and practical, in natural science and in social consciousness, will form a most essential element in the new system of production. Only in this way an

unhampered progression of social life will be secured. And in this way, too, the system of production will develop to ever higher forms. Thus by theoretical mastery of the sciences of nature and society, and by their practical application in labor and life, the workers will make the earth into a happy abode of free mankind.

## Part 2 — The Fight

### 1. Trade Unionism

The task of the working class, to take production in its own hand and to organise it first has to be dealt with. In order to carry on the fight it is necessary to see the goal in clear and distinct lines before us. But the fight, the conquest of power over production is the chief and most difficult part of the work. It is in this fight that the workers' councils will be created.

We cannot exactly foresee the future forms of the workers' fight for freedom. They depend on social conditions and must change along with the increasing power of the working class. It will be necessary, therefore, to survey how, so far, it [has] fought its way upward, adapting its modes of action to the varying circumstances. Only by learning from the experience of our predecessors and by considering it critically will we be able in our turn to meet the demands of the hour.

In every society depending on the exploitation of a working [class] by a ruling class there is a continuous struggle over the division of the total produce of labor, or in other words : over the degree of exploitation. Thus medieval times, as well as later centuries, are full of incessant struggles and furious fights between the landowners and the farmers. At the same time we see the fight of the rising burgher class against nobility and monarchy, for power over society. This is a different kind of class struggle, associated with the rise of a new system of production, proceeding from the development of technics, industry

and commerce. It was waged between the masters of the land and the masters of capital, between the declining feudal and the rising capitalist system. In a series of social convulsions, of political revolutions and wars, in England, in France and in other countries consecutively, the capitalist class has gained complete mastery over society.

The working class under capitalism has to carry on both kinds of fight against capital. It has to keep up a continual struggle to mitigate the heavy pressure of exploitation, to increase wages, to enlarge or keep up its share in the total produce. Besides, with the growth of its strength, it has to gain mastery over society in order to overthrow capitalism and bring about a new system of production.

When for the first time, in the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England, spinning and then weaving machines were introduced, we hear of revolting workers destroying the machines. They were not workers in the modern sense, not wage earners. They were small artisans, independent before, now starved by the competition of cheaply producing machines, and trying in vain to remove the cause of their misery. Afterwards, when they or their children became wage workers, themselves handling the machines, their position was different. It was the same for the hosts from the countryside, who, during the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century of growing industry, flocked into the towns, lured by what to them appeared good wages. In modern times it is ever more the offspring of the workers themselves that fill the factories.

For all of them the struggle for better working conditions is of immediate necessity. The employers, under the pressure of competition, to enlarge their profits, try to lower the wages and to increase the hours as much as possible. At first the workers, powerless by the constraint of hunger, have to submit in silence. Then resistance bursts forth, in the only possible form, in the refusal to work, in the strike. In the strike for the first time the workers discover their strength, in the strike arises their fighting power. From the strike springs up the association of all the

workers of the factory, of the branch, of the country. Out of the strike sprouts the solidarity, the feeling of fraternity with the comrades in work, of unity with the entire class : the first dawn of what some day will be the life-spending sun of the new society. The mutual help, at first appearing in spontaneous and casual money collections, soon takes the lasting form of the trade union.

For a sound development of trade-unionism certain conditions are necessary. The rough ground of lawlessness, of police arbitrariness and prohibitions, mostly inherited from pre-capitalistic times, must be smoothed before solid buildings may be erected. Usually the workers themselves had to secure these conditions. In England it was the revolutionary campaign of Chartism; in Germany, half a century later, it was the fight of Social Democracy that, by enforcing social acknowledgement for the workers, laid the foundations for the growth of the unions.

Now strong organisations are built up, comprising the workers of the same trade all over the country, forming connections with other trades, and internationally with unions all over the world. The regular paying of high dues provides the considerable funds from which strikers are supported, when unwilling capitalists must be forced to grant decent working conditions. The ablest among the colleagues, sometimes victims of the foe's wrath from former fights, are appointed as salaried officials, who, as independent and expert spokesmen of the workers, can negotiate with the capitalist employers. By strike at the right moment, supported by the entire power of the union, and by ensuing negotiations, agreements can be reached about better and more uniform wages and about fair working hours, in so far as the latter are not yet fixed by law.

So the workers are no longer powerless individuals, forced by hunger to sell their labor-power at any price. They are now protected by their union, protected by the power of their own solidarity and

co-operation; for every member not only gives part of his earnings for the colleagues, but is ready also to risk his job in defending the organisation, their community. Thus a certain equilibrium is reached between the power of the employers and the power of the workers. The working conditions are no longer dictated by all-powerful capitalist interests. The unions are recognised gradually as representatives of the workers' interests; though ever again fighting is necessary, they become a power that takes part in the decisions. Not in all trades surely, and not at once everywhere. Usually skilled crafts-men are the first in building their unions. The unskilled masses in the great factories, standing against more powerful employers, mostly come later; their unions often started from sudden outbursts of great fights. And against the monopolistic owners of giant enterprises the unions have little chance; these all-powerful capitalists wish to be absolute master, and in their haughtiness they hardly allow even servile yellow shop unions.

Apart from this restriction, and even assuming trade unionism to be fully developed and in control of all industry, this does not mean that exploitation is abolished, that capitalism is repressed. What is repressed is the arbitrariness of the single capitalist; abolished are the worst abuses of exploitation. And this is in the interest of the fellow-capitalists, too — to guard them against unfair competition — and in the interest of capitalism at large. By the power of the unions capitalism is normalised; a certain norm of exploitation is universally established. A norm of wages, allowing for the most modest life exigencies, so that the workers are not driven again and again into hunger revolts, is necessary for uninterrupted production. A norm of working hours, not quite exhausting the vitality of the working class — though reduction of hours is largely neutralised by acceleration of tempo and more intense exertion — is necessary for capitalism itself, to preserve a usable working class as the basis of future exploitation. It was the working class that by its fight against the narrowness of capitalist greed had to

establish the conditions of normal capitalism. And ever again it has to fight, to preserve the uncertain equilibrium. In this fight the trade unions are the instruments; thus the unions perform an indispensable function in capitalism. Narrow-minded employers do not see this, but their broader-minded political leaders know quite well that trade unions are an essential element of capitalism, that without the workers' unions as normalising power capitalism is not complete. Though products of the workers' fight, kept up by their pains and efforts, trade unions are at the same time organs of capitalist society.

With the development of capitalism, however, conditions gradually grow more unfavorable for the workers. Big capital grows, feels its power, and wishes to be master at home. Capitalists also have learnt to understand the power of association; they organise into employers' unions. So instead of the equality of forces arises a new ascendancy of capital. Strikes are [countered] by lock-outs that drain the funds of the trade unions. The money of the workers cannot compete with the money of the capitalists. In the bargaining about wages and working conditions the unions are more than ever the weaker party, because they have to fear, and hence must try to avoid great fights that exhaust the reserves and thereby endanger the secured existence of the organisation and its officials. In the negotiations the union officials often have to accept a lowering of conditions in order to avoid fighting. To them this is unavoidable and self-evident, because they realise that by the changed conditions the relative fighting power of their organisation has diminished.

For the workers, however, it is not self-evident that they are silently to accept harder working and living conditions. They want to fight. So a contradiction of viewpoints arises. The officials seem to have common sense on their side; they know that the union's are at a disadvantage and that fight must result in defeat. But the workers feel by instinct that great fighting powers still lie hidden in their masses; if only they knew

how to use them. They rightly realise that by yielding, again and again, their position must grow worse, and that this can be prevented only by fighting. So conflicts must arise in the unions between the officials and the members. The members protest against the new tariffs [awards] favorable to the employers; the officials defend the agreements reached by long and difficult negotiations and try to have them ratified. So they often have to act as spokesmen of capital interests against workers' interests. And because they are the influential rulers of the unions, throwing all the weight of power and authority on this side, the unions in their hands may be said to develop into organs of capital.

The growth of capitalism, the increase of the number of workers, the urgent necessity of association, make the trade unions giant organisations, needing an ever increasing staff of officials and leaders. These develop into a bureaucracy administering all business, a ruling power over the members, because all the power factors are in their hands. As the experts they prepare and manage all affairs; they administrate the finances and the spending of money for different purposes; they are editors of the union papers, by which they can force their own ideas and points of view upon the members. Formal democracy prevails; the members in their assemblies, the chosen delegates in the congresses have to decide, just as the people decide politics in Parliament and State. But the same influences that render Parliament and Government lords over the people are operative in these Parliaments of Labor. They turn the alert bureaucracy of expert officials into a kind of union government, over the members absorbed by their daily work and cares. Not solidarity, the proletarian virtue, but discipline, obedience to the decisions is asked from them. Thus there arises a difference in viewpoint, a contrast in opinions on the various questions. It is enhanced by the difference in life conditions : the insecurity of the workers' job, always threatened by depression forces

and unemployment as contrasted to the security that is necessary for officials to well-manage the union affairs.

It was the task and the function of trade unionism, by their joint united fight to raise the workers out of their helpless misery, and to gain for them an acknowledged place in capitalist society. It had to defend the workers against the ever increasing exploitation of capital. Now that big capital consolidates more than ever into a monopolistic power of banks and industrial concerns, this former function of trade unionism [is finished]. Its power falls short compared to the formidable power of capital. The unions are now giant organisations, with their acknowledged place in society; their position is regulated by law, and their tariff [Court Award] agreements are given legally binding force for the entire industry. Their leaders aspire at forming part of the power ruling industrial conditions. They are the apparatus by means of which monopolistic capital imposes its conditions upon the entire working class. To this now all-powerful capital it is, normally, far more preferable to disguise its rule in democratic and constitutional forms than to show it in the naked brutality of dictatorship. The working conditions which it thinks suitable to the workers will be accepted and obeyed much more easily in the form of agreements concluded by the unions than in the form of dictates arrogantly imposed. Firstly, because to the workers the illusion is left that they are masters of their own interests. Secondly, because all the bonds of attachment, which as their own creation, the creation of their sacrifices, their fight, their elation, render the unions dear to the workers, now are subservient to the masters. Thus under modern conditions trade unions more than ever are turned into organs of the domination of monopolist capital over the working class.

## **2. Direct Action**

As an instrument of fight for the working class against capital the trade unions are losing their importance. But the fight itself cannot

cease. The depressing tendencies grow stronger under big capitalism and so the resistance of the workers must grow stronger, too. Economic crises grow more and more destructive and undermine apparently secured progress. The exploitation is intensified to retard the lowering of the profit rate for the rapidly increasing capital. So again and again the workers are provoked to resistance. But against the strongly increased power of capital the old methods of fight no longer can serve. New methods are needed, and before long their beginnings present themselves. They spring up spontaneously in the wild [outlaw] strike, in the direct action.

Direct action means action of the workers themselves without the intermediary of trade union officials. A strike is called wild [outlaw or unofficial] as contrasted to the strike proclaimed by the union according to the rules and regulations. The workers know that the latter is without effect, where the officials against their own will and insight are made to proclaim it, perhaps thinking a defeat a healthy lesson for the foolish workers, and in every case trying to finish it as soon as possible. Thus, when the pressure is too heavy, when negotiations with the directors drag along without effect, at last in smaller or larger groups the exasperation breaks loose in a wild strike.

Fight of the workers against capital is not possible without organisation. And organisation springs up spontaneously, immediately. Not of course in such form that a new union is founded, with a board chosen and regulations formulated in ordered paragraphs. Sometimes, to be sure, it was done in this way; attributing the inefficiency to personal shortcomings of the old leaders, and embittered against the old trade union, they founded a new one, with their most able and energetic men at the head. Then indeed in the beginning all was energy and strong action; but in the long run the new union, if it remains small, lacks power notwithstanding its activity, and if it grows large, of necessity develops the same characteristics as the old one. After such

experiences the workers at last will follow the other way, of keeping the direction of their fight entirely in their own hands.

Direction in their own hands, also called their own leadership, means that all initiative and all decisions proceed from the workers themselves. Though there is a strike committee, because all cannot be always together, everything is done by the strikers; continually in touch with one another they distribute the work, they devise all measures and decide on all actions directly. Decision and action, both collective, are one.

The first and most important task is the propaganda to expand the strike. The pressure upon capital must be intensified. Against the enormous power of capital not only the individual workers, but also the separate groups are powerless. The sole power that is a match for capital is the firm unity of the entire working class. Capitalists know or feel this quite well, and so the only inducement to concessions is the fear the strike might spread universally. The more manifestly determinate the will of the strikers, the greater the numbers taking part in it, the more the chance of success.

Such an extension is possible because it is not the strike of a tardy group, in worse conditions than others, trying to raise itself to the general level. Under the new circumstances discontent is universal; all the workers feel depressed under capitalist superiority; fuel for explosions has accumulated everywhere. It is not for others, it is for themselves if they join the fight. As long as they feel isolated, afraid to lose their job, uncertain what the comrades will do, without firm unity, they shrink from action. Once, however, they take up the fight, they are changed into new personalities; selfish fear recedes to the background and forth spring the forces of community, solidarity and devotion, rousing courage and perseverance. These are contagious; the example of fighting activity rouses in others, who feel in themselves the same forces awakening, the spirit of mutual and of self-confidence. Thus the wild

strike as a prairie fire may spring over to other enterprises and involve ever greater masses.

Such cannot be the work of a small number of leaders, either union officials or self-imposed new spokesmen, though, of course, the push of some few intrepid comrades may give strong impulses. It must be the will and the work of all, in common initiative. The workers have not only to do, but also to contrive, to think out, to decide everything themselves. They cannot shift decision and responsibility to a body, a union, that takes care of them. They are entirely responsible for their fight, success or failure depends on themselves. From passive they have turned into active beings, determinedly taking their destiny into their own hands. From separate individuals each caring for himself, they have become a solid, firmly cemented unity.

Such spontaneous strikes present yet another important side; the division of the workers into different separate unions is effaced. In the trade union world traditions from former petty-capitalist times play an important role in separating the workers in often competing, jealous and bickering corporations; in some countries religious and political differences act as partition fences in establishing separate liberal, catholic, socialist and other unions. In the workshop the members of different unions stand beside one another. But even in strikes they often are kept asunder, so as not to have them infected with too much unity ideas, and the concordance in action and negotiation is solely kept up by the boards and officials. Now, however, in direct actions, these differences of union membership become unreal as outside labels. For such spontaneous fights unity is the first need; and unity there is, else there could be no fight. All who stand together in the shop, in the very same position, as direct associates, subject to the same exploitation, against the same master, stand together in common action. Their real community is the shop; personnel of the same enterprise, they form a natural union of common work, common lot and common interests.

Like spectres from the past the old distinctions of different membership , almost forgotten in the new living reality of fellowship in common fight. The vivid consciousness of new unity enhances the enthusiasm and the feeling of power.

Thus in the wild strikes some characteristics of the coming forms of fight make their appearance : first the self-action, the self-initiative, keeping all activity and decision in their own hands; and then the unity, irrespective of old memberships, according to the natural grouping of the enterprises. These forms come up, not through shrewd planning, but spontaneously, irresistible, urged by the heavy superior power of capital against which the old organisations cannot fight seriously any more. Hence it does not mean that now the scales have turned, that now the workers win. Also wild strikes mostly bring defeat; their extent is too narrow. Only in some favorable cases they have success in preventing a lowering in working conditions. Their importance is that they demonstrate a fresh fighting spirit that cannot be suppressed. Out of the deepest instincts of self-preservation, of duty against family and comrades, the will to assert oneself ever again springs up. There is a gain of increasing self-reliance and class-feeling. They are the harbingers of future greater fights, when great social emergencies, with heavier pressure and deeper distress, drive the masses into stronger action.

When wild strikes break out on a larger scale, comprising great masses, entire branches of industry, towns or districts, the organisation has to assume new forms. Deliberation in one assembly is impossible; but more than ever mutual understanding is necessary for common action. Strike committees are formed out of the delegates of all the personnel's, for continual discussion of circumstances. Such strike committees are entirely different from union boards of officials; they show the characteristics already of workers' councils. They come up out of the fight, to give it unity of direction. But they are no leaders in the old sense, they have no direct power. The delegates, often

different persons, come to express the opinion and the will of the personnel's [groups] that sent them. For these personnel's stand for the action in which the will manifests itself. Yet the delegates are no simple messengers of their mandatory groups; they took a foremost part in the discussion, they embody the prevalent convictions. In the committee assemblies the opinions are discussed and put to the test of momentary circumstances; the results and the resolutions are brought back by the delegates into the personnel [group] assemblies. Through these intermediaries the shop personnel's themselves take part in the deliberations and decisions. Thus unity of action for great masses is secured.

Not, to be sure, in such a way that every group bows obediently to the decisions of the committee. There are no paragraphs to confer such power on it. Unity in collective fighting is not the outcome of judicious regulation of competencies but of spontaneous necessities in a sphere of passionate action. The workers themselves decide, not because such a right is given to them in accepted rules, but because they actually decide, by their actions. It may happen that a group cannot convince other groups by arguments, but then by its action and example it carries them away. The self-determination of the workers over their fighting action is not a demand put up by theory, by arguments of practicability, but the statement of a fact evolving from practice. Often in great social movements it occurred — and doubtless will occur again — that the actions did not comply with the decisions. Sometimes central committees made an appeal for universal strike, and only small groups here and there followed; elsewhere the committees weighed scrupulously, without venturing a decision, and the workers broke loose in massal fight. It may be possible even that the same workers who enthusiastically resolved to strike shrink back when standing before the deed. Or, conversely, that prudent hesitation governs the decisions and yet, driven by inner forces, a non-resolved

strike irresistibly breaks out. Whereas in their conscious thinking old watchwords and theories play a role and determine arguments and opinions, at the moment of decision on which weal and woe depend, strong intuition of real conditions breaks forth, determining the actions. This does not mean that such intuition always guides right; people may be mistaken in their impression of outer conditions. But it decides; it cannot be replaced by foreign leadership, by guardians however clever, directing them. By their own experiences in fight, in success and adversity, by their own efforts the workers must acquire the capacities rightly to take care of their interests.

Thus the two forms of organisation and fight stand in contrast, the old one of trade unions and regulated strike, the new one of spontaneous strike and workers' councils. This does not mean that the former at some time will be simply substituted by the latter as the only alternative. Intermediate forms may be conceived, attempts to correct the evils and weakness of trade unionism and preserve its right principles; to avoid the leadership of a bureaucracy of officials, to avoid the separation by narrow craft and trade interests, and to preserve and utilise the experiences of former fights. This might be done by keeping together, after a big strike, a core of the best fighters, in one general union. Wherever a strike breaks out spontaneously this union is present with its skilled propagandists and organisers to assist the inexperienced masses with their advice, to instruct, to organise, to defend them. In this way every fight means a progress of organisation, not in the sense of fees paying membership, but in the sense of growing class unity.

An example for such a union might be found in the great American union "Industrial Workers of the World" (I.W.W.). At the end of last century in contrast to the conservative trade unions of well-paid skilled labor, united in the "American Federation of Labor," it grew up out of special American conditions. Partly out of the fierce struggles of the miners and lumbermen, independent pioneers in the wilds of the Far

West, against big capital that had monopolised and seized the riches of wood and soil. Partly out of the hunger strikes of the miserable masses of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, accumulated and exploited in the factories of the Eastern towns and in the coal mines, despised and neglected by the old unions. The I.W.W. provided them with experienced strike leaders and organisers, who showed them how to stand against police terrorism, who defended them before public opinion and the courts, who taught them the practice of solidarity and unity and opened to them wider views on society, on capitalism and class fight. In such big fights ten thousands of new members joined the I.W.W., of whom only a small fraction remained. This "one big union" was adapted to the wild growth of American capitalism in the days when it built up its power by subjecting the masses of the independent pioneers.

Similar forms of fight and organisation may be propagated and may come up elsewhere, when in big strikes the workers stand up, without as yet having the complete self-confidence of taking matters entirely in their own hands. But only as temporary transition forms. There is a fundamental difference between the conditions of future fight in big industry and those of America in the past. There it was the rise, now it will be the downfall of capitalism. There the rugged independence of pioneers or the primitive, existence-seeking egoism of immigrants were the expression of a middle class individualism that had to be curbed under the yoke of capitalist exploitation. Now masses trained to discipline during a life time by machine and capital, connected by strong technical and spiritual ties to the productive apparatus, organise its utilisation on the new basis of collaboration. These workers are thoroughly proletarian, all obstinacy of middle class individualism having been worn off long ago by the habit of collaborate work. The forces of solidarity and devotion hidden in them only wait for great fights to develop into a dominating life principle. Then even the most

suppressed layers of the working class, who only hesitatingly join their comrades, wanting to lean upon their example, will soon feel the new forces of community growing also in themselves. Then they will perceive that the fight for freedom asks not only their adherence but the development of all their powers of self-activity and self-reliance. Thus overcoming all intermediate forms of partial self-determination the progress will definitely go the way of council organisation.

### **3. Shop Occupation**

Under the new conditions of capitalism a new form of fight for better working conditions came up, the shop occupation, mostly called sit-down strike, the workers ceasing to work but not leaving the factory. It was not invented by theory, it arose spontaneously out of practical needs; theory can do no more than afterwards explain its causes and consequences. In the great world crisis of 1930 unemployment was so universal and lasting that there arose a kind of class antagonism between the privileged number of employed and the unemployed masses. Any regular strike against wage cuttings was made impossible, because the shops after being left by the strikers, immediately would be flooded by the masses outside. So the refusal to work under worse conditions must needs be combined with sticking to the place of work by occupying the shop.

Having sprung up, however, in these special circumstances, the sit-down strike displays some characteristics that make it worth while to consider it more closely as the expression of a further developed fighting form. It manifests the formation of a more solid unity. In the old form of strike the working community of the personnel dissolved when leaving the shop. Dispersed over the streets and homes between other people they were separated into loose individuals. To discuss and decide as one body they had then to assemble in meeting halls, in streets and squares. However often police and authorities tried to hinder or even to forbid this, the workers held fast to their right of using

them, through the consciousness that they fought with legitimate means for lawful aims. The legality of trade union practice was generally recognised by public opinion.

When, however, this legality is not recognised, when the increasing power of big capital over State authorities disputes the use of hall and square for assemblies, the workers, if they will fight, have to assert their rights by taking them. In America every great strike was as a rule accompanied by a continuous fight with the police over the use of the streets and rooms for meeting. The sit-down strike releases the workers from this necessity by their taking the right to assemble at the adequate place, in the shop. At the same time the strike is made truly efficient by the impossibility of strike-breakers to take their places.

Of course this entails new stiff fighting. The capitalists as owners of the shop consider occupation by the strikers as a violation of their ownership; and on this juridical argument they call for the police to turn the workers out. Indeed, from the strict juridical viewpoint, shop occupation is in conflict with formal law. Just as strike is in conflict with formal law. And in fact the employer regularly appealed to this formal law as a weapon in the fight, by stigmatising the strikers as contract breakers, thus giving him the right to put new workers in their places. But against this juridical logic strikes have persisted and developed as a form of fight; because they were necessary.

Formal law, indeed, does not represent the inner reality of capitalism, but only its outer forms, to which middle class and juridical opinion cling. Capitalism in reality is not a world of equal and contracting individuals, but a world of fighting classes. When the power of the workers was too small the middle class opinion of formal law prevailed, the strikers as contract breakers were turned out and replaced by others. Where, however, trade union fight had won its place, a new and truer juridical conception asserted itself : a strike is not a break, not a cessation, but a temporary suspending of the labor contract, to settle

the dispute over working terms. Lawyers may not accept theoretically this point of view, but society does, practically.

In the same way shop occupation asserted itself as a method in fight, where it was needed and where the workers were able to take a stand. Capitalists and lawyers might splutter over the violation of property rights. For the workers, however, it was an action that did not attack the property rights but only temporarily suspended their effects. Shop occupation is not shop-expropriation. It is only a momentary suspension of the disposal by the capitalist. After the contest has been settled, he is master and undisputed owner as before.

Yet, at the same time, it is more. In it, as in a light flash at the horizon, a glimpse of future development springs up. By shop occupation the workers, unwittingly, demonstrate that their fight has entered into a new phase. Here their firm interjunction as a shop-organisation appears, a natural unity not to be dissolved into single individuals. Here the workers become conscious of their intimate connection with the shop. To them it is not another man's building where only at his command they come to work for him till he sends them away. To them the shop with its machines is a productive apparatus they handle, an organ that only by their work is made a living part of society. It is nothing foreign to them; they are at home here, much more than the juridical owners, the shareholders who do not even know its whereabouts. In the factory the workers grow conscious of the contents of their life, their productive work, their work-community as a collectivity that makes it a living organism, an element of the totality of society. Here, in shop occupation, a vague feeling arises that they ought to be entirely master of production, that they ought to expel the unworthy outsiders, the commanding capitalists, who abuse it in wasting the riches of mankind and in devastating the earth. And in the heavy fight that will be necessary, the shops again will play a primary role, as the units of organisation, of common action,

perhaps as the supports and strongholds, pivots of force and objects of struggle. Compared with the natural connection of workers and shops the command of capital appears as an artificial outside domination, powerful as yet, but hanging in the air; whereas the growing hold of the workers is firmly rooted in the earth. Thus in shop occupation the future forecasts its light in the growing consciousness that the shops belong with the workers, that together they form a harmonious unity, and that the fight for freedom will be fought over, in, and by means of the shops.

#### 4. Political Strikes

Not all the great strikes of the workers in the last century were fought over wages and working conditions. Besides the so-called economic strikes, political strikes occurred. Their object was the promotion or the prevention of a political measure. They were not directed against the employers but against State government, to induce it to give to the workers more political rights, or to dissuade it from obnoxious acts. Thus it could happen that the employers agreed with the aims and promoted the strike.

A certain amount of social equality and political rights for the working class is necessary in capitalism. Modern industrial production is based upon intricate technics, product of highly developed knowledge, and demands careful personal collaboration and capability of the workers. The utmost exertion of forces cannot, as in the case of coolies or slaves, be enforced by rough physical compulsion, by whip or outrage; it would be revenged by equally rough mishandling of the tools. The constraint must come from inner motives, from moral means of pressure based upon individual responsibility. The workers must not feel powerless embittered slaves; they must have the means to go against inflicted wrongs. They have to feel themselves free sellers of their labor-power, exerting all their forces, because, formally and apparently, they are determining their own lot in the general competition. To maintain themselves as a working class they need not

only the personal liberty and legal equality proclaimed by middle class laws : Special rights and liberties, too, are necessary to secure these possibilities; the right of association, the right of meeting in assembly, the right to form unions, freedom of speech, freedom of press. And all these political rights must be protected by universal suffrage, for the workers to assert their influence over Parliament and law.

Capitalism began by refusing these rights, assisted herein by the inherited despotism and backwardness of existing governments, and tried to make the workers powerless victims of its exploitation. Only gradually, in consequence of fierce struggle against inhuman oppression, some rights were won. Because in its first stage capitalism feared the hostility of the lower classes, the artisans impoverished by its competition, and the workers starved by low wages, the suffrage was kept restricted to the wealthy classes. Only in later times, when capitalism was firmly rooted, when its profits were large and its rule was secured, the restrictions on the ballot were gradually removed. But only under compulsion of strong pressure, often of hard fight from the side of the workers. Fight for democracy fills the history of home politics during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first in England, and then in all countries where capitalism introduced itself.

In England universal suffrage was one of the main points of the charter of demands put up by the English workers in the Chartist movement, their first and most glorious period of fight. Their agitation had been a strong inducement to the ruling landowner class to yield to the pressure of the simultaneous Reform movement of the rising industrial capitalists. So through the Reform Act 1832 the industrial employers got their share in political power; but the workers had to go home empty-handed, and to continue their strenuous struggle. Then, at the climax of Chartism, a "holy month" was projected in 1839, when all the work had to rest till the demands were granted. Thus the English workers were the first to proclaim the political strike as

a weapon in their fight. But it could not be put into effect; and at an outburst (1842) it had to be broken off without success; it could not curb the greater power of the now combined ruling classes of landowners and factory owners. Not till a generation later, when after a period of unprecedented industrial prosperity and expansion the propaganda was once more taken up, now by the trade unions combined in the "International Workers' Association" (the "First International" of Marx and Engels), public opinion in the middle class was ready to extend, in consecutive steps, the suffrage to the working class.

In France universal suffrage since 1848 formed part of republican constitution, dependent as such government always was on the support of the workers. In Germany the foundation of the Empire, in the years 1866–70, product of a feverish capitalist development activating the entire population, entailed universal suffrage as a warrant of continued contact with the masses of the people. But in many other countries the propertied class, often only a privileged part of it, kept fast to its monopoly of political influence. Here the campaign for the ballot, obviously the gate to political power and freedom, roused ever larger parts of the working class to participation, to organisation and to political activity. Conversely, the fear of the propertied classes for political domination of the proletariat stiffened their resistance. Formally the matter looked hopeless for the masses; universal suffrage had to be legally enacted by a Parliament chosen by the privileged minority, and thus invited to destroy its own foundations. This implies that only by extraordinary means, by pressure from outside, finally by political mass strikes the aim could be achieved. How it happens may be learnt from the classical example of the Belgian suffrage strike in 1893.

In Belgium, through a limited census-suffrage, government was perpetually in the hands of a small clique of conservatives of the clerical party. Labor conditions in the coal mines and factories were notoriously

among the worst in Europe and led to explosions in frequent strikes. Extension of suffrage as a way to social reform, frequently proposed by some few liberal parliamentarians, always again was defeated by the conservative majority. Then the Workers' Party, agitating, organising and preparing for many years, decided upon a universal strike. Such a strike had to exert political pressure during the parliamentary discussion on a new suffrage proposal. It had to demonstrate the intense interest and the grim will of the masses, who abandoned their work to give all attention to this fundamental question. It had to arouse all the indifferent elements among the workers and the small business men to take part in what for all of them was a life interest. It had to show the narrow-minded rulers the social power of the working class, to impress upon them that it refused longer to be kept under tutelage. At first, of course, the parliamentary majority took a stand, refused to be coerced by pressure from outside, wishing to decide after their own will and conscience; so it took the suffrage bill from the rolls and ostensibly began to discuss other matters. But in the meantime the strike went on, extended evermore, and brought production to a standstill; traffic ceased, and even dutiful public services became restive. The governmental apparatus itself was hampered in its functions; and in the business world, with the growing feeling of uncertainty, opinion became loud that to grant the demands was less dangerous than to provoke a catastrophe. So the determination of the parliamentarians began to crumble; they felt that they had to choose between yielding or crushing the strike by military force. But could the soldiers be trusted in such a case? Thus their resistance had to give way; will and conscience had to be revised, and at last they accepted and enacted the proposals. The workers, by means of a political strike, had reached their aim and won their fundamental political right.

After such a success many workers and their spokesmen supposed that this new powerful weapon could be used oftener to win important

reforms. But therein they were disappointed; the history of labor movement knows of more failures than successes in political strikes. Such a strike tries to impose the will of the workers upon a government of the capitalist class. It is somewhat of a revolt, a revolution, and calls up in that class the instincts of self-defence and the impulses of suppression. These instincts were repressed when part of the bourgeoisie itself grew annoyed by the backwardness of political institutions and felt the need of fresh reforms. Then the mass action of the workers was an instrument to modernise capitalism. Because the workers were united and full of enthusiasm, whereas the propertied class in any case was divided, the strike succeeded. It could succeed not because of the weakness of the capitalist class, but because of the strength of capitalism. Capitalism is strengthened when its roots, by universal suffrage, securing at least political equality, are driven deeper into the working class. Workers' suffrage belongs to developed capitalism; because the workers need the ballot, as well as trade unions, to maintain themselves in their function in capitalism.

If now, however, in minor points they should suppose themselves able to impose their will against the real interests of the capitalists, they find this class as a solid block against them. They feel it as by instinct; and not being carried away by a great inspiring aim that dispels all hesitations, they remain uncertain and divided. Every group, seeing that the strike is not universal, hesitates in its turn. Volunteers of the other classes offer themselves for the most needed services and traffic; though they are not really able to uphold production, their activity at least discourages the strikers. Prohibition of assemblies, display of armed forces, martial law may still more demonstrate the power of government and the will to use it. So the strike begins to crumble and must be discontinued, often with considerable losses and disillusion for the defeated organisations. In experiences like these the workers discovered that by its inner strength capitalism is able to withstand

even well organised and massal assaults. But at the same time they felt sure that in mass strikes, if only applied at the right time, they possess a powerful weapon.

This view was confirmed in the first Russian Revolution of 1905. It exhibited an entirely new character in mass-strikes. Russia at that time showed only the beginnings of capitalism : some few large factories in great towns, supported mostly by foreign capital with State subsidies, where starving peasants flocked to work as industrial hands. Trade unions and strikes were forbidden; government was primitive and despotic. The Socialist Party, consisting of intellectuals and workers, had to fight for what middle-class revolutions in Western Europe had already established : the destruction of absolutism and the introduction of constitutional rights and law. Hence the fight of the Russian workers was bound to be spontaneous and chaotic. First as wild strikes against miserable working conditions, severely suppressed by Cossacks and police, then acquiring a political character, in demonstrations and the unfolding of red flags in the streets, the struggle manifest itself. When the Japanese war of 1905 had weakened the Czarist government and shown up its inner rottenness, the revolution broke out as a series of wild-strike movements on a gigantic scale. Now they flamed up, springing like wildfire from one factory, one town to another, bringing the entire industry to a standstill; then they dissolved into minor local strikes, dying away after some concessions from the employers, or smouldered until new outbreaks came. Often there were street demonstrations and fights against police and soldiers. Days of victory came where the delegates of the factories assembled unmolested to discuss the situation, then, joined by deputation's of other groups, of rebellious soldiers even, to express their sympathy, whilst the authorities stood passively by. Then again the Government made a move and arrested the entire body of delegates, and the strike ended in

apathy. Till at last, in a series of barricade fights in the capital cities the movement was crushed by military force.

In Western Europe political strikes had been carefully premeditated actions for specially indicated aims, directed by the union or the Socialist Party leaders. In Russia the strike movement was the revulsion of heavily abused humanity, uncontrolled, as a storm or a flood forcing its way. It was not the fight of organised workers claiming a long denied right; it was the rise of a down-trodden mass to human consciousness in the only form of fight possible. Here there could be no question of success or defeat, the fact of an outbreak was already a victory, no more to be undone, the beginning of a new epoch. In outward appearance the movement was crushed and Czarist government again was master. But in reality these strikes had struck a blow at Czarism from which it could not recover. Some reforms were introduced, political, industrial and agrarian. But the whole fabric of the State with its arbitrary despotism of incapable chinowniks could not be modernized, it had to disappear. This revolution prepared the next one, in which old barbarous Russia was to be destroyed.

The first Russian revolution has strongly influenced the ideas of the workers in Central and Western Europe. Here a new development of capitalism had set in that made felt the need of new and more powerful methods of fight, for defence and for attack. Economic prosperity, which began in the nineties and lasted till the First World War, brought an unprecedented increase of production and wealth. Industry expanded, especially iron and steel industry, new markets were opened, railways and factories were built in foreign countries and other continents; now for the first time capitalism spread all over the earth. America and Germany were the scenes of the most rapid industrial development. Wages increased, unemployment nearly disappeared, the trade unions grew into mass organisations. The workers were filled with hopes of

continual progress in prosperity and influence, and visions loomed up of a coming age of industrial democracy.

But then, at the other side of society, they saw another image. Big capital concentrated production and finance, wealth and power, in a few hands and built up strong industrial concerns and capitalist associations. Its need for expansion, for the disposal over foreign markets and raw materials, inaugurated the policy of imperialism, a policy of stronger ties to old, and conquest of new colonies, a policy of growing antagonism between the capitalist classes of different countries, and of increasing armaments. The old peaceful free-trade ideals of the "little Englanders" were ridiculed and gave way to new ideals of national greatness and power, Wars broke out in all continents, in the Transvaal, in China, Cuba, and the Philippines, in the Balkans; England consolidated its Empire, and Germany, claiming its share in world power, prepared for world war. Big capital in its growing power ever more determined the character and opinions of the entire bourgeoisie, filling it with its anti-democratic spirit of violence. Though sometimes it tried to lure the workers by the prospect of a share in the spoils, there was on the whole less inclination than in previous times to make concessions to labour. Every strike for better wages, engaged in order to catch up with rising prices, met with stiffer resistance. Reactionary and aristocratic tendencies got hold of the ruling class, it spoke not of extension but of restriction of popular rights, and threats were heard, especially in continental countries, of suppressing the workers' discontent by violent means.

Thus circumstances had changed and were changing ever more. The power of the working class had increased through its organisation and its political action. But the power of the capitalist class had increased still more. This means that heavier clashes between the two classes might be expected. So the workers had to look for other and stronger methods of fight. What were they to do if regularly even the most

justifiable strikes are met by big lock-outs, or if their parliamentary rights are reduced or circumvented, or if capitalist government will make war notwithstanding their urgent protests ?

It is easily seen that under such conditions there was among the foremost elements of the working class much thought and discussion on mass action and the political strike, and that the general strike was propagated as a means against the outbreak of war. Studying the examples of such actions as the Belgian and the Russian strikes, they had to consider the conditions, the possibilities, and the consequences of mass-actions and political strikes in the most highly developed capitalist countries with strong governments and powerful capitalist classes. It was clear that strong odds were against them. What could not have happened in Belgium and Russia would be the immediate result here : the annihilation of their organisations. If the combined trade unions, Socialist or Labor Parties should proclaim a general strike, Government, sure of the support of the entire ruling and middle class, doubtless would be able to imprison the leaders, persecute the organisations as endangering the safety of the State, suppress their papers, by a state of siege prevent all mutual contact of the strikers and by mobilizing military forces, assert its undisputed public power. Against this display of power the workers, isolated, exposed to the threats and calumnies, disheartened by distorted information from the press, would have no chance. Their organisations would be dissolved and break down. And the organisations lost, the fruits of years of devoted struggle, all is lost.

Thus the political and labor leaders asserted. Indeed, to them, with their outlook entirely limited within the confines of present forms of organisation, it must appear so. So they are fundamentally opposed to political strikes. This means that in this form, as premeditated and well decided actions of the existing organisations, directed by their leaders, such political strikes are not possible. As little as a thunderstorm in a placid atmosphere. It may be true that, for special aims entirely

within the capitalist system, a political strike remains entirely within the bounds of legal order, so that after it is over capitalism resumes its ordinary course. But this truth does not prevent the ruling class from being angrily aroused against every display of workers' power, nor political strikes from having consequences far beyond their immediate aims. When social conditions become intolerable for the workers, when social or political crises are threatening them with ruin, it is inevitable that mass-actions and gigantic strikes break forth spontaneously, as the natural form of fight, notwithstanding all objections and resistance of the existing unions, irresistibly, like thunderstorms out of a heavy electric tension in the atmosphere. And again the workers face the question whether they have any chance against the power of State and capital.

It is not true that with a forcible suppression of their organisations all is lost. These are only the outer form of what in essence lives within. To think that by such Government measures the workers suddenly should change into the selfish, narrow-minded, isolated individuals of olden times ! In their hearts all the powers of solidarity, of comradeship, of devotion to the class remain living, are growing even more intense through the adverse conditions; and they will assert themselves in other forms. If these powers are strong enough no force from above can break the unity of the strikers. Where they suffer defeat it is mainly due to discouragement. No government power can compel them to work; it can only prohibit active deeds; it can do no more than threaten and try to intimidate them, try by fear to dissolve their unity. It depends on the inner strength of the workers, on the spirit of organisation within them, whether that can be successful. Certainly thus the highest demands are made on social and moral qualities; but just for this reason these qualities will be strained to the highest possible pitch and will be hardened as steel in the fire.

This is not the affair of one action, one strike. In every such contest the force of the workers is put to the test, whether their unity is strong enough to resist the attempts of the ruling powers to break it. Every contest arouses new strenuous efforts to strengthen it so as not to be broken. And when, actually, the workers remain steadfast, when notwithstanding all acts of intimidation, of suppression, of isolation, they hold out, when there is no yielding of any group, then it is on the other side that the effects of the strike become manifest. Society is paralysed, production and traffic are stopped, or reduced to a minimum, the functioning of all public life is hampered, the middle classes are alarmed and may begin to advise concessions. The authority of Government, unable to restore the old order, is shaken. Its power always consisted in the solid organisation of all officials and services, directed by unity of purpose embodied in one self-sure will, all of them accustomed by duty and conviction to follow the intentions and instructions of the central authorities. When, however, it stands against the mass of the people, it feels itself ever more what it really is, a ruling minority, inspiring awe only as long as it seemed all-powerful, powerful only as long as it was undisputed, as long as it was the only solidly organised body in an ocean of unorganised individuals. But now the majority also is solidly organised, not in outward forms but in inner unity. Standing before the impossible task of imposing its will upon a rebellious population, Government grows uncertain, divided, nervous, trying different ways. Moreover, the strike impedes the intercommunication of the authorities all over the country, isolates the local ones, and throws them back upon their own resources. Thus the organisation of State power begins to lose its inner strength and solidity. Neither can the use of armed forces help otherwise than by more violent threatening. Finally the army consists either of workers too, in different dress and under the menace of stricter law, but not intended to be used against their comrades; or it is a minority over against the entire people.

If put to the strain of being commanded to fire at unarmed citizens and comrades, the imposed discipline in the long run must give way. And then State power, besides its moral authority, would have lost its strongest material weapon to keep the masses in obedience.

Such considerations of the important consequences of mass strikes, once that great social crises stir up the masses to a desperate fight, could mean of course no more than the view of a possible future. For the moment, under the mollifying effects of industrial prosperity, there were no forces strong enough to drive the workers into such actions. Against the threatening war their unions and parties restricted themselves to professing their pacifism and international feelings, without the will and the daring to call upon the masses for a desperate resistance. So the ruling class could force the workers into its capitalist mass-action, into world war. It was the collapse of the appearances and illusions of self-satisfied power of the working class at the time, now disclosed as inner weakness and insufficiency.

