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the wake of 1848: the task of achieving what had failed in mere democracy.

The mass political parties of the Second, Socialist International described themselves variously as “socialist” and “social democratic.” “International social democracy” was the term used to encompass the common politics and shared goal of these parties. They understood themselves as parties of not merely an international but indeed a cosmopolitan politics. The Second International regarded itself as the beginnings of world government. This is because they regarded capitalism as already exhibiting a form of world government in democracy, what Kant had described in the 18th century, around the time of the American and French Revolutions, as the political task of humanity to achieve a “world state or series of states” in a “league of nations”—the term later adopted for the political system of Pax Americana by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in the aftermath of World War I. As the liberal chronicler of Napoleon, Benjamin Constant had observed a hundred years before Wilson, in the wake of the French Revolution and its ramifications throughout Europe, the differences between nations were “more apparent than real” in the global society of commerce that had emerged in the modern era. But capitalism had wrecked the aspirations of Kant and Constant for global bourgeois society.

The International offered the alternative to Wilson, “Workers of the world, unite!,” or an alternative to the international strife of capitalist crisis that led to the modern horrors of late colonialism in the 19th century and finally world war in the 20th. The political controversy that attended the first attempt at world proletarian socialist revolution in the aftermath of the First World War divided the workers’ movement for socialism into reformist Social Democracy and revolutionary Communism. It made social democracy an enemy.

This changed the meaning of social democracy into a gradual evolution of capitalism into socialism, as opposed to the revolutionary political struggle for communism. But what was of greater significance than “revolution” that was sacrificed in this redefinition was the cosmopolitanism of the socialist workers who up until then had assumed that they had no particular country to which they owed allegiance.

The unfolding traumas of fascism and the Second World War redefined social democracy yet again,

lowering it still further to mean the mere welfare state, modeled after the dominant U.S.’s New Deal and the “Four Freedoms” the anti-fascist Alliance adopted as their avowed principles in the war. It made the working class into a partner in production, and thus avoided what Marx considered the inevitable contradiction and crisis of production in capitalism. It turned socialism into a mere matter of distribution. For the last generation, since the 1960s, this has been further degraded to a defensive posture in the face of neoliberalism, which, since the global crisis and downturn of the 1970s, has reasserted the rights of capital.

What has been forgotten today is the essential lesson for Marxism in the failure of the 1848 Revolutions, why petit bourgeois democracy is not only inadequate, but is actually blind to, and indeed an obstacle for, the political task of overcoming capitalism. In its heyday, Marxism assumed that social democracy had as its active political constituent a working class struggling for socialism. Today, social democracy treats the working class not as a subject as much as an object of government policy and civic philanthropy. Through social democracy as it exists today, the working class merely begs for good politicians and good capitalists. But it does not seek to take responsibility for society into its own hands.

Without the struggle for socialism, the immediate goal of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class merely becomes a partner in production at best, and an economic interest group at worst. This is what the liquidation into petit bourgeois democracy means: naturalizing the framework of capital.

International social democracy once meant the means for achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat. Without this as its goal, it has come to mean something entirely different. The working class has deferred to those it once sought to lead.

The “specter of communism” that Marx and Engels had thought haunted Europe in the post-Industrial Revolution crisis of capitalism in the 1840s continues to haunt the entire world today, after several repetitions of the cycle of bourgeois society come to grief—not as a desired dream misconstrued as a feared nightmare, but rather as the evil spirit the doesn’t fail to drive politics no matter how democratic into the abyss. And, as in Marx’s time, the alternating “ethical indignation” and “enraptured proclamations of the democrats” continue to “rebound” in “all the reactionary attempts to hold back” the ceaseless crisis of capitalism in which “all that is solid melts into air.”

We still need social democracy, but not as those who preceded Marxism thought, to mitigate capitalism, and as was attempted again in the 20th century, after the failure of Marxism to achieve global proletarian socialism, but rather to make the necessity for communism that Marx recognized over 150 years ago a practical political reality. We need to make good on the “revolution in permanence” of capitalism that constantly shakes the bourgeois idyll, and finally leverage the crisis in its self-destruction beyond itself.

Responses

BS: When you trace the beginnings of scientific socialism back to Karl Marx—that’s the big difference between him and Utopian Socialism—and you look at the early Marxist movement here in the United States, 20 of the founding members of the Republican Party were communists, and the communists at that period enacted not a sectarian but an open type of policy toward changing the United States. They formed in an actual sense a popular front with the American capitalist class to end slavery, and to increase the right for women to vote, and for labor unions and everything else. And most people know the history of the communists during the American Civil War. And this continued afterwards with some Marxists in the State Department, etc., during it, and also playing a leading role in the Reconstruction here in the United States.

It seems to me that we had this break in World War I, and it’s unfortunate that it happened because it split the working class movement. I’m not saying it was justified or not justified: it doesn’t really matter; it happened. As a Communist, I’m always looking for the broadest coalition possible against the strongest enemy in the history of mankind—the American imperialist state. The only way we’re going to win is by dividing them and uniting ourselves. And they understand that, because their number one task is divide the working class—among women, among race, and any other way they can do it. So anything they’re attempting to do to us, we have to do back to them.