One of the elements of weakness was the lack of a distinct goal. There was not, and could not be, any clear idea of what had to come after successful mass-actions. The effects of mass strikes so far appeared destructive only, not constructive. This was not true, to be sure; decisive inner qualities, the basis of a new society, develop out of the fights. But the outer forms in which they had to take shape were unknown; nobody in the capitalist world at the time had heard of workers' councils. Political strikes can only be a temporary form of battle; after the strike constructive labor has to provide for permanency.

## 5. The Russian Revolution

The Russian revolution was an important episode in the development of the working class movement. Firstly, as already mentioned, by the display of new forms of political strike, instruments of revolution. Moreover, in a higher degree, by the first appearance of new forms of self-organisation of the fighting workers, known as

soviet, i.e., councils. In 1905 they were hardly noticed as a special phenomenon and they disappeared with the revolutionary activity itself. In 1917 they reappeared with greater power; now their importance was grasped by the workers of Western Europe, and they played a role here in the class struggles after the First World War.

The soviets, essentially, were simply strike committees, such as always arise in wild strikes. Since the strikes in Russia broke out in large factories, and rapidly expanded over towns and districts, the workers had to keep in continual touch. In the shops the workers assembled and discussed regularly after the close of the work, or in times of tension even continually, the entire day. They sent their delegates to other factories and to the central committees, where information was interchanged, difficulties discussed, decisions taken, and new tasks considered.

But here the tasks proved more encompassing than in ordinary strikes. The workers had to throw off the heavy oppression of Czarism; they felt that by their action Russian society was changing in its foundations. They had to consider not only wages and labor conditions in their shops, but all questions related to society at large. They had to find their own way in these realms and to take decisions on political matters. When the strike flared up, extended over the entire country, stopped all industry and traffic and paralysed the functions of government, the soviets were confronted with new problems. They had to regulate public life, they had to take care of public security and order, they had to provide for the indispensable public utilities and services. They had to perform governmental functions; what they decided was executed by the workers, whereas Government and police stood aloof, conscious of their impotence against the rebellious masses. Then the delegates of other groups, of intellectuals, of peasants, of soldiers, who came to join the central soviets, took part in the discussions and decisions. But all this power was like a flash of lightning, like a meteor

passing. When at last the Czarist government mustered its military forces and beat down the movement the soviets disappeared.

Thus it was in 1905. In 1917 the war had weakened government through the defeats at the front and the hunger in the towns, and now the soldiers, mostly peasants, took part in the action. Besides the workers' councils in the town soldiers' councils were formed in the army; the officers were shot when they did not acquiesce in the soviets taking all power into their hands to prevent entire anarchy. After half a year of vain attempts on the part of politicians and military commanders to impose new governments, the soviets, supported by the socialist parties, were master of society.

Now the soviets stood before a new task. From organs of revolution they had to become organs of reconstruction. The masses were master and of course began to build up production according to their needs and life interests. What they wanted and did was not determined, as always in such cases, by inculcated doctrines, but by their own class character, by their conditions of life. What were these conditions ? Russia was a primitive agrarian country with only the beginning of industrial development. The masses of the people were uncivilized and ignorant peasants, spiritually dominated by a gold glittering church, and even the industrial workers were strongly connected with their old villages. The village soviets arising everywhere were self-governing peasant committees. They seized the large estates of the former great landowners and divided them up. The development went in the direction of small freeholders with private property, and presented already the distinctions between larger and smaller properties, between influential wealthy and more humble poor farmers.

In the towns, on the other hand, there could be no development to private capitalist industry because there was no bourgeoisie of any significance. The workers wanted some form of socialist production, the only one possible under these conditions. But their minds and

character, only superficially touched by the beginnings of capitalism, were hardly adequate to the task of themselves regulating production. So their foremost and leading elements, the socialists of the Bolshevik Party, organised and hardened by years of devoted fight, their leaders in the revolution became the leaders in the reconstruction. Moreover, were these working class tendencies not to be drowned by the flood of aspirations for private property coming from the land, a strong central government had to be formed, able to restrain the peasants' tendencies. In this heavy task of organising industry, of organising the defensive war against counter-revolutionary attacks, of subduing the resistance of capitalist tendencies among the peasants, and of educating them to modern scientific ideas instead of their old beliefs, all the capable elements among the workers and intellectuals, supplemented by such of the former officials and officers as were willing to co-operate, had to combine into the Bolshevik Party as the leading body. It formed the new government. The soviets gradually were eliminated as organs of self-rule, and reduced to subordinate organs of the government apparatus. The name of Soviet Republic, however, was preserved as a camouflage, and the ruling party retained the name of Communist Party.

The system of production developed in Russia is State socialism. It is organised production, with the State as universal employer, master of the entire production apparatus. The workers are master of the means of production no more than under Western capitalism. They receive their wages and are exploited by the State as the only mammoth capitalist. So the name State capitalism can be applied with precisely the same meaning. The entirety of the ruling and leading bureaucracy of officials is the actual owner of the factories, the possessing class. Not separately, everyone for a part, but together, collectively, they are possessors of the whole. Theirs the function and the task to do what the bourgeoisie did in Western Europe and America : develop industry and the productivity

of labor. They had to change Russia from a primitive barbarous country of peasants into a modern, civilized country of great industry. And before long, in often cruelly waged class war between the peasants and the rulers, State-controlled big agrarian enterprises replaced the backward small farms.

The revolution, therefore, has not, as deceptive propaganda pretends, made Russia a land where the workers are master and communism reigns. Yet it meant progress of enormous significance. It may be compared with the great French revolution : it destroyed the power of monarch and feudal landowners, it began by giving the land to the peasants, and it made the masters of industry rulers of the State. Just as then in France the masses from despised "canaille" became free citizens, recognised even in poverty and economic dependence as personalities with the possibility to rise, so now in Russia the masses rose from unevolving barbarism into the stream of world progress, where they may act as personalities. Political dictatorship as form of government can no more prevent this development once it has started than the military dictatorship of Napoleon hampered it in France. Just as then in France from among the citizens and peasants came up the capitalists and the military commanders, in an upward struggle of mutual competition, by good and by bad means, by energy and talent, by jobbery and deceit — so now in Russia. All the good brains among the workers, and peasants' children rushed into the technical and farming schools, became engineers, officers, technical and military leaders. The future was opened to them and aroused immense tensions of energy; by study and exertion, by cunning and intrigue they worked to assert their places in the new ruling class — ruling, here again, over a miserable exploited class of proletarians. And just as at that time in France a strong nationalism sprang up proclaiming the new freedom to be brought to all Europe, a brief dream of everlasting glory — so now

Russia proudly proclaimed its mission, by world revolution to free all peoples from capitalism.

For the working class the significance of the Russian revolution must be looked for in quite different directions. Russia showed to the European and American workers, confined within reformist ideas and practice, first how an industrial working class by a gigantic mass action of wild strikes is able to undermine and destroy an obsolete State power; and second, how in such actions the strike committees develop into workers' councils, organs of fight and of self-management, acquiring political tasks and functions. In order to see the influence of the Russian example upon the ideas and actions of the working class after the First World War, we have to go a step backward.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 meant an unexpected breakdown of the labor movement all over capitalist Europe. The obedient compliance of the workers under the military powers, the eager affiliation, in all countries, of the union and socialist party leaders to their governments, as accomplices in the suppression of the workers, the absence of any significant protest, had brought a deep disappointment to all who before put their hopes of liberation on proletarian socialism. But gradually among the foremost of the workers came the insight that what had broken down was chiefly the illusion of an easy liberation by parliamentary reform. They saw the bleeding and exploited masses growing rebellious under the sufferings of oppression and butchery, and, in alliance with the Russian revolutionaries, they expected the world-revolution to destroy capitalism as an outcome of the chaos of the war. They rejected the disgraced name of socialism and called themselves communists, the old title of working class revolutionaries.

Then as a bright star in the dark sky the Russian revolution flared up and shone over the earth. And everywhere the masses were filled with anticipation and became restive, listening to its call for the finishing of the war, for brotherhood of the workers of all countries, for

world revolution against capitalism. Still clinging to their old socialist doctrines and organisations the masses, uncertain under the flood of calumnies in the press, stood waiting, hesitating, whether the tale might still come true. Smaller groups, especially among the young workers, everywhere assembled in a growing communist movement. They were the advance guard in the movements that after the end of the war broke out in all countries, most strongly in defeated and exhausted Central Europe.

It was a new doctrine, a new system of ideas, a new tactic of fight, this communism that with the then new powerful means of government propaganda was propagated from Russia. It referred to Marx's theory of destroying capitalism by means of the workers' class fight. It was a call for fight against world capital, mainly concentrated in England and America, that exploited all peoples and all continents. It summoned not only the industrial workers of Europe and America but also the subjected peoples of Asia and Africa to rise in common fight against capitalism. Like every war, this war could only be won by organisation, by concentration of powers, and good discipline. In the communist parties, comprising the most gallant and able fighters, kernel and staff were present already : they have to take the lead, and at their call the masses must rise and attack the capitalist governments. In the political and economic crisis of the world we cannot wait until by patient teaching the masses have all become communists. Nor is this necessary; if they are convinced that only communism is salvation, if they put their trust in the Communist Party, follow its directions, bring it to power, then the Party as the new government will establish the new order. So it did in Russia, and this example must be followed everywhere. But then in response to the heavy task and the devotion of the leaders, strict obedience and discipline of the masses are imperative, of the masses towards the Party, of the party members towards the leaders. What Marx had called the dictatorship of the proletariat can be realised only

as the dictatorship of the Communist Party. In the Party the working class is embodied, the Party is its representative.

In this form of communist doctrine the Russian origin was clearly visible. In Russia, with its small industry and undeveloped working class, only a rotten Asiatic despotism had to be overthrown. In Europe and America a numerous and highly developed working class, trained by a powerful industry, stands over against a powerful capitalist class disposing of all the resources of the world. Hence the doctrine of party dictatorship and blind obedience found strong opposition here. If in Germany the revolutionary movements after the close of the war had led to a victory of the working class and it had joined Russia, then the influence of this class, product of the highest capitalist and industrial development, would soon have outweighed the Russian character. It would have strongly influenced the English and the American workers, and it would have carried away Russia itself along new roads. But in Germany the revolution failed; the masses were kept aloof by their socialist and union leaders, by means of atrocity stories and promises of well-ordered socialist happiness, whilst their advance guards were exterminated and their best spokesmen murdered by the military forces under the protection of the socialist government. So the opposing groups of German communists could not carry weight; they were expelled from the party. In their place discontented socialist groups were induced to join the Moscow International, attracted by its new opportunist policy of parliamentarism, with which it hoped to win power in capitalist countries.

Thus world revolution from a war cry became a phrase. The Russian leaders imagined world revolution as a big scale extension and imitation of the Russian revolution. They knew capitalism only in its Russian form, as a foreign exploiting power impoverishing the inhabitants, carrying all the profits out of the country. They did not know capitalism as the great organising power, by its richness producing the basis of a

still richer new world. As became clear from their writings, they did not know the enormous power of the bourgeoisie, against which all the capabilities of devoted leaders and a disciplined party are insufficient. They did not know the sources of strength that lie hidden in the modern working class. Hence the primitive forms of noisy propaganda and party terrorism not only spiritual, but also physical, against dissenting views. It was an anachronism that Russia, newly entering the industrial era out of its primitive barbarism, should take command over the working class of Europe and America, that stood before the task of transforming a highly developed industrial capitalism into a still higher form of organisation.

Old Russia essentially, in its economic structure, had been an Asiatic country. All over Asia lived millions of peasants, in primitive small scale agriculture, restricted to their village, under despotic far distant rulers, whom they had no connection with but by the paying of taxes. In modern times these taxes became ever more a heavy tribute to Western capitalism. The Russian revolution, with its repudiation of Czarist debts, was the liberation of the Russian peasants from this form of exploitation by Western capital. So it called upon all the suppressed and exploited Eastern peoples to follow its example, to join the fight and throw off the yoke of their despots, tools of the rapacious world capital. And far and wide, in China and Persia, in India and Africa the call was heard. Communist parties were formed, consisting of radical intellectuals, of peasants revolting against feudal landowners, of hard-pressed urban coolies and artisans, bringing to the hundreds of millions the message of liberation. As in Russia it meant for all these peoples the opening of the road to modern industrial development, sometimes, as in China, in alliance with a modernizing national bourgeoisie. In this way the Moscow International even more than a European became an Asiatic institution. This accentuated its middle class character, and worked to revive in the European followers the old traditions of middle

class revolutions, with the preponderance of great leaders, of sounding catchwords, of conspiracies, plots, and military revolts.

The consolidation of State capitalism in Russia itself was the determining basis for the character of the Communist Party. Whilst in its foreign propaganda it continued to speak of communism and world revolution, decried capitalism, called upon the workers to join in the fight for freedom, the workers in Russia were a subjected and exploited class, living mostly in miserable working conditions, under a strong and oppressive dictatorial rule, without freedom of speech, of press, of association, more strongly enslaved than their brethren under Western capitalism. Thus an inherent falsehood must pervade politics and teachings of that party. Though a tool of the Russian government in its foreign politics, it succeeded by its revolutionary talk to take hold of all the rebellious impulses generated in enthusiastic young people in the crisis-ridden Western world. But only to spill them in abortive sham-actions or in opportunist politics — now against the socialist parties styled as traitors or social fascists, then seeking their alliance in a so-called red front or a people's front — causing its best adherents to leave in disgust. The doctrine it taught under the name of Marxism was not the theory of the overthrow of highly developed capitalism by a highly developed working class, but its caricature, product of a world of barbarous primitivity, where fight against religious superstitions is spiritual, and modernized industrialism is economic progress — with atheism as philosophy, party-rule the aim, obedience to dictatorship as highest commandment. The Communist Party did not intend to make the workers independent fighters capable by their force of insight themselves to build their new world, but to make them obedient followers ready to put the party into power.

So the light darkened that had illuminated the world; the masses that had hailed it were left in blacker night, either in discouragement turning away from the fight, or struggling along to find new and better

ways. The Russian revolution first had given a mighty impulse to the fight of the working class, by its mass direct actions and by its new council forms of organisation — this was expressed in the widespread rise of the communist movement all over the world. But when then the revolution settled into a new order, a new class rule, a new form of government, State capitalism under dictatorship of a new exploiting class, the Communist Party needs must assume an ambiguous character. Thus in the course of ensuing events it became most ruinous to the working class fight, that can only live and grow in the purity of clear thought plain deeds and fair dealings. By its idle talk of world revolution it hampered the badly needed new orientation of means and aims. By fostering and teaching under the name of discipline the vice of submissiveness, the chief vice the workers must shake off, by suppressing each trace of independent critical thought, it prevented the growth of any real power of the working class. By usurping the name communism for its system of workers' exploitation and its policy of often cruel persecution of adversaries, it made this name, till then expression of lofty ideals, a byword, an object of aversion and hatred even among workers. In Germany, where the political and economic crises had brought the class antagonisms to the highest pitch, it reduced the hard class fight to a puerile skirmish of armed youths against similar nationalist bands. And when then the tide of nationalism ran high and proved strongest, large parts of them, only educated to beat down their leaders' adversaries, simply changed colours. Thus the Communist Party by its theory and practice largely contributed to prepare the victory of fascism.

## **6. The Workers' Revolution**

The revolution by which the working class will win mastery and freedom, is not a single event of limited duration. It is a process of organisation, of self-education, in which the workers gradually, now in progressing rise, then in steps and leaps, develop the force to vanquish

the bourgeoisie, to destroy capitalism, and to build up their new system of collective production. This process will fill up an epoch in history of unknown length, on the verge of which we are now standing. Though the details of its course cannot be foreseen, some of its conditions and circumstances may be a subject of discussion now.

This fight cannot be compared with a regular war between similar antagonistic powers. The workers' forces are like an army that assembles during the battle ! They must grow by the fight itself, they cannot be ascertained beforehand, and they can only put forward and attain partial aims. Looking back on history we discern a series of actions that as attempts to seize power seem to be so many failures : from Chartism, along 1848, along the Paris Commune, up to the revolutions in Russia and Germany in 1917–1918. But there is a line of progress; every next attempt shows a higher stage of consciousness and force. Looking back on the history of labor we see, moreover, that in the continuous struggle of the working class there are ups and downs, mostly connected with changes in industrial prosperity. In the first rise of industry every crisis brought misery and rebellious movements; the revolution of 1848 on the continent was the sequel of a heavy business depression combined with bad crops. The industrial depression about 1867 brought a revival of political action in England; the long crisis of the 1880's, with its heavy unemployment, excited mass actions, the rise of social-democracy on the continent and the "new unionism" in England. But in the years of industrial prosperity in between, as 1850–70, and 1895–1914, all this spirit of rebellion disappeared. When capitalism flourishes and in feverish activity expands its realm, when there is abundant employment, and trade union action is able to raise the wages, the workers do not think of any change in the social system. The capitalist class growing in wealth and power is full of self-confidence, prevails over the workers and succeeds in imbuing them with its spirit of nationalism. Formally the workers may then stick to

the old revolutionary catchwords; but in their subconscious they are content with capitalism, their vision is narrowed; hence, though their numbers are growing, their power declines. Till a new crisis finds them unprepared and has to rouse them anew.

Thus the question poses itself, whether, if previously won fighting power again and again crumbles in the contentment of a new prosperity, society and the working class ever will be ripe for revolution. To answer this question the development of capitalism must be more closely examined.

The alternation of depression and prosperity in industry is not a simple swinging to and fro. Every next swing was accompanied by an expansion. After each breakdown in a crisis capitalism was able to come up again by expanding its realm, its markets, its mass of production and product. As long as capitalism is able to expand farther over the world and to increase its volume, it can give employment to the mass of the population. As long as thus it can meet the first demand of a system of production, to procure a living to its members, it will be able to maintain itself, because no dire necessity compels the workers to make an end of it. If it could go on prospering at its highest stage of extension, revolution would be impossible as well as unnecessary; then there were only the hope that a gradual increase of general culture could reform its deficiencies.

Capitalism, however, is not a normal, in any case not a stable system of production. European, and afterwards American capitalism could increase production so continuously and rapidly, because it was surrounded by a wide non-capitalist outer world of small-scale production, source of raw materials and markets for the products. An artificial state of things, this separation between an active capitalist core and a dependent passive surrounding. But the core ever expanding. The essence of capitalist economy is growth, activity, expansion; every standstill means collapse and crisis. The reason is that profits

accumulate continuously into new capital that seeks for investment to bring new profit, thus the mass of capital and the mass of products increase ever more rapidly and markets are sought for feverishly. So capitalism is the great revolutionizing power, subverting old conditions everywhere and changing the aspect of the earth. Ever new millions of people from their secluded, self-sufficient home production that reproduced itself during long centuries without notable change, are drawn into the whirl of world commerce. Capitalism itself, industrial exploitation, is introduced there, and soon from customers they become competitors. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century from England it progressed over France, Germany, America, Japan, then in the 20<sup>th</sup> it pervades the large Asiatic territories. And first as competing individuals, then organised in national States the capitalists take up the fight for markets, colonies, world power. So they are driven on, revolutionizing ever wider domains.

But the earth is a globe, of limited extent. The discovery of its finite size accompanied the rise of capitalism four centuries ago, the realization of its finite size now marks the end of capitalism. The population to be subjected is limited. The hundreds of millions crowding the fertile plains of China and India once drawn within the confines of capitalism, its chief work is accomplished. Then no large human masses remain as objects for subjection. Surely there remain vast wild areas to be converted into realms of human culture; but their exploitation demands conscious collaboration of organised humanity; the rough rapine methods of capitalism — the fertility — destroying “rape of the earth” — are of no avail there. Then its further expansion is checked. Not as a sudden impediment, but gradually, as a growing difficulty of selling products and investing capital. Then the pace of development slackens, production slows up, unemployment waxes a sneaking disease. Then the mutual fight of the capitalists for world domination becomes fiercer, with new world wars impending.

So there can hardly be any doubt that an unlimited expansion of capitalism offering lasting life possibilities for the population, is excluded by its inner economic character. And that the time will come that the evil of depression, the calamities of unemployment, the terrors of war, grow ever stronger. Then the working class, if not yet revolting must rise and fight. Then the workers must choose between inertly succumbing and actively fighting to win freedom. Then they will have to take up their task of creating a better world out of the chaos of decaying capitalism.

Will they fight ? Human history is an endless series of fights; and Clausewitz, the well-known German theorist on war, concluded from history that man is in his inner nature a warlike being. But others, sceptics as well as fiery revolutionists, seeing the timidity, the submissiveness, the indifference of the masses, often despair of the future. So we will have to look somewhat more thoroughly into psychological forces and effects.

The dominant and deepest impulse in man as in every living being is his instinct of self-preservation. It compels him to defend his life with all his powers. Fear and submissiveness also are the effect of this instinct, when against powerful masters they afford the best chances for preservation. Among the various dispositions in man those which are most adapted to secure life in the existing circumstances will prevail and develop. In the daily life of capitalism it is unpractical, even dangerous for a worker to nurture his feelings of independence and pride; the more he suppresses them and tacitly obeys, the less difficulty he will encounter in finding and keeping his job. The morals taught by the ministers of the ruling class enhance this disposition. And only few and independent spirits defy these tendencies and are ready to encounter the incumbent difficulties.

When, however, in times of social crisis and danger all this submissivity, this virtuousness, is of no avail to secure life, when only

fighting can help, then it gives way to its contrary, to rebelliousness and courage. Then the bold set the example and the timid discover with surprise of what deeds of heroism they are capable. Then self-reliance and high-spiritedness awake in them and grow, because on their growth depend their chances of life and happiness. And at once, by instinct and by experience, they know that only collaboration and union can give strength to their masses. When then they perceive what forces are present in themselves and in their comrades, when they feel the happiness of this awakening of proud self-respect and devoted brotherhood, when they anticipate a future of victory, when they see rising before them the image of the new society they help to build, then enthusiasm and ardour grow to irresistible power. Then the working class begins to be ripe for revolution. Then capitalism begins to be ripe for collapse.

Thus a new mankind is arising. Historians often wonder when they see the rapid changes in the character of people in revolutionary times. It seems a miracle; but it simply shows how many traits lay hidden in them, suppressed because they were of no use. Now they break forth, perhaps only temporarily; but if their utility is lasting, they develop into dominant qualities, transforming man, fitting him for the new circumstances and demands.

The first and paramount change is the growth of community-feeling. Its first traces came up with capitalism itself, out of the common work and the common fight. It is strengthened by the consciousness and the experience that, single, the worker is powerless against capital, and that only firm solidarity can secure tolerable life conditions. When the fight grows larger and fiercer, and widens into a fight for dominance over labor and society, on which life and future depend, solidarity must grow into indissoluble all-pervading unity. The new community-feeling, extending over the entire working class, suppresses the old selfishness of the capitalist world.

It is not entirely new. In primeval times, in the tribe with its simple mostly communistic forms of labor the community-feeling was dominant. Man was completely bound up with the tribe; separate from it he was nothing; in all his actions the individual felt as nothing compared with the welfare and the honour of the community.

Inextricably one as he was with the tribe primitive man had not yet developed into a personality. When afterwards men separated and became independent small-scale producers, community-feeling waned and gave way to individualism, that makes the own person the centre of all interests and all feelings. In the many centuries of middle class rising, of commodity production and capitalism, the individual personality-feeling awoke and ever more strongly grew into a new character. It is an acquisition that can no more be lost. To be sure, also in this time man was a social being; society dominated, and in critical moments, of revolution and war, the community-feeling temporarily imposed itself as an unwonted moral duty. But in ordinary life it lay suppressed under the proud fancy of personal independence.

What is now developing in the working class is not a reverse change, as little as life conditions are a return to bygone forms. It is the coalescence of individualism and community-feeling into a higher unity. It is the conscious subordination of all personal forces in the service of the community. In their management of the mighty productive forces the workers as their mightier masters will develop their personality to a yet higher stage. The consciousness of its intimate connection with society unites personality-feeling with the all-powerful social feeling into a new life-apprehension based on the realisation of society as the source of man's entire being.

Community-feeling from the first is the main force in the progress of revolution. This progress is the growth of the solidarity, of the mutual connection, of the unity of the workers. Their organisation, their new growing power, is a new character acquired through fight, is a change

in their inner being, is a new morality. What military authors say about ordinary war, namely, that moral forces therein play a dominant role, is even more true in the war of the classes. Higher issues are at stake here. Wars always were contests of similar competing powers, and the deepest structure of society remained the same, whether one won or the other. Contests of classes are fights for new principles, and the victory of the rising class transfers the society to a higher stage of development. Hence, compared with real war, the moral forces are of a superior kind : voluntary devoted collaboration instead of blind obedience, faith to ideals instead of fidelity to commanders, love for the class companions, for humanity, instead of patriotism. Their essential practice is not armed violence, not killing, but standing steadfast, enduring, persevering, persuading, organising; their aim is not to smash the skulls but to open the brains. Surely, armed action will also play a role in the fight of the classes; the armed violence of the masters cannot be overcome in Tolstoyan fashion by patient suffering. It must be beaten down by force; but, by force animated by a deep moral conviction.

There have been wars that showed something of this character. Such wars as were a kind of revolution or formed part of revolutions, in the fight for freedom of the middle class. Where rising burgherdom fought for dominance against the home and the foreign feudal powers of monarchy and landownership, — as in Greece in antiquity, in Italy and Flanders in the Middle Ages, in Holland, England, France in later centuries — idealism and enthusiasm, arising out of deep feelings of the class-necessities, called forth great deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. These episodes, such as in modern times we meet with in the French revolution, or in Italy's liberation by Garibaldi's followers, count among the most beautiful pages in human history. Historians have glorified and poets have sung them as epochs of greatness, gone for ever. Because the sequel of the liberation, the practice of the new society, the rule of capital, the contrast of impudent luxury and miserable poverty,

the avarice and greed of the business men, the job-hunting of officials, all this pageant of low selfishness fell as a chilling disappointment upon the next generation. In middle-class revolutions egotism and ambition in strong personalities play an important role; as a rule the idealists are sacrificed and the base characters come to wealth and power. In the bourgeoisie everybody must try to raise himself by treading down the others. The virtues of community-feeling were a temporary necessity only, to gain dominance for their class, once this aim attained, they give way to the pitiless competitive strife of all against all.

Here we have the fundamental difference between the former middle-class revolutions and the now approaching workers' revolution. For the workers the strong community-feeling arising out of their fight for power and freedom is at the same time the basis of their new society. The virtues of solidarity and devotion, the impulse to common action in firm unity, generated in the social struggle, are the foundations of the new economic system of common labor, and will be perpetuated and intensified by its practice. The fight shapes the new mankind needed for the new labor system. The strong individualism in man now finds a better way of asserting itself than in the craving for personal power over others. In applying its full force to the liberation of the class it will unfold itself more fully and more nobly than in pursuing personal aims.

Community-feeling and organisation do not suffice to defeat capitalism. In keeping the working class in submission, the spiritual dominance of the bourgeoisie has the same importance as has its physical power. Ignorance is an impediment to freedom. Old thoughts and traditions press heavily upon the brains, even when touched already by new ideas. Then the aims are seen at their narrowest, well-sounding catchwords are accepted without criticism, illusions about easy successes, half-hearted measures and false promises lead astray. Thus the importance of intellectual power for the workers is shown.

Knowledge and insight are an essential factor in the rise of the working class.

The workers' revolution is not the outcome of rough physical power; it is a victory of the mind. It will be the product of the mass power of the workers, certainly; but this power is spiritual power in the first place. The workers will not win because they have strong fists; fists are easily directed by cunning brains, even against their own cause. Neither will they win because they are the majority; ignorant and unorganised majorities regularly were kept down, powerless, by well-instructed organised minorities. Majority now will win only because strong moral and intellectual forces cause it to rise above the power of their masters. Revolutions in history could succeed because new spiritual forces had been awakened in the masses. Brute stupid physical force can do nothing but destroy. Revolutions, however, are the constructive epochs in the evolution of mankind. And more than any former the revolution that is to render the workers master of the world demands the highest moral and intellectual qualities.

Can the workers respond to these demands ? How can they acquire the knowledge needed ? Not from the schools, where the children are imbued with all the false ideas about society which the ruling class wishes them to have. Not from the papers, owned and edited by the capitalists, or by groups striving for leadership. Not from the pulpit that always preaches servility and where John Balls are extremely rare. Not from the radio, where — unlike the public discussions in former times, for the citizens a powerful means of training their minds on public affairs — one-sided allocations tend to stultify the passive listeners, and by their never-easing obtrusive noise allow of no reposeful thinking. Not from the film that — unlike the theatre, in early days for the rising burgher class a means of instruction and sometimes even of fight — appeals only to visual impression, never to thinking or intelligence. They all are powerful instruments of the ruling class to

keep the working class in spiritual bondage. With instinctive cunning and conscious deliberation they are all used for the purpose. And the working masses unsuspectingly submit to their influence. They let themselves be fooled by artful words and outside appearances. Even those who know of class and fight leave the affairs to leaders and statesmen, and applaud them when they speak dear old words of tradition. The masses spend their free time in pursuing puerile pleasures unaware of the great social problems on which their and their children's existence depends. It seems an insolvable problem, how a workers' revolution is ever to come and to succeed, when by the sagaciousness of the rulers and the indifference of the ruled its spiritual conditions remain lacking.

But the forces of capitalism are working in the depths of society, stirring old conditions and pushing people forward even when unwilling. Their inciting effects are suppressed as long as possible, to save the old possibilities of going on living; stored in the subconscious they only intensify the inner strains. Till at last, in crisis, at the highest pitch of necessity they snap and give way in action, in revolt. The action is not the result of deliberate intention; it comes as a spontaneous deed, irresistibly. In such spontaneous action man reveals to himself of what he is capable, a surprise to himself. And because the action is always collective action, it reveals to each that the forces dimly felt in himself, are present in all. Confidence and courage are raised by the discovery of the strong class forces of common will, and they stir and carry away ever wider masses.

Actions break out spontaneously, enforced by capitalism upon the unwilling workers. They are not so much the result as the starting point of their spiritual development. Once the fight is taken up the workers must go on in attack and defence; they must exert all their forces to the utmost. Now falls away the indifference that was only a form of resistance to demands they felt themselves unequal to respond to. Now

a time of intense mental exertion sets in. Standing over against the mighty forces of capitalism they see that only by the utmost efforts, by developing all their powers can they hope to win. What in every fight appears in its first traces now broadly unfolds; all the forces hidden in the masses are roused and set in motion. This is the creative work of revolution. Now the necessity of firm unity is hammered into their consciousness, now the necessity of knowledge is felt at every moment. Every kind of ignorance, every illusion about the character and force of the foe, every weakness in resisting his tricks, every incapacity of refuting his arguments and calumnies, is revenged in failure and defeat. Active desire, by strong impulses from within, now incites the workers to use their brains. The new hopes, the new visions of the future inspire the mind, making it a living active power, that shuns no pains to seek for truth, to acquire knowledge.

Where will the workers find the knowledge they need ? The sources are abundant; an extensive scientific literature of books and pamphlets, explaining the basic facts and theories of society and labor already exists and more will follow. But they exhibit the greatest diversity of opinion as to what is to be done; and the workers themselves have to choose and to distinguish what is true and right. They have to use their own brains in hard thinking and intent discussion. For they face new problems, ever again, to which the old books can give no solution. These can supply only general knowledge about society and capital, they present principles and theories, comprehending former experience. The application in ever new situations is our own task.

The insight needed can not be obtained as instruction of an ignorant mass by learned teachers, possessors of science, as the pouring of knowledge into passive pupils. It can only be acquired by self-education, by the strenuous self-activity that strains the brain in fell desire to understand the world. It would be very easy for the working class if it had only to accept established truth from those who know it.

But the truth they need does not exist anywhere in the world outside them; they must build it up within themselves. Also what is given here does not pretend to be established final truth to be learned by heart. It is a system of ideas won by attentive experience of society and the workers' movement, formulated to induce others to think over and to discuss the problems of work and its organisation. There are hundreds of thinkers to open new viewpoints, there are thousands of intelligent workers who, once they give their attention to them, are able, from their intimate knowledge, to conceive better and in more detail the organisation of their fight and the organisation of their work. What is said here may be the spark that kindles the fire in their minds.

There are groups and parties pretending to be in the exclusive possession of truth, who try to win the workers by their propaganda under the exclusion of all other opinions. By moral and, where they have the power, also by physical constraint, they try to impose their views upon the masses. It must be clear that one-sided teaching of one system of doctrines can only serve, and indeed should serve, to breed obedient followers, hence to uphold old or prepare new domination. Self-liberation of the working masses implies self-thinking, self-knowing, recognising truth and error by their own mental exertion. Exerting the brains is much more difficult and fatiguing than exerting the muscles; but it must be done, because the brains govern the muscles; if not their own, then foreign brains.

So unlimited freedom of discussion, of expressing opinions is the breathing air of the workers' fight. It is more than a century ago that against a despotic government, Shelley, England's greatest poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "the friend of the friendless poor," vindicated for everybody the right of free expression of his opinion. "A man has the right to unrestricted liberty of discussion." "A man has not only the right to express his thoughts, but it is his duty to do so" ... "nor can any acts of legislature destroy that right." Shelley proceeded from

philosophy proclaiming the natural rights of man. For us it is owing to its necessity for the liberation of the working class that freedom of speech and press is proclaimed. To restrict the freedom of discussion is to prevent the workers from acquiring the knowledge they need. Every old despotism, every modern dictatorship began by persecuting or forbidding freedom of press; every restriction of this freedom is the first step to bring the workers under the domination of some kind of rulers. Must not, then, the masses be protected against the falsehoods, the misrepresentations, the beguiling propaganda of their enemies ? As little as in education careful withholding of evil influences can develop the faculty to resist and vanquish them, as little can the working class be educated to freedom by spiritual guardianship. Where the enemies present themselves in the guise of friends, and in the diversity of opinions every party is inclined to consider the others as a danger for the class, who shall decide ? The workers, certainly; they must fight their way in this realm also. But the workers of to-day might in honest conviction condemn as obnoxious opinions that afterwards prove to be the basis of new progress. Only by standing open to all ideas that the rise of a new world generates in the minds of man, by testing and selecting, by judging and applying them with its own mental capacities, can the working class gain the spiritual superiority needed to suppress the power of capitalism and erect the new society.

Every revolution in history was an epoch of the most fervent spiritual activity. By hundreds and thousands the political pamphlets and papers appeared as the agents of intense self-education of the masses. In the coming proletarian revolution it will not be otherwise. It is an illusion that, once awakened from submissiveness, the masses will be directed by one common clear insight and go their way without hesitation in unanimity of opinion. History shows that in such awakening an abundance of new thoughts in greatest diversity sprouts in man, expressions all of the new world, as a roaming search

of mankind in the newly opened land of possibilities, as a blooming richness of spiritual life. Only in the mutual struggle of all these ideas will crystallize the guiding principles that are essential for the new tasks. The first great successes, result of spontaneous united action, by destroying previous shackles, do no more than fling open the prison gates; the workers, by their own exertion, must then find the new orientation towards further progress.

This means that those great times will be full of the noise of party strife. Those who have the same ideas form groups to discuss them for their own and to propagate them for their comrades' enlightenment. Such groups of common opinion may be called parties, though their character will be entirely different from the political parties of the previous world. Under parliamentarism these parties were the organs of different and opposite class interests. In the working class movement they were organisations taking the lead of the class, acting as its spokesmen and representatives and aspiring at guidance and dominance. Now their function will be spiritual fight only. The working class for its practical action has no use for them; it has created its new organs for action, the councils. In the shop organisation, the council organisation, it is the entirety of the workers itself that acts, that has to decide what must be done. In the shop assemblies and in the councils the different and opposite opinions are exposed and defended, and out of the contest the decision and the unanimous action has to proceed. Unity of purpose can only be reached by spiritual contest between the dissenting views. The important function of the parties, then, is to organise opinion, by their mutual discussion to bring the new growing ideas into concise forms, to clarify them, to exhibit the arguments in a comprehensible form, and by their propaganda to bring them to the notice of all. Only in this way the workers in their assemblies and councils can judge their truth, their merits, their practicability in each situation, and take the decision in clear understanding. Thus the

spiritual forces of new ideas, sprouting wildly in all the heads, are organised and shaped so as to be usable instruments of the class. This is the great task of party strife in the workers' fight for freedom, far nobler than the endeavour of the old parties to win dominance for themselves.

The transition of supremacy from one class to another, which as in all former revolutions is the essence of the workers' revolution, does not depend on the haphazard chances of accidental events. Though its details, its ups and downs depend on the chance of various conditions and happenings that we cannot foresee, viewed at large there is a definite progressive course, which may be an object of consideration in advance. It is the increase of social power of the rising class, the loss of social power of the declining class. The rapid visible changes in power form the essential character of social revolutions. So we have to consider somewhat more closely the elements, the factors constituting the power of each of the contending classes.

The power of the capitalist class in the first place consists in the possession of capital. It is master of all the factories, the machines, the mines, master of the entire productive apparatus of society; so mankind depends on that class to work and to live. With its money-power it can buy not only servants for personal attendance, when threatened it can buy in unlimited number sturdy young men to defend its domination, it can organise them into well-armed fighting groups and give them a social standing. It can buy, by assuring them honourable places and good salaries, artists, writers and intellectuals, not only to amuse and to serve the masters, but also to praise them and glorify their rule, and by cunning and learning to defend their domination against criticism.

Yet the spiritual power of the capitalist class has deeper roots than the intellect it can buy. The middle class, out of which the capitalists rose as its upper layer, always was an enlightened class, self-reliant through its broad world conception, basing itself, its work, its production system, upon culture and knowledge. Its principles of

personal ownership and responsibility, of self-help and individual energy pervade the entire society. These ideas the workers have brought with them, from their origin out of impoverished middle-class layers; and all the spiritual and physical means available are set to work to preserve and intensify the middle-class ideas in the masses. Thus the domination of the capitalist class is firmly rooted in the thinking and feeling of the dominated majority itself.

The strongest power factor of the capitalist class, however, is its political organisation, State-power. Only by firm organisation can a minority rule over a majority. The unity and continuity of plan and will in the central government, the discipline of the bureaucracy of officials pervading society as the nervous system pervades the body, and animated and directed by one common spirit, the disposal, moreover, when necessary, over an armed force, assure its unquestioned dominance over the population. Just as the strength of the fortress consolidates the physical forces of the garrison into an indomitable power over the country, so State power consolidates the physical and spiritual forces of the ruling class into unassailable strength. The respect paid to the authorities by the citizens, by the feeling of necessity, by custom and education, regularly assure the smooth running of the apparatus. And should discontent make people rebellious, what can they do, unarmed and unorganised against the firmly organised and disciplined armed forces of the Government ? With the development of capitalism, when the power from a numerous middle class ever more concentrated in a smaller number of big capitalists, the State also concentrated its power and through its increasing functions took ever more hold of society.

What has the working class to oppose to these formidable factors of power ?

Ever more the working class constitutes the majority, in the most advanced countries the large majority of the population, concentrated

here in large and giant industrial enterprises. Not legally but actually it has the machines, the productive apparatus of society in its hands. The capitalists are owners and masters, surely; but they can do no more than command. If the working class disregards their commands they cannot run the machines. The workers can. The workers are the direct actual masters of the machines; however determined, by obedience or by self-will, they can run them and stop them. Theirs is the most important economic function; their labour bears society.

This economical power is a sleeping power as long as the workers are captivated in middle class thinking. It grows into actual power by class consciousness. By the practice of life and labour they discover that they are a special class, exploited by capital, that they have to fight to free themselves from exploitation. Their fight compels them to understand the structure of the economic system, to acquire knowledge of society. Notwithstanding all propaganda to the contrary this new knowledge dispels the inherited middle-class ideas in their heads, because it is based on the truth of daily experienced reality, whereas the old ideas express the past realities of a bygone world.

Economic and spiritual power are made an active power through organisation. It binds all the different wills to unity of purpose and combines the single forces into a mighty unity of action. Its outer forms may differ and change as to circumstances, its essence is its new moral character, the solidarity, the strong community-feeling, the devotion and spirit of sacrifice, the self-imposed discipline. Organisation is the life principle of the working class, the condition of liberation. A minority ruling by its strong organisation can be vanquished only, and certainly will be vanquished, by organisation of the majority.

Thus the elements constituting the power of the contending classes stand over against one another. Those of the bourgeoisie stand great and mighty, as existing and dominating forces, whereas those of the working class must develop, from small beginnings, as new life

growing up. Number and economic importance grow automatically by capitalism; but the other factors, insight and organisation, depend on the efforts of the workers themselves. Because they are the conditions of efficient fight they are the results of fight; every setback strains nerves and brains to repair it, every success swells the hearts into new zealous confidence. The awakening of class-consciousness, the growing knowledge of society and its development, means the liberation from spiritual bondage, the awakening from dullness to spiritual force, the ascension of the masses to true humanity. Their uniting for a common fight, fundamentally, means already social liberation; the workers, bound into the servitude of capital resume their liberty of action. It is the awakening from submissiveness to independence, collectively, in organised union challenging the masters. Progress of the working class means progress in these factors of power. What can be won in improvement of working and living conditions depends on the power the workers have acquired; when, either by insufficiency of their actions, by lack of insight or effort, or by inevitable social changes their power, compared with the capitalist power, declines, it will be felt in their working conditions. Here is the criterion for every form of action, for tactics and methods of fight, for forms of organisation; do they enhance the power of the workers ? For the present, but, still more essential, for the future, for the supreme goal of annihilating capitalism ? In the past trade unionism has given shape to the feelings of solidarity and unity, and strengthened their fighting power by efficient organisation. When, however, in later times it had to suppress the fighting spirit, and it put up the demand of discipline towards leaders against the impulse of class solidarity the growth of power was impeded. Socialist party work in the past highly contributed to raise the insight and the political interest of the masses; when, however, it tried to restrict their activity within the confines of parliamentarism and the illusions of political democracy it became a source of weakness.

Out of these temporary weaknesses the working class has to lift its power in the actions of the coming times. Though we must expect an epoch of crisis and fight this may be alternated with more quiet times of relapse or consolidation. Then traditions and illusions may act temporarily as weakening influences. But then also, making them times of preparation, the new ideas of self-rule and council organisation by steady propaganda may take a broader hold on the workers. Then, just as now, there is a task for every worker once he is seized by the vision of freedom for his class, to propagate these thoughts among his comrades, to rouse them from indifference, to open their eyes. Such propaganda is essential for the future. Practical realisation of an idea is not possible as long as it has not penetrated the minds of the masses at large.

Fight, however, is always the fresh source of power in a rising class. We cannot foresee now what forms this fight of the workers for their freedom will assume. At times and places it may take the harsh form of civil war, so common in former revolutions when it had to give the decisions. There heavy odds may seem to be against the workers, since Government and the capitalists, by money and authority, can raise armed forces in unlimited numbers. Indeed the strength of the working class is not situated here, in the bloody contest of massacring and killing. Their real strength rests in the domain of labor, in their productive work, and in their superiority in mind and character. Nevertheless, even in armed contest capitalist superiority is not unquestioned. The production of arms is in the hands of the workers; the armed bands depend on their labor. If restricted in number, such bands, when the entire working class, united and unafraid, stands against them, will be powerless, overwhelmed by sheer number. And if numerous, these bands consist of recruited workers too, accessible to the call of class solidarity.

The working class has to find out and to develop the forms of fight adapted to its needs. Fight means that it goes its own way according

to its free choice, directed by its class interests, independent of, hence opposed to the former masters. In fight its creative faculties assert themselves in finding ways and means. Just as in the past it devised and practised spontaneously its forms of action : the strike, the ballot, the street demonstration, the mass meeting, the leaflet propaganda, the political strike, so it will do in future. Whatever the forms may be, character, purpose and effect will be the same for all : to raise the own elements of power, to weaken and dissolve the power of the foe. So far as experience goes mass political strikes have the strongest effects; and in future they may be still more powerful. In these strikes, born out of acute crises and strong strains, the impulses are too fierce, the issues go too deep to be directed by unions or parties, committees or boards of officials. They bear the character of direct actions of the masses. The workers do not go into strike individually, but shopwise, as personnel collectively deciding their action. Immediately strike committees are installed, where delegates of all the enterprises meet, assuming already the character of workers' councils. They have to bring unity in action, unity also, as much as possible, in ideas and methods, by continual interaction between the fighting impulses of the shop-assemblies and the discussions in the council meetings. Thus the workers create their own organs opposing the organs of the ruling class.

Such a political strike is a kind of rebellion, though in legal form, against the Government, by paralyzing production and traffic trying to exert such a pressure upon the government that it yields to the demands of the workers. Government, from its side, by means of political measures, by prohibiting meetings, by suspending the freedom of press, by calling up armed forces, hence by transforming its legal authority into arbitrary though actual power, tries to break the determination of the strikers. It is assisted by the ruling class itself, that by its press monopoly dictates public opinion and carries on a strong propaganda of calumny to isolate and discourage the strikers. It supplies volunteers

not only for somehow maintaining traffic and services, but also for armed bands to terrorise the workers and to try to convert the strike into a form of civil war, more congenial to the bourgeoisie. Because a strike cannot last indefinitely, one of the parties, with the lesser inner solidity, must give way.

Mass actions and universal strikes are the struggle of two classes, of two organisations, each by its own solidity trying to curb and finally to break the other. This cannot be decided in one action; it demands a series of struggles that constitute an epoch of social revolution. For each of the contending classes disposes of deeper sources of power that allow it to restore itself after defeat. Though the workers at a time may be defeated and discouraged, their organisations destroyed, their rights abolished, yet the stirring forces of capitalism, their own inner forces, and the indestructible will to live, once more puts them on their feet. Neither can capitalism be destroyed at one stroke; when its fortress, State Power, is shattered, demolished, the class itself still disposes of a great deal of its physical and spiritual power. History has instances how governments, entirely disabled and prostrate by war and revolution, were regenerated by the economic power, the money, the intellectual capacity, the patient skill, the class-consciousness — in the form of ardent national feeling — of the bourgeoisie. But finally the class that forms the majority of the people, that supports society by its labor, that has the direct disposal over the productive apparatus, must win. In such a way that the firm organisation of the majority class dissolves and crumbles State power, the strongest organisation of the capitalist class.

Where the action of the workers is so powerful that the very organs of Government are paralysed the councils have to fulfil political functions. Now the workers have to provide for public order and security, they have to take care that social life can proceed, and in this the councils are their organs. What is decided in the councils the workers perform. So the councils grow into organs of social revolution;

and with the progress of revolution their tasks become ever more all-embracing. At the same time that the classes are struggling for supremacy, each by the solidity of its organisation trying to break that of the other class, society must go on to live. Though in the tension of critical moments it can live on the stores of provisions, production cannot stop for a long time. This is why the workers, if their inner forces of organisation fall short, are compelled by hunger to return under the old yoke. This is why, if strong enough, if they have defied, repelled, shattered State Power, if they have repulsed its violence, if they are master in the shops, they immediately must take care of the production. Mastery in the shops means at the same time organisation of production. The organisation for fight, the councils, is at the same time organisation for reconstruction.

Of the Jews in olden times building the walls of Jerusalem it is said that they fought sword in one, trowel in the other hand. Here, differently, sword and trowel are one. Establishing the organisation of production is the strongest, nay, the only lasting weapon to destroy capitalism. Wherever the workers have fought their way into the shops and taken possession of the machines, they immediately start organising the work. Where capitalist command has disappeared from the shop, disregarded and powerless, the workers build up production on the new basis. In their practical action they establish new right and new Law. They cannot wait till everywhere the fight is over; the new order has to grow from below, from the shops, work and fight at the same time.

Then at the same time the organs of capitalism and Government decline into the role of unessential foreign and superfluous things. They may still be powerful to harm, but they have lost the authority of useful and necessary institutions. Now the roles, more and more manifestly to everybody, are reverted. Now the working class, with its organs, the councils, is the power of order; life and prosperity of the entire

people rests on its labor, its organisation. The measures and regulations decided in the councils, executed and followed by the working masses, are acknowledged and respected as legitimate authority. On the other hand the old governmental bodies dwindle to outside forces that merely try to prevent the stabilisation of the new order. The armed bands of the bourgeoisie, even when still powerful, get ever more the character of unlawful disturbers of obnoxious destroyers in the rising world of labor. As agents of disorder they will be subdued and dissolved.

This is, in so far as we now can foresee, the way by which State Power will disappear, together with the disappearance of capitalism itself. In past times different ideas about future social revolution prevailed. First the working class had to conquer the political power, by the ballot winning a majority in Parliament, helped eventually by armed contests or political strikes. Then the new Government consisting of the spokesmen, leaders, and politicians, by its acts, by new Law, had to expropriate the capitalist class and to organise production. So the workers themselves had only to do half the work, the less essential part; the real work, the reconstruction of society, the organising of labor, had to be done by the socialist politicians and officials. This conception reflects the weakness of the working class at that time, poor and miserable, without economic power, it had to be led into the promised land of abundance by others, by able leaders, by a benignant Government. And then, of course, to remain subjects; for freedom cannot be given, it can only be conquered. This easy illusion has been dispelled by the growth of capitalist power. The workers now have to realise that only by raising their own power to the highest height can they hope to win liberty; that political dominance, mastery over society must be based upon economic power, mastery over labor.

The conquest of political power by the workers, the abolition of capitalism, the establishment of new Law, the appropriation of the enterprises, the reconstruction of society, the building of a new

system of production are not different consecutive occurrences. They are contemporary, concurrent in a process of social events and transformations. Or, more precisely, they are identical. They are the different sides, indicated with different names, of one great social revolution : the organisation of labor by working humanity.

## Part 3 – The Foe

### 1. The English Bourgeoisie

Knowledge of the foe, knowledge of his resources, of his forces and his weaknesses, is the first demand in every fight. The first requisite to protect us, when seeing his superior powers, against discouragement; after partial success, against illusions. Hence it is necessary to consider how, with the evolution of society, the present ruling class has developed.

This development was different in different countries. The workers of each country are exploited and dominated by their own bourgeoisie ( the property owning and capitalist class ); it is the foe they have to deal with. So it might seem sufficient to study its character only. But at present we see that the capitalist classes of all countries and all continents grow together into one world class, albeit in the form of two fiercely fighting coalitions. So the workers cannot restrict their attention to their direct masters. Already in the past, when taking up their fight, they themselves immediately felt an international brotherhood. Now the capitalist classes of the entire world are their opponents, and so they must know and understand them all.

Old capitalism is best seen in England. There for the first time it came to power; from there it spread over the world. There it developed most of the institutions and the principles imitated and followed afterwards in other countries. Yet it shows a special character different from the others.

The English revolution, of the time of Pym and Cromwell, was not a conquest of power by the capitalist class, won from a previously ruling feudal class of landowners. Just as earlier in Holland, it was the repulse of the attempts of a king to establish absolute monarchical power. In other countries, by means of their standing armies and of the officials and judges appointed by them and obeying them, the kings subdued the independent nobility as well as the privileged town governments. Making use of the money power of rising capitalism, they could establish strong central governments and turn the tumultuous nobles into obedient courtiers and military officers, securing them their feudal rights and properties, and at the same time protecting commerce and industry, the source of the taxes from the business people. Their power was based on a kind of equilibrium between the rising power of capital and the declining power of land ownership. In England, however, in consequence of the local self-rule of the counties, of the traditional coalition of landowners and town citizens in the House of Commons, and of the lack of a standing army, the Stuart kings failed in their striving for absolute monarchy. Though it broke out in defence of the medieval rights and privileges, the revolutionary fight, convulsing the depth of society, to a great extent modernised institutions. It made Parliament, especially the House of Commons, the ruling power of the land.

The middle class, thus becoming the ruling class in England, consisted chiefly of the numerous class of squires, independent landowners, the gentry, forming the lower nobility; they were associated with the influential merchants of London, and with the wealthy citizens ruling in the smaller towns. By means of local self-government, embodied in their office of Justices of the Peace, they dominated the countryside. The House of Commons was their organ, by means of which they determined the home and foreign policy of the country. Government itself they left mostly to the nobility and the kings,

who were now their instruments and steadily controlled by Parliament. Because England as an island was protected by her fleet, there was hardly any army : the ruling class having learnt to hate and fear it as an instrument of governmental despotism, jealously kept it insignificant. Neither was there a police to restrain personal liberty.

Thus the government had no means to keep down by force new rising powers. In other countries this keeping down of course could only be temporary, till at last a violent revolution broke out and swept away the entire old system of domination. In England, on the contrary, when after long resistance the ruling class in public opinion and social action felt the irresistible force of a rising class, it had no choice but to yield. Thus by necessity originated the policy grown into an English tradition, of resisting rising forces as long as it is possible, in the end to yield before the breaking point is reached. The governing class then retained its power by sharing it with the new class, accepting its leading figures into its midst, often by knighting them. The old forms remained, even though the contents changed. No revolution, as a cleansing thunderstorm, did away with the old traditions and the old wigs, with the meaningless ceremonials and the antiquated forms of thinking. Respectfully the English people look up to the aristocratic families ruling with such sensible policy. Conservatism permeates all forms of social life. Not the contents; by the unlimited personal liberty labour and life develop freely according to practical needs.

The industrial revolution broke into the careless life of old England of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an irresistible new development and a destructive catastrophe. Factories were built, provided with the newly invented spinning machines, driven by water, and then by steam power, soon to be followed by weaving, and then by machine factories. The new class of factory owners arose and grew rich by the exploitation of the new class of miserable workers, formed out of the impoverished artisans beaten down by the superiority of the new machines. Under

the indifference of the old authorities that were entirely inactive and incapable of coping with the new situation, industrial capitalism grew up in a chaos of free competition, of the most horrible working conditions, of utter neglect of the simplest exigencies of health and careless waste of the nations vigour.

A fierce struggle ensued, in a complicated triangular way. Repeatedly the workers broke out into revolts against the miserable working conditions combined with cruel oppression from the old political institutions, against the employers, as well as against the governing landowner class. And at the same time the new industrial bourgeoisie growing in wealth and social influence, vindicating its share in government, organised itself ever more strongly. Under this double pressure the landowners were forced to yield; in the Reform Act of 1832 modernising the constituencies, the capitalist class of factory owners got their representation in Parliament. And in 1846, by a special repeal of the corn laws that raised the price of wheat by import duties, they succeeded in throwing off the heavy tribute to the landowners. Thus the way was free for producing and accumulating capital in unlimited quantity. The working class, however, stormed in vain against the ramparts of the State stronghold, now fortified by an additional garrison of defenders. The rulers had, it is true, no forces to suppress the working class movement by violence. Capitalist society resisted by its inner toughness, by its deep seated solidity, instinctively felt by the entire middle class to be a rising form of production destined to conquer the world. It yielded by steps, by granting such reforms as were unavoidable; so in ever new fights the workers obtained the right of association, the ten hour day, and finally, gradually, the franchise.

The English bourgeoisie was undisputed master; its Parliament was the sovereign power of the realm. The first and strongest industrial and capitalist class of the world, it dominated world commerce and world markets. During the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century it was master on the

seven seas and powerful in all continents. Riches flowing from all sides, from industry, from commerce, from the colonies, accumulated in its hands. The other classes shared in its enormous profits. In the first place the landowner class, the ruling nobility, from olden times was strongly affiliated to business and commercial life. It was not feudal at all, not of mediaeval descent — the feudal class had exterminated itself in civil wars — but of middle class origin, owing its elevation to wealth, services, to mere favour, the more jealous therefore of the outer appearances and ceremonies of prerogative. Now in the new system of unlimited profit-production it coalesced with the industrial capitalists into one powerful ruling and exploiting class.

Where an aristocracy finds its place in capitalist society, its special pursuit, besides government offices, is the profession of arms. So the standing of the landowner class is shown by the power of militarism. In Prussian Germany the supremacy of the landed nobility was expressed in the ascendancy of military above civil forms. There, even under modern capitalism, civilians were despised as second rate, and the highest ambition for a wealthy business man or a deserving scientist was to don the uniform of reserve officer, "the kings coat." In England, with its small and chiefly colonial army, the same process took place in the navy. For continental wars there was an army recruited from the lowest classes, called "scum of the earth" by their honoured chief, the Duke of Wellington; fighting in the stiff linear tactics of hirelings at a time when in France and Germany enthusiastic popular armies practised the free skirmishing method of fighting; only as late as 1873 flogging of the soldiers was abolished. Military office was not esteemed, and the spirit of militarism was entirely absent. Civilian life was supreme above military forms; when the professional daily duties were absolved, the English officer put on civilian dress, to be simply a gentleman — the word expressing a civilian code of honour not known in other countries. Thus the absence of continental militarism is an

indication of how completely the landowning aristocracy in England is absorbed into the entirety of the capitalist class.

The working class also got its part. Not all of course; only its most influential groups, "skilled labour," that by its trade unions was able to display fighting power. From its profits secured by world monopoly the capitalist class could grant them a share sufficient to turn them into contented adherents of the existing order. They separated from the miserable unskilled masses that filled the slums. Every thought that another system of production might be possible or necessary, disappeared. So capitalism was entirely secure; the solidity of a system of exploitation depends on the lack of capacity of the exploited class to discern its exploitation. Among the workers the middle class doctrine prevailed that everybody is master of his own fate. They took over all middle class ideas and traditions, even the reverence paid to the upper classes and their ceremonies.

During the long years of exploitation and gradual development capital in private hands could increase along with the need for larger installations, brought about by the progress of technics. There was no need for organisation of capital; banking operations found sufficient scope in interchanging and lending money for facilitating intercourse. There was also little organisation of the industrial enterprises into large combines; the employers, themselves disposing of sufficient capital, remained independent owners of their shops. Hence a wilful individualism was the salient character of the English bourgeoisie. Hence also little concentration in the realm of production; numerous independent small shops kept up alongside of the large factories. Thus in the coal industry the demands of security and health put up by the workers and by the Sankey commission, ever again were frustrated by the small mine owners not having the means to modernise their backward installations.

Entire freedom in social life allows every new idea to be tried out and to be put into practise, every impulse of will; whereas the lack of this liberty causes the impeded wishes and inapplicable ideas to develop into consistent theoretical systems. So, contrasted to the broadly worked-out theoretical character of science and activity on the continent, the English became men of practical deeds. For every problem or difficulty an immediate practical solution was sought without regard to further consequences, in technics as well as in politics. Science played a small part in the progress of technics. This is also a cause of much backwardness in English business life.

In this way England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became the model country of old capitalism with its free competition, careless and improvident, full of hard egoism against the weak, persons as well as peoples, full of obsolete institutions and senseless old forms, full of downtrodden misery viewed with indifference alongside the display of luxury. Already such books as William Booth's "Darkest England" and Robert Blatchford's "Dismal England" indicate a state of dirty neglect not tolerated in other civilised countries, entirely left to the individual initiative of single philanthropists. In the later years only, and in the new century, social reforms began to play a noticeable role; and, especially after the first world war, a stronger concentration of capital set in.

In this way at the same time, however, the English bourgeoisie developed that master character that was the envy of all capitalists of other countries, who in vain tried to imitate it. For many centuries it has been living in a state of complete freedom and unchallenged power. Through its monopoly of industry and commerce in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it felt itself master of the world, the only cosmopolitans, at home in every continent and on every ocean. It never learnt to fear; never was it faced by a superior foe attacking from outside or a revolution threatening from within, suggesting the idea of mortality. With unlimited self-

assurance it confronts every new difficulty, sure to overcome it, by force if it can, by concessions if it must. In foreign politics, in the founding and defence of its world power, the English ruling class showed the capacity of ever again adapting itself to new situations, of defying its most solemn proclamations of yesterday by the opposite practise of to-morrow, of "shaking hands with murderers" where it was necessary, and, in seeming generosity, of making allies of vanquished opponents of whom it feels that they cannot be permanently kept down. All this not by a wide knowledge and foresight; on the contrary, it is a class rather ignorant, narrow-minded and conservative — hence much blundering before finally the new arrangement is found — but it has the self-sure instinct of power. The same instinctive sagacity to solve its problems by practical conduct was used in home politics to keep the working class in spiritual and actual dependence; here with equal success.

Modern development, certainly, caused the English bourgeoisie to lose a good deal of its exceptional position in the world; but ever again it knew how to resign and to adapt itself to the rise of other equal powers. Already in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century German industry made its appearance as a serious competitor in the world market, whilst afterwards Japan came to oust the products of British industry. Britain's financial supremacy was lost to America in the first world war. But its main character, acquired in an unchallenged rule of so many centuries was unshaken. In home politics also it knew how to adapt its rule to the demands of the working class, by introducing a system of social reforms and provisions. The English bourgeoisie had the good luck that the formation of the Labour Party, transferring all workers' votes from Liberal politicians to Labour leaders entirely filled with middle class ideas, rendered the working class an active agent in consolidating capitalist rule though it had to pay for it the price of a modernising reform of some of the worst abominations of capitalism. In leaders of the Labour Party it found able Cabinet Ministers, entirely devoted to the

maintenance of the capitalist system, therein representing, when these temporarily had to prevail, the pacifist tendencies.

This character of the English bourgeoisie is essential in determining the forms of the prospective rise of the working class. What must be overcome, the power of the bourgeoisie, the weakness of the workers, is not physical force but spiritual dependence. Doubtless physical force may play its role, too, at critical moments; English capitalism, in defence of its existence, will be able to bring up, when necessary, strong powers of violence and restraint. But the weakness of the English working class consists chiefly in its being entirely dominated by middle class ideas. Self-centred individualism, the conviction that everybody has to forge his own fate, respect for traditional social relations, conservatism of thought, are firmly rooted in it by the unchallenged power of capitalism, at home and all over the world. Strong shocks will be needed to stir the petrified brains; and capitalist development is at work already. When political catastrophes or the irresistible rise of mighty competitors undermine the world power of the English bourgeoisie, when the privileged position of the English workers has gone, when their very existence is endangered, then also for them the only way will be the fight for power over production.

The fundamental ideas of council organisation are not entirely foreign to the English workers. At the end of the first world war the shop steward movement arose, establishing a direct contact of shop representatives in preparing fighting actions, independent of the unions. Already earlier "guild socialism" presented many cognate conceptions; and "industrial unionism" put up the demand of control of production by the workers, linked, though, with the ideas of the unions as the ruling bodies. The character of the English bourgeoisie and the freedom of all social relations make it probable that practical momentary solutions of the conflicts will be sought for, rather than fundamental decisions. So as an instance, we might conceive that as a

temporary compromise, freedom of speech and discussion in the shop is established, and the capitalist's old right of hiring and firing is restricted by the workers' right to decide on the membership of the personnel; this would keep the road open to further progress. In such a course of development, when at last the partial concessions should amount to an important loss of power, attempts of the capitalist class to regain supremacy by serious decisive class war cannot be avoided. Yet it seems possible that, if anywhere, in England the mastery of the workers over production may be won by successive steps along intermediary forms of divided rule; each step unsatisfactory, and urging further steps until complete freedom is reached.

## 2. The French Bourgeoisie

The development in France took place along quite different lines. In a great political revolution the bourgeoisie, combined with the farmers, overthrew the absolute monarchy with all its mediaeval forms, and deprived the nobility and the church of its landed property. In explicit acts and laws the Revolution abolished all feudal privileges, proclaimed the "rights of man," with private property as their main foundation, and asserted legal equality of all citizens. Constrained to a pitched revolutionary fight the bourgeoisie made a sharp division between itself, garbed as the third estate, as the entire people, and the defeated feudal classes, now completely excluded from political power. It had to do the governing work entirely by itself. There was a clear consciousness of the middle class character of its institutions, formulated in precise paragraphs; the rights of Parliament, differently from English custom, were exactly circumscribed. These formulations of Parliamentary constitution then served as a model for other countries. Political freedom, in England a practical fact, in France was conscious theory. The need of explaining and formulating it created a wealth of political literature, in books and speeches, full of lucid expression of principles. But what was lacking was the immediate feeling of complete

mastership. Practise at the same time was imperfect; the French bourgeoisie had first to suffer military despotism, and then, in gradual steps, in a series of smaller political revolutions, in 1830, 1848, 1870, had to win complete power over the State.

In these revolutions, fought chiefly by the popular classes, the petty burghers, the artisans, the workers, these learnt to distinguish their own class interests, as contrasted to capitalist interests. The workers aspired to a further revolution that should break the new class power of capitalism, but in the armed conflicts, in 1848 and 1871, they were defeated and butchered; partly by their own class fellows, hired by the bourgeoisie, partly by the aid of the petty burgherdom, shopkeepers, farmers, who all came to the rescue as defenders of private property. Thus it was shown that the bourgeoisie had a firm grip on society, that the working class was not yet ripe for mastery, and that a further development of capitalism was needed.

Though in these fierce class fights the bourgeoisie had been victorious, it did not come out without injury. It had lost its self-confidence. It knew that ever it would have to defend itself against the growing power from beneath, that ever its rule would be threatened by the working class. So it sought for protection by a strong State Power. The centralisation of all political power in the government at Paris, introduced already by the Convention and by Napoleon, was intensified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Together with the absence of a ruling aristocracy it gave a political aspect to France quite different from England.

Moreover, economic development took a different course. After a strong growth about the middle of the century industrial development slackened. The countryside gave no strong surplus of population flowing to the towns to provide labour power for a growing industry. The savings of small business men, collected in the banks, were not used as industrial capital in founding new enterprises, but mostly invested in government loans. Certainly in regions with rich coal and ore deposits

a strong iron and steel industry developed, with powerful capitalists at the head, often in family relation with the landed aristocracy. Besides, in the big towns, especially in Paris, as the centre of fashion for the entire European bourgeoisie, the old small-scale industry of luxuries, founded on personal skill and taste of a numerous class of wage-earning artisans, strongly developed. But the chief character of French capitalism, especially after 1870, ever more became the prevalence of financial capital as supreme power.

The banks, under the lead of the central "Banque de France," collected the money of small capitalists, shareholders and farmers into a huge mass of bank capital. Wherever governments in Europe or other continents wanted loans they were procured by the French banks; the bonds and shares were recommended and urged upon the clients as a good investment. Thus the small-property-class in France consists mainly of rentiers, stock-holders, living upon the exploitation of foreign peoples, receiving their income from the taxes squeezed by foreign governments out of their subjects. The loans of these governments usually had to serve for buying war materials or building railways. So bank capital worked in close collaboration with the lords of the steel industry, usually imposing the condition that the money was to be spent in the affiliated French steel works. Thus the savings of the French rentiers went to the coffers of the steel capitalists, and the interest for the rentiers was provided by foreign taxpayers.

This predominant character of French capital determined French politics, foreign, as well as home. Foreign politics served to protect the interests of bank capital and the rentiers, by alliances fortifying its international power and its influence over smaller backward countries. By military power when necessary, it secured the payments from unwilling debtor-governments; or it converted some barbarian chieftain into a dependent prince, providing him with European arms

to subjugate and exploit the formerly free tribes; which was called bringing order and civilisation.

The problem of home politics in big capitalism is always how to make parliaments chosen by universal suffrage, hence dependent on the votes of small business men, of farmers and of workers, instruments of the interests of big capital. In countries with a rapid industrial development this is not difficult. The entire bourgeoisie is carried away, its business prospers through the fervent economic action, and the workers, too, fully occupied as they are, and able to win good wages, are conciliated. Big capital, with assured self-confidence, proclaims its interests to be the common interests of society at large. It is quite different, however, with bank capital. Its exploitation of foreign peoples and capturing of the savings of their own people, through violence and deceit, bears the character of usury and robbery. Its interests must be served behind the scenes, by secret arrangements with influential politicians. For its purposes cabinet ministers must be installed or deposed, party leaders must be won over, members of parliament must be manipulated, papers must be bribed, all dirty intrigues that cannot bear the light of day. The politicians, mostly lawyers or other intellectuals, forced by the party-machines upon the farmers and citizens as their representatives, consider politics as business, aiming at high and remunerative offices as their share in the spoils. Parliamentarianism everywhere in modern times is degenerating because it has to put up the semblance of the common good while serving capitalist interests. But where financial capital rules, it must deteriorate into sheer corruption. For financial capital, as represented by the French banks, has no direct connection with labour. Its politics, not founded on the actual fight of a class in command of production, must live on false slogans, on deceitful promises and sounding rhetoric.

Because in Paris during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century small scale enterprises were dominant, the working class, not sharply separated

from the mass of the small independent artisans and employers, could not develop a clear-cut class consciousness, though it was filled with an ardent republican and democratic fighting spirit. Seeing the capitalists rise by the protection of government, by using the political power for shameless personal enrichment, whereas they themselves were forcibly kept down, the workers considered State Power as the chief cause of their exploitation and their misery. So their feelings of free individuality, inheritance of the Great Revolution developed into some kind of anarchism, the doctrine that only by complete abolition of the State and its constraining power mankind can be free as an agglomeration of independent collaborating individuals.

When, in later years, with the gradual development and concentration of industry, trade unions arose, these, just as in England, took the central place in the social ideas of the working class. Not so much as practical means of participating in prosperity, but rather, French capitalism lacking industrial and commercial world power, as the theoretical basis of a better society. So towards the end of the century syndicalism became the theory of social reconstruction occupying the minds of the workers not only in France, but spreading over Spain, Italy and other countries also. Syndicats is simply the French name for trade unions. In the doctrine of syndicalism, "labor the basis of the new world," means that the syndicat, the union will be its organisation unit. The union, it says, is the free creation of the workers, their field of self-government, whereas in the State the officials and politicians, and in the political parties the intellectuals dominate. A political revolution that should make the State master of production would mean a more oppressive slavery for the workers. Liberation of the workers by revolution is only possible as a destruction of State and Government. It must be brought about by a universal strike, a common action of all its workers. In its place shall come the free association

of all the unions; the unions will be the bodies to organise and direct production.

These principles clearly expound their dependence on the forms of French capitalism. Since the contents of politics stood at a wide distance from the productive work of society with its struggle of real class interest, the working class held itself at a wide distance from politics. Since politics was a dirty business of personal intrigue, the workers disdained to get mixed up with politics. Their practise, proclaimed as class war, theoretically for abolishing exploitation, practically for better working conditions, was comprised entirely within the field of production, where it acted by means of the syndicats. Syndicalism did not intend to yield or to submit to bank capital; in the syndicalist slogans of anti-patriotism, anti-militarism, and universal strike, it expressed its refusal to be carried away in the militaristic policy of bank capital. But this was only a negative form of opposition, not a positive form of fight; it underrated the powerful hold of capital through the power of nationalistic ideas. In the principle : that every member of the syndicat may individually take part in politics by voting "according to his philosophic or political ideas" is expressed the primitive helplessness of a class that contents itself with trying to exclude from its immediate struggle differences of opinion on society at large. The insight was lacking that against big capital in industry solid big organisations needs must arise, involving a bureaucracy of leading officials. And that production directed by the syndicats means production under the direction of union leaders and not by self-management of the workers.

Practically syndicalism went down when at the outbreak of the first world war its leaders joined their Government and submitted to their capitalist class. This prepared the transition to overt reformist policy after the war, when in international collaboration the differences in theory between the English, German and French unions receded

behind their common practise. In these later years also the differences in character of capitalism in different countries, strongly emphasised before, became less marked in the growth of industry everywhere, in the merging of financial and industrial capital, in their common imperialist policy of subduing foreign peoples and of preparing for future wars for world supremacy.

The power of the French bourgeoisie consists, as everywhere, in its economic and financial power, its spiritual power and its State power. Different from the English bourgeoisie, its economic power is not in the first place mastery over industry and world commerce, but money power; with this money it buys propaganda and armed force, and dominates politics. The spiritual power of French capitalism is based on the tradition of the Great Revolution and the social institutions created by it. The proud feeling of having thrown off despotism and, an example for others, established legal freedom and equality, lives as a strong tradition in the entire people. Only by nursing these feelings, by acknowledging the democratic forms, by respecting the freedom in public opinion, can capital rule over the masses who take the outer appearances for reality. And should they become rebellious, they find a strong centralised State Power over them. The basic weakness of the French working class, notwithstanding its gallant fights in the past, rests on the slowness of modern economic development, the masses of the farmers, the citizens, the workers being dispersed over numerous petty enterprises. French capitalism lagged behind the old power of English and the rising power of German and American capitalism : no fresh stream of impulses pushed the classes into strong action and energetic fight.

### **3. The German Bourgeoisie**

At the end of the Middle Ages a proud, free and martial burgherdom, rich through its commerce from Italy and the East to Northern and Western Europe, filled the flourishing German towns.

Then by the discovery of America and India world trade shifted to the shores of the Atlantic. The economic decline found its sequel in interneceine wars and invasions by foreign powers, ransacking and murdering, entirely destroying the old wealth. The Thirty-Years War left Germany a devastated and impoverished country, without commerce and industry, cut off from the economic development of the West, divided into a hundred small independent States under petty princes, powerless outside their domain, arbitrary despots at home. the largest among them, the rising Prussian monarchy, was dominated completely by the landed aristocracy, the "Junkers," who kept the miserable farmers in servitude, masters of the army as n instrument of conquest. The French Revolution and the rise of the English industry gave a first impulse to the German poets and philosophers, exponents of the nascent aspirations of burgherdom. Through the Napoleonic domination the rise of nationalism had a reactionary character finding its theoretical expression in the solemn confession of servility : the French revolution proclaimed the rights of man, we proclaim the duties of man.

Towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industry began to develop, and with it a first spirit of freedom, of criticism against the narrow-minded suppression by absolutism and police arbitrariness. The rising bourgeoisie prepared to extort political rights from the Prussian monarchy, which meant a revolution by the help of the working masses. But then, in 1848, it saw the working class proclaim its radical demands, and even fight the propertied classes in a fierce class struggle, at the Paris barricades. So it shrank back; the way of revolution, of winning freedom and power for itself by winning political freedom for the masses, was barred. When in the following years industry developed ever more, the German bourgeoisie alongside of itself saw the working class organising into an independent power. So it was pinched between an old ruling power above, monarchy, aristocracy and army, and

a rising new power beneath, workers already talking communism. Because it wanted police protection in every strike, because it felt the working class to be its genuine economic antagonist, it could not venture a serious fight against State Power. And should it eventually talk of revolution, then the aristocratic rulers would not hesitate to rouse the workers against their employers by promising social laws restricting the arbitrariness in the factory, and by even hinting at a "social monarchy," protecting the working class against capitalism.

So the German bourgeoisie learnt fear. Fear for the power above, fear for the power beneath determined its social character. Never it knew that proud feeling that only self-won freedom can waken in a social class.

Other causes aided to develop this character. Unlike France and England that many centuries ago already had acquired their national unity, Germany was still divided in several dozens of insignificant Statelets. It was an annoying and cumbersome impediment to the development of industry and commerce; so many different governments and laws and rules, different systems of taxes and coinage, custom duties at the several frontiers, every petty government plaguing business through stupid officials, and powerless to protect it on foreign markets. The German bourgeoisie deeply resented the lack of a powerful united State. A free and united Germany had been its hope at the outset of 1848; but the courage had failed to join in the fight of the people. And now it perceived that there was another way to acquire, not freedom, but unity : by means of Prussian militarism. The Prussian aristocracy had made its army an excellent instrument of conquest. In a series of wars, a revolution from above, the surrounding Powers were defeated or overawed, and the small German States were subjected and combined into a powerful German Empire. And now the bourgeoisie changed its policy left its parliamentary spokesmen alone to

make speeches against militarism, and enthusiastically hailed the “iron chancellor” and the Prussian king as its heroes.

“Despotism under Bismarck,” wrote the English historian Trevelyan, “had become an active principle in the van of progress; it was no longer timidly hostile to the mercantile class, to the press, education and science but harnessed them all to the car of government.” Formerly, in other countries, progress — i.e., the development of capitalism — was always linked with increasing freedom i.e., mastery of the bourgeoisie over government. Now, here, on the contrary, despotic government became the instrument for the development of capitalism. The constitution of the newly created Empire was animated by a modern daring spirit, and its policy by brutal energy, adequate to a strongly developing capitalism. Social reform laws and universal suffrage for the Diet secured participation of the masses in its world politics, and the adaptation to changing conditions. At the same time the separate States remained, with their obsolete constitutions, with their narrow-minded officialdom covering the field of administration, of home affairs, of police and education, keeping the masses subjected and continually supervised.

Thus a strong State power was put into the service of rising capitalism without giving political supremacy to the capitalists themselves. The Prussian landowning aristocracy remained master of modern Germany; but only by serving the demands of capitalism. It took its share of the increasing mass of surplus value, not only occupying the lucrative ruling posts in government, but also using its political power to increase — by corn laws — the money produce of its landed property. The bourgeoisie remained a class of obedient subjects, socially influential by its money, but regarded as second class citizens, content to conduct their business and respectfully glorifying monarchy and nobility. In contrast to England and France, parliament had no power over government; it could not by its vote enforce the dismissal of

a cabinet. If a parliamentary majority had tried such a thing by using its right of control of the budget, the bourgeoisie would have forsaken and discarded it; rather than be dependent on a parliament elected by the masses it preferred to be ruled from above.

Now the way was open for capitalist development without political freedom. Whereas the working class, continually struggling for breathing and fighting space, was kept down by a strong hand, Germany as a mighty new power played its role in European politics. Industry and commerce developed with a marvellous rapidity, overtaking all other European countries, equalled only by the United States of America.

This was not only the fresh energy of a people, kept back through years of adverse political conditions. In Germany industry came up half a century later than in England, at a time of more highly developed technics. It had to begin at the outset by introducing big machines and expensive installations requiring science and capital. Science it had; long before already its scientists had taken an honourable part in international research. Just because technical application had been restricted better theoretical foundations could be laid, that now were the basis, at a rapidly growing number of universities and technical schools, of a thorough scientific training for the needs of industry. Personal wealth, however, great capital, such as the factory owners in England had accumulated out of the profits of half a century, was lacking in Germany. There the capital needed for big enterprises had to be provided by carefully collecting all small bits of savings from the separate small capitalists. This was the function of the banks.

Thus German industry acquired a special character. To increase the profits for a rapid accumulation of capital the productivity was raised by conscious amelioration of its scientific basis. So from a number of markets German competition was able to oust the English, confident in their tried and proved methods. At the same time the close connection

of banks and industry created new forms of organisation. The bank, interested in the success of enterprises because it provided them with capital, supervised and advised their policy and brought them into connection. This led to mutual assistance and favourite treatment between such enterprises, to an intertwining of interests, often to the formation of cartels, in every case to organisation. The interpenetration of the directions of the banks and big industries created a conscious common policy of continuously extending their power over new branches. By investing capital here, by enlarging existing business there, by the well-planned founding of new enterprises, the banks, a few groups of fiercely competing financial powers, organised industry in a systematical way, increasing profits and still more their own share in it. Thus what first appeared as a weakness, the lack of private capital, turned into strength. Against the self-willing independence of English business-men, confident in their traditional wealth and clientele, German industry rapidly rose to power through its purposeful organisation. With restless energy and fresh ambition the German bourgeoisie forced its way up in production and world commerce, began to export capital to colonies and foreign continents, and prepared to conquer its share in world power.

In England militarism never got a footing in society. In Germany the forms and spirit of militarism pervaded and dominated society; its code of honour, coarse and touchy, was aped by the middle class youth at the universities; and to the caste of officers the business man was the despised civilian. The middle class German looked up with deep veneration at the army, its refuge and its instrument of power, and equally worshipped the masters of the army, the monarch and his officers. In German constitution, parliament, the Diet, had no power over the army, it had solely to provide the money. This militarism embodied the submissiveness of the German bourgeoisie, its lack of personal pride, its feeling of inferiority, often camouflaged as rough

brutality. The German bourgeoisie never knew freedom. Entirely foreign to them is the proud feeling of independence, as personal freedom pervading all classes in the Western countries.

This, however, made the German bourgeoisie better adapted to the exigencies of big capitalism. Organisation of capitalism, based as it is on subordination under a stronger power, came easier to the German than to a capitalist class accustomed to personal independence. The same disposition enabled the German bourgeoisie twice to engage in the fight for world power with an unequalled, well nigh irresistible war machine, the efficiency of which was based on carefully prepared military and capitalist organisation, technically as well as spiritually. So that its opponent, the world-commanding English bourgeoisie, careless and unprepared, staggering under the fierce assault, had to put up its defence by summoning all the deepest forces of its inner nature.

The American entomologist Howard, in his "Man and Insect," makes a comparison of Nature's two most successful adaptations to the "struggle for life" in animal structure : the insects covering all their weak parts by an unassailable hard and flexible skin, the mammals supporting them by a skeleton within; and their contest over the domination of the world, the author says, is not yet decided. This image fits for a comparison of the two contending capitalist classes; the German bourgeoisie covering its inner softness by an outer steel armour and assailing with the sharpest arms the apparently unprotected foe; but the English bourgeoisie has bones in its body.

This character of the German bourgeoisie at an early date brought the German workers to political independence. Left alone in their struggle against the oppressive police State, they were not attached to the middle class by the tradition of a common fight for political freedom. Whereas in other countries the hard industrial boss commanded respect by seizing power over the State and modernising it, in Germany the gruff master in the shop proved the submissive

coward in politics, giving examples in servility only. The German workers stood directly over against the allied classes of land owners and capitalists; they had to fight on the political at the same time as on the economic field. Concentrated by the rapid development of industry in large numbers in the factories and the towns, they had to build their organisations and find their own way, independent of middle class influences and traditions.

The rapid rise of social democracy demonstrated this political independence. Its name expresses the basic idea that socialist production must be won by means of democracy, by the masses conquering power over the State. Its propaganda of class struggle aroused the increasing numbers of workers to devoted fight, its papers and pamphlets educated them to knowledge of society and its development. It was the energy and rapidity of capitalist development that aroused the energy of the German working class and soon made them the foremost and directing power in the international workers' movement. It was the submissive politics of the German capitalist class, in placing them directly over against the entire ruling class, that rendered them class-conscious, that forced them by theory to deepen their insight in social forces, and that made them the teachers of the workers of all countries. Just as in France the sharp opposition between middle class and nobility had given origin to an extensive literature on political theory, so in Germany the sharp opposition between working class and bourgeoisie gave origin to an extensive literature on social theory, mostly based on the scientific work of Marx. This intellectual superiority, together with the gallant fight against oppression and despotism, alone against the mighty rulers, attracted all progressive and idealistic elements among the other classes and collected around them all who longed for liberty and hated the degrading Prussian militarism. In Germany a deep gap, social as well as spiritual, separated two worlds, one of insolent power and wealth, where servility glorified

oppression and violence, the other of idealism and rebelliousness, embodied in the workers' class struggle for liberation of humanity.

The infiltration with idealistic middle class and intellectual elements tended to call up ideas of peaceful petty capitalist reform and democracy, though they were entirely at variance with the actual big capitalist conditions. Other influences went in the same direction. The increased power of the workers politically, by finally, in 1912, mustering one-third of all the vote, economically by the rapid growth of the trade unions to giant organisations — awakened the desire for direct progress in social reform. Though traditional program and theory spoke of evolution as the goal of all activity, the real outcome was to ascertain to the workers their place in capitalism, acknowledged not officially, but actually, and only at the cost of continual fight. So reformist tendencies got an increasing hold on the workers. At the deepest root of reformist mood lay, of course, the economic prosperity that in the twenty years before the first world war enormously swelled German capitalism. All this meant a strong influence of capitalist and middle class ideas upon the workers.

The spiritual power of the German bourgeoisie over the working masses was not due to its political, but to its economic achievements. Leaving politics and government to others, concentrating all its attention on industry and commerce, the capitalist class here unfolded such capacities and energy as to push German economy in an unrivalled tempo to the forefront of world development. This vigour commanded respect in the workers and carried them along in the feeling of participating in a mighty world process. They felt the enormous and enormously increasing power and brunt of capital, against which their organisations appeared insufficient and against which even their own ideals seemed to fade. So, in their sub-consciousness, they were to a certain extent dragged on in the middle class stream of nationalism, in

the desire for national greatness and world power that burst out in the first world war.