When we look at the Socialist movement, say, Eugene Debs running as a third party. It’s never been successful, other than regionally, and for a short period of time. In American history, the way that the state is set up, it’s set up for a two-party rule. It’s a sham democracy that tells you other parties can form, but everything’s set up against it, and every party that’s been successful that’s formed has come out of one of the two parties. The Republicans coming out of the Whig Party, for instance.

A Labor Party will come out in the United States as an independent coalition of labor and civil rights within the Democratic Party and outside the Democratic Party. People think that when you operate within the Democratic Party, you’ve broken some principle. There is no principle! If you believe otherwise, then you have to say, “This union is led by a reactionary, we’re not going to go in that union, we’re going to form a red union.” That was done; it didn’t work. Because now you have to fight the union and you have to fight the boss.

We want to be everywhere: We want to be part of every church, every civil rights group, the NRA (National Rifle Association), everything. We need to build groups within those things instead of staying outside of them. Socialism in America has to have American characteristics. The party I belong to has the hammer and the sickle, but there’s never been a peasant class in this country. This is ultra-left type of stuff, and hopefully we’ll change it at the next convention to something that represents the American struggle. I consider myself a revolutionary, and I think I understand what the state is, but I’m a member of the Democratic Party. I’m a precinct judge, and I work in the Democratic Party because that’s where labor is, that’s where civil rights is, that’s where the millions are. Outside of that there’s very few people.

Ted Cruz has an office in Houston, and there’s demonstrations in front of it all the time. You could have 10,000 people out there, but when he looks out the window what does he see? How many of those people register to vote? I guarantee you it’s about ten percent, and he doesn’t worry, the demonstration goes home a few hours later.

We can reinvent the wheel. Bernie Sanders made a decision as an independent to run in the Democratic Party. The Communist Party set up the first web site for Bernie Sanders in 2014 in Houston, Texas, to help him win. We called his senatorial office and we told him there is support for you to do that. Bernie Sanders is not a Democrat, he’s an independent socialist. I don’t agree with everything Bernie Sanders says, and the Communist Party has not endorsed Bernie Sanders. But half-way through this campaign, he has already registered six million votes. Eugene Debs didn’t come close to it. No socialist ever can.

As we all know, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. We’ve been through it—the Socialist Party, the Communist Party. The thing that seems to work is what Bernie Sanders is doing. We’re trying to build an independent movement with millions of people, changing the consciousness of the United States. Now we’ll fight within that movement for what socialism means, and the direction we want to go, but we’re not going to go against the vast majority of people. We’re an independent organization. This is the first presidential candidate that has asked for a grounds up organizing group by millions of people, and wants it to stay if he’s elected president. This didn’t happen with Obama. It’s a pragmatic decision to be in the Democratic Party.

I don’t know about y’all, but I want state power, and I do not believe that the bourgeois state, by the way, can be used to bring about socialism. It has to be dismantled. That’s what they were attempting to do in Venezuela, and what they’ve done in other countries. But to get there we have to have some forms of state power: Right now, the Right is extremely strong in the United States, and the Left, even with the Bernie Sanders campaign, is still extremely weak. So we have to form the broadest coalitions, and have to take advantages of all the differences, including those that exist within the bourgeoisie class.

KB: I want to first address this question of abstractions that Jack posed in his remarks. I don’t think that there’s anything abstract whatsoever about the success of the Bernie Sanders campaign. I don’t think that there’s anything abstract about the 10,000 people on the streets of Chicago today. I don’t think that there’s anything abstract about the fact that the majority of the people under 30 in Romania think that life was better under Stalinism than it is under capitalism today. These are concrete questions which demonstrate a clear and decisive break with the status quo.

The point that Bernard just raised about Venezuela is a particularly important one. I was in Venezuela for the height of the revolution, in 2005, and the first declaration of the so-called Bolivarian Socialist Republic of Venezuela. After a few short years of a continuous dual power situation, we’ve seen the degeneration of the parties and institutions and trade unions that the working class setup in a period of intense struggle. As a matter of fact, to paraphrase Trotsky when talking about the Spanish proletariat, the Venezuelan proletariat could have made ten revolutions in the last period.

This brings me to the question of dual power. Jack said maybe this can happen or maybe that can happen to make the decisive break for a workers’ party or a revolutionary upheaval, but it is happening. Just like anything else, it’s a process. Sometimes it happens on a level that can’t be immediately quantified, but it’s happening. I think anybody who calls himself a socialist and doesn’t engage with the people who are around the Bernie Sanders campaign is a dabbler, at best. And

anybody who calls himself a socialist but waters down his program in order to appease the sort of milieu that dominates the Bernie Sanders campaign is also a dabbler, and is actually more so a faker and a traitor.

We need to have a transitional approach. We can’t club working people over the head with this absolute maximalist program. And in the same way, we can’t water down our program for the sake of popularity. We have to use reform struggles, for example like what’s happening here in Chicago, as a pivot point for raising more militant program points through the struggle. A year ago, I don’t think that the CTU would have had the gumption to do what they did today. Today they shut down an entire city. For regular working people across the city it was impossible to get anywhere. And I can tell you that because I walked most of the way here.