In the Western countries the early political ascendency of the bourgeoisie kept the workers in political dependence; the economic forces and crises had to awaken them to class consciousness and class fight. In Germany the late, therefore more thorough economic ascendency of the bourgeoisie bound the workers into spiritual dependence; here the political forces drove them into fight and awakened their class consciousness. Opposed to a bourgeoisie entirely addicted to despotism and violence the German workers will have to win their freedom along the difficult way of political crises and catastrophes.

#### **4. Nationalism**

Nationalism is the essential creed of the bourgeoisie. What for this class stands above the individuality of separate man s the community indicated, with small differences of meaning, by the different names of nation, people, fatherland or State.

Nation and national feeling came up and developed along with the bourgeoisie. Original peasant life knew only the community of the village and of the larger tribe or county or canton; for the rising burgher class the town was their community. Their common interests did not stretch beyond these small realms. The spoken languages varied over larger regions; their similarity over limited regions facilitated their connection under the domination of one prince. But usually such domination, by conquest and inheritance, extended over countries with entirely different speech. For the farmers it hardly mattered what prince reigned far away and over what other people.

This changed with the rise of commercial, and still more with that of industrial capital. The merchant trading over wide countries and seas needs a strong Power that protects him, fights his competitors and subdues backward tribes; if this is lacking he himself founds a town

federation. The industrialist needs security on the roads, unity of law, protection by a power mightier than a town. Where by insular isolation, as in England, or by conquests of princes, as with France, larger realms had been joined, they need only be consolidated and strengthened from within. In other cases, as with Italy and Germany, strong States had to be built in modern times, through wars and revolutions, through the force of the nationalist feeling of the bourgeoisie.

This does not mean that State and nation are identical or coincide. The State is a power structure, provided with physical means of coercion and suppression; the nation is a community bound by inner forces. So the State has the greatest inner solidity when it coincides with the nation. But States to increase their power try to include regions and peoples as much as possible, though they may belong to other nations, mixed up one with another by chance migrations in olden times. So Denmark formerly included Germans, Germany later included Danes and Poles, Hungary included Roumanians, Slavs and Germans, Roumania afterwards included Hungarians and Germans. The Austrian Monarchy comprised seven different nationalities, never grown together. In such cases the growth of national feeling, accompanying the rise of a modern bourgeoisie, acts as a destructive force. In cases of a seaport town with a hinterland of different race and language ( as Fiume or Dantzig ) the economic interests demanding political unity are impaired by national enmity.

A common language, as the instrument of understanding, is the strongest force to connect people into one State and one nation. This does not mean, however that nations are simply communities of speech. The Swiss, in their majority, speak German; yet they are a separate nation, different from the Germans. The English and the American nations speak the same language. The Swiss people during five centuries already has gone its own way, different from the way of other German-speaking people. They lived under their special institutions,

ruling themselves as free peasants in a primitive democracy, whilst the Germans were oppressed under the yoke of some hundred small tyrants. The Swiss all experienced the same historical happenings, that moulded their mind in the same way; in continual actual and spiritual intercourse they grew together into a similarity of character and ideas, different from those on the other side of the frontier. It is not only the passive qualities acquired in this way, but much more the active will, the mutual feeling of belonging together in a community of life, that connects and separates mankind into nations. It is the same with the English and the Americans : their separate history in different continents each following its own fate, often in sharp hostility of capitalist interests, made them different nations. And within each nation the community of fate, the subjection to the same historical influences impressed a common stamp upon all; the common fight for common interest, for common freedom, welded them into a firm unity. It produced a community of ideas embodied in and strengthened by literature, by art, by the daily papers constituting national culture, itself an important factor in developing the sense of nationality. Even the bitter struggle of the classes takes place on this common ground of common experience in the ups and downs of mutual fight as direct face-to-face opponents.

So a nation is not a community of State, not a community of language, but a community of lot ( of destiny arising out of their common social-economic practice ). Of course, these different types of community are mutually strongly dependent. Language is a strong nation-building agent. Nationality is the strongest State building power. On the reverse political State power strongly reacts in making and unmaking nations, by uniting and separating the peoples, by establishing or destroying lot-community [a feeling of common destiny]. In the Middle Ages Northern and Southern France, differing in language as much as France and Spain, were united by conquest;

during the rise of the bourgeoisie they formed one country, and as a unity they experienced later revolutions. Simultaneously with the Swiss mountaineers the Low Countries bordering the ocean separated politically from the large German body. A dozen of rich merchant towns, protecting themselves on the land side by a chain of allied provinces, they formed an independent State, raising the Holland dialect into a separate language with its own literature and culture; and by their special history becoming a separate nation. The Flemish, though speaking the same language as the Dutch, by their entirely separate and different history cannot be considered to belong to the same nation, whereas their political unity with the Wallons is thwarted by difference of language. Political measures, dictated by economic interests gradually melted the Scots with the English into one nation, whereas by such measures the Irish were driven into the consciousness of being a separate and hostile nation.

Thus nation is a product of history. All the happenings in the past, experienced in common, determining character, feelings, culture, have settled in the form of nationality. Nationality is congealed history, perpetuated outcome of the past as a living force.

National character and still more national feeling, thus spontaneously growing out of society, constitute the inner strength of national States. They are needed by the bourgeoisie, praised as patriotism, and furthered by special measures. The differences within the boundaries are effaced as much as possible, the differences with the outside world are emphasised and enhanced. One common language, necessary for intercourse, is taught all over the realm, suppressing the old dialects and even minority languages—as Gaelic in Wales, Provencal in Southern France—that only remain as curiosities and in remote villages. And a vast literature in this common language is at work, from first childhood onward, to impress identical ideas and identical feelings upon the entire population. An intentional propaganda

works to intensify the mutual feelings of connection, and to render the antagonism to anything foreign more conscious. The doctrine of class struggle that draws a cleavage through national community is denounced as a danger and even persecuted as a crime against national unity. What as a spontaneous living product of society develops and changes with society itself, nationalism proclaims to be an eternal fact of nature and a duty of man.

Nationality is congealed history—but history goes on, adding continuously to the former deposit. New economic developments, growth of capital, wars and conquests produce new interests, change frontiers, awaken new directions of will and feeling, combine or separate peoples, break old communities and engender new ones. So nationality, together with its deeper generating forces, is fluctuating, in extent and content, and shows a variety of aspects.

Just as petty trade remains within big capitalism, provincialisms, remnants of old customs and ideas, persist, and they sometimes extend across the State frontiers. In the time of ascending capitalism with its free trade reaching all over the world, feelings of cosmopolitanism, of international brotherhood of all mankind gained ground in the bourgeoisie. Afterwards, when competition became fierce and the ensuing fight for world power deepened nationalism, this was ridiculed and suppressed as a childish illusion. In such parts of the world where capitalism is just beginning to take a footing, where it begins to undermine primitive economy and to overthrow worn-out despotisms, we see nations in the making. Besides profit-hungry business men, gambling adventurers, agents of foreign capital and rapacious politicians, forming the beginning of a bourgeoisie, it is chiefly the intellectuals, educated by European sciences and ideas, who come forward as the spokesmen of nationalism. On the Balkans the chance results of war often decided what adjacent valleys with cognate dialects would be included into the Serbian or into the Bulgarian nation. In

China the class of merchants and landowners, spiritually united already by an old culture, assisted by a Western educated class of intellectuals, gradually develops into a modern bourgeoisie, animated by a growing spirit of nationalism. In India such growth, though rooted in native capitalist industry, is severely hampered by an obsolete diversity of religions. In all colonies with no bourgeoisie as yet, nationalism propagated by small groups of intellectuals, is the first theoretical form of rebellion against foreign exploitation. Where, on the other hand, in groups of a single million speaking a separate dialect nationalism arises, as wish or only whim of intellectuals it may work as a disruptive force in the coherence of greater units.

In the countries of modern capitalism nationalism has gone through different forms, corresponding to the development of the bourgeoisie. When burgherdom in its first rise becomes master in its town or realm it is freedom for which it fights. It not only breaks the power of nobility, of land ownership in its domain, it has also to beat foreign powers that suppress or threaten its freedom. The rise of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class is connected with war against foreign feudal or absolutistic or previously dominant capitalistic powers. Such wars are wars of liberation, are a kind of revolution; all enthusiasm, all devotion nascent from the establishment of a higher system of production manifests itself as national passion and exalts nationalism to lofty idealism. Thus it was with Holland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century freeing itself from the Spanish King, with the English at the same time fighting against Spanish world power, with America 1776 against England, with the French in the Great Revolution against Europe led by England, with the Italians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century against Austria; and even the German war against France 1870 had some traits of it. Such wars of liberation and consolidation, establishing its independence and power, in all later years are exalted by the bourgeoisie as the sublime summits of national history.

But then, gradually, the image changes. Capitalism is exploitation, is domination of an exploited class by a ruling class. The bourgeoisie, liberating itself from domination by land ownership, establishes new suppression. Throwing off the yoke of foreign oppression it soon begins to lay its yoke upon weaker peoples, adjacent or in far away colonies. Specially with the development of big capitalism. And always under the same slogans of nationalism. But now nationalism has another colour. Not the freedom but the greatness of the nation is its slogan. It appeals to the feelings of pride, to the instincts of power, in all the other classes who have to serve the bourgeoisie as its helpers and underlings, as spokesmen, as military and civil officers, and who take part in its power. Now the own people is proclaimed the chosen people, superior in force and virtue, the "grande nation," the "Herrenvolk," the "finest race among mankind," destined to lead or to dominate other nations. As the contest for world power, the fight for supremacy in the world between the capitalist classes becomes fiercer, nationalism grows into a feverish passion, often carrying away the entire population in a common struggle for existence.

Nationalism is not simply an artificial doctrine imposed by the rulers upon the masses. Like every system of thoughts and feelings it arises out of the depth of society and proceeds from the economic realities and necessities. For the bourgeoisie the nation is the community to which its weal and woe is tied; so all the old instincts of community feeling are put in its service and develop to mighty forces of idealism. More than the adults the youth, not yet permeated by the spirit of selfish profit-seeking, is susceptible to enthusiastic response to the call of the community. For the working masses, as long as they have no possibility and no thought to fight for themselves against the bourgeoisie, there is no other way than to follow the bourgeoisie. Spiritually dependent on the master-class, they have to accept, more or less willingly, its ideas

and its aims. All these influences work as spiritual forces in the realm of instinctive spontaneity.

But then, added to it, come the deliberate efforts of the bourgeoisie to intensify the spontaneous feelings by artificial means. The entire education in the schools and the propaganda in literature and papers are directed to foster and strengthen the spirit of nationalism. Not of course by showing its connection with the profit for capital ; a clear consciousness of this connection, as in all ideologies of an exploiting class, is lacking, and must be carefully withheld from the exploited masses. So other foundations must be sought for, other usually deceptive arguments must be found, drawn mostly from existing traditions based on former social conditions. The love for the birthplace where our cradle stood, the remembrance of the world of our youth, of villages or town quarter, small communities of peasant or artisan life, must serve to fix the adherence to the nationalist State Power, where it fights foreign Powers, for the profit of capital. History is coloured and doctored to convert the strict objective truth about the past into a brilliant one-sided image of the nation's life, apt to awaken strong feelings of inter-community, of enthusiasm, of pride and admiration in young people, to elate their hearts, to strain their minds, to instigate emulation, hence to solidify the inner strength of the national community.

To give a still greater solidity to the national ideology, it sometimes is founded upon a material, physical base, on consanguinity and race. The races of mankind have been formed in the many thousands of years of prehistoric times. We meet with them at the dawn of history, and afterwards in surrounding barbaric countries and continents, as groups with similar qualities. They have been shaped by migrations, conquests, exterminations and blendings of primitive groups, when in more quiet times or in isolated regions the mixture settled to specific types. The fight for living space and for possession of the sources of life

continued in later civilized history. But now, by the development of new forms of production, as a fight of States and nations. Though both are communities of lot ( of common destiny ) and are designated by the same name of "people," there is a fundamental difference between the original races and the later nations. The races are groups connected by the ties of blood, by consanguinity ; the nations, formed in the ages of production of commodities, are groups connected by the spiritual ties of common consciousness, ideas, experience and culture.

Written history of the great migrations in later times attests how almost all modern peoples, the nations, have been shaped by a thorough mixture of different races. And this process of mixing is going on, though in more quiet forms, under modern industrial conditions. Large numbers of people migrate from the poor agrarian regions into foreign industrial towns or districts ; such as the Irish into English towns, the Czechs into Vienna, the Poles into Rhineland, the Europeans into America. Mostly they assume language and habits from their new surroundings, as well as the ideas, and so are dissolved and assimilated into its national community. Only when the migration comprises greater connected masses, especially when touched already by the consciousness of fervid national strife, the assimilation ceases.

When a modern nation is claimed to be the pure descendants of one original race, how can it be decided ? The evidence of history, usually uncertain, points to strong blending. Neither is the community of language decisive. It is true that peasant communities tenaciously stick to their language as long as their life and work is not influenced by other dominant languages. But it is known quite well how often in the mixing-up of peoples the language of the victors is assumed by the vanquished or the language of more civilized residents by less civilized intruders. Community of language later on is a strong force in the making of nations ; but it cannot make certain a community of descent. There are, further, bodily differences in colour, hair, bodily structure

and form of the skull, manifest and large between the main groups, Europeans, Mongolians, Negroes. But they are small in subordinate groups. And in all modern peoples these bodily characteristics show the most embarrassing diversity. Ethnologists, especially in Germany, speak of a "Nordic" race, dolichocephalic (with oblong skull), blonde, and blue-eyed, of which the Teuton peoples were descendants and representatives, contrasted to the darker "alpine" race, brachycephalic (with round skull), living in Central Europe. But modern Europe shows dolichocephaly dominant only in Norway, North-western Germany, Holland, England, whereas the chief part of Germany is brachycephalic, increasingly so in the later centuries. The American ethnologist Dixon pointed out that the inhabitants of the then existing Austrian monarchy as to bodily characteristics and shape of the skull formed a nearly homogenous race, whereas they were divided into some seven fiercely quarrelling nations, speaking as many different languages, and brought together by different ancient wanderings and adventures. On the other hand the French, bodily showing a mixture of most different racial characteristics, feel and act as one homogenous consolidated nation.

Race community as the foundation of nationality is only a phantastic theory, devised and propagated for political purposes. The strength of German nationalism is not rooted in the blood of the ancient Teutons but in the needs of modern capitalism. The strong real roots of nationalism are situated in economy, in the mode of production. So it must be different for different classes.

On the working class nationalism never got much hold. In the petty-burgher and farmer classes from which it proceeded national feeling played no great role; and its own exploitation by capital gave another direction to the ideas, not towards community, but towards fight with the bourgeoisie. They perceived nationalism to be the ideology of their exploiters, often a form of hypocrisy when the most greedy capitalists used patriotic talk to fill their own pockets. When by unemployment

they were driven to wander they found in other countries other workers, comrades, exploited like themselves. Practically, by their fight, and then theoretically, in their consciousness, they drew a dividing line across the nation. Another community of lot, the class-community determined their feelings and thoughts, extending over all countries. The dividing line of the classes crosses that of the nations. To the nationalist propaganda of the bourgeoisie they opposed the reality of their life by the statement that the workers have no fatherland. Socialist propaganda fundamentally opposing capitalism proclaimed internationalism to be the principle of the working class.

But beneath the conscious thoughts and avowed doctrines there was in the workers, in their sub-consciousness, still a certain national feeling, revealing itself at the outbreak of the world war. Practically they had to acquiesce in the rule of the bourgeoisie and were its subordinates ; practically their fight could do no more than ascertain their place in capitalism ; so in their ideas they could not attain complete independence. When the workers politically and socially follow the bourgeoisie they remain middle-class minded. In England they participated in the profits that world commerce, industrial monopoly and colonial exploitation bestowed upon the bourgeoisie. In Germany the energy of the bourgeoisie to win industrial world power carried them away in the vague feeling that industrial power and prosperity is a workers' interest, too. So nationalism in the working class was the companion of reformism, in England as a quiet hardly conscious conservative tradition, in Germany as an impetuous instinct driven by a turbulent economic expansion. It must be remarked that working class nationalism always was pacifistic, rooted in the tradition of petty-burgher illusions, in contrast to the aggressive violent nationalism of the bourgeoisie.

When the working class takes up its revolutionary fight, nationalism is dropped entirely. In the new workers' organisation of production

there is no antagonism of interests with other peoples ; it extends over the countries disregarding all former frontiers. In the reconstruction of society fight is only needed against the capitalist class ; in this fight the workers all over the world have to rely on one another as brothers in arms ; together belonging to one army. They speak different languages, certainly ; but these differences relate only to the outer forms of their thoughts. The essential contents, their ideas, their feelings, their culture, determined as they are by the same class struggle, the common fight as the chief life experience, the common lot, are identical. From having been subjected to different national influences in previous history there may remain differences in passive character and culture ; but in active character, in the direction of will, they form one unity. This new state of thought of the working class cannot well be indicated by calling it international ; it is more and higher than a peaceful collaboration of free and equal nations. It is the entire absence of nationality ; for the workers the nations do not exist, they see before them the unity of mankind all over the world, a community of production, of life, of culture. Over all diversity of bodily qualities and natural surroundings, of local speech and traditional habits stretches the interconnection of all mankind as one great community of lot. Thus nationalism disappears from the earth together with the class that was its author.

This is of the future. For the time being nationalism exists as a strong power obstructing the way. For the workers it is necessary not only to destroy all nationalist tradition in themselves, but also, in order to avoid illusions, to understand its strength in the hostile class. Nationalism does not belong to the ideologies that as traditions of the past times are gradually extinguished under modern conditions. It is a living ideology, drawing its forces ever anew from a fertile economic soil, standing in the centre of fight, the flag of the foe. German history of the last quarter of a century offers an example of how after the downbreak of her State power the bourgeoisie was able to resuscitate itself by means of spiritual

power, through nationalism, and thus to build up a new more powerful State.

The outbreak of the first world war in 1914 was the catastrophe of social democracy and labor movement. The party and union leaders placed all the power of their organisation, its press its moral authority at the service of the Government ; in Germany considered as the foremost power and example for the working class, and in all other countries. It was the collapse of all the proud program slogans of class struggle and of internationalism. The workers having put all their confidence, their faith into their party, their organisation, now were powerless against the nationalist propaganda, against the combined pressure of the military and the party apparatus.

Then came 1918 — the downbreak of the German military power. The rebellion of the sailors, the strikes and demonstrations in the chief towns, the formation of workers' and soldiers councils carried the socialist leaders into power. They were the only men to keep the working class in check and to prevent a real workers' revolution, which they hated and feared no less than did the generals and the capitalists. The working masses found the political power fallen into their hands ; but they did not know what to do with it. Again they put their faith into the party, in their leaders and passively suffered the small advance groups of revolutionary fighters and spokesmen to be massacred by military forces at the command of the socialist rulers. They had always been taught that the party would bring them socialism. Now the party was ruling, now their leaders were in office; now socialism was to come.

What they got was capitalism. The socialist leaders did not touch capitalist property, not even aristocratic land ownership. By convoking a National Assembly they immediately restored parliamentarism, which had always been their life element. So the bourgeoisie gained an official centre of organised power. It was quite content that socialist and democratic politicians, beguiling the masses with the illusion of

power, occupied the upper places ; afterwards they could be turned out gradually and replaced by liberals and reactionaries. Capitalism acted as it always acts : it exploited the masses, expropriated the middle classes, aggravated the economic chaos by gambling with the means of production, bribed the officials, and threw society into ever new crises of unemployment. And all discontent and exasperation turned against the new republic and its parliamentary leaders.

Now the bourgeoisie began to build up its fighting power out of all the elements that were depressed and embittered by the new conditions : the middle class youth, flung down from its high hopes for victory and future greatness ; the dismissed military officers, exasperated by defeat, entirely living in the old conceptions ; the young intellectuals, in despair at seeing the governmental offices once considered as their monopoly now occupied by despised socialists and Jews. All impoverished by the devaluation of the money, all filled with bitterness over the humiliation of their country, all driven by a fierce will to take up again the fight for world power. Their binding force was an ardent nationalism, blasted into white heat by the enforced humiliating peace conditions, animated by hatred against the slack nationality of the meek rulers no less than against the foreign victorious enemies. They stood up as the bearers of sublime national ideas, whereas the workers over against them could show no more than either contentment over the mock democracy of a worthless republic, or the sham revolutionist talk of bolshevist party dictatorship. Thus the most active elements among the upgrowing youth were assembled and drilled into fighting bands, inspired by fiery nationalist teachings. Big capital provided the means for a continuous propaganda among the population. Until the world crisis of 1930 raised them to political importance. The impotent socialist leaders did not even venture to call upon the armed workers for resistance. The "world-liberating" social democracy ignominiously went to ruin as a worm eaten wreck. Nationalism, now raised to the highest pitch, easily

annihilated the parliamentary republic, and began to organize all the forces of the nation for a new war for world power.

### **5. American Capitalism**

The white population of the U.S.A. descends from European immigrants who, most energetic and independent elements of their peoples, crossed the ocean to escape oppression, persecution and poverty. From the first settlements on the Eastern coast, with its commercial towns, they gradually expanded over the entire continent, exterminating in continuous fight the Indian natives, clearing the forests, subduing the wilderness, and converting it into cultivated land. In all these pioneers, as a necessary character developed a strong individualism, a daring adventurous spirit, self-reliant, hard, alert, watchful and relentless in the surrounding dangers, and a love of liberty taking and making its own right. Not only in the forerunners, the trappers and farmers, but also in the dealers, the artisans, the business men, who followed them, populating the new towns and creating a new existence for themselves. Whereas in old Europe everybody found himself in fixed conditions, here everything had to be shaped anew. In the hard and pitiless struggle for life, that left no time for spiritual concentration, in the creation of great enterprises and fortunes, respect for success in life and business became the outstanding character of American society.

Thus conditions for both capital and labor were different from Europe. To keep the workers from trying their luck as pioneers in the wide spaces, high wages must be paid, thus furthering the introduction of labor-saving machines. This privileged position, fixed by craft unions, could be upheld until modern times. Then in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, destitute masses of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe began to pour in and fill the factories and slums of the Eastern towns with cheap labor power. And in the present century free soil came to an end.

Capital was the leading power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion. It had not to fight a feudal power or class; with the throwing off, in the war of independence, of the domination of English 18<sup>th</sup> century commercial capital, it had won complete mastery. The absence of any feudal tradition, of all respect for privilege of birth, made respect for property, for the reality of dollar power paramount. American capital soon played the chief role in opening up the Western wilds by digging canals and building railways. Through its friends in Congress it was rewarded for this service to the nation with big allotments for exploitation, paying not more than the bribes, the form by which the politicians got their share of the profits. The timber of the endless woods, the fertile soil along the railways, the rich ore deposits in the earth, all became property of the capitalists. And in their wake colonists from the Eastern States or from Europe populated the West, farmers and business men finding their villages and towns ready made, lumber workers and miners ordering their life by the law of the wild, soon to be substituted by the organs of Government and public law.

The seizure of the natural riches of an immense virgin continent laid the foundation for the rapid growth of big fortunes. In Europe this seizure and exploitation had been the task of a large citizen class during many centuries; thus the profit — economically a form of rent — was spread out in the form of moderate wealth for the many, only exceptionally — as with the Fugger family in Augsburg — creating big fortunes. In America this process in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century concentrated within a short time, raising rapidly a small class of supercapitalists, of multimillionaires.

The big American fortunes have not been formed by regular accumulation of industrial profit, but in the first instance by the appropriation, partly through traffic monopolies, partly through political corruption, of valuable primary materials. In stubborn mutual fight, destroying or subduing larger and smaller competitors, big

monopolies were erected that laid a heavy tribute upon the entire population and snatched part of the industrial surplus value from the hands of the industrial capitalists. More rapidly and more ruthlessly than elsewhere the supremacy of big capital over the entire bourgeoisie, the power of big finance over industry, and the concentration of capitalist power in a small number of big concerns was established. Monopoly of course does not mean a full hundred per cent. control over a branch : if it reaches only, say, 80 per cent., outsiders are harmless and usually follow the lead of the monopolists. So there remains a border region for individual efforts of smaller capitalists to wrestle themselves up to secondary importance. Neither are all of the profits pocketed by the monopolists themselves; part of the shares is left to the capitalist public to gamble with and to enjoy the dividends without thereby having any share in the leading of the business. In this way at the same time all the smaller capitalists' property comes at the disposal of the monopolists, to use it in their strategy of mutual capital warfare, just as in olden times the kings made use of the combined fighting power of the dependent barons.

Yet, what remains as income for the monopolists is so enormous that it cannot be consumed or spent by themselves. With such boundless richness the motive of securing wealth for luxurious satisfaction of all needs is absent; many of the monopolist leaders, indeed, live rather frugally. What drives them is the striving for power, for expansion of their domination over ever wider domains of economic life — an automatic impulse of business instinct swollen to irrationality. The example was set long ago already by John D. Rockefeller, whose yearly income was then estimated at nearly a hundred millions of dollars. No luxury, however crazy, was able to absorb the stream of gold flowing into his hands; he did not concern himself with the spending, and left it to an office of secretaries. No young spendthrifts could, as in olden times, destroy the fortunes collected by their fathers; this property has

now become an unassailable family possession. As a new feudal class "America's sixty families" hold sway over the sources of life of society, living in their castles and large estates, sometimes possessors of almost a whole State, as the Dupont family in Delaware. They are mightier than the kings of old, who only could try to squeeze their share out of the profits of the capitalist class; they are the masters of the very capital power of society, of all the rapidly growing productive forces of a rapidly developing continent.

Power over production means power over politics, because politics is one of the basic means to secure power over production. Politics in America was always different from politics in Europe because here there was no feudal class to beat down. In its fight against the domination of the feudal class the European bourgeoisie acquired its sense for the supremacy of class interests above personal interests, thus in their pursuit developing idealism and self-sacrifice. So in Europe politics was a domain where disinterested politicians could work for sublime principles, for the "public interest." In America there was no need and no room for such class-politics; interests from the beginning were personal or group interests. Thus politics was business, a field for pursuit of personal interests like any other field of activity. Only in later years, when the working class awoke and began to talk of socialism, as its counterpart came up some talk of public interests of society, and the first traces of reform politics.

The result, accepted as inevitable, was that politics often is graft. In their first rise the monopolists had no other means than direct bribing. Often the word is quoted as spoken by John D., that everybody can be bought if you only know his price. A continuous fight on the part of the smaller capitalists, of competitors, and of spokesmen of public honesty, before the courts in the legislative bodies tried in vain either to punish or to redress fraud, or to so much as disclose truth. It was on such an occasion that a senator friend of the accused millionaire exclaimed :

"We ought to pass a law that no man worth a hundred of million dollars should be tried for a crime." Indeed, the masters of capital stand above law; why, then, maintain the troublesome appearance that they are equal citizens, subject to law ?

When the power of big business becomes more firmly rooted and unassailable these coarse methods gradually became superfluous. Now it had a large attendance of friends, of clients and agents, of dependent proxies, all men of standing, put into well-paid honourable offices, influential in politics as in all public life. They are or they influence the party leaders, they form the caucuses, they manage everything behind the scenes at the party congresses and select congress members, senators and candidates for the presidency. The hundred thousands of dollars necessary for the noisy election campaigns are paid by big business; each of the big interests has one of the two great contending parties as its agent, and some of the largest even pay both. To fight this "corruption" or at least to expose it by publicity their adversaries succeeded in enacting that each party had to give public account of its finances, thus to show the sources of its funds. It was a blow in the air; it created no sensation and not even surprise; it appeared that public opinion was entirely prepared to accept the domination of politics by big business as a self-evident fact of common knowledge.

The press of course is entirely in the hands of big capital. The big papers are bought, or an unlimited amount of dollars is spent to have new papers founded by its retainers. Most important here are the popular local papers providing the spiritual nurture for the millions of voters. At the same time the leading papers offer to the educated classes, in order to direct their opinions, able articles on science, art, literature, foreign politics, carefully written by good experts. No independent press of wide circulation is possible. Sometimes a cross-headed rich idealist founded a paper open to exposure and criticism of the secret dealings of the capitalists. Attempts were then made to capture or to

undermine it; if they failed, its revelations, its opinions, its existence even, were never alluded to in the other papers, in a conspiracy of silence, so that its influence remained entirely negligible.

This press dominates the spiritual life of the American people. The most important thing is not even the hiding of all truth about the reign of big finance. Its aim still more is the education to thoughtlessness. All attention is directed to coarse sensations, everything is avoided that could arouse thinking. Papers are not meant to be read — the small type is already a hindrance — but in a rapid survey of the fat headlines to inform the public on unimportant news items, on family triflings of the rich, on sexual scandals, on crimes of the underworld, or boxing matches. The aim of the capitalist press all over the world, the diverting of the attention of the masses from the reality of social development, from their own deepest interests nowhere succeeds with such thoroughness as in America.

Still more than by the papers the masses are influenced by broadcasting and film. These products of most perfect science, destined at one time to be the finest educational instruments of mankind, now in the hands of capitalism have been turned into the strongest means to uphold its rule by stupefying the minds. Because after nerve-straining fatigue the movie offers relaxation and distraction by means of simple visual impressions that make no demand on the intellect, the masses get used to accept thoughtlessly and willingly all its cunning and shrewd propaganda. It reflects the ugliest sides of middle-class society. It turns all attention either to sexual life, in this society — by the absence of community feelings and fight for freedom — the only source of strong passions, or to brutal violence; masses educated to rough violence instead of to social knowledge are not dangerous to capitalism. Broadcasting by its very nature is an organ of rulership for dominating the masses, through incessant one-sided allocations forcing its ideas, its view points, its truths and its lies upon the listeners, without possibility

of discussion or protest. As the genuine instruments of spiritual domination of the millions of separate individuals by an organised dictatorship it is used by big capital, to assert its power.

Not only to the coarse work of mass propaganda through the papers, but also to the more subtle influencing of deeper spiritual life the masters of capital extend their care. Reviews are bought or founded, richly illustrated Weeklies or Monthlies are edited and composed by able men of letters and expert collaborators. They are full of instructive and attractive stuff carefully selected in such a way that the cultured and intellectual part of the citizens learn to feel and to think just as monopolist capital wishes them to, namely, that their country is a great country, and a free country, and a young country, destined to a far greater future, and — though there are some defects to be corrected by deserving citizens — the best possible of worlds. Here the young intellectuals find their opportunities; if they should be inclined to thwarting the mighty, to independent criticism, to sharp opposition they are ejected, ignored, and silenced, hampered everywhere, perhaps morally ruined; if docile and ready to serve the masters the way is open to well remunerated positions and public honours.

Science, too, is subject to the millionaire class. The English tradition of private endowment not only of churches, hospitals and orphanages, but also of universities, professorships and libraries, has been followed in America from the beginning. Enormous sums of money have been spent by American millionaires — of course not all of them, and not even the richest — on institutes of arts and sciences, on museums, galleries, universities, laboratories, hospitals, observatories, libraries. Sometimes from idealistic motives, sometimes in commemoration of a relative, sometimes for mere pride, always with an instinct of justice in it : where they had seized for their own the riches that elsewhere went to society at large, theirs was the duty to provide for such special, large, cultural expenses not immediately

felt as needed but yet necessary as the basis of society in the long run. Spending in this way only a small part of their wealth they acquired fame as protectors of science, as benefactors of mankind. Their names are inscribed in big golden letters on the fronts of the proud buildings : Field Museum, McCormick University, Widener Library, Carnegie Institute, Lick Observatory, Rockefeller Foundation. And this means more than simply the satisfaction of personal pride. It means that the entire world of science becomes their adherents and considers their exploitation of the American people a more desirable condition for the advancement of science than when in other countries money for science must be extorted in meagre amounts from uninterested governments. Founding and endowing universities means controlling them; thus the millionaires, by means of their agents who act as presidents and overseers, can see to it that no dangerous elements as teachers may influence the ideas of the students.

The spiritual power that big capital wields in this way hardly requires any sacrifices on their side. If it left all these expenses to Government to provide it would have to pay for them in the form of taxes. Now such foundations are exempt from taxes and often are used as a means to escape taxation. The donations consist of shares of large enterprises; what these institutions receive is the dividend, the money produce for which the capitalists have no other use. The voting power attached to the shares, however, needed in the manipulation and financial strategy of the masters, the only thing that concerns them, by carefully devised statutes is securely kept in the hands of their agents.

Thus in a firm grip the monopoly capitalists dominate industry, traffic, production, public life, politics, the church of course, the press, the reviews, the universities, science and art. It is the most highly developed form of class domination, of an all powerful small minority over the entire bourgeoisie, and thus over the entire American people, "United States incorporated." It is the most perfect form of capitalist

rule, because it is based on democracy. By the democratic forms of life it is firmly rooted in society; it leaves all the other classes — the smaller bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, the farmers, the mass of the workers — convinced that they are free men in a free country, struggling of course against mighty social forces, but still master of their lot, choosing their own way. It has been built up, gradually and instinctively, in a shrewdly composed organisation of all economic and spiritual forces. The main part of business, as well its of spiritual life is interwoven into a system of dependencies, accepted as existing conditions, camouflaged in an appearance of independent action and free individuality. Whoever tries opposition is thrown out and destroyed; whoever collaborates willingly, though obliged to continual struggle with competitors, finds his place in the system.

Against this domination of the big monopolists the capitalist world has no means of resistance or redress. Hundreds of times, in the most varied ways, attempts have been made to break their power, by action before the courts, by legislation against trusts and combinations, by election campaigns, by new political parties with new slogans. But it was all in vain. Of course; for it would have meant return to unorganised small business, contrary to the essential nature of social development. Attempts to prepare the way for further development towards collective production, by means of fundamental criticism, were made in the propaganda of "technocracy" by a group of intellectuals and engineers, as well as in the action of the Social-Democratic Party. But their forces were too weak. The bulk of the intellectual class feels well off and content with the system. And as long as skilled labour succeeds in maintaining its position by means of its unions, a powerful revolutionary class-action of the workers cannot be expected.

The American workers have always felt the hard hand of capital and had to fight ever again against its pressure. Though simply a fight over wages and working conditions, it was fought with all the

fierceness that under the wild conditions of unbridled business egotism accompanied all fight for mere personal interests. What appeared in such conflicts between labor and capital was first the solidarity of the entire class of business men with big capital. It was an instinctive class-consciousness, fanned to white-heat by the press that, entirely in the hands of capital's servants denounced the strikers for forged outrages and called them anarchists and criminals. And secondly the spirit of lawlessness and violence in the same class, inheritance of the pioneer conditions, especially vivid in the far West. The old methods of wild warfare against the Indians and of taking law into their own hands were now used against the new foe, the rebelling class, the strikers. Armed bands of citizens promoted to civic guards and thus qualified to any lawless deed of violence, imprisoned and ill-treated the strikers and applied every form of terrorism. The workers, their old independent pioneer spirit not yet broken, resisted with all means, so that strikes often took the character of small civil wars, in which case of course the workers usually had the worst of it. In the industrial towns of the East a well organized police force, strong fellows convinced that strikers are criminals, stand in the service of mayors and town councils who themselves are installed as its agents by big capital. When in big plants or in mining districts strikes broke out, troops of rowdies from the underworld, procured by the Pinkerton office, sworn in by the authorities as special constables, were let loose upon the workers. Thus in America only in extreme cases the workers on strike might hope for the amount of right and order as is the rule, e.g., in England.

All this was no hindrance for the workers to fight. The American labor movement has shown brilliant examples of fighting spirit, courage and devotion, though they always acted in separate groups only. From now on, however, new methods of fight, greater unity, new forms of organisation will gradually be enforced upon them. Conditions are changing; there is no more open land to be settled by

pioneers — though, more broadly considered, with better methods the continent might feed many more millions of inhabitants. Now it will be more difficult to uphold the old wage standards. Since the stream of immigration has been stopped the process of Americanisation of the old immigrants is equalizing the working and fighting conditions, and prepares the basis for an all encompassing unity of class. The further conditions will have to be created by the further expansion of capitalism.

American capital is now entering upon world politics. Up till now all its time and force was occupied by organising and raising itself, by taking possession of its continent. Then the first world war made it the paramount financial power. The American supply of war materials to Europe had to be paid, first with European property of American shares, and then with gold and obligations. London lost to New York its place as money-centre of the world. All the European gold assembled in America, property of the American capitalist class. Its congestion already brought a world crisis, because there was no market for an industrial production built upon this abundance of gold.

Such a market, however, can be created. Thronged in the fertile plains and valleys of Eastern and Southern Asia, many hundreds of millions of people, nearly half the population of the earth, are living as yet in home production or small scale craft and tillage. To convert these intelligent and industrious masses first into buyers of industrial products and then into industrial and agrarian workers in the service of capital is the big opportunity that now faces American capitalism. The supplying of this enormous market will secure an age of rise and prosperity for American industry. The investment of capital, the building of railways and factories, the founding of new industries in those thickly populated countries, promises immense profits from capitalist exploitation and immense increase of power. It is true that by the creation of a capitalist China a mighty competitor will be raised

for the future, with the prospect of future world war farther ahead; but that is of no concern now. For the moment the concern is to secure this market by ousting other world powers, especially the strongly developed Japanese capitalism that was at work to found an East-Asiatic Empire under its lead. World politics means wars; that will introduce militarism in America, with all its constraint, with its barrack drill, with its restriction of old liberties, with more violence and heavier pressure. Camouflaged of course in democratic forms, but still creating new conditions of life, new feelings and ideas, a new spiritual outlook, somehow resembling those of old Europe. Then the American workers, partly participating in the power and prosperity of the rise, partly pressed down more heavily by more powerful masters, will needs develop more powerful forms of class fight.

American capitalism built up a power over society and the working class unequalled over the world. Social and political democracy afford a far more solid foundation than any dictatorship could give. Its power rests on its concentrated ownership of all means of production, on its money, on its unrestricted power over State and Government, on its spiritual domination over the entire society. Against a rebellious working class it will be able to bring all the organs of the State into sharper action, to organise still larger bodies of armed defenders, through its press monopoly to incite public opinion into a spiritual terrorism; and when necessary, democracy may even be replaced by open dictatorship. So the working class also will have to rise to a far greater height of power then ever before. Against a more powerful foe higher demands of unity, of insight, of devotion must be satisfied than anywhere else in the world were needed. Their development doubtless requires a long period of fight and growth. The chief weakness of the American working class is its middle class mentality, its entire spiritual subjection under middle class ideas, the spell of democracy. They will be able to throw it off only by raising their minds to a deeper class

consciousness, by binding themselves together into a stronger class unity, by widening their insight to a higher class-culture than anywhere else in the world.

The working class in America will have to wage against world capitalism the most difficult, at the same time the decisive fight for their and the world's freedom.

## 6. Democracy

Democracy was the natural form of organisation of the primitive communities of man. Self-rule and equality of all the tribe members determined in their assemblies all the common activities. The same was the case in the first rise of burgherdom, in the towns of Greece in antiquity, of Italy and Flanders in the Middle Ages. Democracy here was not the expression of a theoretical conception of equal rights of all mankind, but a practical need of the economic system; so the journeymen in the guilds took as little part in it as the slaves in antiquity; and larger property usually carried larger influence in the assemblies. Democracy was the form of collaboration and self-rule of free and equal producers, each master of his own means of production, his soil or his shop and his tools. In ancient Athens it was the regular citizens' assemblies that decided on the public affairs, whereas the administrative functions, held for small periods only, circulated by lot. In the mediaeval towns the artisans were organised in guilds, and the town government, when not in the hands of patrician families, consisted of the leaders of the guilds. When at the end of the middle ages the mercenaries of the princes got ascendancy over the armed citizens the freedom and democracy of the towns were suppressed.

With the rise of capitalism the era of middle class democracy begins, fundamentally though not at once actually. Under capitalism all men are independent owners of commodities, all having the same right and freedom to sell them at their will — the unpropertied proletarians own and sell their labor power. The revolutions that abolished feudal

privileges, proclaimed freedom, equality and property. Because in this fight the combined force of all citizens was needed, the promulgated constitutions bore a strongly democratic character. But the actual constitutions were different; the industrial capitalists, as yet not very numerous and powerful, were in fear lest the lower classes whom they trod down by competition and exploitation, should control legislation. So to these classes, excluded from the ballot, during the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century political democracy is program and goal of their political activities. They are animated by the idea that through the establishment of democracy, through universal suffrage, they will win power over government and in that way be able to restrain or even to abolish capitalism.

And, to all appearance this campaign succeeds. Gradually the suffrage is extended, and finally in nearly all countries the equal vote for all men and women for the election of members of parliament is established. So this time often is spoken of as the age of democracy. Now it becomes apparent that democracy is not a danger for capitalism, not weakness but strength. Capitalism stands on a solid basis; a numerous middle class of wealthy industrial employers and business men dominates society and the wage earning workers have found their acknowledged place. It is now understood that a social order gains in solidity when, all the grievances, all the misery and discontent, otherwise a source of rebellion, find a regular and normalised outlet in the form of criticism and charge, of parliamentary protest and party strife. In capitalist society there is a perpetual contest of interests between the classes and groups; in its development, in the continuous changes of structure and shifting of industries new groups with new interests arise and demand recognition. With suffrage universal, not artificially limited, they all find their spokesmen; any new interest, according to its significance and power, can carry its weight in

legislation. Thus parliamentary democracy is the adequate political form for rising and developing capitalism.

Yet the fear for the rule of the masses could not do without warrants against "misuse" of democracy. The exploited masses must have the conviction that by their ballot they are master of their fate, so that if they are not content it is their own fault. But the structure of the political fabric is devised in such a way that government through the people is not government by the people. Parliamentary democracy is only partial, not complete democracy.

Only one day in four or five years the people have power over the delegates; and on election day noisy propaganda and advertising, old slogans and new promises are so overwhelming that there is hardly any possibility of critical judgement. The voters have not to designate trusted spokesmen of their own : candidates are presented and recommended by the big political parties, selected by the party caucuses; and they know that every vote on an outsider is practically thrown away. The workers adapted themselves to the system by forming their own party — in Germany the Social Democratic Party, in England the Labor Party — playing an influential role in parliament, sometimes even providing cabinet ministers. Then, however, its parliamentarians had to play the game. Besides their special concern, social laws for the workers, most questions subjected to their decisions relate to capitalist interests, to problems and difficulties of capitalist society. They get used to be caretakers of these interests and to deal with these problems in the scope of existing society. They become skilled politicians, who just like the politicians of other parties constitute an almost independent power, above the people.

Moreover, these parliaments chosen by the people have not full power over the State. Next to them, as a guarantee against too much influence of the masses, stand other bodies, privileged or aristocratic — senate, House of Lords, First Chamber — whose consent is necessary

for the laws. Then the ultimate decision is mostly in the hands of princes or presidents, living entirely in circles of aristocratic and big capitalist interests. They appoint the State secretaries or cabinet ministers directing the bureaucracy of officials, that do the real work of governing. By the separation of the legislative and the executive part of government the chosen parliamentarians do not themselves govern; besides law-making they can only indirectly influence the actual governors, by way of criticism or of refusing money. What is always given as the characteristic of real democracy : that the people chooses its rulers, is not realised in parliamentary democracy. Of course not; for its purpose is to secure the rule of capitalism through the illusion of the masses that they have to decide their own fate.

So it is idle talk to speak of England, of France, of Holland as democratic countries — only for Switzerland this may fit in a way. Politics is the reflection of the state of feelings and ideas in the people. In custom and feeling there is the spirit of inequality, the respect for the "upper" classes, old or new; the worker as a rule stands cap in hand before the master. It is a remnant of feudalism, not eradicated by the formal declaration of social and political equality, adapted to the new conditions of a new class rule. The rising bourgeoisie did not know how to express its new power otherwise than by donning the garb of the feudal lords and demanding from the exploited masses the corresponding professions of respect. Exploitation was made still more irritating by the arrogance of the capitalist asking servility also in manners. So in the workers' struggle the indignation of humiliated self-respect gives a deeper colouring to the fight against misery.

In America it is just the reverse. In the crossing of the ocean all remembrances of feudalism are left behind. In the hard struggle for life on a wild continent every man was valued for his personal worth. As an inheritance of the independent pioneer spirit a complete democratic middle class feeling pervades all classes of American society. This

inborn feeling of equality neither knows nor tolerates the arrogance of birth and rank; the actual power of the man and his dollar is the only thing that counts. It suffers and tolerates exploitation the more unsuspectingly and willingly, as this exploitation presents itself in more democratic social forms. So American democracy was the firmest base and is still the strongest force of capitalism. The millionaire masters are fully conscious of this value of democracy for their rule, and all spiritual powers of the country collaborate to strengthen these feelings. Even colonial policy is dominated by them. Public opinion in America abhors the idea that it should subjugate and dominate foreign peoples and races. It makes them its allies, under their own free government; then the automatic power of financial supremacy makes them more dependent than any formal dependence could do. It must be understood, moreover, that the strong democratic character of social feelings and customs does not implicate corresponding political institutions. In American government, just as in Europe, the constitution is composed in such a way as to secure the rule of a governing minority. The President of the U.S. may shake hands with the poorest fellow; but president and Senate have more power than king and upper houses have in most European governments.

The inner untruthfulness of political democracy is not an artful trick invented by deceitful politicians. It is the reflection, hence an instinctive consequence, of the inner contradictions of the capitalist system. Capitalism is based upon the equality of citizens, private owners, free to sell their commodities — the capitalists sell the products, the workers sell their labor power. By thus acting as free and equal bargainers they find exploitation and class antagonism as the result : the capitalist master and exploiter, the worker actually the slave. Not by violating the principle of juridical equality, but by acting according to it the result is a situation that actually is its violation. This is the inner contradiction of capitalist production, indicating that it can be only a transition system.

So it can give no surprise that the same contradiction appears in its political form.

The workers cannot overcome this capitalist contradiction, their exploitation and slavery proceeding from their legal liberty, as long as they do not recognize the political contradiction of middle-class democracy. Democracy is the ideology they brought along with them from the former middle-class revolutionary fights; it is dear to their hearts as an inheritance of youthful illusions. As long as they stick to these illusions, believe in political democracy and proclaim it their program they remain captives in its webs, struggling in vain to free themselves. In the class struggle of to-day this ideology is the most serious obstacle to liberation.

When in 1918 in Germany military Government broke down and political power fell to the workers unrestrained by a State Power above, they were free to build up their social organisation. Everywhere workers' and soldiers' councils sprang up, partly from intuition of necessities, partly from the Russian example. But the spontaneous action did not correspond to the theory in their heads, the democratic theory, impressed by long years of social-democratic teaching. And this theory now was urged upon them with vehemence by their political and union leaders. To these leaders political democracy is the element where they feel at home, in managing affairs as spokesmen of the working class, in discussion and fight with opponents in parliament and conference room. What they aspired at was not the workers master of production instead of the capitalists, but they themselves at the head of State and society, instead of the aristocratic and capitalist officials. This for them was meaning and contents of the German revolution. So they gave out, in unison with the entire bourgeoisie, the slogan of a "National Assembly" to establish a new democratic constitution. Against the revolutionary groups advocating council organisation and speaking of dictatorship of the proletariat they proclaimed legal

equality of all citizens as a simple demand of justice. Moreover, the councils, they said, if the workers were set on them, could be included into the new constitution and thereby even get an acknowledged legal status. Thus the mass of the workers, wavering between the opposite slogans, their heads full of the ideas of middle-class democracy, offered no resistance. With the election and meeting of the National Assembly at Weimar the German bourgeoisie acquired a new foothold, a centre of power, an established Government. In this way started the course of events that finally led to the victory of National Socialism.

Something analogous, on a minor scale, was what happened in the civil war in Spain, 1935–1936. In the industrial town of Barcelona the workers having at the revolt of the generals stormed the barracks and drawn the soldiers to their side, were master of the town. Their armed groups dominated the street, maintained order, took care of the food provision, and, whilst the chief factories were kept at work under the direction of their syndicalist unions, waged war upon the fascist troops in adjoining provinces. Then their leaders entered into the democratic government of the Catalan republic, consisting of middle-class republicans allied with socialist and communist politicians. This meant that the workers instead of fighting for their class had to join and to adjust themselves to the common cause. Weakened by democratic illusions and inner dissensions their resistance was crushed by armed troops of the Catalan government. And soon, as a symbol of restored middle-class order, you could see as in olden times workers' women, waiting before the bakers' shops, brutalized by mounted police. The working class once more was down, the first step in the downfall of the republic, that finally led to the dictatorship of the military leaders.

In social crisis and political revolution, when a government breaks down, power falls into the hands of the working masses; and for the propertied class, for capitalism arises the problem how to wrest it out of their hands. So it was in the past, so it may happen in the future.

Democracy is the means, the appropriate instrument of persuasion. The arguments of formal and legal equality have to induce the workers to give up their power and to let their organisation be inserted as a subordinate part into the State structure.

Against this the workers have to carry in them a strong conviction that council organisation is a higher and more perfect form of equality. It realizes social equality; it is the form of equality adapted to a society consciously dominating production and life. It might be asked whether the term democracy fits here, because the ending — “-cacy” — indicates domination by force, which here is lacking. Though the individuals have to conform to the whole there is no government above the people; people itself is government. Council organisation is the very means by which working mankind, without need of a ruling government, organizes its vital activities. Adhering, then, to the emotional value attached of old to the word democracy we may say that council organisation represents the higher form of democracy, the true democracy of labor. Political democracy, middle-class democracy, at its best can be no more than a formal democracy; it gives the same legal rights to everybody, but does not care whether this implies security of life; because economic life, because production is not concerned. The worker has his equal right to sell his labor power; but he is not certain that he will be able to sell it. Council democracy, on the contrary, is actual democracy since it secures life to all collaborating producers, free and equal masters of the sources of their life. The equal right in deciding needs not to be secured by any formal regulating paragraph; it is realized in that the work, in every part, is regulated by those who do the work. That parasites taking no part in production automatically exclude themselves from taking part in the decisions, cannot be considered as a lack in democracy; not their person but their function excludes them.

It is often said that in the modern world the point of dispute is between democracy and dictatorship; and that the working class has

to throw in its full weight for democracy. The real meaning of this statement of contrast is that capitalist opinion is divided whether capitalism better maintains its sway with soft deceitful democracy, or with hard dictatorial constraint. It is the old problem of whether rebellious slaves are kept down better by kindness or by terror. The slaves, if asked, of course prefer kind treatment to terror; but if they let themselves be fooled so as to mistake soft slavery for freedom, it is pernicious to the cause of their freedom. For the working class in the present time the real issue is between council organisation, the true democracy of labor, and the apparent, deceitful middle-class democracy of formal rights. In proclaiming council democracy the workers transfer the fight from political form to economic contents. Or rather — since politics is only form and means for economy — for the sounding political slogan they substitute the revolutionizing political deed, the seizure of the means of production. The slogan of political democracy serves to detract the attention of the workers from their true goal. It must be the concern of the workers, by putting up the principle of council organisation, of actual democracy of labor, to give true expression to the great issue now moving society.

## **7. Fascism**

Fascism was the response of the capitalist world to the challenge of socialism. Socialism proclaimed world revolution that was to free the workers from exploitation and suppression. Capitalism responds with a national revolution curbing them, powerless, under heavier exploitation. The socialist working class was confident that it could vanquish the middle-class order by making use of the very middle-class right and law. The bourgeoisie responds by snapping its fingers at right and law. The socialist workers spoke of planned and organised production to make an end of capitalism. The capitalists respond with an organisation of capitalism that makes it stronger than ever before. All previous years capitalism was on the defence, only able apparently

to slacken the advance of socialism. In fascism it consciously turns to attack.

The new political ideas and systems, for which from Italy the name Fascism came into use, are the product of modern economic development. The growth of big business, the increase in size of the enterprises, the subjection of small business, the combination into concerns and trusts, the concentration of bank capital and its domination over industry brought an increasing power into the hands of a decreasing number of financial magnates and kings of industry. World economy and society at large were dominated ever more by small groups of mutually fighting big capitalists, sometimes successful stock jobbers, sometimes pertinacious shrewd business tacticians, seldom restricted by moral scruples, always active sinewy men of energy.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these economic changes brought about a corresponding change in the ideas. The doctrine of equality of man, inherited from rising capitalism with its multitude of equal business men, gives way to the doctrine of inequality. The worship of success and the admiration for the strong personality — leading and treading down the ordinary people — distorted In Nietzsche's "superman" — reflect the realities of new capitalism. The lords of capital, risen to power through success in gambling and swindling, through the ruin of numberless small existences, are now styled the "grand old men" of their country. At the same time the "masses" ever more are spoken of with contempt. In such utterances it is the downtrodden petty bourgeoisie, dependent, without social power and without aspirations, bent entirely on silly amusements — including the congenial working masses without class consciousness — that serves as the prototype for the will-less, spiritless, characterless mass destined to be led and commanded by strong leaders.

In politics the same line of thought appears in a departure from democracy. Power over capital implies power over Government; direct power over Government is vindicated as the natural right of the economic masters. Parliaments evermore serve to mask, by a flood of oratory, the rule of big capital behind the semblance of self-determination of the people. So the cant of the politicians, the lack of inspiring principles, the petty bargaining behind the scenes, intensifies the conviction in critical observers not acquainted with the deepest causes that parliamentarism is a pool of corruption and democracy a chimera. And that also in politics the strong personality must prevail, as independent ruler of the State.

Another effect of modern capitalism was the increasing spirit of violence. Whereas in the rise of capitalism free trade, world peace and collaboration of the peoples had occupied the minds, reality soon had brought war between new and old capitalist Powers. The need of expansion in foreign continents involves big capital into a fierce fight for world power and colonies. Now forcible subjection, cruel extermination and barbarous exploitation of colored races are defended by the doctrine of the superiority of the white race, destined to dominate and to civilize them and justified in exploiting natural richness wherever it may be. New ideals of splendour, power, world domination of the own nation replace the old ideals of freedom, equality and world peace. Humanitarianism is ridiculed as an obsolete effeminacy; force and violence bring greatness.

Thus the spiritual elements of a new social and political system had silently grown up, visible everywhere in moods and opinions of the ruling class and its spokesmen. To bring them to overt action and supremacy the strong concussions of the world war with ensuing distress and chaos were necessary. It is often said that fascism is the genuine political doctrine of big capitalism. This is not true; America can show that its undisturbed sway is better secured by political democracy.

If, however, in its upward struggle it falls short against a stronger foe, or is threatened by a rebellious working class, more forcible and violent modes of domination are needed. Fascism is the political system of big capitalism in emergency. It is not created by conscious premeditation; it sprang up, after much uncertain groping, as a practical deed, followed afterwards by theory.

In Italy the post-war crisis and depression had brought discontent among the bourgeoisie, disappointed in its national hopes; and had brought an impulse to action among the workers, excited by the Russian and the German revolutions. Strikes gave no relief, owing to soaring prices; the demand for workers' control, inspired by syndicalist and bolshevist ideas, led to shop occupation, not hindered by the weak and wavering government. It looked like a revolution, but it was only a gesture. The workers, without clear insight or purpose, did not know what to do with it. They tried, in vain, to produce for the market as a kind of productive co-operation. After an arrangement of the trade unions with the employers they peacefully cleared out.

But this was not the end. The bourgeoisie, terror-stricken for a moment, attained in its deepest feelings, fuming revenge now that disdain succeeded fear, organised its direct action. Bands of active pugnacious middle-class youths, fed with strong nationalist teachings, full of instinctive hatred against the workers, their unions, their co-operatives, their socialism, encouraged by bourgeoisie and landowners providing money for arms and uniforms, began a campaign of terrorism. They destroyed workers' meeting rooms, ill-treated labor leaders, sacked and burnt co-operatives and newspaper offices, attacked meetings, first in the smaller places, gradually in the bigger towns. The workers had no means of efficient response; wont to peaceful organising work under the protection of law, addicted to parliamentarism and trade union fight, they were powerless against the new forms of violence.

Soon the fascist groups combined into stronger organisation, the fascist party, its ranks ever more joined by energetic youths from the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. Here, indeed, these classes saw a rescue from the impending threat of socialism. Now the riots grew into a systematic destruction and annihilation of everything the workers had built up, the ill-treatment grew into unpunished murder of prominent socialists. When at last the liberal ministers made some hesitating attempts to suppress the outrages they were turned out, on the menace of civil war, and the leaders of fascism, appointed in their place, became masters of the State. An active organised minority had imposed its will upon the passive majority. It was not a revolution; the same ruling class persisted; but this class had got new managers of its interests, proclaiming new political principles.

Now fascist theory, too, was formulated. Authority and obedience are the fundamental ideas. Not the good of the citizens but the good of the State is the highest aim. The State, embodying the community, stands above the entirety of the citizens. It is a supreme being, not deriving its authority from the will of the citizens, but from its own right. Government, hence, is no democracy, but dictatorship. Above the subjects stand the bearers of authority, the strong men, and uppermost the — formally at least — all-powerful dictator, the Leader.

Only in outer forms does this dictatorship resemble the ancient Asiatic despotisms over agrarian peoples or the absolutism in Europe some centuries ago. These primitive monarchial governments, with a minimum of organisation, soon stood powerless over against the rising social power of capitalism. The new despotism, product of highly developed capitalism, disposes of all the power of the bourgeoisie, all the refined methods of modern technics and organisation. It is progress, not regress; it is not return to the old rough barbarism but advance to a higher more refined barbarism. It looks like regression because

capitalism, that during its ascent evoked the illusion of the dawn of humanity, now strikes out like a cornered wolf.

A special characteristic of the new political system is the Party as support and fighting force of dictatorship. Like its predecessor and example, the Communist Party in Russia, it forms the bodyguard of the new Government. It came up, independent from and even against Government, out of the inner forces of society, conquered the State, and fused with it into one organ of domination. It consists chiefly of petty-bourgeois elements, with more roughness and less culture and restraint than the bourgeoisie itself, with full desire to climb to higher positions, full of nationalism and of class hatred against the workers. Out of the equable mass of citizens they come to the front as an organised group of combative fanatical volunteers, ready for any violence, in military discipline obeying the leaders. When the leaders are made masters over the State they are made a special organ of Government, endowed with special rights and privileges. They do what lies outside the duties of the officials, they do the dirty work of persecution and vengeance, they are secret police, spies and organ of propaganda at the same time. As a devoted semi-official power with undefined competencies they permeate the population; only by their terrorism dictatorship is possible.

At the same time, as counterpart, the citizens are entirely powerless; they do not influence government. Parliaments may be convoked, but only to listen and applaud to speeches and declarations of the leaders, not to discuss and decide. All decisions are taken in the set assemblies of party chiefs. Surely this was usually the case under parliamentarism also; but then secretly, and publicly denied, and always there was control by party strife and public criticism. These have disappeared now. Other parties than the One are forbidden, their former leaders have fled. All newspapers are in the hands of the Party; all publicity is under its control; free speech is abolished. The former source of

power of Parliament, its financial control of Government by voting or refusing money, has gone, too. Government disposes at its will over all State revenues without rendering account; it can spend unknown and unlimited sums of money for party purposes, for propaganda or anything else.

State power now takes up the care for economic life, making it at the same time subservient to its own purposes. In a country where capitalism is still in its development, this means collaboration with big capital, not as in former times in secret, but as a normal duty. Big enterprise is furthered by subsidies and orders; public services are actuated for business life, the old laziness disappears, and foreign tourists in praise of the new order relate that the trains conform to schedule. Small enterprise is organised in "corporations" where employers and directors collaborate with controlling State officials. "Corporatism" is put up as the character of the new order against parliamentarism; instead of deceitful talk of incompetent politicians comes the expert discussion and advice of the practical business man. Thus labor is acknowledged as the basis of society : capitalist labor, of course.

The fascist State through its regulations strengthens the economic power of big capital over small business. The economic means of big capital to impose its will are never entirely adequate; in a free State ever again small competitors come up, take a stand against the big ones, refuse to conform to agreements, and disturb the quiet exploitation of customers. Under fascism, however, they have to submit to the regulations established in the corporations according to the most influential interests and given legal validity by decree of government. Thus the entire economic life is subjected more thoroughly to big capital.

At the same time the working class is made powerless. Class war, of course, is "abolished." In the shop all are collaborating now as

comrades in the service of the community; the former director, too, has been turned into a worker and a comrade; but as he is the leader, clad with authority, his commands must be obeyed by the other workers. Trade unions, being organs of fight, of course are forbidden. The workers are not allowed to fight for their interests; State power takes care of them, and to the State authorities they have to bring forward their complaints — usually neutralized by the greater personal influence of the employers. So a lowering of' working conditions and standard of life was unavoidable. As a compensation the workers, now assembled in fascist organisations with Party members as designated dictatorial leaders, were regaled with brilliant speeches on the eminence of labor, now for the first time acknowledged in its worth. For capital times were good now, times of strong development and high profits, notwithstanding the often troublesome control of ignorant fascist officials demanding their share. Capitalists of other countries visited with troubles and strikes, looked with envy at the industrial peace in Italy.

More consciously than elsewhere nationalism uprises as the all dominating ideology, because it affords a basis to theory and practice of State omnipotence. The State is the embodiment, the organ of the nation; its aim the greatness of the nation. For the raising of the power needed in the world fight of capitalism fascism in many points is superior to other political systems. With all the forces of State-paid propaganda national feelings and pride are aroused; the ancient Romans are exalted as the great ancestors, the Emperor Augustus is celebrated as the great Italian, the Mediterranean is called "our sea," the glory of ancient Rome has to be restored. At the same time military power is built up; war industry is promoted and subsidized; for armaments Government through lack of any public control can secretly spend as much money as it wants. The Italian Government and bourgeoisie grew boastful and aggressive. They wanted their country not to be admired as a museum

of ancient art any more, but respected as a modern country of factories and guns.

For many years Italy was the only European country, besides Russia, that had a dictatorial government. So it might seem a result of special chance conditions there. Then, however, other countries followed. In Portugal, after many bickerings between parties in Parliament and military officers, the generals seized power, but felt incapable of solving the many economic difficulties. So they appointed a well known fascist-minded professor of economy to act as dictator under the name of prime minister. He introduced corporatism to take the place of parliamentarism, and was much praised for the undisturbed firmness of his reign. The petty-capitalist stage of development in this country is shown in that his most praised reform was economizing in finance by cutting the government expenses.

It seems a contradiction that fascism, a product of big capitalism, should happen to rule in backward countries, whereas the countries of biggest capitalism reject it. The latter fact is easily explained, because democratic parliamentarism is the best camouflage for its sway. A system of government is not connected automatically with a system of economy. The economic system determines the ideas, the wishes, the aims; and then people with these aims in mind adjust their political system according to their needs and possibilities. The ideas of dictatorship, of the sway of some few strong individuals, countered by other strong social forces in countries where big capital reigns, in distant regions also strike the minds where big capitalism in no more than aspiration of future development.

In backward countries, when capitalism begins to come up and to stir the minds, the political forms of advanced countries are imitated. Thus in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century parliamentarism held its triumphal course through the world, in the Balkans, in Turkey, in the East, in South America, though sometimes in parody forms. Behind

such parliaments stood no strong bourgeoisie to use them as its organ; the population consisted in large landowners and small farmers, artisans, petty dealers, with chiefly local interests. Parliaments were dominated by jobbers enriching themselves through monopolies, by lawyers and generals ruling as ministers and bestowing well-paid offices on their friends, by intellectuals making business out of their membership, by agents of foreign capital preying upon the riches of timber and ore. A dirty scene of corruption showing that parliamentarism did not sprout from sound and natural roots here.

Such new countries cannot repeat the gradual line of development of the old capitalist countries in first ascent. They can and must introduce highly developed technics at once; on their pre-capitalist conditions they must implant big industry directly; acting capital is big capital. So it is not strange that the political forms generated by petty capitalism in Europe do not fit here. There parliamentarism was firmly rooted in the consciousness of the citizens and had time gradually to adapt itself to the new conditions. Here, at the outskirts, the fascist ideas of dictatorship could find adherence, since the practice of politics was already conforming to it. Landowners and tribe chieftains easily convert their old power into modern dictatorial forms; new capitalist interests can work better with some few mighty men than with a host of greedy parliamentarians. So the spiritual influences of big world capital find a fertile field in the political ideas of rulers and intellectuals all over the world.

### **8. National Socialism**

Far more important are the forms of fascism presented by the most strongly developed country of capitalist Europe. After having lost the first world war and after being pressed down to entire powerlessness, Germany through fascism was enabled to prepare for a second, more formidable attempt at world power.

In the post-war years of misery and humiliation the gradually assembling nationalist youth felt by instinct that its future depended on organisation of power. Among the many competing organisations the National Socialist Party crystalized as the group with the greatest growing faculty, and afterwards absorbed the others. It prevailed by having an economic program, sharply anti-capitalist — hence denoted socialist — fit to attract the petty bourgeoisie, the farmers and part of the workers. Directed of course against capital such as these classes know it as their suppressor, the usury capital, the real estate banks, the big warehouses, especially against Jewish capital therefore. Its anti-semitism expressed the feelings of these classes as well as of the academic circles who felt threatened by Jewish competition now that the republic had given equal civil rights. Its acute nationalism gave expression to the feelings of the entire bourgeoisie, by sharply protesting against Germany's humiliation, by denouncing Versailles, and by the call to fight for new power, for new national greatness.

When then the great crisis of 1930 reduced the middle class masses to a panic fright, when these, through their millions of votes, made national socialism a powerful party, German big capital saw its chance. It gave money for an overwhelming propaganda that soon beat the wavering liberal and socialist politicians out of the field, made national socialism the strongest party and its leader chief of the government.

Unlike other parties in government its first provisions were to make sure that it never should loose its government power. By excluding the Communist Party as criminals from the Reichstag and affiliating the lesser nationalist groups it secured a majority to start with. All important government and police offices were filled by party members; the communist fighting groups were suppressed, the nationalist ones were privileged. Protected by the authorities the latter, by deeds of violence, with impunity could spread so much terror that every idea of resistance was quelled in the people. The daily press first was muzzled,

then gradually captured and “equalized” into organs of national socialism. Socialist and democratic spokesmen had to flee to other countries; the widely spread socialist and the not less hated pacifist literature was collected in violent searches and solemnly burned. From the first days began the persecutions of the Jews, that gradually became more cruel, and at last proclaimed as their aim the extermination of the entire Jewish race. As a heavy steel armour the dictatorship of a resolute, well-organised minority closed around German society, to enable German capital as a well-armoured giant to take up again the fight for world power.

All political practice and all social ideas of national socialism have their basis in the character of its economic system. Its foundation is organisation of capitalism. Such among the first adherents who insisted upon the old anti-capitalist program were of course soon dismissed and destroyed. The new measures of state control over capital were now explained as the formerly promised subjection and destruction of capitalist power. Government decrees restricted capital in its freedom of action. Central government offices controlled the sale of products as well as the procuring of raw materials. Government gave prescripts for the spending of profits, for the amount of dividends allowed, for the reserves to be made for new investments, and for the share it required for its own purposes. That all these measures were not directed against capitalism itself, but only against the arbitrary freedom of capital dispersed over numerous small holders, is shown by the fact that herein Government was continually guided by the advice of big capitalists and bankers outside the Party, as a more resolute sequel of what had been started already in collaboration with former less daring governments. It was an organisation imposed by the condition of German capitalism, the only means to restore it to power.

Under capitalism capital is master; capital is money claiming the surplus value produced by labor. Labor is the basis of society, but

money, gold, is its master. Political economy deals with capital and money as the directing powers of society. So it had been in Germany, as anywhere. But German capital was defeated, exhausted, ruined. It was not lost; it had maintained itself as master of the mines, the factories, of society, of labor. But the money had gone. The war reparations pressed as a heavy debt, and prevented rapid accumulation of new capital. German labor was tributary to the victors, and through them to America. Since America had secluded itself from the imports of goods it had to be paid in gold; gold disappeared from Europe and choked America, pushing both into a world crisis.

The German “revolution” of 1933 — proudly called so by national socialism — was the revolt of German against American capital, against the rule of gold, against the gold form of capital. It was the recognition that labor is the basis of capital, that capital is mastery over labor, and that, hence, gold is not necessary. The real conditions for capitalism, a numerous intelligent and skilled working class and a high stage of technics and science, were present. So it repudiated the tribute, rejected the claims of foreign gold, and organised capitalist production on the basis of goods and labor. Thus, for the use of internal propaganda, always again it could speak of fight against capital and capitalism; for capital was money, was gold that reigned in America, in England, in France, as it had reigned formerly in Germany. The separating cleft, in this line of thought, gaped between the gambling and exploiting usurers and money capitalists on the one side, and the hard toiling workers and employers on the other side.

Under free capitalism the surplus value growing everywhere out of production piles up in the banks, looks out for new profits, and is invested by its owner or by the bank in new or in existing enterprises. Since in Germany money was scarce State government had to provide the means for founding new necessary enterprises. That could be done only by seizing the profits of all enterprises for this purpose, after

allowance of a certain dividend for the shareholders. So it established itself as the central leader of economy. In the emergency of German capitalism the spending of capital could not be left to the will and whim of private capitalists, for luxury, for gambling or foreign investment. With strict economy all means must be used for reconstruction of the economic system. Every enterprise now depends on the credit assigned by the State and stands under continuous control of the State. The State for this purpose has its economic offices of experts, in which the leaders of the big enterprises and concerns by their advice are dominating. This means a complete domination of monopolist capital over the smaller capitalists in a system of planned economy. Conscious organisation has replaced the automatism of gold.

Germany, though striving after autarchy, could not exist without importing raw materials from outside, paying for them, because it had no money, by exports of its own products. Hence commerce could not be left to the arbitrariness of private dealers, to the wish of the public for superfluous or foreign fancies. When all sales shall serve the necessary reconstruction Government has to supervise foreign commerce by rigid prescripts, or take it in its own hand. It controls and limits every transfer of money across the frontiers, even tourist travels; all drafts on foreign debtors must be delivered. The State itself takes up large-scale commerce, purchase as well as sale. The great difficulty of the old economic system, the transition of commodities into gold, the selling of the goods, the primary cause of so much faltering and crisis, is thereby automatically solved at the same time. The State, as universal dealer, is able in every purchase contract to stipulate that the same value of its product shall be bought, so that no money is needed. Or expressed in another way : in selling its goods it asks to be paid not in money but in kind, in other goods : German machines against Hungarian wheat or Roumanian oil. Gold is eliminated from business by direct barter of goods.

But now barter on a gigantic scale, of the produce and needs of entire countries at once. Private dealers in the other countries seldom have such monopolies as are needed here; moreover such big transactions, especially of materials serviceable to war have political consequences. Hence the foreign governments have to step in. If they were not yet adapted to such economic functions they now adapt themselves; they take in hand the disposal over the products, and in their turn go to regulating commerce and industry. Thus State control in a big country leads to state control in other countries. A new system of economy, the system of direct barter of goods, is introduced into international commerce. It is especially attractive to the rising countries that are purveyors of raw materials. They now get their machines and canons, without in Paris and London contracting heavy loans that would bring them into financial dependence. Thus German economic expansion is ousting English and French capital from those countries; and it is accompanied by political expansion. With the new economic system the ruling classes there adopt the new political ideas, the fascist system of government, that increases their power at home and better fits their needs than an imitation of parliamentarism. Politically they are drawn nearer to Germany. Thus what at first, according to old economic ideas, looked a paralysing weakness, the lack of gold, was now turned into a source of new force.

German capitalism saw a new road opened towards resurrection and power. This could not but have an enormous influence upon the ideas and feelings of the bourgeoisie, especially upon the capitalist and intellectual youth. It had experienced the poverty and dejection in the post-war years, the desperation and impotence under the Weimar republic; now again it saw a future full of hope. When a class, from pressure and dependence, sees looming up a future of greatness with as yet unlimited possibilities, enthusiasm and energy are awakened; it clothes the coming world with the garb of exalted ideologies inspiriting

the minds. Thus national socialism speaks of its conquest of power as a grand social, political and spiritual revolution, far surpassing all previous ones, a revolution that ends capitalism, establishes socialism and community, one destined to renovate society for thousands of years.

What really happened was only a structural change of capitalism, the transition from free to planned capitalism. Yet this change is important enough to be felt as the beginning of a new grand epoch. Human progress always consisted in the replacing of instinctive action, of chance and custom by deliberate planning. In technics science had already replaced tradition. Economy, however, the social entirety of production, was left to the chance of personal guessing of unknown market conditions. Hence wasted labor, destructive competition, bankruptcy, crisis and unemployment. Planned economy tries to bring order, to regulate production according to the needs of consumption. The transition of free capitalism to capitalism directed by State-dictatorship means, fundamentally, the end of the pitiless fight of all against all, in which the weak were succumbing. It means that everybody will have his place assigned, an assured existence, and that unemployment, the scourge of the working class, disappears as a stupid spilling of valuable labor power.

This new condition finds its spiritual expression in the slogan of community. In the old system everybody had to fight for himself, only guided by egotism. Now that production is organised into a centrally directed unity, everybody knows that his work is part of the whole, that he is working for the national community. Where loss of old liberty might evoke resentment an intense propaganda accentuates the service of the community as the high moral principle of the new world. It is adequate to carry away especially young people into devoted adherence. Moreover the anti-capitalist fiction of the exclusion of the gold, by persistent propaganda is hammered into the minds as the new

reign of labor. Community and labor find their common expression in the name socialism.

This socialism is national socialism. Nationalism, the mightiest ideology of the bourgeoisie, stands over all other ideas as the master they have to serve. The community is the nation, it comprises only the fellow people, labor is service of the own people. This is the new, the better socialism, entirely opposed to the international socialism of Jewish Marxism that by its doctrine of class war tore the national unity asunder. It had made the German people powerless; national socialism makes the national community a mighty unbreakable unity.

For national socialist doctrine the nations are the entities constituting mankind. The nations have to fight for their place on earth, their "living space"; history shows an almost uninterrupted series of wars in which strong peoples exterminated, drove out or subjected the weaker ones. Thus it was and thus it will be. War is the natural condition of mankind, peace is nothing but preparation of future war. So the first duty of every people is to make itself powerful against others; it has to choose between victory or downfall. Internationalism and pacifism are bloodless abstractions, yet dangerous because they are sapping the strength of the people.

The first aim of national socialism was to make a powerful unity of all German-speaking people. Through adversity of historical development it had been divided into a number of separate states, only incompletely united in Bismarck's former Reich — the Austrian part remaining an independent state — moreover mutilated by the victors of 1918. The call for national unity met with a wide response in the feelings, even of such isolated groups as the German settlers in Transylvania or in America. In consequence of the interlacing of living sites of different races, as well as by economic connections, the principle of political unity of course encounters many difficulties. The German-speaking town of Danzig was the natural harbour for the surrounding

Polish hinterland. The Czechoslovak State as a Slavonic protrusion separated the Northern and the Austrian Germans, and included on the inner slopes of the frontier ridges ( Sudetes ) an industrious German population. Under capitalism such abnormal cases are not solved by any fair principle of equitable dealing, but by power against power. So they were the direct motives that gave rise to the present world war.

From the first day preparation for war was the leading thought of national socialism, the goal of all its measures. For this purpose industry was supervised and regulated by the State, for this purpose private profits and dividends were cut down, for this purpose the investment of capital and the founding of new enterprises was reserved to Government economic offices. All surplus value beyond a certain profit rate for the shareholders is taken by the State for its needs; these needs are the supreme common interest of the entire bourgeoisie. In old capitalism the State had to procure money for its needs by taxation, sometimes by the cunning method of unfair indirect taxes; or, if by direct taxes, conceded grudgingly and under suspicious control by the propertied citizens, and considered as an unrighteous incursion upon their personal expenditure. Now this is all changed. The State by its own right takes what it wants directly at the source, the chief part of the surplus value, and to the capitalist owners it leaves some remnant fixed at its own discretion. No more the State has to beg from the masters of the means of production; it is itself master now and they are the recipients. An enormous increase of financial power compared with other States; but indispensable for success in the world fight. And again national socialism in this way shows off before the people's masses as the power that curbs capital, by enforcing it to deliver the main part of its profit to the common weal, to the community.

Moreover the State is direct master of production. In the old capitalism, when the State had with difficulty extorted money for war expenses from Parliament, or borrowed it under fat provisions

from the bankers, it had to spend it on the monopolistic private arms industry. These concerns, internationally connected, though they paraded as national firms, Krupp in Essen, Schneider in Le Creusot, Armstrong in England, not only took their big profits, but without conscientious scruples impartially supplied enemies and allies with the most perfect and newest inventions. It looked as if war were a puerile play of politicians to fatten some few armament capitalists. To national socialism, however, war is the most serious affair, for which an unlimited part of the entire industrial apparatus can be used. Government decides what big portion of the total steel and chemical industry shall serve for armaments. It simply orders the factories to be built, it organises science and technics to invent and try new and better weapons, it combines the functions of military officer, engineer, and inventor, and makes war science ( Wehrwissenschaft ) the object of special training. Armoured cars, dive bombers, big submarines with ever more perfect installations, rapid torpedo boats, rockets, all of new construction, can be built in secret. No information reaches the enemy, no sensational daily press can publish any notice, no parliament members can ask information, no criticism has to be encountered. Thus the arms are heaped up during years of feverish war preparation till the moment of attack has arrived.

In old capitalism war was a possibility, avoided as long as possible, or at least disclaimed, a war of defence mostly on the part of the old satisfied Powers. The new upgrowing powers, aggressive because they have to conquer their share in the world, have a positive aim that strains the energy much more intensely than does the negative aim of mere passive defence of existing conditions. They are "dynamic"; in military tactics this character is represented in the irresistible impulse of the well prepared mass offensive.

Thus German capitalism, by installing a national socialist government completely dominating the entire economic life, provided

itself with an incomparable war machine. The question may be posed, however, whether it did not shoot past the aim. In striving for power over the world, did it not lose its mastery at home ? Could the German bourgeoisie still be called the ruling class ?

German state control is no state socialism. The State is not, as it is in Russia, owner of the means of production. In Russia the bureaucracy of State officials collectively owns the industrial apparatus; it is the ruling and exploiting class, appropriating the surplus value. In Germany there is a numerous bourgeoisie, directors of enterprises, free employers, officials, shareholders; they are the owners of the means of production living on surplus value. But now the two functions of the shareholder are separated; the right of disposal is detached from ownership. Under big capitalism the right of disposal is the most important function of capitalist ownership; we see it in America in the holding companies. Then the owner in his character of exploiter only retains the function of receiving part of the profits. In Germany Government took for itself the right of disposal, the right to manipulate with capital, to direct production, to increase the productivity and to distribute the profits. For the mass of the bourgeoisie there remained the detailed work of directing their enterprises and gambling with the shares. Since production and import both are determined by the State, private dividends could not be spent in another way than by buying industrial shares, i.e., by returning the profits as new capital into State-controlled industry.

Thus big capital retained power. Surely its expectation when it put national socialism at the head of the State, of finding obedient servants, was disappointed; the old masters of industry and banks had to share their power with the new masters of the State, who not only partook in the directing but also in the pocketing. Big capital in Germany had not yet taken the American form of an unassailable property of some families; capable men of daring from anywhere could rise to the

leadership of big concerns. Now they had to share their leading power with other men of daring risen to power by way of politics and party fight. In the economic offices the leaders of big business meet with the political leaders in the common task of regulating production. The dividing line between private Capitalists and State officials disappears in the coalescing of functions. Together they are master of the State and of the means of production.

With the deep changes in economic and political conditions a new state of mind pervaded the German people. The mutual connection and dependence became stronger, gradations of value and rank were felt, the authority of leaders, the obedience of the masses imposed themselves; consciousness of subordination in large entities accompanies planned economy. And above all, in the entire middle class there is a strained nationalism, a passionate will to fight for world power. Though growing spontaneously out of the new conditions this new spirit was not left to develop freely; for in that case opposite ideas and forces would arise at the same time. It was the object of an intense one-sided propaganda. To make these feelings a spiritual force binding the entire nation into a fighting unity, they were fostered and developed by special means. Propaganda and education were made the task of a separate State department, endowed with unlimited financial means. All usable forces of publicity, of science, literature and art were set to work systematically to cram the national socialist ideas into all the heads, with exclusion of all deviating spiritual influences.

This implied a complete spiritual despotism. Whereas under former systems of despotism the daily press was only muzzled or harassed by a stupid censorship, often outwitted by the wits of editors, now the entire press was annexed by the Party and provided with party members as editors. The national socialist State was not only master of the material life of man, it was also master of the spiritual life, by means of the Party. No books or writings expressing deviating opinions could be published;

foreign publications were carefully controlled before being admitted. Secret printing of independent or opposite opinions was not only punished severely as capital crime, but also rendered difficult by State control of all materials. It is intellectual cowardice that shuns dispute on equal terms and dares to attack and insult the adversary only after he has been fettered and muzzled. But it was efficient; the party press was able, without compensation, day by day to force upon the readers not only its doctrine but also its biased representation or misrepresentation of facts and happenings, or to omit them entirely. Notwithstanding all preconceived distrust of one-sided information, the ever repeated, never contradicted views, so well confirmed by the facts presented, must in the long run take hold of the minds. The more so as they were presented as part and result of an attractive doctrine, the ideology of community and labor : the end of selfishness and exploitation, the new reign of devotion to the people's weal, regulated work and prosperity for all, the common exertion for the greatness and the future of the nation, with severe punishment of course for all its enemies.

At the same time all verbal intercourse was strictly controlled. The party everywhere had its members and adherents, in the offices, in the shops, all inspired with the moral duty to denounce for punishment, as enemies of the community, all who expressed other opinions, ventured criticism, or spread rumours. Thus no opposition could form, except in the extreme secrecy of insignificant groups; everywhere a feeling of utter powerlessness prevailed.

Thus, compared with the ancient forms of despotic rule, modern capitalism showed an enormous progress of efficiency in the technics of suppression. Whether we take the English Tory Government in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that had no police force, or the Prussian absolutism or Russian Czarism in later times, with their primitive barbarous cruelty, they all present the spectacle of stupid helplessness, normal for a government living far from the people. In the English

courts editors and authors made a tough fight for reform and freedom of press, applauded by the people when they went to gaol. The Czarist gaolers often could not conceal their respect for the revolutionaries as representatives of superior culture. Repeatedly Prussian police, trapped by the better organisation of the socialist workers, had to suffer exhibition as simpletons before the courts.

Now that was all over. The new despotism was equipped with all the engines of the modern State. All force and energy that capitalism evokes is combined with the most thorough-going tyranny that big capital needs in order to uphold its supremacy. No tribunal to do justice to the subject against the State. The judges are Party members, agents of the State, dismissed if they are soft, bound to no statute book, administering justice after decrees from above. Law suits are public only when needed for propaganda, to intimidate others; and then the papers bring only what the judge deems adequate. The police consist of strictly organised and disciplined ruffians provided with all weapons and methods to beat down the "Volksgenossen." Secret police again were all powerful, were more capable than it was in olden times. No law secured anybody from being put in gaol, for unlimited time, without trial. The concentration camp, formerly invented as a War measure against guerrillas, now was installed as a form of mass-prison with hard labor, often accompanied by systematic cruelties. No personal dignity was respected; it did not exist any more. Where petty bourgeois coarseness, turned into perverse abuse of unlimited power, was provided with all the inventiveness of modern capitalism, cruelty against the victims can reach a pitch rivalling the worst barbarousness of former centuries. Cruelty as a rule is a consequence of fear, experienced in the past or felt for the future, thus betraying what is hidden in subconsciousness. But for the moment all adversaries were made powerless, silenced and intimidated.

Spiritual tyranny was supplemented by incessant propaganda, especially adapted to the younger generation. The rulers know quite well that they can win over only very few of the older generation of workers who, grown up in the nobler ideas of Social Democracy, preserved these as a precious remembrance, though bereft of practical use. Only for the younger adults who experienced Social Democracy in its decline, as ruling party, the propaganda could be effective. But it was in the upgrowing youth which it did itself educate and shape, that national socialism placed its hope as material for its new world.