JR: I guess I have to be specific, whether it’s Karl’s old-time religion or Bernard’s old Popular Front version. I think Karl misunderstood what I meant by abstraction. Certainly the historical forces in this country and other countries today are not abstractions. But I frankly fail to see the relevance of either old-fashioned Bolshevism or even recycled Popular Front politics. These are not the organizing principles of labor movement or youth movements of today. Maybe I should have a better answer to what is, but I’m not sure I do. I don’t think I’m myopic about the democratic process, but I also am not sanguine about an alternative.

Really, there are some very perverse consequences of the end of the Cold War. Say what you will, we lost the positive values of anti-Communism: the belief, however idealized, in basic liberalism and the basic values of civil liberty, of free society, and how much that could potentially be lost in any kind of left-wing movement. I’ve had some discussions with members of Platypus yesterday about differences with *Jacobin* magazine, and on an essential level I think we share a lot of the same criticisms of what contemporary liberalism or progressivism has become. That’s something that needs to be borne in mind when you talk about any revolutionary or even Popular Front style, or trying the usual organizing principles from the past.

I was partly under the mistaken impression that this whole conference and not just my event last night was taking place at UIC. I almost didn’t want to come after what happened with UIC shutting down the Trump rally. I mean, these are not trivial questions. Let me also make clear, I certainly place a very large share of the blame for the death of the positive values of anti-Communism with the capitalist class. And that is to say nothing at all of Trump. But these are not questions that you can ignore or write off, however much some—per hours a majority of this audience—want to simply retreat into a who-whom formula.

CC: I tried to just channel the 19th century, but I guess I’m going to have to say something about the Sanders campaign, since it’s unavoidable. The Democratic Party is not in crisis. The Republican Party is in crisis. Sanders has said he wants to strengthen the Democratic Party. Whether or not he’s a Democrat, what are these political parties anyway? Sanders is not being defeated by the Democratic Party tops. He’s being defeated by the Democratic Party base, by its organization. We saw it in Illinois. He’s being defeated by petit bourgeois democracy. He’s being defeated by Black Lives Matter. We’ve got to deal with that.

What Sanders is calling for is rejuvenation of the Democratic Party on the basis of the remnants of its New Deal, Great Society, Civil Rights, and New Left foundation. It’s ironic: he’s not trying to be a McGovernite, Hillary’s really the McGovernite. Because of course he would not have been a McGovernite in 1972—that’s when he was still a socialist. Really he’s attempting to play out what he tried to do in the ‘80s, when he endorsed Jesse Jackson. And again, the Jesse Jackson campaign was not a crisis for the Democratic Party, not at all. There’s no essential discontinuity between the Jesse Jackson campaigns and Bill Clinton’s eventual victory in 1992.

This is a myth that the Left has spun for itself with regard to supposed different forces within the Democratic Party and trying to split the Democratic Party, its working-class base. I would say the degree to which the Democratic Party has a working-class base, that working-class base is a proletarian base. It’s a petit bourgeois democratic base. It’s based on Cold War unionism; it’s the George Meany labor movement. So what you have is not a Left and a Right in the Democratic Party, but what you have is various different Right-wing factions in the Democratic Party.

The labor movement would have to be radically reconstituted and the Democratic Party is not going to be a vehicle for that. Its support of the Democratic Party is also not going to be anything but an obstacle to that. So it’s not about going out and forming new unions necessarily, but certainly what the old Socialist Party tried to do, namely, take over the AFL and change it into something completely different. They tried to do industrial unionism before the CIO. That’s what Debs tried to do. Something like that would have to happen.

So it’s not about, “Okay, you’ve got to work within and deal with these supposedly Left-moving forces.” I would say that the Sanders support is only as good as the Sanders campaign. I have my doubts about where it will go after either the convention, or if he’s the nominee, in November. However it goes, win or lose, I’m not sure that an electoral campaign is any basis for a new politics.

Q&A

As a historical question, how would you evaluate people’s beliefs that Stalinism was social democracy? I’m curious what all the panelists would say about Trotsky’s struggles in the 1920s and the Trotskyist political tradition. As for the present, Bernie Sanders was discussed, but what would happen if Hillary Clinton won, or what would happen if Donald Trump is the next President of the United States?

JR: Maybe I’ll answer the second question first, because I want to respond to what Chris had to say about Bernie Sanders. I actually agree, though from a somewhat different point of view. What would a Trump presidency

mean for the American Left? It could mean one of two things that aren’t mutually exclusive. I think he would be an exceptionally terrible, incompetent president, and that you would probably see a move leftward, a Democratic Party cutback. You could also see a lot more people going into the streets. You could see both those things happening at once. In other words it might really force the crisis on the terms Karl elaborated and it’s anyone’s guess how that would resolve itself.

I think what’s not said or acknowledged, is how constrained Sanders is in making an institutional critique of the Democratic Party. That doesn’t mean some doctrinaire Marxian critique of the Democratic Party’s institution, but of ways you said, Chris, it’s Black Lives Matter and groups like Planned Parenthood and Human Rights Campaign. A lot of us probably remember how all hell came down on him for mildly suggesting that they were part of the Democratic establishment. And that is why what happens after Bernie Sanders wins or loses either the nomination or the election does raise some very interesting questions that are uncomfortable for liberalism. And I would add a lot of those questions would certainly also emerge in the event that Trump were elected. I made a swipe earlier at *Jacobin* magazine, though I can think of one or two articles where I was actually rather stunned as they began to confront some of these questions about the Democratic Party. From my limited experience since yesterday I certainly give the people involved in Platypus a lot of credit for taking on these kind of questions a lot more frankly than almost any other leftists I’m aware of.