It cannot surprise that it here met with great success. As no party or group before it concerned itself with youth. National socialism appointed able leaders well versed in modern psychology, disposing of ample financial means, who, with entire devotion assembled and educated the youth in an all-embracing organization. All the innate feelings of comradeship, of mutual aid, of attachment, of activity, of ambition could develop in young people. They were filled with the self-confidence of being an important part of the national community with an important task of their own. Not to win a good position for oneself, the highest ideal of the youngsters in capitalist society, but to serve and forward the national community. The boys had to feel future fighters, preparing for great deeds, not by learned studies but by vigour, pluck, fighting capacity and discipline. The girls had to prepare for the future of being heroic German mothers; increase of population, as rapid as possible, was a condition for strength in the world fight.

With ardour the children imbibed the new teachings that far outweighed the spiritual influence of their parents and teachers. Against these they acted as fervent champions and spokesmen of the new creed, especially educated for that task. Not simply to extend the propaganda into home and school, but still more to report to their new leaders home disputes and controversies. Hence to act as spies and denunciators of their own parents, who under the threat of severe punishment had to

abstain from any attempt to educate their children in their own spirit. The children belonged to the State, not to the parents. Thus for the future war an army of millions was prepared unrivalled for enthusiasm and devotion. Such an education implies careful protection against any opposite influence that could evoke doubts, uncertainties and inner conflicts. Doubts and inner conflicts, to be sure, produce strong characters, independent thinkers; but for such national socialism had no use. What it needed, and what it tried to rear by one-sided teaching of the one sole truth, was blind faith and, based thereon, fanatical devotion, expedient for irresistible assault.

The strength of national socialism lay in its organisation of the material production, of physical forces. Its weakness lay in its attempt to uniformize the mentalities, the intellectual forces, in both cases by brutal constraint. Most of its adherents and spokesmen came from the lower middle class, rough, ignorant, narrow-minded, desirous to win a higher position, full of prejudices, easily addicted to brutality. They came to power not through intellectual but through physical and organisational superiority, by daring and combativeness. They imposed their spirit of violence upon the dominated intellectuals and workers. Thus respect for brute strength, contempt for science and knowledge was bred in the upgrowing generation; for the ambitious, instead of painful patient study, an easier way to high positions led through party service that demanded no knowledge but only sturdy drilling, physical training, rough force and discipline.

Big capitalism, however, cannot develop without science as the basis of technical progress, and without an intellectual class with important functions, economic and social. Furthering and encouragement of science is a life interest for capital. Its new political system brought it into contradiction not only with humanity and culture, but also with its own spiritual basis. To uphold its dominance it suffered to decay what constituted its force and justification. This will avenge itself when

in the contest of capitalisms for world power the highest perfection in technics is imperative, and its neglect cannot be made good by physical constraint. The great scientific and technical capacities of the German people, of its engineers, its scientists, its workers, who brought it to the front of industrial progress, now chained to the war chariot of big capitalism and, enhancing its fighting strength, will be wasted and spoilt in this bondage.

National socialism, moreover, tried to impose its very theory upon science, in giving to nationalism the theoretical expression of the racial doctrine. Always German nationalism had taken the form of worship of the ancient Teutons whose virtues as a mirror for the effeminate Romans had been exalted by Tacitus. German authors had exposed the theory of the "Nordic" race, superior to other races and destined to dominate them, and nowadays represented by the Germans and some adjacent peoples. This theory was now blended with anti-semitism. The special capacities of the Jews for commerce and money dealing, for medicine and jurisprudence had, half a century ago already, aroused strong anti-semitic feelings among the petty bourgeoisie and in academic circles. Neither among the great bourgeoisie, that by its mastery of the industrial surplus value was without fear of Jewish finance, nor among the working class had they any importance. Anti-semitism was a sentiment of the lower middle class; but most adherents of national socialism came from these very circles. Jewish immigration from the East after the first world war, introducing its primitive trade methods of barter, and the appointing of Jews in political offices in the Weimar republic intensified the hatred and made anti-semitism the main creed of the most influential new leaders.

Thus racial theory became the central doctrine of national socialism. Real Germans were not all the German-speaking inhabitants of Germany, but only the "Aryans" — the same held good for surrounding peoples as the Scandinavians and the Dutch; the English were too much

corrupted already by capitalism. The non-Aryan cohabitants, the Jews, have no rights; the allowance to settle they misused by assembling capital and by robbing and insolently suppressing the Aryans. So now they were expropriated and the persecutions gradually increased to rough abuse and deliberate extermination.

National socialism by means of its political power forced this racial theory upon science. It appointed the spokesmen of the doctrine as university professors, and profusely procured funds for publishing books and periodicals for its vindication. That the amount of scientific truth in it is extremely meagre could be no hindrance. Capitalism in power always elevates to official science the doctrines that serve its purposes; they dominate the universities everywhere; but criticism and opposite opinions have the possibility to express themselves, albeit not from official chairs. Under national socialism, however, all critical discussion of the official doctrine was made impossible. Still more grotesque was the extension of the racial theory to physics. In physics Einstein's theory of relativity was considered by almost the entirety of physicists as a most important progress of science, basis of numerous new developments. But Einstein was a Jew, and so anti-semitism took a stand against this theory. When national socialism came to power the Jewish professors, men of world fame often, were dismissed and expelled; the anti-semitic opponents of relativity were hailed as the genial spokesmen of "German physics," the expression of sound and simple Aryan intelligence, against "Jewish physics," consisting in crooked theories contrived by Talmudian distortion of thought. It is easily seen that that "sound Aryan intelligence" is nothing but the simple-mindedness of petty burgher thought inaccessible to the deeper abstractions of modern science.

In the fight of German capitalism for world power anti-semitism was not needed, was rather a disadvantage. But it had no choice. Since the bourgeoisie had not dared to join the people's fight, 1848, to win

domination, it had to surrender to the lead of other classes. First of the landed aristocracy with the Kaiser, who, by their stupid diplomacy, were responsible for the defeat in the first world war. Now of the petty burgher party and its leaders, who made this fad the basis of a policy that by evoking scorn and intense hatred all over the world, prepared for a new defeat.

From the beginning national socialism gave special attention to the farmers. The platform of any petty burgher party spoke of ridding the farmers from exploitation by mortgage and banking capital. Moreover, for the impending war it was imperative that Germany should feed itself and have sufficient raw materials. So an organisation of agriculture, as essential part of the wholesale organisation of production, was necessary. It was expressed in the national socialist ideology of the farmer class, inseparably united with the soil, preservers of the racial strength of the forebears, the true "nobility of blood and soil." It had to be protected against the dissolving influences of capitalism and competition, and connected into the whole of planned production. Conforming to the reactionary forms of thought of the new system this was done by reviving mediaeval customs and forms of bondage abolished by the French revolution.

Thus mortgage was forbidden; the farmer was not allowed to invest foreign capital for ameliorations. If he wanted money for his farm he could go to the State offices, and thus his dependence on the State increased. In his farming he was subjected to a number of prescripts restricting his liberty. In the first place as to the products he had to cultivate; since agriculture had to feed the entire people, a difficult problem with the dense population, and still more so in war time, an exact fixation of needs and proceeds was necessary. The sale, too, was organised. The products had to be delivered to purchase offices, at prices fixed from above, or to agents visiting the farms. Theirs was the all-important task and duty : the feeding of the national community.

This truth, however, they had to swallow in the form of complete subjection to Government measures sometimes even amounting to direct seizure of the crops. Thus the farmers, formerly free in, for better or worse, fighting their way through the vicissitudes of capitalism, were turned into serfs of the State. To meet the emergencies of big capitalism, mediaeval conditions, under flattering names, were restored for the farmers.

To the workers no less attention, though of a different kind was given. For the great aim of conquering world power the internationally minded working class, fighting capitalism, splitting national unity, had first to be made powerless. So the first work of the revolution of 1933 was to destroy the social democratic and the communist parties, to imprison or banish their leaders, to suppress their papers, to burn their books and to transform the trade unions into national socialist organisations. Labor was organised not by the workers and for the workers, but by capital and for capital, through its new governing agents. The "labor-front," directed by State-appointed leaders, took the place of the unions where, formally at least, the workers themselves were master. Its task was not to fight the employers for improvement of working conditions, but the promotion of production. In the productive community, the factory, the employer was the leader and must be obeyed, unconditionally. The national socialist leaders of the labor-front, often former officials of the unions, treated with the employer and brought forward complaints; but the latter decided.

It was not the intention of national socialism to make the workers helpless victims of employers' arbitrariness; the latter also had to obey the higher dictators. Moreover, for its great aim, the world fight, national socialism needs the goodwill, the devoted collaboration of all, as soldiers and as workers; so besides incessant propaganda, good treatment as far as possible, was serviceable. Where heavy exertions and extreme hardships were demanded from them the reward was praise

of their performance of duty. Should they be cross and unwilling, hard constraint would make it clear that they were powerless. Free choice of their master has no sense any longer, since everywhere the real master is the same; the workers are transposed from one shop to another at the command from above. Under national socialism the workers were turned into bondsmen of State and capital.

How could it happen that a working class, appearing so powerful as the German one in the high tide of social democracy, almost ready to conquer the world, did fall into such utter impotence ? Even to those who recognized the decline and inner degeneration of socialism, its easy surrender in 1933, without any fight, and the complete destruction of its imposing structure came as a surprise. In a certain way, however, national socialism may be said to be the regular descendant of social democracy. National socialism could rise to such power only on the shoulders of the previous workers' movement. By closer examination of the inner connection of things we can see that not only communism, by its example of State-dictatorship, but also social democracy had prepared the way for national socialism. The slogans, the aims, the methods contrived by social democracy, for the workers, were taken over and applied by national socialism, for capital.

First the idea of State socialism, consciously planned organisation of the entire production by the centralized power of the State. Of course the democratic State was meant, organ of the working people. But intentions do not count against the power of reality. A body that is master of production is master of society, master of the producers, notwithstanding all paragraphs trying to make it a subordinate organ, and needs develops into a ruling class or group.

Secondly, in social democracy a leading bureaucracy already before the first world war was acquiring mastery over the workers, consciously aspiring at it and defending it as the normal social condition. Doubtless, those leaders just as well would have developed into agents of big

capital; for ordinary times they would have served well, but for leaders in world war they were too soft. The “Leader-principle” was not invented by national socialism; it developed in social democracy hidden under democratic appearances. National socialism proclaimed it openly as the new basis of social relations and drew all its consequences.

Moreover, much of the programme of social democracy was realized by national socialism; and that — an irony of history — especially such aims as had been criticized as most repulsive by the middle class of old. To bring order in the chaos of capitalist production by planned regulation always had been proclaimed an impossibility and denounced as an unbearable despotism. Now the State accomplished this organisation to a great extent, thus making the task for a workers' revolution considerably easier. How often the intention of social democracy to replace the automatism of market and shop by a consciously organised distribution has been ridiculed and abhorred : everyone equally apportioned for normalized wants, fed and clothed by the State, all alike mere specimens. National socialism went far in the realisation of this bogus. But what was meant in the socialist program as organised abundance is introduced here as organised want and hunger, as the utmost restriction of all life necessities in order that as much of productive force as possible remains for war materials. Thus the socialism the workers got was parody rather than realisation; what in social democratic ideas bore the character of richness, progress and freedom, found its caricature in dearth, reaction and suppression.

The chief blame on socialism was the omnipotence of the State, compared with the personal freedom in capitalist society. This freedom, to be sure, often was no more than an ambiguous form, but it was something. National socialism took away even this semblance of liberty. A system of compulsion, harder than any slanderer ventured to impute to socialism, was imposed upon mankind by capitalism in its power and emergency. So it had to disappear; without liberty man cannot live.

Liberty, truly, is only a collective name for different forms and degrees of bondage. Man by his bodily needs depends on nature; this is the basis of all dependencies. If life is not possible but by restraining of the free impulses they must be restrained. If productive labor can only be secured by submission under a commanding power, then command and submission are a necessity. Now, however, they are a necessity only for the succumbing capitalism. To uphold exploitation it imposes upon mankind a system of hard constraint, that for production itself, for the life of man, is not required. If a fascist system, instead of being shattered in world war were able to stabilize in lasting peace, a system of organised production providing as it pretended an abundance of all life necessities, even then it could not last. Then by necessity it must perish through the inner contradiction of freeing mankind from the constraint of its needs and of yet trying to keep it in social slavery. Then the fight for freedom, as the only desire left, would be taken up with irresistible force.

The workers cannot foster the easy illusion that with a defeat in world war the role of national socialism will be played out. The epoch of big capitalism is rife with its principles and instigations. The old world does not come back. Governments, even those styled democratic, will be compelled to interfere with production ever more. As long as capital has power and has fear, despotic methods of government will arise as formidable enemies of the working class. Not always in the open form of violent middle class or military dictatorships; they may also take the appearance of labor governments, proceeding from labor fights, perhaps even in the disguise or under the contradictory name of council governments. So a consideration, on broad lines, of their place and role in the development of society does not seem superfluous. A comparison with the rise of another new class formerly, the middle class, may offer an analogy, uncertain though, and surely to be used with caution, and

with the reserve that now the pace of social evolution is much quicker, but has to go farther and deeper, than it was in former centuries.

The rise of the bourgeoisie took place in steps of gradually growing power. From the powerless burgesses of the early middle ages they lead to the merchants and guilds ruling their own towns, fighting the nobility and even vanquishing the knight armies in the open field; an essential element in the mediaeval world, yet only islands in an ocean of agrarian power. By means of the money power of the burghers the kings rise as masters above the other feudal powers, and institute centralized governments in their kingdoms. Their absolutism often is spoken of as a state of equilibrium, when the nobility was no longer, the bourgeoisie not yet strong enough for mastery; so a third power, protecting the privileges of the one and the trade of the other class, leaning upon them both, could rule both. Until, after new growth of trade and industry, the bourgeoisie is so much strengthened as to overthrow this rule and establish itself master of society.

The rise of the working class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the rise of a powerless, exploited, miserable mass into a class with acknowledged rights and with organisations to defend them. Their unions and their political parties may be compared somehow with the guilds and the town governments of the burgesses, an essential element in the all-powerful capitalist world. Whereas, however, the burghers could build up their money power separately, leaving the nobility with its landed property alone, the workers now, to build up their economic power, have to take the means of production from the capitalists, so that immediate fight cannot be avoided. Just as then in the further rise the old institutions, the independent town governments were destroyed and the burghers subjected by the biggest of the feudals, the princes, masters of the lesser aristocracy, so now the old organisations of labor, unions and parties, are destroyed or subjected by big capitalism, thus clearing the way for more modern forms of fight. So there is a certain

analogy between former absolutism and new dictatorship, a third power above the contending classes. Though we cannot yet speak of their equilibrium, we see that the new rulers appeal to labor as the basis of their system. It is conceivable that in a higher stage of the power of labor, camouflaged dictatorships may come up founded upon the support of labor, transient attempts to keep the workers in submission before their final victory.

Historical analogy may also be useful to show that development does not necessarily go along exactly the same lines everywhere. Later middle class mastery in Holland and England, by a fight against absolutistic attempts, developed out of the mediaeval urban privileges, without having lived under absolutism. In the same way now it might be that, whereas in some countries fascist dictatorships arise, in other countries the conditions are lacking. Then forms and conditions of the workers' fight will also be different. It is not well imaginable that in countries where personal liberty is firmly rooted in all classes, such as England and America, complete slavery could be established, though single measures of fascist character are possible. Capitalist domination there is founded on finer, more spiritual elements of power, more efficient than rough violence. Then the power of the workers for a long time will remain poor and unconscious; practical necessities will enforce partial steps in the direction of council organisation, rather than a great revolutionary fight over fundamentals. The growth of clear consciousness of class and the organisation of production are a far more extensive and laborious task, when the mind is filled with middle class ideas and when society is full of unorganised small trade.

In countries with strong fascist dictatorship, on the other hand, the heaviest part of the workers' task is the direct fight to overthrow it. There dictatorship has gone far already in clearing away small trade with its feelings of independence, as well as middle class ideas. The mind is bent already on organization of industry, the idea of community

is present, though practice is a sham. The hard pressure forcing all into the same harness of servitude, regulating production, rationing consumption, uniforming life, evoke resentment and exasperation, only to be kept down by harder suppression. Because all physical power and an enormous spiritual power lie in the hands of the rulers, the fight demands from the workers the highest degree of devotion and courage, of clear insight, and unity. The same holds good if capitalism should succeed in establishing one supreme dominating power over the entire earth.

The object of national socialist dictatorship, however, the conquest of world power, makes it probable that it will be destroyed in the war it unloosened. Then it will leave Europe ruined and devastated, chaotic and impoverished, the production apparatus adapted to war implements, entirely worn away, soil and man power exhausted, raw materials lacking towns and factories in ruins, the economic resources of the continent squandered and annihilated. Then, unlike in the Germany of 1918, political power will not automatically fall into the hands of the working class; the victorious powers will not allow it; all their forces now will serve to keep it down. Whilst at the same time new rulers and leaders present themselves with promises and programs of a new and better order, and the allied armies are liberating the European continent for the exploitation by American capitalism. Then, in this economic, social and spiritual chaos it will fall to the workers to find ways for organising themselves on class lines, ways for clearing up their ideas and purposes, ways for first attempts in reconstructing production. Wherever a nucleus of organisation, of fight, of production is growing, wherever wide embracing connections are tied, wherever minds are struggling for clear ideas, there foundations are laid and a start is made for the future. With partial successes won in devoted fight, through strong unity and insight progressing by gradual steps, the workers must build their new society.

It is not possible as yet to foresee the coming forms of social strife and activity in the different countries. But we may say for certain that, once they understand it, the consciousness of their great task as a bright star will guide the workers through all the difficulties on their path. And that the certainty that by their work and fight they build up the power and unity of the working class, the brotherhood of mankind, will elate their hearts and brighten their minds. And that the fight will not end until working mankind has won complete freedom.

## Part 4. The War

### 1. Japanese Imperialism

The preceding chapters were composed in the first years of the war, 1941–1942, a summary of what past times of struggle provided in useful information for the working class, an instrument helpful in their further fight for freedom. Now, 1944, the war, begun as an attempt of German capital to wrench world power from the English bourgeoisie, has extended over the entire world. All the strains created by the growth of capitalism in different continents, all the antagonisms between new rising and old powerful bourgeoisies, all the conflicts and excitations in near and far away countries have coalesced and exploded in this truly world war. And every day shows how much deeper, more tremendous and more thorough than in any former war its effects will be, in America and Asia, as well as in Europe. Mankind in its entirety is involved, and the neutrals, too, experience its consequences. Every nation is implicated in the fate of every other nation, however remote. This war is one of the last convulsions in the irresistible process of unification of mankind; the class fight that will evolve from the war will make this unity into a self-directing community.

Besides Europe, its first scene, Eastern Asia has become a second, no less important, centre of the war. In China war with Japan was already

going on for some years when, by the outbreak of the war between America and Japan, it was included as a subordinate part in the world fight. This struggle in East Asia will have the same importance for the world's course as the fight in Europe. Hence its origins, as well as its tendencies, must be considered here somewhat more attentively.

The dense populations thronged together in the fertile plains of East and South Asia and the adjacent islands have long resisted the invasion of capitalism. With their number of nearly a thousand millions they constituted almost the half of mankind. Hence, as long as they remain in the condition of small agriculture and small handicraft, capitalism cannot be said to occupy the world, capitalism is not yet at the end of its task and its growth. The old powerful monarchies stiffened in their first contact with the rising capitalism of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, they kept off its intrusion and shut out its dissolving effects. Whereas in India and the Indian islands commercial capital could gradually establish its sway, China and Japan could maintain themselves as strong military powers during some centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the military power of modern capitalism broke the resistance. The development of capitalism, first in Japan, now in China, was the origin, is the content and will be the outcome of the present world war.

In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Japan was a feudal-absolutist state separated from the outer world by strict prohibitional laws. It was governed by some hundred small princes ( daimyos ), each lord over his own realm, but all strictly subjected under the sway of the Shogun in the capital, formally the military chief for the nominal emperor, the Mikado in Kyoto, but practically the real ruler. The Shoguns, whose office was hereditary in the Tokugawa family, retained the daimyos in submission and kept internal peace during two and a half centuries. A strict feudal organisation of four orders in society was maintained; but in the long run it could not prevent an inner development.

The basis of society was small farming, on lots mostly of only one or some few acres. Legally half the product had to be delivered to the prince, in kind ( mostly rice ), but often more was taken from the farmers. Above them stood the ruling and exploiting class of warriors, the samurai, forming the uppermost order ranged in a number of ranks, from the princes down to the common soldiers. They constituted the nobility, though their lowest most numerous ranks had only a small rice-income; they were a kind of knights, living around the castles of their lords. Since through the cessation of the internal wars of old their special office, fighting, was no longer needed, they had turned into a purely parasitic class, living in idleness or occupying themselves with literature and art — they were the producers of the famous Japanese art, afterwards so much admired in Europe. But they had the right to slay everyone of the lower orders they came across without being punished. Below the second order, the farmers, stood the lowest orders, the artisans and the merchants, who worked for the samurai, their patrons and customers; they earned money and gradually out of them arose a first species of bourgeoisie.

The basis of the system was heavy exploitation of the farmers; Japanese authors said the policy of the government consisted in leaving to the farmers so much that they neither could die nor live. They were kept in absolute ignorance, they were bound to the soil, which they could not sell, all ease of life was denied to them. They were slaves of the State; they were looked upon as machinery for production of the rice the ruling class needed. Sometimes the famished peasants rose in local revolt and obtained some redress, because the inept soldiers did not dare to oppose them. But hunger and misery remained the prevailing conditions.

Still, although the laws meant to establish a petrified immutability, conditions gradually changed. The extension of craft and commerce, the increase of the production of commodities, brought luxury into

the towns. The ruling nobility, to satisfy their new needs, had to borrow money and became debtors of the merchant class, the highest daimyos, as well as the common soldiers. The latter, reduced to poverty, sometimes, notwithstanding the prohibition, escaped into other professions. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century their growing discontent crystallised into a systematic hostility to the system of government. Because they formed the most intellectual class and were influenced by some European ideas trickling through the narrow chink of Dutch commerce at Deshima, they were able to formulate their opposition in the nationalist programme of "respect for the Emperor" as a symbol of national unity. So there were forces for change from feudal absolutism in the direction of capitalism; but they would have been too weak for a revolution, had not the big push from aggressive Western capitalism come to enforce admission.

In its first rise already, in the discovery of the entire earth in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, capitalism had knocked at the gates of Japan; it kindled wars between the feudal lords and princes; the spreading of Christendom over against Buddhism was an expression of the paralyzing disruption of the empire. A couple of consecutive strong Shoguns averted the danger by subjecting the rebellious lords to their centralised power; the foreigners were driven out, and with a booming blow — prohibition and extermination of Christendom — the gate was closed for two centuries and a half. Then modern capitalism in its world conquest again knocked at the gate, and with its guns forced it open. American and Russian men-of-war came in 1853, others followed, treaties for commerce were made with the Western powers. And now the old worm-eaten system of government broke down, the Shogunate disappeared, clans hostile to it got the upper hand, and through the "restoration" of 1868 established a strongly united state under the government of the Mikado.

This meant the introduction of capitalism. First the juridical basis for a middle-class society was laid : the four orders were abolished and all

inhabitants became free citizens with equal rights. Freedom of trade, of living and travel, private property, also of the land, that could be bought and sold now, were established. Instead of the tiller of the soil paying half the product in kind, land taxes in money were laid upon the owner. The samurai lost their feudal privileges, and instead got an amount of money to buy a lot of land or to start a business; as artisans and employers they formed part of the rising bourgeoisie. The state officials, the army and naval officers, the intellectuals in the new society chiefly came from this samurai class. The upper ranks remained in power; part of the feudal princes now formed the Secret Council, which, behind the scenes directed government; their retainers, still linked together by the old clan ties, became cabinet ministers, generals, party chiefs and influential politicians.

So in Japan things were different from Europe. Capitalism did not come because a rising bourgeoisie vanquished the feudal class in a revolutionary struggle, but because a feudal class transformed itself into a bourgeoisie, certainly a performance worthy of respect. Thus it is easily understood that also under capitalism the feudal spirit, with its prejudices of ranks, its overbearing haughtiness, its servile respect to the emperor, persisted in the Japanese ruling class. The middle-class spirit of European capitalism was entirely lacking; Germany, that most resembles it, differs from Japan by the diversity there between the land owning nobility and the middle-class industrialists. Not till some dozens of years later a constitution was made, after the German model, with a parliament without power over the administration and the budget. Civil rights hardly existed, even on paper; government and officials had absolute power over the people. The peasants remained the deeply subjected, heavily exploited mass of starvelings; the substitution of capitalist for feudal pressure meant that they had to pay a lot of money in taxes or rent, that their land came into the hands of big landowners, that they could be evicted by withdrawal of the lease,

that instead of the former known misery there came unforeseen ruin through unknown influences of market and prices. Peasant revolts were numerous after the first years of the Restoration.

Capitalism was introduced from above. Capable young men were sent to Europe to study science and technics. The government erected factories, in the first place armament works and shipyards; for military strength against the other powers was most urgent. Then railways and ships were built, coal mines constructed, afterwards the textile industry developed, chiefly silk and cotton, banks were founded. Private business was encouraged by subsidies, and state industries were turned over to private hands. In this way the government spent much money, got partly by taxes, partly by borrowing, or by the issue of paper money, which rocketted prices. This policy was continued later on; capital was fattened by government subsidies, especially navigation, with its ensuing artificial prosperity. The system often developed into sheer corruption; the new-made capitalist class, through the absence of inherited business maxims in its dealings, exhibited a brazen lack of ordinary honesty; plundering public funds for personal enrichment is considered a common affair. Even the highest officials and politicians take part in big enterprises and procure orders for them by means of political influence.

Large numbers of impoverished peasants flowed into the towns, to the factories, where a heavily exploited proletariat, almost without rights, accumulated in the slums, ravished through low wages ( half a yen per day ), long hours ( 14–16 hours ), and child labour. State officials in the lower ranks, even intellectuals, engineers, marine officers are paid far lower wages than in Europe. The working classes in the country, as well as in the towns, lived in a state of hopeless misery, of squalor and despair, surpassing the worst conditions in Europe of olden times. In the textile industry there is a regular slave system; the farmers sell their daughters for a number of years to the factories, where they

live intern under the most horrible unhygienic conditions; and after the contract expires they return in part only to their villages, bringing with them tuberculosis. Thus, Japanese production was cheap, and through the low prices of its trash could outbid Western products on the Asiatic market. On the basis of highly developed machine technics — complemented by extensive primitive home industry and the low standard of life of the workers — capitalist industry and commerce shot up powerfully; every ten years import and export were doubled. Though it did not equal America, England and Germany, it rose above most other countries. The number of industrial workers reached two millions in 1929; agriculture occupied less than half the population already. The workers lived in a state of partial slavery; only in machine industry and among the sailors was there a bit of organisation. Strikes broke out, but were forcibly beaten down. Socialist and communist ideas, naturally finding their way under such conditions, were persecuted and exterminated ferociously. This fitted entirely in the system of police arbitrariness, of lack of personal rights, of brutal cruelty and lawless violence against their own, as well as against subjected alien people, which showed already the character of later fascism.

Imperialism, the big-capitalist politics of conquest, had no need to develop gradually here; from the first it belongs to the policy of introduction of capitalism from above. From the beginning militarism was the chief aim and ideal of the new system, first as a means of defence against the white powers, then as a means of conquest of markets and sources of raw materials. All the old fighting instincts, traditions of discipline and impulses of oppression of the former samurai class could exhibit themselves and revive in the military spirit of exalted nationalism. First by defeating in 1895 the mouldy Chinese power and conquering Korea and Formosa, it took its place among the big powers. Then its victory over the equally mouldy power of Russian Czarism in 1904, opened the way into the inner Asiatic realms.

Now the Japanese rulers grew cockier and began to speak of Japan's world mission to lead East Asia and to free Asia entirely from the white domination.

This policy of conquest is often defended with the argument that the rapid increase of the population — a doubling in 35 years — that cannot find a sufficient living on the small lots of tillable soil in these mountainous islands, compels emigration or the increase of industrial labour for which markets and raw material must be available.

Everywhere the rise of capitalism, with its abolition of old bonds and its increasing possibilities for living has brought about a rapid increase of population. Here, on the reverse, this consequence, considered as a natural phenomenon, is used as an argument for conquest and subjugation of other peoples. The real reason, however, of this policy of conquest, first of Manchuria, then of the northern provinces of China, consists in Japan's lack of iron ore. All industrial and military power nowadays is based upon the disposal over iron and steel; hence Japan wants the rich mineral deposits of Jehol and Shansi. At the same time Japanese capital invaded China and set up factories, chiefly cotton mills, in Shanghai and other towns. And there a vision loomed of a future of greatness and power : to make of these 400 millions firstly customers of its industry, and then to exploit them as workers. So it was necessary to become the political master and leader of China. And most experts in Eastern affairs did not doubt that Japan, with its military power, its big industry, its proud self-reliance, would succeed in dominating the impotent and divided Chinese empire.

But here the Japanese rulers met with a heavy reverse. First with the unexpected tenacious resistance of the Chinese people, and then with a mightier opponent. Mastery over the markets and the future development of China is a life issue for American capitalism in its present state of development. Notwithstanding the most careful and extensive preparations Japan cannot match the colossal industrial

resources of America, once they are transformed into military potency. So its ruling class will succumb. When the military power of Japan will be destroyed and its arrogant capitalist barons have been beaten down, then for the first time the Japanese people will be freed from the feudal forms of oppression.

For Japan this will be the dawn of a new era. Whether the victorious allies enforce a more modern form of government, or with the collapse of the suppressing power a revolution of the peasants and the workers breaks out, in every case the barbarous backwardness in living standards and in ideas will have lost its basis. Of course, capitalism does not disappear then; that will take a good deal yet of internal and world fight. But the exploitation will assume more modern forms. Then the Japanese working class will be able, on the same footing as their American and European class-fellows, to take part in the general fight for freedom.

## 2. The Rise Of China

China belongs to those densely populated fertile plains watered by great rivers, where the necessity of a central regulation of the water for irrigation and for protection by dykes, in the earliest time already produced unification under a central government. It remained so for thousands of years. Under a strong and careful government the land rendered rich produce. But under a weak government, when the officials neglected their duties, when governors and princes made civil war, the dykes and canals fell into decay, the silted rivers overflowed the fields, famine and robbers ravished the people, and "the wrath of heaven" lay on the land. The population consisted chiefly of hard toiling peasants, carefully tilling their small lots Through the primitive technics and the lack of cattle for ploughing, with the hardest labour during long days they could produce hardly more than a bare existence. The slight surplus produce was taken from them by the ruling class of landowners, intellectuals and officials, the mandarins. Since usually more even was

taken from them, they often stood on the brink of famine. The plains were open to the north, the Central-Asiatic steppes, from where warlike nomads came invading and conquering. When they conquered the land they became the new ruling class, formed a kind of aristocracy, but were soon assimilated by the higher Chinese civilisation. So came the Mongols in the Middle Ages; so came in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Manchus from the north-east, extended their empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century far over Central Asia, but fell into decay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the numerous towns lived a large class of small artisans and dealers with a proletarian class of coolies below and the wealthy class of merchants above them. From the seaports, as well as on caravan routes to the West across deserts and mountains, the precious wares of Chinese origin : tea, silk and porcelain were exported, even into Europe. So there was a middle class comparable with the European as to free initiative in business. But in the Chinese peasants too lived the same spirit of independence and selfreliance, far stronger than in the Japanese, deeply curbed as they were under feudalism. If the oppression of the officials, tax farmers, landlords or usurers became too heavy, revolts broke out, increasing sometimes to revolutions, against which the possessing class sought protection from foreign military powers; in such a way the Manchus came into the country.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western capitalism begins to attack and invade China. The strict prohibition of opium import led to a war with Britain, 1840, and to the opening of a number of ports for European commerce. This number increases in later wars and treaties; European merchants and missionaries invade the country, and by their use and abuse of their specially protected position incite the hatred of the population. Cheap European wares are imported and undermine home handicraft; heavy war contributions imposed upon China aggravate the tax burden. Thus revolutionary movements flare up, such as the Taiping insurrection ( 1853–1864 ), having its own emperor in Nanking, and the Boxer

revolt, 1899; both were suppressed with the help of European military power, which showed itself as barbarian destroyers of old Chinese culture. When the war with Japan lays bare Chinese impotence, all the Western powers, including Japan, seize parts of it as "concessions," tearing it asunder in "spheres of influence." Foreign capital builds some few railways and installs factories in the great harbor towns; Chinese capital, too, begins to take part. And now the obsolete Manchu dynasty crumbles in 1911, and is replaced in name by a Chinese republic proclaimed in Nanking, in reality, however, by the rule of provincial governors and generals, the so-called "war lords," often upstart former bandit chiefs, who now with their gang of soldiers in continuous wars pillage the country.

For the rise of a Chinese capitalism the elements were present : a class of wealthy or even rich merchants in the cities, mostly agents of foreign capital, which could develop into a modern bourgeoisie; a numerous class of poor urban proletarians and artisans, with a low standard of life; and an enormous population as customers. Western commercial capital, however, was not a driving force towards a development to higher productivity; it exploited the primitive forms of home industry for commercial profit, and impoverished the artisans by its imports. Hence the dominating position of this Western capital, on the way to make China into a colony, had to be repelled through organisation of the Chinese forces. This work of organisation fell as their task to the young intellectuals who had studied in England, France, America or Japan, and had imbibed Western science and Western ideas. One of the first spokesmen was Sun Yat-Sen, formerly a conspirator persecuted by the Manchu government, a well-known figure in European socialist circles, then the first President in name of the Chinese republic. He designed a program of national unity, a mixture of middle-class democracy and government dictatorship, and after his death in 1925 he became a kind of saint of the new China. He

founded the Kuomintang, the political organisation and leading party of the rising Chinese bourgeoisie.

A strong impulse came from the Russian revolution. In 1920 students in Paris and workers ( chiefly miners, railway men, typos and municipal workers ) in Shanghai and Canton founded a Chinese Communist Party. Big strikes broke out against the mostly foreign employers, and by their exemplary solidarity the workers were able to get many of their demands conceded by the powerful capital; often, however, the fight led to bloody reprisals from the war lords. Now also the bourgeoisie took heart; in the next years the Kuomintang allied itself with the communist party and with Russia. Of course, the Chinese bourgeoisie did not profess any inclination to communist ideas; but it felt that such an alliance offered a lot of advantages. Merely by allowing them to shout for liberty and communism it gained the service of the most active groups of workers and enthusiastic young intellectuals for its purposes, and found skilled Russian organisers from Moscow as "advisers," to lead its fight and to instruct its cadres. Russia, moreover, gave it exactly the slogans it needed for its liberation from the grip of the all-powerful Western imperialism : the doctrine of world revolution against world capital, especially against its chief exponent, the English world power. Soon strictly enforced boycott and strike movements undermined European business and commerce; a sharp anti-foreigner excitation flooded the country; and from the interior, a terrified flock, came a stream of white missionaries, dealers and agents, fleeing to the seaports and the protection of the guns of the men-of-war. From Canton, 1926, an expedition went to the North, partly military conquest, partly intense nationalist propaganda campaign, "watering its horses in the Yang-tse River," chasing the war lords or compelling them to join, and uniting Central and Southern China into one state, with Nanking as its capital.

But now the long smouldering and ever again suppressed fight of the classes broke loose. The workers of the big towns, especially the industrial workers of Shanghai, the emporium of the East, took communism in its proletarian sense, as the workers' class fight. Their wages hardly sufficed to appease direct hunger, their working time was 14 to 16 hours daily; now they tried to raise their miserable conditions by striking, notwithstanding that Russian propaganda always had taught coalition with the bourgeoisie. The C.P. of China had been instructed from Moscow that the Chinese revolution was a middle-class revolution, that the bourgeoisie had to be the future ruling class, and that the workers simply had to assist her against feudalism and bring her into power. The C.P. had followed this lesson, and so had entirely neglected to organize and to arm the workers and the peasants against the bourgeoisie. It kept faith with the Kuomintang, even when this party ordered the generals to beat down the peasant revolts; so the communist militants were left at a loss, wavering between contradictory class sentiments and party commands. The mass actions that broke out in Canton and Shanghai were quenched in blood by the Kuomintang armies of Chiang Kai-shek, financed for that purpose by the Chinese and international bankers. A sharp persecution of communism set in, thousands of spokesmen and militants were slaughtered, the Russian "advisers" were sent home, the workers' organisations were exterminated, and the most reactionary parts of the bourgeoisie took the lead in government. These were chiefly the groups of rich merchants, whose interests as agents of foreign commercial and banking capital were bound to this capital and to the preservation of the old conditions.

Communism in the meantime had spread over the countryside. During all these years of anarchy the condition of the peasants had gone from bad to worse. By the landlords and tax collectors they were stripped to the bone; the war lords often demanded taxes for many years to come, and when they had been driven out by others who

demanded the same taxes again, these were deposed safely in a foreign Shanghai banking house. Nobody took care of the canals and the dykes; through floods and the ensuing famine and pestilence uncounted millions perished. For some few pieces of bread the famished peasants sold their land to full-stocked hoarders and money lenders, and roamed as beggars or robbers through the land. Under such conditions communism, in its Russian bolshevist form of' a workers and peasants republic, without capitalists, landlords and usurers, was hailed and made rapid progress in the most distressed provinces. At the same time that it was extinguished in the towns, communism rose in the countryside as a mighty peasant revolt. Where it won power it began already to drive out the landlords and to divide up their land among the peasants and to establish Soviet rule. Part of the armies, consisting chiefly of workers and peasants, joined by their officers, mostly intellectuals sympathizing with the popular movement, revolted against the reactionary Kuomintang policy, and formed the nucleus of a Red Army.

The civil war, thus ensuing was waged by the Kuomintang government as a campaign against the "communist bandits," who were branded with all kinds of atrocities — doubtless the rebellious peasants often were far from soft against their tormentors — and which had to be exterminated before unity of the nation was possible. From the side of the peasants it was a tenacious and heroic defence of their besieged chief territory in the south-eastern provinces Kiangsi and Hunan. Every year again from 1930 onward, the war of extermination is resumed with ever larger armies, and ever again it is frustrated by the superior skill, the indomitable courage and the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of the red troops that in careful and intrepid guerilla fighting had to win their very arms from the routed enemy regiments. Meanwhile, Japan makes use of this mutual destruction of Chinese military forces by occupying consecutively Manchuria and the Northern provinces.

What may be the reason that the Chinese bourgeoisie so ferociously made war upon the peasants and thereby squandered its military and financial resources ? If we speak, for shortness, of a Chinese bourgeoisie, we should bear in mind that this class differs considerably from the bourgeoisie of Europe, so that ideas instinctively associated with the latter class are not all applicable here. In Europe the rising bourgeoisie, a class of industrial and commercial employers and capitalists, in a social revolution, assisted by the peasants, had to break the political dominance of a landpossessing nobility. In China this antagonism is lacking; the bourgeoisie itself was the land-possessing class, and from herself came the ruling officials. On account of the lack of a rapidly rising industry the rich urban merchants and business men invested their money in land; and rent was as important a source of their income as profit; on the reverse landowners went into the town to set up a business. They combined the characters of two opposite European classes. Thus the peasants' fight found its most fitting expression in the communist slogan of fight against capitalism. In its character of landowners subjection and exploitation of the peasants was a life interest of the Chinese bourgeoisie; its deepest feelings were affected by the land expropriation of the red soviets. So the conservative elements of this class, who had first distrusted the Kuomintang as a disguised red organisation, as soon as possible expelled the communists and made it an instrument of reactionary middle-class politics. They felt the lack of power on the part of the Chinese government to bring order into the chaos : so they sought support from the strongest anti-communist power, from Japan. Japan, aiming at dominance over the resources, the mineral riches and the labour power of China, came forward as the protector of the landowning interests against the rebellious masses. In every next treaty it imposed upon the Chinese government the duty to exterminate communism.

Against this conservative there was, however, an opposite trend, especially among the smaller bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. It anticipated and represented the future; it gave expression not to what the bourgeoisie had been till now, but to what it would be and should be. Its spokesmen realized that a wealthy class of peasants with purchasing power was the chief and necessary condition for a powerful development of capitalist industry in China. Their middle-class feeling understood instinctively that all these landowners and usurers represented a piece of feudalism, barring the way to the future development of China; and that a free landowning peasantry belongs to the middle-class world and would form its solid basis. Hence, next to and opposite to the conservative tendency there was a strong democratic stream of thought among the rising Chinese bourgeoisie. It was strongly nationalistic; the Japanese aggression, the seizure of precious provinces in the North, and the haughty brutalities of Japanese militarism filled it with indignation. It wished to end the civil war by concessions to the peasants in order to unite all force in a common resistance to Japanese imperialism.

Five years the extermination campaign lasted in Kiangsi, and, on a minor scale, in other provinces, without success. The communist armies were firmly rooted in the peasant population, among which they made extensive educational propaganda, and from which ever new forces came to join them. When at last their position against the besieging superior forces ably led by German military advisers, became untenable, they broke through the iron ring and invaded the South-western provinces. Then in 1934 the Red Army began its famous long march, over the highest, nearly unpassable, mountain passes, across the wildest and most dangerous rivers, through endless swampy steppes, through the extremes of heat and cold, always surrounded and attacked by better equipped superior White forces, until after heavy privations, heroic struggles and severe losses it arrived, a year later, in the North-

western provinces, where in Shensi a new Soviet government was organized.

But now, in the meantime, tactics and aims had changed. Not against capitalism and landlords the communist fight was directed in the first place, but against Japan and Japanese imperialism. Before the start of their long march already the C.P. of China had proposed, publicly, to the Kuomintang to cease the civil war in order to fight in common the Japanese aggression, in which case it would stop the expropriations and respect the existing property rights, in exchange for social reform and democratic rights of the people. But this offer had not been regarded.

This change of tactics has been sharply criticised in other countries as an opportunistic renouncement of communist principles. Such criticism, however, is based on the false supposition that the C.P. was a party of industrial workers exploited by big capitalism. The Chinese C.P., and still more the Red Army, however, consists of rebellious peasants. Not the name stuck on a label outside, but the class character determines the real content of thought and action. The party leaders saw quite well that Japanese military power was the most dangerous threat to the Chinese peasants, and that a coalition of the Chinese bourgeoisie with Japan would make their liberation impossible. So it was imperative to separate them and to direct all military and economic potencies of China against Japan. To the red leaders the ideal of the future was a democratic middle-class China, with free peasants as owners, or at least well-to-do farmers of the soil. Under communist ideas and slogans they were the heralds and champions of the capitalist development of China.

From these tendencies on both sides arose the new policy, in the dramatic form of the capture, December, 1936, in Sianfu, of the generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek by the government's own Manchurian troops, who wanted to fight the Japanese rather than the Reds. The

nationalist leader, in involuntary discourses with the communist leaders, could make certain that they were equally nationalist and middle-class minded as himself, and were ready to put themselves under his command in a war with Japan. When, then, the civil war ceased and the most reactionary leaders were turned out of the government, Japan immediately drew the consequences and began war with a heavy attack on Shanghai. China, with its undeveloped sleeping resources at first sight might seem no match for the tremendous, carefully prepared war machinery of Japan. But it had trained armies now, it was filled with a strong nationalist spirit, and it got war materials from England and America. To be sure, its armies had to give way, the government had to retreat to Chunking in the South-western province of Szechuan, and Japanese troops occupied the Eastern towns. But behind their back ever new armies of partisans stood up as guerilla and exhausted their forces. Till, in 1941, after the war in Europe had gone on for nearly two years, the long foreseen conflict between America and Japan broke out in consequence of America's ultimatum that Japan should leave China. Thus the Chinese war became part of the world war.

This world war means the rise of China as a new capitalist world power. Not immediately as an independent power on an equal par with its allies, Russia on the one, America on the other side, though it exceeds both in population. Its economical and political dependence on America, to which it is heavily in debt because of its war supplies, will mark the new future; American capital will then have the lead in building up its industry. Two great tasks are standing in the forefront; the construction of railways and roads, combined with the production of engines and motor cars, to modernize the primitive expensive traffic; and introduction of mechanical power in agriculture to free the human beast-of-burden and make its labour efficient. The accomplishment of these tasks requires a big metal industry. China possesses all the

resources necessary for capitalist development. It has coal, iron and other minerals, not enough to make it an industrial country for export as England or Germany, but enough for its own needs. It has a dense population with all the qualities necessary for capitalism : a strong individualism, painstaking diligence, capability, spirit of enterprise, and a low standard of needs. It has, moreover, a fertile soil, capable of producing an abundance of products, but requiring security by wide scientific care and regulation of the water, by constructing dykes and excavating and normalizing the rivers.

The ideals and aims for which the working masses of China are fighting, will of course not be realized. Landowners, exploitation and poverty will not disappear; what disappears are the old stagnant, primitive forms of misery, usury and oppression. The productivity of labour will be enhanced; the new forms of direct exploitation by industrial capital will replace the old ones. The problems facing Chinese capitalism will require central regulations by a powerful government. That means forms of dictatorship in the central government, perhaps complemented by democratic forms of autonomy in the small units of district and village. The introduction of mechanical force into agriculture requires the conjunction of the small lots into large production units; whether by gradual expropriation of the small peasants, or by the foundation of co-operatives or kolchozes after the Russian model, will depend on the relative power of the contending classes. This development will not go on without producing deep changes in the economic, and thereby in the social relations, the spiritual life and the old family structure. The dimensions, however, of things there, of the country, of the population, of its misery, of its traditions, of its old cultural life are so colossal, that an innovation of conditions, even if taken up with the utmost energy, will take many dozens of years.

The intensity of this development of economic conditions will stir the energies and stimulate the activity of the classes. Corresponding to capitalism the fight against capitalism will arise simultaneously. With the growth of industry the fight of the industrial workers will spring up. With the strong spirit of organisation and great solidarity shown so often by the Chinese proletarians and artisans, even a rise more rapid than in Europe of a powerful working class movement may be expected. To be sure, the industrial workers will remain a minority compared with the mass of the agrarian population, equally subjected to capitalist exploitation, though in another way. The mechanisation of agriculture, however, will weave strong ties between them, manifesting itself in the community of interests and fights. So the character of the fight for freedom and mastery may take in many regards another aspect in China than in Western Europe and America.

### **3. The Colonies**

When socialism grew up, half a century ago, the general expectation was that the liberation of the colonial peoples would take place together with the liberation of the workers. The colonies there and the workers here were exploited by the same capitalism; so they were allies in the fight, against the common foe. It is true that their fight for freedom did not mean freedom for the entire people; it meant the rise of a new ruling class. But even then it was commonly accepted, with only occasional doubts, that the working class in Europe and the rising bourgeoisie in the colonies should be allies. For the communist party this was still more self-evident; it meant that the new ruling class of Russia looked upon the future ruling classes in the colonies as its natural friends, and tried to help them. Certainly the forces for colonial liberation were still weak. In India, with its 300 millions of people, industry and a class of employers gradually developed, giving the basis for an independence movement, that suffers, however, from the great diversity of races and religions. The 50 millions population of Java is well-nigh homogeneous,

but entirely agrarian, and the opposition was till recently restricted to small groups of intellectuals.

These colonial peoples are no savages or barbarians, as the tribes of central Africa or the inhabitants of remote Indian islands. They live densely crowded in fertile areas with a highly developed agriculture. Often they have a thousand years old civilization; there is a separation between a ruling class of priests and nobility spending their portion of the total product in often refined artistic and spiritual culture, and the subjugated masses of heavily exploited peasants. Foreign warlike peoples invaded India and formed new upper social layers; incessant wars between larger and smaller princes checked the increase of the population. Agriculture was the chief occupation; because during many months agricultural labour had to rest, there was also an important cottage industry in the villages. This handicraft, artistic and highly developed, differing according to natural produce, raw materials and inherited endowments in different regions, produced a large amount of goods for export. Cotton goods, fine dyed cloths in many designs, silk wares, goldsmiths' and copper wares, beautifully decorated swords formed the contents of an extensive trade over Southern and Eastern Asia, and far to the West, even into Europe. Here the precious coloured textile wares from the East, chiefly from Indian village industry, formed the main part of medieval traffic, produced the materials for the dress of princes, nobility and rich bourgeoisie, up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and brought a continuous flow of gold from Europe to India.

Against the invading European capitalism the Indian countries, mostly divided into small states, were soon powerless. The armed Western merchant vessels began to monopolize forcibly the entire trade of the Indian seas, with its enormous profits. Thereafter direct conquest and pillage brought the accumulated riches of Eastern treasures into the hands of Western officials and adventurers, and contributed in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to form the capital needed in the industrial

revolution. More important still was regular exploitation by enforced delivering of precious products on the Molucca islands of spices, on Java of pepper, indigo, sugar — for which hardly anything was paid, a few coppers for what in Europe brought hundreds of florins. The population had to spend a great deal of its time and of its soil in these products for export, thus leaving not enough for their own food; famine and revolts were the result. Or heavy taxes were imposed upon the people of India, to procure high incomes for a parasitical class of English officials and nabobs. At the same time England employed its political power to forbid, in the interest of the Lancashire cotton industry, the export of Indian textile goods. Thus the flourishing Indian cottage industry was destroyed and the peasants were still more impoverished. The result was that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even up to the present day, for the majority of the villagers life is a continuous state of hunger. Famines and pestilences, formerly unavoidable local occurrences, now take place in devastated larger regions and more often. But also in normal times in the villages and urban slums a state of misery reigns, worse than at any time in Europe.

The essence of colonial policy is exploitation of foreign countries while preserving their primitive forms of production or even lowering their productivity. Here capital is not a revolutionary agent developing production to higher forms; just the reverse. European capital is here a dissolving agent, destroying the old modes of work and life without replacing them by better technics. European capital, like a vampire, clasps the defenceless tropical peoples and sucks their life blood without caring whether the victims succumb.

Western science of course demonstrates that the domination of colonies by the Europeans is based on nature, hence is a necessity. The basis is formed by the difference of climate. In cool and moderate climes man can extort his living from nature by continuous exertion only; the temperature allows of assiduous hard working; and the inconstancy of

the phenomena, the irregular change from storm and rain to sunshine stimulates the energy into restless activity. Labor and energy became the gospel of the white race; so it gained its superior knowledge and technics that made it master of the earth. In the hot tropical and sub-tropical countries, on the contrary, nature by itself or with slight labor bears abundant fruit; here the heat makes every continuous exertion a torment. Here the dictum could originate that to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow was the worst curse to man. The monotonous equality of the weather, only interrupted at the change of seasons, deadens the energy; the white people, too, when staying too long in the tropics, are subjected to these influences that render laziness the chief characteristic and Nirvana the highest ideal. These dicta of science doubtless are true, theoretically. But practically we see that the Indian and Javanese peasants till their soil and perform their handicraft with unflagging zeal and painstaking assiduity. Not, of course, in the nerve-racking tempo of modern factory work; economic necessity determines the character of their labor.

The Western bourgeoisie considers its rule over the colonies a natural and lasting state of things, idealizing it into a division of tasks; profitable to both parties. The energetic intelligent race from the cool climes, it says, serves as the leaders of production, whereas the lazy, careless coloured races execute under their command the unintelligent manual labor. Thus the tropical products, indispensable raw materials and important delicacies are inserted into the world's commerce. And European capital wins its well deserved profits because by its government it assures to the fatalistic aborigines life, security, peace and, by its medical service and hygienic measures, health, too. Suppose this idyll of a paternal government, honest illusion or deceptive talk of theorists and officials, to be as true as in reality it is impossible under capitalist rule, then still it would be faced by an insoluble dilemma : If by the cessation of wars, epidemics and infant mortality the population

increases, there results a shortage of arable land notwithstanding all the irrigation and reclaiming that only postpones the conflict. Industrialization for export, properly speaking an unnatural way out for the most fertile lands, can give only temporary relief. Into such a final state every population that, ruled from above, is left to its own life instincts, must arrive. Every economic system develops its own system of population increase. If by an autocratic rule from above the feelings of responsibility are suppressed, then any active force of self-restraint and self-rule over the conditions of life is extinguished. The impending clash between increase of population and restriction of means of subsistence can find its solution only in a strong display of inner energy and will-power of a people, consequence of its self-reliance and freedom, or of an active fight for freedom.

In the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter it is not the commercial capital in the first place that exploits the colonies. Capitalist enterprises come forth in ever greater numbers : partly agricultural and mining enterprises for cultivating rubber, coffee, tea, for winning oil, tin and other metals, partly industrial or mixed enterprises to work the tropical raw materials, such as textile or sugar factories. It is mostly European capital, drawing high profits from this exploitation. In India, where in such towns as Bombay lived a class of rich merchants, these also take part and constitute a first instance of a modern Indian bourgeoisie. This Indian industry consists well nigh exclusively of textile factories; and from all the textile goods consumed in India nearly 60 per cent. is imported from England and Japan, 20 per cent. comes from the cottage industry, and only 20 per cent. is provided by Indian factories. Yet to exhibit and introduce aspects of modern work and life is sufficient inspiration to a nationalist movement, for throwing off the yoke of the Western rulers. Its spokesmen are the intellectuals, especially the younger generation, who are acquainted with Western science, and in opposition to it study and emphasize with strong

conviction their own national culture. They feel deeply hurt by the racial haughtiness of the whites, who admit them in lower offices only; they come forward as the leaders of the oppressed masses, involving them into their fight for independence. Since the impudent riches of the rulers contrasts so sharply with the abject misery of the masses, this is not difficult. Though as yet the fight can only be peaceful propaganda, passive resistance, and non-co-operation, ie., the refusal of collaboration with the English government, it alarms public opinion in England, inspiring so much apprehension in the rulers there that they resort to vague promises of self-government, and at the same time to sharp persecutions. The movement, of course, is too weak still to throw off the domination of Western capitalism. With the capitalist factories a class of industrial workers is coming into being with extremely low wages and an incredibly low standard of living; strikes occurred against Indian, as well as against European employers. But compared with the immense population all this is an insignificant start, important only as indication of future development.

With the present world war colonial exploitation, as well as the problem of liberation, acquires a new aspect. Against the enormously increasing power of capitalism a fight for independence in its old meaning has no longer any chance. On the other hand, it is probable that from now on world capital under American hegemony will act as a revolutionary agent. By a more rational system of exploitation of these hundreds of millions of people capital will be able to increase its profits considerably; by following another way than the previous primitive impoverishing methods of plunder, by raising labor in the colonies to a higher level of productivity, by better technics, by improvement of traffic, by investing more capital, by social regulations and progress in education. All of this is not possible without according a large amount of independence or at least self-rule to the colonies.

Self-rule of the colonies, of India, and of the Malayan islands, has already been announced. It means that parliaments in Europe and viceroys sent from thither can no longer govern them despotically. It does not mean that politically the working masses will be their own masters, that as free producers they will dispose of their means of production. Self-rule relates to the upper classes of these colonies exclusively; not only will they be inserted into the lower ranks of administration, but they will occupy the leading places, assisted of course by white "advisers" and experts, to ensure that capital interests are served in the right way. Already from the upper classes of India a rather numerous group of intellectuals has proceeded, quite capable as ruling officials to modernise political and social life.

To characterize modern capitalist production as a system wherein the workers by their own free responsibility and will-power are driven to the utmost exertion, the expression was often used that a free worker is no coolie. The problem of Asia now is to make the coolie a free worker. In China the process is taking its course; there the workers of olden times possessed a strong individualism. In tropical countries it will be much more difficult to transform the passive downtrodden masses, kept in deep ignorance and superstition by heavy oppression, into active well-instructed workers capable of handling the modern productive apparatus and forces. Thus capital is faced with many problems. Modernization of the government apparatus through self-rule is necessary, but more is needed : the possibility of social and spiritual organisation and progress, based on political and social rights and liberties, on sound general instruction. Whether world capital will be able and willing to follow this course cannot be foreseen. If it does, then the working classes of these countries will be capable of independent fighting for their class interests and for freedom along with the Western workers.

To all the peoples and tribes living in primitive forms of production in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, it will, of course, mean an entire change of the world, when the working class will have annihilated capitalism. Instead of as hard exploiting masters and cruel tyrants, the white race will come to them as friends to help them and to teach them how to take part in the progressing development of humanity.

#### **4. Russia And Europe**

With this war Russia, the Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics, as it calls itself, has made its entry among the recognised capitalist powers. In the Western countries an entire change has taken place in valuation of and attitude towards Russia and bolshevism. Certainly, the first fear of a communist revolution and the accompanying calumnies had already died away gradually in the ruling classes. Yet they were not quite at ease about their workers, and since the talk of the C.P. on world revolution went on, reports of forged atrocities and real cruelties were a motive to exclude Russia from the community of civilized nations. Until they needed Russia as an ally against Germany; then sentiment made a turn, though at first only in the kind wish that both dictatorships might devour one another. Then there they met governing politicians, officials, generals and officers, factory directors, intellectuals, an entire well-dressed, civilized, well-to-do class ruling the masses, just as at home. So they were reassured. The church only kept aloof, because of the bolshevist anti-religious propaganda.

The similarity of political forms and methods of government in Russia and Germany strikes the eye at first sight. In both the same dictatorship of a small group of leaders, assisted by a powerful well-organized and disciplined party, the same omnipotence of the ruling bureaucracy, the same absence of personal rights and of free speech, the same levelling of spiritual life into one doctrine, upheld by terrorism, the same cruelty towards opposition or even criticism. The economic basis, however, is different. In Russia it is state capitalism, in Germany

state-directed private capitalism. In Germany there is a numerous class of owners of the means of production, a bourgeoisie, which, because of the difficulty of the fight for world power, gave itself a tyrannical dictatorship; it is augmented by an increasing bureaucracy of officials. In Russia bureaucracy is master of the means of production. The conformity in the necessary forms of practical rule and administration, domination from above, gave them the same system of dictatorship.

There is similarity also in the character of their propaganda. Both make use of the ideology of community, because both represent organized against unorganized capitalism. As in Russia, the antithesis to old capitalism was expressed in the catchword of communism, so in Germany by socialism. These are the names under which, in extensive propaganda, the fight for their own power against the old capitalist powers is urged upon the masses as a fight against capitalism. Thus they present themselves as more than a mere nationalism, they proclaim new world principles, fit for all countries, to be realized by world-revolution and world war against the exponents of the old order, English and American capitalism. So they find adherents to their cause, followers of their party, within the country of their opponents, ready to undermine from within their power of resistance.

As similar hostile rivals they find a basis for their opposition in their origin and the consequent traditions. National socialism came to power as an agent of big capitalism, wiping out the old labor movement, in conscious sharp antagonism to the "Marxian" trends of social-democracy and communism. In their own country only it could proclaim itself a party of the workers and impose by terror-propaganda this trickery upon uncritical adherents. The Russian ideology proceeded directly from a revolution made by the workers under the communist banner, and appealed to Marxian doctrines that had been adapted to its cause; but in foreign countries only could it find belief that indeed it represented dictatorship of the workers. Here it could impose upon

young people desirous to fight capitalism and exploitation, whereas national-socialism was considered everywhere as a genuine enemy of the workers, and found sympathy only among the upper and lower part of the bourgeoisie.

The foreign policy of the Russian revolution was a logical consequence of its basic ideas. Though a socialist community has no wishes but to live in peace besides other peoples, it is in danger of being attacked by capitalist states. Hence, it must prepare for war. Moreover, world revolution, annihilation of capitalism all over the world remains the supreme aim; only in this way, by liberating the workers elsewhere, the socialist state can secure its own freedom. So the, socialist state arms and prepares for war, not only for defence, but also for attack. And with surprise naive idealists perceive that what seemed a haven of peace reveals itself a power for war. And they ask whether indeed compulsion by the sword can bring freedom to others.

The contradiction is easily explained. What is named state-socialism discloses itself as state-capitalism, the rule of a new exploiting class, bureaucracy, master of the production apparatus, as in other countries the bourgeoisie. It, too, lives on surplus value. The larger its realm, its power, the larger its share, its wealth. Thus, for this bureaucracy war assumes the same significance as for the bourgeoisie. It takes part in the world contest of Powers, on the same footing as other States, but with the pretension to be the world-champion of the working class. And though in view of the allied governments it cannot make too much show of it, and temporarily even silences the Comintern, yet it knows that in all foreign countries communist parties are working on its behalf. Thus the role of Russia in and after the war begins to depict itself. Behind the old now deceitful aims of extending the realm of communism stands the reality of extending the own international power. If the German bourgeoisie tries to steer its course in the track of England and America, the working class, prevented during long years

from finding its own new way, may produce communist parties as agents of Russian hegemony over the Mid-European regions.

This policy and position among the other capitalist powers has its basis in an inner change of policy in Russia itself. State capitalism has consolidated its power in and through the war, the completion of the preceding development. Since the revolution there was a continual struggle between the socially important groups. First, State bureaucracy, with the Communist Party as its organ, being master of the industrial production, in a hard fight subdued the peasants in its campaign of founding the kolchozes. Besides them, however, stood the army officers and the numerous technical experts and officials in the factories, commonly called the engineers. They had an important function as technical leaders of the production, they had their own union, and were mostly non-party men. The well-known trials of engineers on forged charges of sabotage were an episode in the silent struggle; they were condemned not because they had committed the imputed crimes, but for intimidation and to forestall any attempt at independent political action. In the same way in the trial of General Tukhachevsky and other officers all elements from whom independent action was feared, were shot and replaced by others. Thus the political bureaucracy remained master, but it had to regard the other groups.

The war made a unification of all these forces necessary, and at the same time possible, on the basis of a strong nationalism aspiring to expansion. In the preceding years some so-called reforms had been proclaimed, though by the absence of free speech and free press they had no meaning for the working masses; they now could afford an opportunity for non-party men to take part in the governing apparatus. Party rule and Comintern was pushed into the background. Now under a firmly consolidated ruling class the masses, as in every capitalist state, could be led to the front in well-disciplined gigantic armies.

At the same time the war has brought about an increase of the spiritual influence of bolshevism in Western Europe. Not among the bourgeoisie; now that organized big capitalism is becoming master of the world it has not the least inclination to make way for state capitalism. Not very much among the workers; in the beginning the recognition perforce of the communist parties by the governments may increase its credit among workers dominated by nationalism; but its support of government policy, however masked by a seeming of wild opposition talk, will soon discredit it among the fighting masses of the working class. Among the Western intellectuals, however, Russian bolshevism attracts ever more attention.

Under the rule of big capitalism it is the class of intellectuals that has the technical lead of production, and the spiritual lead of society in its hands. Now it begins to ask — in so far as it is not entirely occupied by its narrow personal job — why shareholders and stock jobbers should have the upper command over production. It feels itself called upon to lead social production as an organized process, to throw off the dominance of a parasitical bourgeoisie and to rule society. It is divided, however, in a series of higher and lower ranks, arranged after usefulness or what else; they form a ladder on which, in mutual rivalry, one may ascend by ambition, capacities, favor or cunning. The lower and badly paid ranks among them may join the fight of the working class against capital. Its higher and leading elements, of course, are hostile to any idea of mastery by the workers over the process of production. Their prominent thinkers and learned scholars, often refined or ingenious spirits, strongly feel their superiority threatened by the phantom of a general “levelling.” The intellectual class feels quite well that its ideal of social order cannot exist without a strong power apparatus, to keep down private capital, but chiefly to keep down the working masses. What they want is a moderate dictatorship, strong enough to resist attempts to revolution, civilized enough to dominate

the masses spiritually and to assure a rational liberty of speech and opinion to the civilized; anyhow, without the rough violence that made national socialism the object of hatred all over Europe. A free road to the talented, and society led by the intellectual elite, such is the social ideal rising in this class.

This they see realized to a fair extent, though mixed up with barbarous remnants, in the Russian system. And the Russians have exerted themselves to promote such ideas. Soon after the revolution already scientific congresses were organized where the assembled scholars from all countries were regally entertained — though there was dearth in the land — and got the most favorable impression of the young enthusiasm and the fresh energy bestowed by the new-shaped society upon science and technics. Of the Solovki camps, where the deported peasants and workers are ill-treated till they perish, of course, nothing was shown to them, nor did they know of the deadly hard labor of millions of victims in the icy wilds of Siberia; probably not even the ordinary "black workers" in the factories did they meet with. Such inspiring experiences could not but strongly impress the younger Western intellectuals; what trickled through about atrocities was easily effaced by the splendour of increasing production figures in the world-wide propaganda of the CP. And now the military successes of the Russian armies enhance the image of Russia as a vigorous civilized modern State.

So we may surmise something about the future of Russia and Bolshevism in Europe. In its antagonism to the Western powers of private capitalism, England and America, its ideology may serve as a valuable weapon to undermine the solid power of their bourgeoisie, by rousing, in case of need, working class opposition against her. As a recognised respectable party the C.P. will try to win posts of influence in politics, either in competition or in collaboration with social democracy; by a seeming show of sparkling opposition talk it seeks

to gather the workers in its fold, to deter them from taking their own road to freedom. As it does already now, it will try, by a quasi-scientific propaganda among intellectuals, to win them over to some bolshevist kind of dictatorial government, and adorn it, may be, with the mark world-revolution.

More direct and important will be the Russian influence upon Central Europe. In the wake of the annihilation of military power comes economic slavery. To impose as much as possible of the burdens on the defeated foe, through the necessity of restoration and compensation of the immeasurable wanton destruction and pillages by the German armies, not only all property, so far as it is left, will be seized, but also all the peoples in so far as they are left, will be harnessed under the yoke of hard labor. The victors probably will not, as after the first world war, leave to the German bourgeoisie the possession of the production apparatus and the rule of the country.

Before, then, an effective fight for their cause will be possible to the Central European workers, a deep change in their thinking and willing must take place. They are faced not only by the formidable physical power of victorious world capitalism, but they will also encounter extreme difficulty in resisting the spiritual forces of Bolshevism on the one side, nationalism on the other side, to find the way clear to their class task. In this fight they must involve the Russian workers. Russian State capitalism, as well, has been exhausted and ravaged by the war; to restore itself it will have to lay a harder pressure upon the workers. So the Russian workers will be compelled to take up the fight for freedom, for liberation out of slavery, as a new great task, the same as the workers all over the world.

### 5. In The Abyss

The second world war has thrown society into an abyss deeper than any former catastrophe. In the first world war the contending capitalisms stood against one another as Powers of old form, waging

war in old forms, only on a larger scale and with improved techniques. Now the war has reversed the inner structures of the States, and new political structures have arisen; now the war is a "total war," into which all forces of society are linked up as its subordinate means.

In and through this war society is thrown back to a lower level of civilization. That is not so much because of the immense sacrifices of life and blood. During the entire period of civilization — i.e., the period of written history and of the division of society into exploiting and exploited classes, between the primitive tribal life and the future world unity of mankind — war was the form of the struggle for existence. So it is quite natural that the last world fights, before the final consolidation drawing along all people, should embrace greater names and be more bloody than any former war.

What makes this retrogressive is first the regress from military and juridical norms that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave a certain appearance of humanity to warfare. The enemies were nominally considered as equal humans and soldiers, political rights of vanquished or occupied countries were recognised, national sentiments respected; civilians usually stood outside the fighting. In international treaties on "the laws of war" these principles were endorsed, and however often violated, they stood out as international law, that could be appealed to against the arbitrariness of a victor. Total war tramples on all these scraps of paper. Not only are all supplies seized and all industry is put into the service of the conqueror, not only are prisoners of war set to work for the enemy, but on an ever larger scale all people from occupied regions are forcibly, in a real slave hunting, dragged off to work in the German war industry. So, by producing arms for the foe, they are constrained to aid him against their own nation; at the same time relieving the enemy's workers for service at the front. Now that war is a matter of industrial production, slave labor becomes one of the foundations of warfare.

It is natural that in the occupied countries — half of Europe — resistance sprang up, and it is natural that it was suppressed severely, even when it consisted only in tentative first traces. It is not natural, however, that in the repression such a height of cruelty was reached, as first applied in the rough mishandling and extermination of the Jewish citizens and then extended to all national opposition. The German soldier, himself an unwilling slave of the dictatorial apparatus, develops into a master and instrument of oppression. As a filthy contamination the habits of violence and outrage spread over the continent, wakening an immense hatred against the German occupants.

In former wars occupation of a foreign country was considered a temporary situation, and international law expressed it in this way, that the occupant was not allowed to change anything in the fundamental law of the country, and only took the administration in its hands insofar as war conditions necessitated it. Now, however, Germany interfered everywhere in the existing institutions, trying to impose the national-socialist principles, pretending it was the beginning of a new era for the entire Europe in which all the other countries as allies, i.e., vassals, had to follow Germany. Underlings it found in the small number of foreign adherents to its creed, and the larger number who saw their chance now; they were made rulers over their compatriots and exhibited the same spirit of wanton violence. The same spiritual tyranny as in Germany itself is imposed; and especially in the Western countries, with their large civil liberties, this arouses an increasing embitterment, that found expression in underground literature. Neither the silly fiction of the unity of the Teutonic race nor the argument of the united, continent of Europe made any impression.

The fall into barbarity is due, firstly, to the destructive power of modern war machinery. More than in any previous time all industrial and productive power of society, all ingenuity and devotion of men is put into the service of the war. Germany, as the aggressive party, set

the example; it perfected the air weapon into bombers that destroyed, with factories of war supplies, the surrounding city quarters. It did not foresee at the time that the steel production of America many times surpassed that of Germany, so that the system of destruction, once that America would have transformed its industrial into military power, would with multiple vehemence upon Germany itself. In the first world war much lamenting was heard about Ypres being destroyed and some French cathedrals damaged; now, first in England and France, and then on a larger scale in Germany, towns and factory quarters, grand monuments of architecture, remnants of irretrievable mediaeval beauty, went to rack and ruin. Week after week the wireless boasted of how many thousands of tons of explosives were thrown upon German towns. As an instrument of terror to bring the German population upon its knees, or to rouse the desire for peace into resistance to the leaders, these bombardments were a failure. On the contrary, through the exasperation over the wanton destruction and killings a disheartened population was bound the firmer to its rulers. They rather gave the impression as if the Allied rulers, sure about their industrial and military superiority, wished to prevent a revolution of the German people against the national-socialist rulers which would have led to milder peace conditions, preferring to beat down German attempts at world power once and for all by a downright military victory.

Besides the material, the spiritual devastation perpetrated among mankind represents no smaller fall into barbarity. The levelling of all spiritual life, of speech and writing to one prescribed creed, and the forcible suppression of any different opinion has grown in and through the war into a complete organisation of falsehood and cruelty.

Censoring of the press had already proved necessary in former wars to prevent sensational news harmful to the warfare of the country. In later times, when the entire bourgeoisie felt keenly nationalist and closely bound to the government, the papers felt it their duty

to collaborate with the military authorities in upholding morale by optimistic statements, in criticizing and abusing the enemy, and in influencing the neutral press. But censorship became more needed than before to suppress resistance on the part of the workers, now that the war brought a heavier pressure of long hours and of shortness of provisions. When propaganda is needed, artificially to rouse in the people enthusiasm for war, counter propaganda revealing the capitalist background of the war cannot be tolerated. So we see in the first world war the press turned into an organ of the army staff, with the special task to uphold the submissiveness of the masses, as well as the fighting spirit.

In the present war this may still represent the state of things on the Allied side; but on the other side it is far surpassed by the adaptation to war conditions of the already existing department of propaganda, with its staff of artists, authors and intellectuals. Now its system of directing opinion, raised to the utmost perfection and extended over Europe, reveals its full efficiency. By stating its own case as the case of highest right, truth and morals, by relating every action of the foe as an act of weakness, or of baseness, or of embarrassment, an atmosphere of faith and victory is created. It proved itself capable of transfiguring the most obvious defeat into a brilliant success, and to represent the beginning of collapse as the dawning of final victory, and thus to inspire stubborn fighting and to postpone the final collapse. Not that people accept it all as truth; they are suspicious of anything they hear; but they see the resolution in the leaders and feel powerless through lack of organization.

Thus the German masses are the victims of a system growing more violent and more mendacious as ruin approaches. So the destruction of the power of German capitalism will be accompanied by the aimless destruction and new slavery of the German people, not by its rise to a new fight for a new world of real freedom.

As a destructive catastrophe, the reign of national-socialism passed over Germany and the surrounding countries. A torrent of organised cruelty and organised falsehood has flooded Europe. As a poisonous taint they have infected mind, will and character of the peoples. They are the mark of new dictatorial capitalism, and their effect will long be felt. They are not a chance degeneration; they are due to special causes characteristic of the present times. Whoever recognises as their deepest cause the will of big capital to keep and to extend its domination over mankind, knows that they will not disappear with the end of the war. Nationalism excited to red heat everywhere, imputing all this to the bad racial character of the foe, thereby rousing stronger national hatred, will always be a fertile soil for new violence, material and spiritual.

The fall into barbarity is not a biological atavism to which mankind might be subjected at any time. The mechanism of how it came to work lies open to the view. The reign of falsehood does not mean that what is said and written is all lies. By emphasising part of the truth and omitting other parts the total can turn into untruth. Often it is combined with the conviction of its truth on the part of the speaker. Doubtless, it holds for everybody that what he says is never the objective, material, all-sided truth, but always subjective truth, a coloured personal, one-sided image of reality. Where all these subjective, personal, hence incomplete, partial truths complete, control and criticise one another, and where most people thereby are compelled to self-criticism, there arises out of them a more general aspect which we accept as the nearest approach to objective truth. If, however, this control is taken away and criticism is made impossible, whilst only one special opinion is put forward, the possibility of objective truth entirely vanishes. The reign of falsehood finds its essential basis in the suppression of free speech.

Cruelty in action often is accompanied by ardent devotion to new principles, that is, irritated by its failure to make progress rapidly enough. In normal society there is no other way than patient

propaganda and the thorough self-education in working out arguments. If, however, dictatorship gives to the few power over the many, then, excited by the fear of losing this power, it tries to obtain its aims through increasing violence. The reign of cruelty finds its essential basis in the dictatorial power of a minority. If we wish that in the coming times, in the fight of classes and peoples, the downfall into barbarity be prevented, these are the things we must oppose with all energy; dictatorial power of a small group or party, and suppression or limitation of free speech.

The storm now sweeping over the earth has raised new problems and new solutions. Besides the spiritual devastation it brought spiritual renovation, new ideas in economic and social organization, most conspicuous among them ideas on new forms of suppression, dominance and exploitation. These lessons will not be lost to world capital; its fight will be more tenacious, its rule stronger by using these new methods. On the other side in the workers a stronger consciousness will dawn of how completely their liberation is bound up with the opposite factors. Now they feel in the body how much the reign of organized falsehood hampers them in gaining the simplest inkling of the knowledge they need, how much the reign of organized terror makes their organization impossible. Stronger than ever before the will and the strength will arise in them to keep open the gates to knowledge by fighting for freedom of speech against any attempt to restrict it; to keep open the gate to class organisation by refusing and repelling any attempt at forcible suppression, in whatever guise of proletarian interest it may present itself.

In this second world war the workers' movement has fallen much deeper than in the first. In the first world war its weakness, so sharply in contrast with former pride and boasting, manifested itself in that it was dragged along, that deliberately, by its own will, it followed the bourgeoisie and turned into underlings of nationalism. This character

persisted in the next quarter of a century, with its idle talk and party intrigue, though gallant fighting in strikes occurred. In the present war the working class had no will of its own any more to decide on what to do; it was already incorporated into the entirety of the nation. As they are shuffled to and fro over factories and shops, uniformed and drilled, commanded to the fronts, mixed up with the other classes, all essence of the former working class has disappeared. The workers have lost their class; they do not exist as a class any more; class-consciousness has been washed away in the wholesale submission of all classes under the ideology of big capital. Their special class-vocabulary : socialism, community has been adopted by capital for its dissimilar concepts.

This holds good especially for Central Europe, where in former times the workers' movement looked more powerful than anywhere else. In the Western countries there remains a sufficient amount of class feeling soon to find them back on the road to fight in the transformation of war industry to peace industry. Encumbered, however, with the heavy load of old forms and traditions, leading to battle in the old forms, it will have some difficulty to find its way to the new forms of fight. Still, the practical needs of the struggle for existence and working conditions will, more or less gradually, compel it to put up and clarify the new aims of conquering the mastery over production. Where, however, dictatorship has reigned and has been destroyed by foreign military power, there under new conditions of oppression and exploitation, a new working class must first take its rise. There a new generation will grow up, for whom the old names and catchwords have no meaning any longer. Certainly, it will be difficult under foreign domination to keep the class feeling free and pure from nationalism. But with the collapse of so many old conditions and traditions, the mind will be more open to direct influence of the new realities. Every doctrine, every device and catchword will be taken, not at its face value, but at its real content.

More powerful than before, capitalism will tower after the war. But stronger also the fight of the working masses, sooner or later, will arise over against it. It is inevitable that in this fight the workers will aim at mastery over the shops, mastery over production, dominance over society, over labor, over their own life. The idea of self-rule through workers' councils will take hold of their minds, the practice of self-rule and workers' councils will determine their actions. So from the abyss of weakness they will rise to a new unfolding of power. Thus a new world will be built up. A new era is coming after the war, not of tranquility and peace, but of constructive class fight.

## Part 5. The Peace

### 1. Towards New War

Hardly had Berlin fallen, hardly had the German power been annihilated, when in the American press well nigh unanimously a new war cry arose, proclaiming Russia the new enemy. With all the armies still in the field, a panic of new war spread over the exhausted tormented world. The new weapon, the atomic bomb, that had turned into dust two big industrial towns and killed at one stroke a hundred thousand people, struck terror into the hearts of civilised mankind and made the Americans realize their own insecurity. "There is no secret, and there is no defence," was the verdict of the atomic physicists who had constructed the bomb; in a couple of years every government can have them made, and they can be carried across the oceans or easily smuggled into America. An intensive campaign in the "Security Council of the 'United Nations'" for eliminating the threat was started. America proposed to establish an international, supernational board or authority, sole master of dangerous material all over the world, qualified to inspect manufacture in every country. The Russian Government refused to admit such a committee with such powers into its territory and

demanded that first America should destroy all its atomic bombs and give up its supremacy.

Why could not the Russian Government agree to an international control ? Russian scientists, speaking for their rulers, said that Russia, the only country free from capitalism, must keep strictly to its sovereignty, cannot take part in a capitalist world unity, cannot suffer its socialism to be corrupted by capitalist-minded inspecting authorities. One would say that to open up their happier and progressive way of life to the view of the rest of the world should only propagate their economic system. So the Russian rulers' true reason for shunning a close contact of their subjects with the peoples of freer private capitalism must be that there is, besides war secrets, too much to conceal. During and after the war so many more details have come to light about conditions in Russia : the general low standard of living of the masses, the wide divergence between low wages of the workers and high salaries of the political and technical leaders, the concentration camps, where ten or more millions of people are starved and worked to death under the most horrible working conditions. The existence of this immense army of slave-labourers testifies that besides the much praised highly technical sector of Russian economy there is a large sector consisting of unskilled forced labor of the lowest level of productivity. It means a state of economic backwardness, not suspected before beneath the glorifying figures of five-year plans and stackhanovism, an inner weakness beneath the apparent progress. Whereas organization and skilful planning, according to either admiring or hostile socialist opinion in the Western world should imply a higher form of production system, the effect seems to be frustrated to a high degree by the secret police, essential instrument of dictatorship, that ever endangers the security and state of life of any member of the technical and bureaucratic officialdom.

Russia and America are not only rivals in that they both are in need of the oil abundance in the Near East. Moreover, Russia has to fear the power of America. The yearly production of steel in 1945 for America was 80 millions of tons, for Russia ( after the fourth five-year plan ) 24 millions; for coal these figures are 575 and 250 millions of tons. This shows the relative industrial strength, that cannot be compensated by Russia having 170 millions against America 130 millions of people. And now America transformed its industrial power into military and political power. This political power finds its ideological expression in the call for world-unity. "One world or none" was the panic cry of the atomic scientists when aghast they saw the consequences of their work; if this terrible new power is not fettered through international unity, it will destroy mankind itself. But it stands to reason that in any world organization of "united nations" the most powerful will dominate the others. The Russian rulers fully realize that to consent to the establishment of a superpower with large competencies means subjection under the most powerful of the associates, under American capitalism. They refuse.

So both prepare for war. Is it inevitable ? All we can see and consider is what deep-seated forces lie at the root of this threat. It is to America in the first place that we have to turn. Here private capitalism is in full development, here socialism is insignificant, practically absent in politics, here planned economy and State direction of production was only a short-lived war necessity, soon replaced by free enterprise. All the conditions and phenomena of former free capitalism in Europe, especially in England and Germany, repeat themselves here, now on a far bigger scale. In 1928 already American production exceeded that of total Europe; at the beginning of the war, notwithstanding nine millions of unemployed, it produced more than in any former year. Then during the war the production increased enormously, as well on account of the greater number of workers as of a rapid rise in technical productivity;

so that, despite the tremendous production of war materials, it was not necessary to impose strict limitations on the people's consumption, as was the case in European countries. War is always a golden time for capitalist profit, because the State, as buyer, pays willingly the highest prices. In America it was a gold rush as never before; war profits were not in terms of millions, but of billions of dollars. And the end of the war that devastated the production apparatus of Europe, sees America with a production apparatus more than fifty per cent. larger than at its beginning, with an industrial production twice as large as that of the rest of the capitalist world. For this increased capacity of output a market must be found. This is the problem facing American capitalism.

An inner market might easily be found : by giving a larger share to the working class, thus increasing their buying capacity. But this course, a cutting of profits, capitalism cannot take. It is convinced that the workers, if they can provide a fourth-hand car and a refrigerator, are well off and have nothing to desire. The essence of capital is to make profit.

So foreign markets have to be found. First there is devastated Europe. Its production apparatus has to be restored by American exports made possible through big loans. Part of it is already American property, and for what nominally remains European property heavy interest will have to be paid to American finance. European economy stands under direct control of American supervision agents who will see to it that the loans are spent in such a way that Europe cannot develop into a serious competitor. In Europe American capital finds a working class with much lower standard of life than that of the American workers, hence promising bigger profits than at home. But this is only possible if first of all its labor power is restored by sending as relief gifts of food, clothes, fuel, to the hungry impoverished peoples. It is investment at long, promising profits only in the long run. Moreover, it

is here confronted with Russia trying to extend its exploitation system over Central and Western Europe.

Then there is China, the most promising market for American products. But here American capitalism has done its very best to spoil its own chances. In the civil war it supported the capitalist government against the red peasant armies, with the sole result that the American officers and agents turned away with disgust from the incapable rapacious Kuomintang rulers; that the peasant armies could neither be defeated nor win entire power, so that the permanent civil war brought chaos and prevented recovery. The natural sympathy of American capitalist rulers towards exploiting classes in other parts of the world, and its equally class-born hostility against popular movements, makes them blind to the fact that only out of the latter the basis for strong economic development may arise. Thus an entire reversal of policy would be necessary. The fact that the communist armies are backed by Russia intensifies American antagonism towards the Chinese people's masses, thus preventing China from becoming a market for American export,

Then there is Russia, the U.S.S.R., in extension and population a continent in itself, after the U.S.A., the second realm of the world in industrial development under one State government, with immense sources of the most valuable raw materials, the second gold producer of the world, abounding in fertile land, with a rapidly increasing population estimated within twenty years to reach up to 250 millions. It is closed to foreign commerce; an iron wall isolates it from any foreign influence. American capitalism, so much in need of markets for its outpouring mass of products can it suffer such a wall to exist without trying to break it open ? It waged a war for "liberty"; liberty means free commerce and intercourse all over the world. It is not to be expected from the mightiest capitalist class that it should tolerate exclusion from a third part of the industrially developed world.