KB: On the question of Trotskyism, and in the spirit of embracing my old-time religion—which by the way I love and it harkens back to my Appalachian roots, so I’ll take it—let me say I am a proselytizer for the good word of Trotsky. I myself am a Trotskyist. I will die a Trotskyist. That’s the way it is. And in particular I want to recommend a couple of things for folks who might be interested in the struggles against Stalinism in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. First, a book called *Samizdat*, published by Pathfinder (1974). And another called *Out of the Night* (1941), by Jan Valtin—Johann Krebs was his real name—who was a German Stalinist agent during the Nazi regime. He says, “Trotskyists must forgive us. They had the program, they had the perspective, they had the method, but we had the party.”

About Trump, I don’t think he is a fascist. I don’t think the social basis for fascism exists in the United States. But I think that workers and young people should continue to protest Trump rallies. We should do everything in our power to stop him and the jingoistic, backward layers of the lumpen proletariat and the proletariat that follow behind him, and the petite-bourgeoisie that makes up the majority of his supporters. I think that we should continue to obstruct that at every given chance, and at the next turn of violence towards those protestors, those rallies should be broken up with axe handles if necessary. That’s my position on Trump.

BS: Trump isn’t a fascist; he’s a Right-wing populist. And his positions have changed sometimes three or four times during his speech. He would be a terrible president. A dangerous one, but not as dangerous as Cruz. He is not a conservative of the Republican type and that’s why they’re trying to stop him. He has a lot of support, he does actually have white workers’ support too. A lot of white workers are supporting him, and there are some similarities between his campaign and Bernie’s campaign. Both are anti-establishment campaigns—one from the Right, one from the Left.

Trump will become the nominee, and I’m hoping Bernie becomes the nominee. He has won the last six of the seven elections, and there are some good ones coming up. It’ll be the first time in history we have of the two major parties a socialist facing off against a billionaire capitalist, and every poll shows Bernie winning. And winning more against Trump than Hillary does, so this is good for us. For all of us that consider ourselves socialists even among our differences or our different ideologies this is a good thing.

Now on Trotsky: He was a very talented and smart person. He did a great job of organizing the Red Army, there’s no doubt about it. But after the Lenin’s death, the problem was very simple. Again, the German revolution was not going to happen. Soviet Russia was a country where the vast majority of people are peasants, many illiterate, and a large portion of the working class had been killed in the civil war, there was no industry. War Communism had just ended, and the NEP was just three years in the making at the time. So the dilemma was: Which way to go? Bukharin, as everybody knows, wanted the NEP to continue—to have a mixed economy and hold out until another industrial country had a revolution. Trotsky’s position was to end it as quick as possible, and he supported military adventures to try to link up with the proletariat in other countries. Stalin had a very cynical view of the revolutionary movement in Europe, and he said it’s time for Russia to stand alone. So Stalin united with Bukharin and defeated the Left Opposition. Trotsky became not only an anti-Stalinist, but in my opinion, in many ways anti-Soviet.

During the Second World War, the SWP (Socialist Workers Party) called for revolution against Stalin at the time they were under invasion. This is in a period when the first workers’ state in the world was about to be overrun. I don’t care for Stalin, don’t get me wrong, but I don’t care for Trotsky either. I don’t think either of them were real Marxists. Stalin did a lot to destroy the entire world socialist movement, to give it a bad name, like killing off the leadership of the Bolshevik Revolution. I don’t remember Lenin killing anyone. When Zinoviev and Kamenev came out in Gorky’s paper to complain about the date of the revolution and to oppose it, Lenin didn’t throw them out of the party, and he didn’t kill them.

Under Stalin there wasn’t a single successful socialist revolution anywhere in the world except in China, where they went against Stalin. Stalinism was a failure in spreading world revolution. Stalin didn’t care about world revolution, he cared about defending the world’s first workers’ state. Trotsky would’ve thrown the workers’ first state out immediately to advance a revolution somewhere else.

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The revolution happened historically in a country that was not fit to build socialism by itself. So Marxism became a dogma, because it had to defend something that was artificial and shouldn’t exist in the first place. If you’re going to build socialism in a backward country, you’ve got to link up with capitalism. You’re going to have to have limited capitalism, and you’re going to have capitalists. During the NEP, Lenin invited the German industrialists to come back into Russia and run the mills and oil refineries. He told them that he would control the unions and that they needed to make as much money as possible and they needed to train Soviet workers to take over and learn the skills.

If we had the revolution here tomorrow, everyone still has to pay their rent; everyone still has to go to the work the next day. The people’s movement is not able to run the banks and to run the industries. We already have a planned economy; it’s just sitting there ready for us to take. But what we have to do once we take state power is to begin the battle of production. There’s going to be a black market unless you allow limited capitalism. And that’s what happened in the Soviet Union: You had two economies and that led towards its demise. Stalin never got rid of the capitalists or the NEP, he just drove them underground and into the Communist Party. If the revolution had happened in an advanced industrial country, it would’ve been different, but capitalism was too strong for the working class to overthrow it.