Moreover, American capitalists are confident that against the impact of even peaceful commerce Russian economy will not be able to hold out, but will gradually give way to private ownership. So, apparently, think the Russian rulers; they refuse to expose their skilfully constructed higher organisation of planned economy to the corrupting influences of private capitalism.

Thus the conditions for a deep-seated conflict are given. By its very nature American private capitalism is, fundamentally, the aggressor; Russian state-capitalism has to defend its position. Of course, defence often has to consist in attacking; in any war preparation each party imputes aggression to the other. So Russia tries to establish a protecting fringe beyond its borders and tries to extend its domination over Europe. Moreover, in all capitalist countries it has an organisation of devoted adherents and agents, allured by the revolutionary traditions of 1917, convinced that organized state-directed economy means socialism, firm in the expectation of an approaching economic crisis that will upset the system of private capitalism.

Among expert economists, too, there is a widespread opinion that world industry, that is, especially American industry, is to face a heavy crisis. Its productive capacity, its output of products is so large that there is no market for it. So, after the first peace boom supplying the deficiencies of the war years, there will come a heavy slump, with large unemployment and all its consequences. Strictly speaking, it is a continuation of the 1930–33 slump, after which no real recovery until 1940 took place. Then the war provided an enormous market for a rapidly expanding production, a market never choked because all products were rapidly destroyed. Now that the war is over the capitalist class again faces the pitiful situation that the world cannot absorb its products. Is it to be wondered at that once more its thoughts turn to those golden years of high profits when death and destruction of uncounted human lives brought in such a rich harvest ? And that even

great parts of the workers, narrow capitalist-minded as they are, think of that time only as years of high wages and exciting adventure ?

War as a market can be partly substituted by war preparation as a market. Armaments already occupy a notable part of the productive force of Society. For the budget year 1946–47 America's military budget amounted to 12 billions of dollars. Compared with an estimated total yearly national product of 180 billions it may not look impressive; but compared with an American peace-time export of seven billions it gains in importance. The bulk of production is always destined for home consumption of food, clothes, tools, machinery, etc.; the fringe of export and extension is the active force that stimulates the entirety of production, increasing the need for productive apparatus and labor hands, who, in their turn, need commodities; under capitalism each extra demand from outside tends to raise, directly and still more indirectly at a much enhanced rate, the extent of production. The continued demand for war materials to be destroyed and to be replaced continually because in a few years they are superseded by new inventions, may act as a force postponing the impending industrial crisis.

It is highly questionable, however, whether such a rate of war preparedness can last indefinitely. Though theoretically it seems possible that two lots of slave-drivers, practising different methods, but not so very different in deepest character, when viewing the risks, may prefer to come to terms with one another, it does as yet not look probable. The American capitalist class, knowing that at the other side of the iron curtain war preparations go on in the same feverish tempo, trusting that at the moment America is the strongest in war technics, driven by the desire to have the entire world open to international trade, believing in America's mission to make the world into one unity, might in view of the allurements of war well be expected to overcome its fear

of seeing its big cities turned into dust by atom bombs. And then hell again breaks loose over mankind.

Is war inevitable ? Is not war an anachronism ? Why should man, able to discover atomic processes, not be able to establish world peace ? Those who pose this question do not know what capitalism means. Can there be world peace when in Russia millions of slaves are worked to death in concentration camps, and the entire population lacks freedom ? Can there be world peace when in America the kings of capital keep the entire society in subjection and exploitation without being faced by any trace of a fight for social freedom ? Where capitalist greed and capitalist exploitation dominate world peace must remain a pious wish.

When we say that, hence, war is inseparable from capitalism, that war can only disappear with capitalism itself, this does not mean that war against war is of no use and that we have to wait till capitalism has been destroyed. It means that the fight against war is inseparable from fight against capitalism. War against war can be effective only as part of the workers' class war against capitalism.

If the question is raised whether it is possible to forestall a threatening war, it is pre-supposed that there is a conflict between government, invested with power and authority on war and peace, and the masses of the population, especially the working class. Their voting power is without effect since it works only on election day; parliaments and Congresses are part of the ruling Power. So the question comes down to this : Have the workers, and in a wider sense the people's masses, at the moment of danger the possibility, by other than parliamentary means, to enforce their peace-will upon the war-preparing rulers ? They have. If such a will actually lives within them, if they are prepared to stand with resolute conviction for their aim. Their form of fight then consists in direct mass-actions.

A government, a ruling class cannot go into war with the people, unwilling and resisting. Therefore a moral and intellectual preparation

is no less necessary than a technical and organizational preparation. Systematic war propaganda in the press, in broadcasting, in movies, must waken a bellicose spirit and suppress the instinctive but unorganised spirit of resistance. Hence it is certain that a decided conscious refusal on the part of the people's masses, demonstrated in outspoken widely heard protest, can have a determining influence upon the governmental policy. Such a protest may appear first in mass meetings voting sharp resolutions. More efficient will be the protest if the masses go into the streets demonstrating; against their ten and hundred thousands all riot acts and court injunctions are meaningless. And when these are not sufficient, or are suppressed by military violence, the workers and employees in traffic and industry can strike. Such a strike is not for wages, but to save society from utter destruction.

Government and the ruling class will try to break the resistance with all means of moral and physical suppression. So it will be a hard fight, demanding sacrifices, steadfastness and endurance. The psychological basis for such fight is not at once present in full vigour; it needs time to develop, and does so only under heavy spiritual strain. Since the middle classes always tend to vacillate between opposite moods, capitalist greed expressing itself in nationalist aggressiveness, and fear for destruction, from them stubborn resistance cannot be expected. The fight, therefore, takes the character of a class fight, with mass strikes as its most powerful weapon.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea of a universal strike at the outbreak of war, as well as that of a general refusal to take up arms, was propagated, especially by the anarchists; it was meant as a direct impediment to mobilisation and warfare. But the power of the working class was far too small at the time. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when an imperialist war became ever more threatening, the question of how to prevent it became urgent among European socialists. In the German socialist party there were discussions about mass strikes, and

the idea gained ground whether mass actions could be used against war. But the party — and union — leaders opposed all such actions because they feared that in that case Government would suppress and annihilate their laboriously built-up organisations. They wished to restrict the workers' movement to parliamentary and trade union action. In 1912, when again war loomed near, an international peace congress was held at Basle. Under solemn bib-bam of the bells the delegates entered the cathedral, to listen to fine speeches from the most prominent leaders on the international unity and brotherhood of the workers. Part of the delegates wished to discuss ways and means how to oppose war; they intended to propose resolutions calling up the workers of all countries for discussion and mass action. But the presidium said no; no discussion was allowed. Whereas now the splendid demonstration of unity and peace-will, it said, would impress and warn the war-mongers, the discussions exposing our dissensions about the ways of action would encourage the militarists. Of course, it was just the reverse. The capitalist rulers were not deceived by this show; they at once sensed the inner weakness and fear; now they knew they could go on and that the socialist parties would not seriously oppose the war. So the disaster took its inevitable course. When in 1914, during the last days of July, working masses demonstrated in the streets of Berlin they felt uneasy, because the socialist party failed to give energetical directions; their calls were drowned in the louder national anthems of the bourgeois youth. The war started unhampered, with the working class organizations tied firmly to its chariot.

Basle had been a symbol, a test, a crossroad. The decision taken there determined all further events, the four years of murder over Europe, the catastrophe of all moral and spiritual progress, and then beyond, Hitlerism and the second world war. Could It have been otherwise ? The Basle result was not chance, but a consequence of the actual inner state of the workers' movement : the supremacy of leaders,

the docility of the masses. Social developments depend on the deeper general power relations of the classes. But just as in geography small structure details of watersheds determine whether the water flows to one or to another ocean, so small hardly noticed differences in relative strength at definite moments may have decisive effects on the course of events. If the opposition in the socialist parties had been stronger, more self-confident; if at the time in the workers the spirit of independent action had been stronger; if, hence, the Basle congress had been compelled to discussion and thus had brought more clearness, then the war, surely, would not have been prevented. But from the onset, it would have been crossed by class fights, by internal strife within each country breaking up national unity, exalting the workers' spirits. Then the history of the later years, the state of socialism, the relations of the classes, the conditions of society would have been different.

Now again society at large, and the working class especially, stands before the same question : can the war be prevented ? Of course, there are differences; then the bourgeoisie was mostly unaware of the danger, whereas now it is itself full of apprehension; then the working class was well organized in a socialist party proclaiming itself hostile to imperialist policy, and the deadly foe of all capitalism, whereas present day America shows nothing of the sort. It is not certain whether this is only weakness. The Russian workers are entirely powerless; they lack the liberties which the American workers enjoy and may use in their fight : freedom of speech, of press, of discussion, of organization, of action. So, in any case, it is up to the American working class to decide whether as obedient instruments they will help to make their capitalist masters all-powerful masters of the world, or whether, by making war against war, they will enter for the first time into the war against capitalism, for their own freedom.

## **2. Towards New Slavery**

The second world war has devastated Europe. In Germany nearly all towns have been turned into ruins and rubbish by American bombers, where 60 millions of people, starving and naked, have to live as savages in their holes. In France, Italy, Holland, Poland, England, large parts have been devastated in the same way. More vital still than this visible lack of housing is the destruction of the production apparatus. Under the industrial system of capitalism the production apparatus, the factories, machines, traffic are the backbone, the basis of life. Under primitive, pre-capitalist conditions of simple agriculture the soil secures life. Under capitalism-in-ruins agriculture, retrograde as it is, cannot provide sufficient food for the industrial millions, and ruined industry cannot provide tools and fertilizers to restore agriculture. So Europe, after the war, as first and main task, faces the problem of recovery.

Recovery, reconstruction, was the watchword proclaimed and heard everywhere. It meant more than simply reconstruction of the production apparatus, the construction of new machines, ships, trucks and factories. It meant reconstruction of the production system, of the system of social relations between capital and labor, the reconstruction of capitalism. Whereas during the war ideas arose and were heard of a new world to come after the war, a better world of harmony, social justice and progress, even of socialism, now it was made clear that, practically, capitalism and exploitation were to remain the basis of society. How could it be otherwise ? Since during the war the workers acted only as obedient servants, soldiers to vanquish their masters' enemies, with never a thought of acting for their own freedom, there can be no question to-day of any change in the basic principle of society, capitalist exploitation.

This does not mean restoration of old capitalism. It has gone for ever. Conditions have changed. Capitalism is in distress. We are poor. Where productive force has been destroyed so thoroughly, it stands

to reason that there must be scarceness of all life necessities. But there is more to it. Poverty is not equally distributed. As President Truman lately stated, wages had risen less and profits had risen more than the prices. The poor are poorer now, the rich are richer than before. This is no chance result of temporary conditions. To grasp its meaning we have to consider the deeper economic basis of the new' social conditions.

Formerly, in ordinary times, the gradual renovation of the productive apparatus at the rate in which it was used up or became antiquated, took a certain regular percentage of the entire labor of society. Now the mass destruction demands a mass renovation in a short time.

This means that a larger part of the total labor has to be spent on the production of means of production, and a smaller part is left for consumption goods. Under capitalism the means of production are the property of the capitalist class; they are renovated out of the surplus-value. Hence more surplus-value is needed. This means that a larger share of the produce has to fall to the capitalist class, a smaller share to the working class. As capitalist opinion in the middle class literature expresses it : For recovery of prosperity the first condition is production of capital, accumulation of profits; high wages are an impediment to rapid recovery.

Thus the main problem of capitalist policy since the war is how to increase the surplus-value by depressing the standard of life of the workers. Automatically this happens already by the steady rise of prices, a consequence of the continuous issue of paper money under scarcity of goods. So the workers have to fight ever again for increase of the nominal wages, have ever again to strike, without attaining more than that the wages slowly, at a distance, follow the increasing cost of living. Still there may be a willingness among individual employers — in view of the shortness of labor power — to pay more than the contracted scale of wages; so the State intervenes in the interest of the entire capitalist class. First by means of the institute of mediators. These

state-appointed mediators, formerly designated to arbitrate in case of wage disputes, now have the function of imposing standard wages, maximum wages not to be surpassed by any employer. It now happens that in a strike the employer is willing to pay more wages, but the State forbids it. Or the government proclaims a general wage-pegging which, in view of the rising prices, means a continuous lowering of life standard. Thus the strike against individual employers or employers' unions becomes meaningless; each strike is directed and must be directed consciously against State power.

Trade unions, too, now acquire a new function. They are directly interposed as officially recognized institutions that negotiate and make treaties, in the name of the workers, with the governmental and capitalist bodies. Government gives legal sanction to the decisions of the union; this means that the workers are bound morally and legally to the contracts made by the union leaders considered as their representatives. Formerly it was the workers themselves who in their assemblies had to decide on the new working conditions; they could, by their vote, accept and reject them. Now this semblance of independence, of at least formal free decision in bargaining, is taken from them. What the union leaders in conference with government and capitalists arrange and agree upon, is considered law for the workers; they are not asked, and should they refuse, all the moral and organisational power of the union is used to force them into obedience. It is clear that unions as formally self-ruling organizations of the workers with chosen leaders are far more apt to impose the new bad working conditions than would be any power institute of the State. Thus the trade unions are made part of the power apparatus dominating the working class. The union is the salesman of the labor power of the workers, and in bargaining in conference with the State officials sells it to the employers.

This does not mean, of course, that now the unions and their leaders in every case consent to the capitalist demands. Thereby their authority

would soon break down, as is actually the case to a certain degree now. Their attitude, moreover, often depends on political considerations, whether they stand entirely at the side of the Government, as in England, or are hostile against the Government, as in France. The trade union leaders in France, belonging to the C.P., hence agents of the Russian rulers, have not the least interest now to sustain the French capitalist class and its government, as they did some years ago when they took part in government themselves and stood hostile against the workers' strikes. Thus the fight of the workers against impoverishment is used by the political parties as a subordinate means in the struggle between the Western system of private capitalism and the Russian system of state capitalism.

The problem facing European capitalism, however, has a still wider scope. It is not only a matter of wages; it is the question whether, after this breakdown of the economic system, the working masses are willing to rebuild it. Capitalism knows that "labor only can save us." Hard work and low wages are the conditions for recovery. Will the workers, who remember the hard life under capitalist exploitation before the war, consent to a still harder life in order to restore that state of things ? They may, if they can be convinced that it is for a better world that they now exert themselves, for a world of freedom for their class, for socialism. Socialism is the magic word able to transform sullen rebels into ready co-operators.

In broad layers of the middle class the conviction awoke that socialism, in one way or another, was needed for recovery; in most countries socialist ministers took office, socialist and communist parties dominated the parliaments. In England the slogan read : "Labor only can save us"; a large combined middle class and workers' vote gave an overwhelming majority to the Labor Party that in former governments had shown its capitalist reliability. Where a downright capitalist government would have been unable to suppress forcibly the resistance

of the workers and to enforce the new hard living conditions upon them, a Labor Government was the only escape.

England, indeed, was in a critical condition. The second world war had exhausted its capital of foreign investments, the interest of which formerly directed a stream of unpaid consumption goods into the country. Uncle Shylock had given his generous aid only after his hard-pressed Ally had delivered most of its assets — notwithstanding the fact that the war essentially had served to destroy America's most dangerous rival to world domination, a Germany disposing of the resources of the entire European continent. England had to give up a large part of its colonies, it could hardly bear the expenses of playing the part of a Big Power any longer. Also we see the English bourgeoisie lose its old self-reliant feeling of confidence; its foreign policy, e.g., in the Near East, shows signs of diffidence. The privileged position formerly occupied by the British working class, having its share in England's exploitation of the world, had gone. Now the Labor Party faced the task of clearing the bankrupt estate.

Socialism, however, was not to be simply make-believe. A good dose of Socialism was really needed to restore capitalism. Some of the basic industries of capitalist production, as coal mining and railway traffic, as a consequence of private ownership encumbered with an entirely antiquated lack of organisation, constituted a ridiculous muddle of inefficiency. To a well-developed capitalist production good organisation of such basic branches as coal, steel, traffic, is just as necessary as that of post and telegraph; so nationalization is a capitalist necessity, to which the name socialisation is given. Though there is nothing revolutionary in it former governments were too full of respect for private enterprise to satisfy those general needs; a "socialist" Labor Government was needed to establish capitalist efficiency. When now the miners complain that they find no difference in treatment between the former mine owners and the new Coal Board they have to consider

that the reform was not made for them, but for capitalism. It was not an attack on capitalist property; the coal mine shares — of doubtful quality — were replaced by Government Bonds; this manipulation has in no way lessened the exploitation of the workers.

The State has to assume functions in the production apparatus that formerly were the domain of private enterprise. This does not yet mean state-capitalism, as in Russia, but only state-directed capitalism, somewhat as it was in Nazi-Germany. And there are more points of resemblance. Capital is scarce in post-war Europe, as it was in Germany after the first war. The strictest economy is necessary. No more than under German fascism can it now be left to the free will of the capitalist class to spill the available national capital by importing luxuries or materials for the production of luxuries. To rebuild the production apparatus of the country Government has to take in hand the control and command of all imports and exports, of all transport of values across the frontiers. International trade then cannot be left to private merchants; the governments negotiate trade pacts, often strictly bilateral, on quantities comprising the bulk of food supplies and the industrial produce of the entire country. What Nazi-Germany introduced as the new totalitarian system of trade is now imitated by all the European States, an emergency measure here, just as it was there. But the character of the emergency is different; there it was to spare forces for a new assault toward world conquest, to prepare for world war; here it is to stave off starvation and revolution, a result of world war. Every government has to import foodstuffs from abroad — grain production in Europe by deterioration of the soil and lack of hands having diminished to only half or two-thirds of its prewar amount — lest the hungry population should revolt and bring the C.P. into power. But they must be paid by the export of industrial products withheld from their own people; or by loans from America, tying Western Europe with the bonds of debt slavery to the master of the world's gold.

So the State has a far greater power now than before. It is the consequence of war destruction. This does not mean, however, that it is a temporary abnormal state of things. Nobody believes that hereafter old private capitalism can return. The increasing size of enterprises, the interconnection of world economy, the concentration of capital demand planning and organisation; though now and then it needs catastrophes to enforce these tendencies. These post-war conditions form a transition, an introduction to a new world, the world of planned capitalism. The State rises as a mighty power above society. It dominates and regulates economic life, it directs planned production, it distributes food and other life necessities according to its judgment of primary needs, it distributes the surplus-value produced by the workers among the owners of capital; it directs more or less even the spiritual food, having distributive power over the paper needed for the printing of books. In its organization the political parties are its bickering office-of-publicity holders, and the trade unions are part of its bureaucracy. And, most important, the totalitarian State incorporates the working masses into its social organisation as the obedient producers of value and surplus-value. This is performed by calling planned capitalism by the name of socialism.

This is not simply usurpation of a name. A simple word, a deceitful name, has no such power. The name is the expression of a reality. Socialism was the watchword of the suffering and fighting workers in the past century, the message of their liberation, the magic word occupying their hearts and heads. They did not see that it meant only an imperfect liberation, the rule of their leaders as new masters, disposing over production apparatus and product. Socialism was the program of the leaders and politicians they sent into the parliaments there to fight capitalism and exploitation. The goal of socialism, after the conquest of State power, was the organisation of production, planned economy, transferring the productive apparatus into the hands of the community,

represented by the State. Now that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism in emergency needs planned economy, direction and organization of production through State power, the old slogan of the workers just fits in with the new needs of capitalism. What had been the expression of their modest hopes for liberation becomes the instrument of their ready submission under stronger slavery. All the traditions of former aspirations, sacrifices, and heroic struggles, binding socialist workers to their creed and their party and condensed in the name socialism, now act as fetters laming resistance against the growing power of the new capitalism. Instead of clearly seeing the situation and resisting, blindfolded by the dear traditional slogans, they go into the new slavery.

This socialism is for Europe; it is not for America, nor for Russia. It is born in Europe, it has to save capitalist Europe. Why did Europe succumb into such utter powerlessness ? It has outside Russia, 400 millions of people, more than the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. together, it is rich in raw materials for industry, rich in fertile land; it had a highly developed industry and a well-instructed population disposing of an abundance of capital. Why, then, such a lack of capitalist power ? Because Europe is divided up in a dozen nationalities, speaking several dozens of languages, and so is driven by fierce centuries-old antagonisms and national hatreds. At the rise of capitalism these nations were the right size for economic units; now that capitalist efficiency needs larger units, of continent size, Europe is at a disadvantage against the new powers America and Russia. Its inner inextinguishable enmities and wars called in those mightier rivals who trampled it down, physically and economically. What at the end of the Middle Ages happened to the Italian towns, which had been the birthplaces of burgher power and early capitalism, but which, torn by their mutual feuds and hatreds, could not establish a larger national unity, and so were, as battlefield, trampled by the French and the Spanish armies and

subjected to mightier foreign powers — now happened to Europe on a larger scale. European capitalism is now the victim of that nationalism that once was its force. When after the first world war President Wilson, as the arbiter of Europe, proclaimed the principle of national self-determination this was the very means to keep Europe powerless, divided up into a host of independent, mutually fighting parts. It is quite natural that now socialist politicians propagate the idea of one consolidated socialist Europe; but they are too late; Europe is being partitioned already into an Eastern and a Western block. The idea itself of trying to make socialist Europe a third world power bridle the aggression of the others, belongs to the realm of middle class ideology that sees only contending nations, of continent size now; this ideology means the salvation of European capitalism.

Looking from a general point of view we may say that the development of the productive forces of society renders inevitable their social organization into one well-planned entirety. It may take place in two different ways. One is the way of capital, making State power the directing power of the production, making managers appointed from above the commanders of labor. It leads to totalitarianism in different degrees, the State extending its regulative power over ever more realms of human and social life. It leads to dictatorship, more or less camouflaged by parliamentary or sham democratic form. Such dictatorship does not necessarily assume the brutal forms we have seen in Germany and Russia, with an all-powerful secret police keeping all classes in its cruel grip. For the working class the difference between Western democratic and Eastern dictatorial forms of Government is not essential, economically; in both it is subjected to exploitation by a ruling class of officials that commands production and distributes the produce. And to stand over against the State as the all-powerful master of the production apparatus, means loss of a good deal of that limited amount of free action by which it could formerly resist the demands of capital.

The other way is the way of the working class, seizing social power and mastery over the production apparatus.

### 3. Towards New Freedom

The second world war has inaugurated a new epoch. More than the first world war it has changed the structure of the capitalist world. Thereby it has brought a fundamental change in the conditions of the workers' fight for freedom. These new conditions the working class has to know, to understand, and to face. It has, first, to give up illusions. Illusions about its future under capitalism, and illusions about an easy way of winning freedom in a better world of socialism.

In the past century, the first epoch of the workers' movement, the idea of socialism captured the mind. The workers built up their organisations, political parties, as well as trade unions, and attacked and fought capitalism. It was a fight by means of leaders; parliamentarians as spokesmen did the real fighting, and it was assumed that afterwards politicians and officials should do the real work of expropriating the capitalists and building up the new socialist world. Where reformism pervaded the socialist parties it was believed that by a series of reforms they would gradually mitigate and finally transform capitalism into a real commonwealth. Then at the end of the first world war hopes ran high about a near world revolution led by the communist party. By proclaiming strict obedience of the workers towards the leaders under the name of discipline, this party believed it could beat down capitalism and establish state socialism. Both parties denounced capitalism, both promised a better world without exploitation, under their rulership. So millions of workers followed them, believing they would defeat capitalism and liberate the proletariat from slavery.

Now these illusions have broken down. First about capitalism. Not a mitigated, but an aggravated capitalism faces us. It is the working class that has to bear the burden of capitalist recovery. So they must fight. Ever again strikes flare up. Though successful in appearance, they

do not succeed in staving off want and misery. Against the formidable power of capitalism they are too weak to bring relief.

Not illusions about party communism. Such could hardly have existed; because the C.P. never concealed its intention to establish a despotic rule over a subordinate working class. This goal stands squarely opposite to the workers' goal of being free masters of society themselves.

There were, too, illusions about socialism and unions. Now the workers discover that the organisations they considered as part of themselves stand as a power against them. Now they see that their leaders, political and union leaders, take side with capital. Their strikes are wild-cat strikes. In England Labor holds the State office for capitalism-in-need, and the trade unions are inserted as part of the apparatus of the State. As in the Grimethorpe strike a miner said to a reporter : "As usual, we are united and every one is against us."

This, indeed, is the mark of the new time. All the old powers stand against the workers, driving, sometimes cajoling, mostly denouncing and abusing them : capitalists, politicians, leaders, officials, the State. They have only themselves. But in their fight they are firmly united. More firmly, more unbreakably than in former contests, their mutual solidarity forging them into one solid body. Therein lies an indication of the future. To be sure, such small strikes cannot be more than a protest, a warning, to reveal the mood of the workers . Solid unity in such small units can be no more than a promise. To exert pressure upon the government they must be mass strikes.

In France and Italy, where the government tried to maintain wage-pegging without being able to prevent a rise of prices, mass strikes flared up, now indeed consciously directed against the government; combined with stronger forms of fight, with shop occupation, seizure by the workers of the offices. It was not, however, a pure class action of the workers but at the same time a political manoeuvre in party strife.

The strikes were directed by the central committee of the trade unions ( C.G.T. ), dominated by the Communist Party, and had to serve as an action of Russian politics against the Western governments. Thus from the onset there was an intrinsic weakness in them. The fight against private capitalism took the form of submission to state capitalism; hence it was opposed by those who abhorred state capitalist exploitation as a worse condition. So the workers could not arrive at real class unity; their action could not display as real massal class action; their great aim of freedom was obscured through servitude to capitalist party slogans.

The fierce antagonism sprung up at the end of the war between Russia and the Western powers has changed the attitude of the classes towards Russian communism. Whereas the Western intellectuals take side with their capitalist masters against dictatorship, large parts of the workers once more see Russia as their partner. So the difficulty for the working class to-day is that it is involved in the struggle of two world powers, both ruling and exploiting them, both referring to the exploitation on the other side in order to make them obedient adherents. In the Western world the Communist Party, agent of Russian state capitalism, presents itself as the ally and leader of the workers against home capitalism. By patient, petty work in the organizations it shoved itself into the leading administrative places, showing how a well-organized minority is able to dominate a majority; unlike the socialist leaders bound to their own capitalism it does not hesitate to put up the most radical demands for the workers, thus to win their favor. In countries where American capitalism retains in power the most reactionary groups, the C.P. takes the lead of popular movements, as the future master, to make them allies of Russia should they win dominance. If in America itself the working masses should come to mass actions against new war, the C.P. will immediately join and try to make the action a source of spiritual confusion. On the reverse, American capitalism will not be slow to present itself as the liberator

of the enslaved Russian masses, hereby to claim the adherence of the American workers.

This is not a chance situation of to-day. Always capitalist policy consists in dividing the working class by making it adhere to two opposite capitalist parties. They feel by instinct that in this way the working class is made powerless. So the more they are alike, two lots of profit-seeking exploiters and office-seeking politicians, the stronger they emphasize their often traditional artificial differences into sounding slogans simulating fundamental principles. So it was in home politics in every country, so it is now in international politics, against the working class of the world. Should capitalism succeed in establishing "one world" it certainly would discover the necessity to split into two contending halves, in order to prevent unity of the workers.

Here the working class needs wisdom. Not solely knowledge of society and its intricacies, but that intuitive wisdom that is growing out of their plain condition of life, that independence of mind that is based upon the pure principle of class struggle for freedom. Where both capitalist powers try to win the working masses by their noisy propaganda and thus to divide them, these have to realize that theirs is the third way, the fight for their own mastery over society.

This fight arises as an extension of their present small attempts of resistance. Up till now they struck separately; when one factory or industry went on strike the others looked on, apparently uninterested; so they could only worry the rulers who at most appeased them with small concessions. Once they perceive that the first condition to enforce their demands is mass unity of action they will begin to raise their class power against State-power. Up till now they let themselves be directed by capitalist interests. Once they understand that the other condition, not less primary, is to keep the direction in their own hands by means of their delegates, their strike committees, their workers' councils, and do

not allow any leaders to lead them, they will have entered the road to freedom.

What we now witness is the beginning of breakdown of capitalism as an economic system. Not yet visible over the entire world, but over Europe, where it took its origin. In England, in Europe, capitalism arose; and like an oil-spot it extended ever wider over the world. Now in this centre we see it decay, hardening into despotic forms to stave off ruin, showing the now flourishing new sites, America, Australia, their future.

The beginning of breakdown : what was supposed to be a matter of the future, the limitedness of the earth as an impediment to further expansion of capitalism now manifests itself already. The slow increase of world trade since the first world war indicates the slackening tempo, and the deep crisis of 1930 has not been vanquished by a new prosperity. The slackening at the time did not enter into the consciousness of man; it could only be made out afterwards in statistical figures. To-day the breakdown is conscious experience; the broad masses of the people feel it and know it, and in panic try to find a way out.

The breakdown of an economic system : not yet of a social system. The old dependencies of the classes, the relations of a master and a servant class, the basic fact of exploitation as yet are in full vigour. Desperate efforts are made to consolidate them. By transforming the chance economy into planned economy, by increasing State-despotism, by intensifying the exploitation.

The beginning of breakdown of an old system : not yet the beginning rise of a new system. The working class is far back, compared to the master class, in recognizing the changed conditions. Whereas the capitalists are active in transforming old institutions and adapt them to new functions, the workers stubbornly adhere to traditional feelings and actions, and try to fight capital by putting their trust in agents of capitalism, in unions and parties. Surely the wild strikes are

first indications of new forms of fight. But only when the entire working class is permeated by the new insight into the significance of self-action and self-rule, the way to freedom opens out.

The breakdown of capitalism is at the same time the breakdown of the old socialism. Because socialism now turns out to be a harsher form of capitalism. Socialism, as inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the creed of a social mission for the leaders and politicians : to transform capitalism into a system of State-directed economy without exploitation, producing abundance for all. It was the creed of class struggle for the workers, the belief that by transferring government into the hands of these socialists they would assure their freedom. Why did it not happen ? Because the casting of a secret vote was too insignificant an effort to count as a real class-fight. Because the socialist politicians stood single-handed within the entire capitalist fabric of society, against the immense power of the capitalist class being master of the production apparatus, with the workers' masses only looking on, expecting them, little squad, to upset the world. What could they do otherwise than run the affair in the usual way, and by reforming the worst abuses save their conscience ? Now it is seen that socialism in the sense of State-directed planned economy means state-capitalism, and that socialism in the sense of workers' emancipation is only possible as a new orientation. The new orientation of socialism is self-direction of production, self-direction of the class-struggle, by means of workers' councils.

What is called the failure of the working class, alarming many socialists, the contradiction between the economic breakdown of capitalism and the inability of the workers to seize power and establish the new order, is no real contradiction. Economic changes only gradually produce changes in the mind. The workers educated in the belief in socialism stand bewildered now that they see that the very opposite, heavier slavery, is the outcome. To grasp that socialism and communism now both mean doctrines of enslavement is a hard

job. New orientation needs time; maybe only a new generation will comprehend its full scope.

At the end of the first world war world revolution seemed near; the working class arose full of hope and expectation that now its old dreams would come true. But they were dreams of imperfect freedom, they could not be realized. Now at the end of the second world war only slavery and destruction seem near; hope is far distant; but, a task, the greater aim of real freedom looms. More powerful than before, capitalism rises as master of the world. More powerful than before the working class has to rise in its fight for mastery over the world. More powerful forms of suppression capitalism has found. More powerful forms of fight the working class has to find and use. So this crisis of capitalism at the same time will be the start of a new workers' movement.

A century ago, when the workers were a small class of downtrodden helpless individuals, the call was heard : proletarians of all countries unite ! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win. Since then they have become the largest class; and they have united; but only imperfectly. Only in groups, smaller or larger, not yet as one class-unity. Only superficially, in outer forms, not yet in deep essence. And still they have nothing to lose but their chains; what else they have they cannot lose by fighting, only by timidly submitting. And the world to be won begins to be perceived dimly. At that time no clear goal, for which to unite, could be depicted; so their organizations in the end became tools of capitalism. Now the goal becomes distinct; opposite to the stronger domination by state-directed planned economy of the new capitalism stands what Marx called the association of free and equal producers. So the call for unity must be supplemented by indication of the goal : take the factories and machines; assert your mastery over the productive apparatus; organize production by means of workers' councils.

# Letter on Workers Councils (1952)

I would like to make some critical and complementary remarks about Comrade Kondor's observations on "Bourgeois or Socialist Organisation" in the issue of "Funkener" for December 1951. When firstly he criticises the present-day role of the trade unions (and parties), he is completely right. With the changes in the economic structure the function of the different social structures must also change. The trade unions were and are indispensable as organs of struggle for the working-class under private capitalism. Under monopoly and state-capitalism, towards which capitalism increasingly develops, they turn into a part of the ruling bureaucratic apparatus, which has to integrate the working class into the whole. As organisations maintained and developed by the workers themselves they are better than any apparatus of compulsion for installing the working class as a section within the social structure as smoothly as possible. In today's transitional period this new character comes to the fore ever more strongly. This realisation shows that it would be wasted effort to repair the old relationship. But at the same time it can be used to give the workers greater freedom in choosing the forms of struggle against capitalism.

The development towards state-capitalism — often propagated under the name Socialism in Western Europe — does not mean the liberation of the working class but greater servitude. What the working

class strives for in its struggle, liberty and security, to be master of its own life, is only possible through control of the means of production. State socialism is not control of the means of production by the workers, but control by the organs of the state. If it is democratic at the same time, this means that workers themselves may select their masters. By contrast direct control of production by workers means that the employees direct the enterprises and construct the higher and central organisations from below. This is what is called the system of workers councils. The author is thus perfectly correct when he emphasises this as the new and future principle of organisation of the working class. Organised autonomy of the productive masses stands in sharp contrast to the organisation from above in state socialism. But one must keep the following in mind. "Workers' councils" do not designate a form of organization whose lines are fixed once and for all, and which only requires a subsequent elaboration of the details. It means a principle — the principle of the workers' self-management of enterprises and of production.

This principle can in no way be implemented by a theoretical discussion about the best practical forms it should take. It concerns a practical struggle against the apparatus of capitalist domination. In our day, the slogan of "workers' councils," does not mean assembling fraternally to work in co-operation; it means class struggle — in which fraternity plays its part — it means revolutionary action by the masses against state power. Revolutions cannot, of course, be summoned up at will; they arise spontaneously in moments of crisis, when the situation becomes intolerable. They occur only if this sense of the intolerable lives in the masses, and if at the same time there exists a certain generally accepted consciousness of what ought to be done. It is at this level that propaganda and public discussion play their part. And these actions cannot secure a lasting success unless large sections of the working

class have a clear understanding of the nature and goal of their struggle. Hence the necessity for making workers councils a theme for discussion.

So, the idea of workers councils does not involve a program of practical objectives to be realized — either tomorrow or in a few years -, it serves solely as a guide for the long and heavy fight for freedom, which still lies ahead for the working class. Marx once put it in these words: the hour of capitalism has sounded; however he left no doubt about the fact that this hour would mean an entire historical epoch.

# The Politics Of Gorter (1952)

In an article in Revolution Proletarienne No 50 ( May 1951, page 171 ) in which S. Tas speaks of Herman Gorter, he is described as having "a rather bad politics." It seems necessary to compensate for this article with some remarks on the positive character of Gorter's politics.

Gorter became a member of the socialist party where he discovered and studied Marxism. From this he drew the conviction that the proletariat can only gain the management of society through class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and that this is how it will destroy capitalism. He was then of the opinion, like the whole of the radical wing of the party, that good parliamentary politics could be an effective means to organize the working masses, to awaken their class consciousness and, by this means, increase their power in respect of the dominant bourgeoisie. For him the socialists in Parliament ought to have vigorously opposed the bourgeois politicians, the representatives of the dominant class. It would be a misunderstanding to say that this politics sought to transform the world through a single blow. The goal of this politics was to increase the strength of the proletariat so that through a series of engagements it became capable of obtaining power. It was in the politics of the German socialist party that one saw the most clear incarnation of this radical position.

This attitude was opposed by reformism, which sought to achieve reforms that would make capitalism bearable, through compromises

with the other parties. In the western countries, because of the much longer and slower development of capitalism, class divisions were marked in a much less acute way than they were in Germany, due to the feverish rise of its industrial capitalism. Thus reformism generally dominated the practical activity of the socialist parties. The struggle of the Dutch Marxists, in which Gorter distinguished himself, was directed against this practise because they were of the opinion that reforms could not be obtained through the cunning of politicians, but only through the power of the working class. Only once were they successful. However they were finally expelled. In other Western countries, this was not even necessary; the reformism of the members of parliament, "good politics", reigned in absolute mastery. If we now consider the results of this politics, we see that after a half-century of reformism, capitalism is more powerful than ever and society is threatened with annihilation, while the workers must continue to fight for their crumbs of bread.

In Germany, reformism continued to gain influence in practise, although theoretically this was not recognised in the face of the intensity of the class struggle. It was here that the conviction was born, within the Marxists and the most progressive circles of the proletariat, that one could not achieve power by purely parliamentary means. For that one needed the action of the masses, of the workers themselves. The Party passed resolutions on the general strike and we started demonstrations for the right to vote. The extent and strength of these frightened the party chiefs even more than it did the dominant class; they put an end to it for fear of the consequences and all forces were channelled into the elections and parliamentary politics. Only, a minority, "the extreme left," continued propaganda in favour of mass action. The German bourgeoisie, its power unshaken, could prepare to conquer world power without meeting any obstacles. Naturally, Gorter was at the side of the extreme left, whose politics were as his own

After this the danger of war became ever more menacing. The socialists and pacifists of France and Germany organised a Peace congress at Basle in 1912. Beautiful and solemn speeches were made against the war. Gorter himself went there to provoke a discussion about the practical means of fighting against war. Mandated by a certain number of elements of the left, he had proposed a resolution according to which, in all countries, workers had to discuss the danger of war and consider the possibility of mass action against it. But he was not allowed to speak. The leadership of the congress refused any discussion about means or methods. It acted, supposedly, so as not to destroy the impression of our imposing unity. Actually it feared the consequences of such mass struggles. The governments, not misled by appearances, now knew that they had no serious resistance awaiting them in the socialist parties. Gorters "bad politics" which wanted to prevent war by all means, had been repulsed, the "good politics" of the party politicians remained dominant, it imposed itself on the proletariat and soon led Europe into the first world war.

In this war the socialist politicians were revealed as being what they always had been fundamentally : nationalist politicians, or in other words bourgeois politicians. In every country they supported their own government, helped it to contain the workers and to stifle any resistance to the war. All this was the good politics of skilful politicians. The "bad politics" of Gorter consisted of attempting in his pamphlets on imperialism and on the world revolution, to inform the workers of the reasons for the war and the need for a revolution after the war.

In 1918 when the war ended, revolution erupted in Germany. Or, to be more exact, on November 6<sup>th</sup> it erupted in Kiel, and three days later the counter-revolution erupted in Berlin; Ebert, the leader of the socialist party, came into government to repress the action of the revolutionary workers, in association with the generals. Naturally Gorter was at the side of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacists... The

workers action was cut down by the military, Liebknecht and Rosa were assassinated. Ebert, the model of a socialist politician was victorious; through good politics he brought the bourgeoisie back to power in Germany and was its first president.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution destroyed tsarism and brought the Bolsheviks into power. In every country the workers were stirred up and communist groups were formed. Naturally Gorter was immediately at their side with all his heart. He saw this as the beginning of the world revolution, and in Lenin, its supreme leader; in the strike movements in Russia he saw the beginnings of a new form of independent action by workers, and in the soviets the beginning of a new form of organisation of the revolutionary proletariat. But divergences soon appeared. When the defeat of the Spartacists in Germany prevented a world revolution, Lenin sought to return to the tactics of parliamentarism to win over the left wing of the socialist parties. The majority of German communists vigorously opposed this. They were expelled, and it was against them that Lenin wrote his pamphlet on the "infantile disorder". Lenin's action meant the end of the Russian revolution as a positive factor in the world proletarian revolution. Gorter, as spokesman of the opposition, replied with his "Open letter to Lenin" [1]. Two fundamentally different conceptions were opposed in these two works. Lenin was a great politician, much greater than his socialist contemporaries, because he had greater tasks and objectives. His historical task, as leader of the Bolshevik party, was to raise Russia up from its primitive and agrarian form of production into industrialization, by means of a social and political dictatorship which led to State socialism. And because he only knew capitalism from the outside and not from the inside, he believed it was possible to free the workers of the world by making some the disciplined troops of the "Communist party". From then on they only had to follow the Russian example. Gorter replied that in Russia the revolution had only been able to conquer thanks to the aid

of the peasant masses, and that, precisely this aid was missing in the West, where the peasants themselves were property owners. In Russia it was only necessary to get rid of a crumbling Asiatic despotism. In the West the workers were opposed by the formidable power of capitalism. They would only free themselves from it if they themselves raised the levels of revolutionary strength, of class unity, of independence and of intelligence. Thereafter Lenin's politics have logically ended in Stalinism in Russia, they have divided the proletariat in the West and been rendered impotent by the fanatic and boastful quasi-revolutionism of the communist party. In the years after 1920, Gorter in contact with the small groups of the extreme left, worked to clarify the idea of the organisation of workers councils and thus collaborated in the future renewal of the class struggle of the proletariat. During this time the socialist politicians of the second international, as members of parliament and ministers, were occupied in bailing out a bankrupt capitalism for the bourgeoisie, but nonetheless without halting the crisis or being able to blur class divisions. In this way they prepared the ground for the accession of Hitler and the second world war.

If we take in at a glance the whole of the political history of the last century, we constantly see the opposition of two political methods, which are themselves an expression of the class struggle. Why is one called good and the other bad politics? Politics is the art of dominating men. Skilful politicians endeavour to reform, in other words patch up the old system of antiquated and shaky domination, or, when its fall is inevitable, erect a new system of domination. This is what is called good politics. Others endeavour to help the exploited masses acquire the strength to deliver themselves from exploitation and domination. It is this which in parliamentary terms is called bad politics.