We’re not in a pre-revolutionary situation. We’re in a situation where we’re fighting to survive and to defend the democratic rights of the working people. Things will change, but we can’t rush it. We’re not like the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party) that throws a May Day event and says it will be the spark that starts a prairie fire. We’re not ultra-leftists. You know we can’t rush things. What we can do is build a broad movement and teach people in the struggle to fight for democracy. Remember all that socialism does is fulfill bourgeois-democratic rights. If we look at the bourgeois-democratic rights from the American Revolution, name one that’s enforced. Name one that’s been done by the capitalist class. None of them. Voter suppression, civil rights, women’s rights: until we have the dictatorship of the proletariat, we’re not going to have it.

CC: With respect to Trump, it’s possible he’d be a very weak president. It’s likely that he would, both out of inclination and also out of a limited range of choices, govern as a moderate—as a centrist. What he’s trying to do is what the Republicans actually him of doing: to change the Republican Party to make it into a conservative-liberal capitalist party. Because in the United States what you have is progressive-liberalism and conservative-liberalism. You don’t have traditional conservatism like you have in Europe, and you don’t really have nationalism like you do in Europe either. Despite the jingoism, it’s not classic nationalism. So Hillary would be more dangerous than Trump, not only Cruz, and one needs to consider that. Because she would not be the same as Obama. In fact she would be different.

I just want to clarify how Sanders is being defeated by the grassroots Democratic Party, and how a rejuvenation of the Democratic Party is contradictory. I said that Black Lives Matter defeated Sanders, for instance in Illinois. The concrete example of that is the Kim Foxx campaign for Cook County State’s Attorney, because the incumbent Democrat Anita Alvarez was discredited with the police brutality cases. Where Sanders’ supporters campaigned for Kim Foxx in the Democratic primary, in fact the turn-out for Kim Foxx benefited Hillary. So even though the Sanders campaign supported Kim Foxx, it actually was to the benefit of Hillary against Sanders in Chicago. I just wanted to clarify that point, because the way it happens is not necessarily straight forwardly apparent.

With respect to Trotsky in the 1920s, the struggle was not over the existence of the Soviet Union, but rather over the existence of the international Communist movement of the Third International. What Trotsky was struggling to do in this period of successful counter-revolution was to preserve a party that could learn from history. So the main crime of Stalinism from a world-historical standpoint is not only the brutality in the Soviet Union but the liquidation of the international Communist movement. I think we pay the consequences for that. There’s a lot of murkiness to the history starting in the 1920s. It’s very hard for us to make sense of 20th century history because there wasn’t an adequate political vehicle to learn from the historical experience. Trotsky represents an attempt to preserve Marxism as a way of making history into politically palpable concrete experience.

Bernard, I want to echo something that Chris said earlier in his response to you: It’s unclear in what sense the Democrats and Republicans actually are political parties. So I would like you to speak to the possibilities you see about the Democrats. It’s not the same as being a member of Die Linke or being a member of Labour where you can actually, through committee work and so forth, be an actively engaged democratic participant in the process of the party. How can activists actually engage within the Democratic Party?

BS: Well it’s quite an experience let me tell you. Some of us operate very openly and some not, and you can see a struggle going on within the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party is an organization that you join. It has members, it has donors, it has an elite that runs the party, but then it also has a lot of people that are part of the Democratic Party that aren’t part of that leadership. You’ll see that labor and civil rights groups, which I consider independent organizations, pragmatically use the Democratic Party to get bills passed that might help them. They support candidates and endorse candidates, etc. People do pay dues in the Democratic Party, many of them do. I look at the Communist Party, and I look at the Democratic Party—who has the most union members? Who has the most civil rights workers? Who has the most peace activists? The Democratic Party does.

I don’t believe that we can take over the Democratic Party, and I don’t think Trump can take over the Republican Party. But I do believe we can build an independent movement, and this is what people have such a hard time understanding. We’re an independent movement working within the vehicle of the Democratic Party, because to

work outside of it leaves you with nothing. You’re nothing outside of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. And we feel we can do the same thing in the Democratic Party that the Tea Party has done in the Republican Party. We can move it to the left. Not that we can reform it or take it over. But I believe we can build a large enough movement where the Democratic Party forces us out and we have a large enough coalition to form an actual labor party, leaving the Democratic Party so weak that maybe it withers away. That’s the strategy.

The first time that I heard this strategy was an article by William Z. Foster in 1958. And it seems to me a practical way. I spent too much time working in third parties and I see nothing from it. Again we can look at Sanders and see what he’s doing. He is an independent working from within. And believe me he’s a lot more radical than what he’s appearing to be. What you’re seeing is a minimal program being put forward. He’s an old-school, Eugene Debs type, but he’s working within. That’s all it is right now.

Bernard said that the split up of international socialism during World War I was unfortunate. I wonder to what extent the speakers understood that crisis as being a product of the development and growth of the socialist movement up to that point in time alongside the development of capitalism? To what extent was the development of both alongside each other the context for what Lenin characterized as imperialism? Do we still live in imperialism as Lenin understood it? How has the history of the Left in the 20th century affected the social conditions that we live in today?

BS: It’s unfortunate that the split happened, but I don’t think there was any way to avoid it. We don’t want to split the working class. I believe in a mass party, not a vanguard party. I want to be inclusive not exclusive. And this is how you win.

We still live in the age of imperialism, and it’s changed some. It’s gotten stronger since the fall of the Soviet Union and not weaker. It was getting weaker with the Soviet Union but with the fall of the Soviet Union all aid to guerrilla groups and everything around the world stopped. And now all of the guerrilla groups had to go to the governments they were fighting and make deals while they were being executed by death squads. So the struggle against imperialism is still the main thing, and the major source of imperialism is this country.

There are three areas of Marxist struggle: the economic, the ideological, and the political. We’re always very good at the ideological and we’re also very good at the economic, but we’re pretty bad at the political. That’s where we fail more than anything: the fight for state power, how to do it, the science of winning an election. Tell me how many communists or socialists out here are studying how to raise financing or how to run phone banks? This is the science. You know, the Well-stone organization travels around the country to teach this. The Democratic Party teaches it. If the capitalists want to teach us how to overthrow them, we’ll go there.

KB: Social democracy after the first inter-imperialist war failed in wielding its power, and more capable leaders came to the fore. Unfortunately, because of the historical circumstances that Chris mentioned before, that was, in the end, also a failure. And then what about today? All of the same contradictions and all of the same ideological battles are playing themselves out on a daily basis in the labor movement and in the social movements. If you go to a Bernie event, people are wrestling with these ideas—the question of free college, for instance. How do we make that happen? Asking, “Whose money are we going to take to make sure that happens?” is itself a revolutionary question because it raises the question of expropriation.

Any number of things can happen if there’s an independent trajectory to the Sanders campaign. Or more accurately, the forces around the Sanders campaign. If these people are left to their own devices then the very best scenario is that we will have a situation like we did in Spain where people arrive at centrist conclusions and vacillate between reformism and revolution. So we as Marxists have a responsibility. We’re approaching a historical precipice. If we can put forward our ideas in a way that translates to the actual lives of working people and young people in this country, we can put ourselves in a position to wield that power. Or we can put ourselves in a position where we can never touch that power, ever.

JR: When I was writing my book on the Socialist Party in late 2011, 2012, I thought I was mostly dealing with the past and not really the present. Then, of course, that changed rather dramatically with the rise of Sanders. I would certainly begin with some very different premises than my co-panelists about larger historical forces—whether it’s the First World War, or the whole sweep of the 20th century. An awful lot is contingent on the rise and decline of American capitalism, and the fact that there is certainly a relative decline going on now. The U.S. remains the largest and most powerful state in the international system, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t several very profound changes taking place in that system right now. And how political movements of the Left respond to those changes and are shaped by those changes we’re still at a very early stage of seeing.

I want to hear how the panelists would respond to Jack’s challenge that things have fundamentally changed. Karl, it seems you argue that things haven’t changed, it’s the same problem. Bernard, for you we’re not at 1917, we’re somewhere further back. For Chris, 1848 continues to be this moment of return and repetition. How do you think things have really changed and what would socialism be like in the present? Would it look like anything in the past?

CC: The Revolutions of 1848 that failed really grew out of a global economic crisis of the 1840s. The difference between 1848 and 1917 therefore is that 1917 was really conditioned by a preceding generation of growth of the workers’ movement for socialism. And it is hard to disentangle World War I from the history of the Second International because in many respects the German military leadership and the German government—after the SPD won its highest electoral victory level in 1912—

started thinking, “How are we going to stop this?” They thought maybe a war in the Balkans could spike the growth of the SPD. They got more than they bargained for—that’s how World War I started. It looked like a preemptive counterrevolution by the German government against the SPD that got out of control.

That raises another question which is the demise of Pax Britannica versus the demise of Pax Americana. World War I was a crisis of a British-led world system. Looking at the precedent of World War I—that era of imperialism and what led up to the ultimate demise of Pax Britannica in the decades leading up to World War I—we shouldn’t wish that upon the world again. We should not wish that the end of Pax Americana is World War III. Because, in fact, unlike the decades before World War I, we’re not seeing the growth of a global working-class movement for socialism that sees itself as generating within capitalism the possibility of a world socialist dictatorship of the proletariat. But the absence of that also might save us from World War III. In other words, because there is no revolutionary threat there may not be any preemptive counterrevolution either. But in some ways we are living within the same history. In other ways we are in entirely new terrain.

On the question of imperialism, Lenin’s pamphlet is usually misconstrued as a kind of positive statement about imperialism. But the core of the argument is the critique of imperialism, meaning he looks at the liberal critique of imperialism by Hobson, who’s saying that the British should give up the empire and retreat into a little England-ism. This is what Sanders and Trump are both saying that the United States should do now. That we should have an America first, a little America—we should give up the empire. And on the other hand, Lenin looked at Hilferding, who said, “No, imperialism is a necessary stage of history. It’s not an unfortunate policy that should be given up in favor of liberal democracy, but it actually reflects the necessities of the accumulation of capital and of social production at a global scale.” Lenin said that this is a *dialectical* contradiction.

It’s posed much more obscurely today, so that you can get Trump and Sanders basically pulling at the same kind of discontent—that we should retreat from empire. Neither of them are saying we should retreat into liberal democracy the way Hobson did, because they’re both products of the 20th century. Both Sanders and Trump have to take the welfare state and late capitalism as their model. So does a new socialist movement have to be entirely new? In some ways it would have to be entirely new, but it would have to be like what was achieved before. It’s not going to be achieved the same way, but it would have to in a sense fulfill the same needs. But in a new and different way.

JR: I do not deny the underlying premise about the contradictions of capitalism and how they remain with us and remain very relevant today. I would specifically go back to the point I made earlier about the Democratic establishment and how all that is solid melts into air. And even just in the last few years how closely business and capitalism has allied itself with the gay movement in particular, but there are many other examples as well—even to some extent a phenomenon like Black Lives Matter.

BS: Imperialism is still here, the United States is still the strongest country in the world, but of course it changes. We see a new bloc forming between China and Russia. At the last elections where the right won in Venezuela, the U.S. wasn’t sure about it and they had a battleship out there, but you know what else showed up? Chinese and Soviet warships. It wasn’t in the papers, or it was very obscure if it was. But the U.S. is being challenged everywhere. Look at China and the SEZs (Special Economic Zones) over there. The U.S. was impotent against it there just as much when Russia took the Ukraine back. You can see a problem.

I don’t believe Trump is an isolationist. He’s an imperialist, but he wants to do it differently. He feels that the way that both the Democratic and Republican Parties are pursuing it is not working. He looks at the Middle East, he looks at Crimea, he looks at China, and they’re not being contained—they’re taking advantage of us, they’re beating us at our own game. He just wants to redraw the rules, but he’s an imperialist. After all, he’s worth what, ten billion? How can he not be? He has businesses all over the world and he exploits labor everywhere.

Is the question of the political party in the 21st century a trajectory mainly of the 20th century, or is it a question that stands from the 19th century? How would we have to face this, and how would we have to work through it politically?

CC: Bernard, you raised that you’re against the vanguard party idea. And I would say that historically, that’s more in keeping with the deep history of Marxism. Lenin didn’t really advocate a vanguard party, he advocated a party of the vanguard, which is a different thing. He thought that the working class was the vanguard, and that the working class needed its own party. The vanguard needs a party because the working class is the vanguard of democratic revolution in capitalism, which would otherwise constantly come to grief and produce more or less authoritarian Bonapartist outcomes, kidding itself through petit bourgeois illusions about democracy. And that also goes for Venezuela, but I’ll leave that aside for the time being.

We can observe that soon enough there’s going to be more time between the present and 1968 than there was between 1917 and 1848. Rosa Luxemburg gave a speech at the founding convention of the Communist Party of Germany in which she said, “our tasks are those of 1848, we’re following the *Communist Manifesto*, we’ve arrived back at where Marx and Engels were in 1848.” We don’t have that kind of unbroken and developing tradition that they had in 1917. Which is why Luxemburg or Lenin would’ve called themselves revolutionary social democrats. What they were calling themselves was Red 1848-ers, basically. We don’t really have that. Things have gotten very confused by the crisis of World War I, they got confused by Stalinism, and I would say they’ve also gotten confused by the New

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from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state—i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class—and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Marx's fifth characteristic of socialism is that centralized planning will by degrees replace the market economy. So all the working class needs to do is just catch up with bourgeois scope and depth of planning that already exists today in modern capitalism. Lenin picked up the idea in "A Great Beginning," in 1919: "In the last analysis, productivity of labor is the most important, the principal thing for the victory of the new social system. Capitalism created a productivity of labor unknown under serfdom. Capitalism can be utterly vanquished by the fact that socialism creates a new and much higher productivity of labor. This is a very difficult matter, and must take a long time, but it has been started and that is the main thing."²

So what happened? The Russian Revolution was the first time in history that Marxism appeared directly in the field of statecraft, shaping governments and their policies. In 1917, Lenin represented the original thought of Marx, essentially unmodified. How did this change because of the Russian experience? Lenin, when he wrote *What is to be Done?* (1902), recognized Kautsky and the German party at that time as the most authoritative spokespeople of Marxism. The differences on how to deal with World War I split Lenin and Kautsky. Kautsky advocated the use of democratic legality. Lenin insisted on the open revolutionary assault on capitalism at the first big crisis of the war. Each claimed Marx as his authority, though Lenin was appealing to the more spontaneous and dynamic side of Marx.

Lenin matured the idea, after his break with Kautsky, that the Russian Revolution could be the trigger that would release the long-maturing German socialist revolution and propel the cautious Kautsky into action or out of leadership. With Germany plunged into the socialist revolution, Russia could then join the most massive European land mass to the one most advanced economically in an unbeatable combination that would carry socialism to all of Europe. Lenin never considered the possibility of socialism in Russia alone. Such an idea was never mentioned by a serious Russian leader until Stalin advanced the slogan "Socialism in One Country" in 1926, two years after Lenin's death. For Lenin in 1917, the Russian Revolution was to be proclaimed socialist not because Russia taken alone was ripe for such a step, but because it would trigger the German socialist revolution.

Lenin's theory in 1917 was fully in the spirit of Marx and didn't challenge any of his theories. The most advanced industrial country in the world remained the base of strategy, and there was no hint of shifting this base. On the contrary, he openly declared that the headquarters would shift from Moscow to Berlin at the earliest possible moment. Lenin's strategy was quite new and unfamiliar even to his own party. It took the Central Committee several months to be won over to his position.

Even the most casual readings of Lenin's writings and speeches during 1917–1920 reveals that he was completely depending on the quick arrival of the German revolution. Many times he repeated the thought: "If the German revolution does not come in, we're doomed."³ Only after it was clear that this wasn't going to take place did he think it might be postponed for no more than a decade or two. He then looked for answers to hold on until the German revolution would finally come to the rescue. So he developed the New Economic Policy, which would construct a modified capitalism under the control of the dictatorship of the proletariat. All expectations of help from successful revolutions in advanced industrial countries proved to be actual utopianism.

It was the very backwardness of Russia that enabled Bolsheviks to take power, just as it was the advanced state of Germany and world capitalism that had defeated the attempts to trigger the German revolution. So Lenin became a revisionist of Marxism only under this extreme pressure of history. All else that has been later incorporated into the Leninist doctrines that departed fundamentally from Leninism came after Lenin's death, and constituted the first phase of Stalin's regime. This led to the point where socialist ideology openly based itself on the backward sectors of the world economy, and builds them into a block against the countries of the original modern industrial development.

After Lenin's death, realizing the road westward had been blocked, the Russian leadership was plunged into an inner struggle over the way out of this dilemma. Events took their course regardless of dogmas. The dogmas were maintained regardless of events. This is why the relatively small steps of Lenin's revisionism of Marx later lead to the giant steps of Stalinism. Because of Russia's backwardness, its revolution changed the theory more than Lenin's theory changed Russia. The attempts to trigger the revolution in Western Europe failed, but they were not without effect. They released a counterrevolution that was to be known as fascism. So when the Communists looked for help in the West, they were confronted by a deadly enemy, sworn to exterminate them. Stalin's socialism in one country won because the Soviet Union had been looking outward too long and too vainly, and Stalin was the first leader who clearly and loudly said that Russia came first. Lenin always considered himself a Marxist. It was Stalin who turned Marxism into Marxism-Leninism, a dogma to justify his version of Marxism.

Karl Belin: The period that Bernard focuses on may actually be a period where the two of us depart from each other, in terms of our understanding of the history of socialism, the history of social democracy, and also the history of communism and the tradition of Bolshevism.

The age of imperialism—the age of capitalist domination of foreign markets and capitalist wars and inter-imperialist rivalries—also gave us a wholly-developed capitalism and a wholly-developed capitalist state throughout much of the world, including Europe and here in North America. It's also no mistake that this period was the one in which the Bolsheviks and others launched an all-out assault on reformism. Europe in the late nineteen-teens was not just a killing field for young men, it was also a killing field for ideas. It was a killing field for the ideas that were incapable of resolving the contradictions of capitalism, and incapable of answering for the working class the question: "How do we take power?"

I would argue that it was only the Bolsheviks and their co-thinkers in the Third International who were capable of answering this question decisively. And we can see that in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution, when throughout Europe, and throughout the backward countries in Europe, places like Hungary and Italy, you had massive uprisings for a whole decade and even the formation of Soviet-style states in places like Hungary and Bavaria.

But, to step away from history, we have to take a look at what's going on now, and I'll just talk about my experience on my way over here to this convention. I went to the strike rally today for the Chicago Teachers Union, and I heard a speech by Karen Lewis, which was the most interesting labor speech I've heard in a long time; it showed the shining best of labor, but at the same time it showed the creeping worst of labor. On the one hand, Karen Lewis talked about the need to develop a broad labor fight against austerity and cuts, but then turned around to some young black activists in the crowd and said, I'm paraphrasing here: "Don't start any of that 'these police are all our enemies' kind of thing."

What that demonstrates is that all of the previous battles that took place in Europe in the 1900s are reopening themselves again today. That's why, on my way to Chicago, when a socialist activist whom I respect very much asked me, "Why would a convention of socialists take up the question of the legacy of the social democracy in the year 2016?" at first the question astounded me. How did this person not see the importance of analyzing the tremendous successes and the colossal failures of social democracy, especially in the period that we're in? But when I thought about it more, I realized that the question made perfect sense from the point of view of a modern day American twenty-something, enthused by the ideas of socialism and by the living struggle for socialism, this practical learning experience that many hundreds of young people are going through, whether it was today in downtown Chicago, or in the fight for \$15 an hour minimum wage.

There are reasons these things are coming back into the forefront. Number one, I would argue, is the collapse of Stalinism, which was also the collapse in many ways of a counterexample to the bankrupt ideas of social democracy. For decades, you could point to the East and say, they did it. Capitalism was gone in Russia, it was gone in Eastern Europe. But now for an entire generation, including many people in this room, we don't remember the Soviet Union as an actual living, breathing entity. We don't remember Stalinism as a living, breathing body of ideas. And all the old fights are being rehashed again, but in a sort of distorted form. For example, you can see Karen Lewis saying we need a united front of labor against austerity, but then saying that some, actually most, of the police are okay—this institution of the capitalist state— and that, "they can be helpful sometimes and we want to help them be helpful." That's actually a direct quote from Karen Lewis's speech from this morning.

But we can also see it in Europe in the ascendancy of Jeremy Corbyn. I was a member of the International Marxist Tendency, which for many decades maintained an entryist position inside the British Labour Party. Some co-thinkers split away from the IMT in 1992, and said, "We're finished with the Labour Party. It's a dead end, it's a capitalist institution at this point." And now after the collapse of Stalinism and the bankruptcy of the Stalinist parties, they've found themselves in the milieu of the Labour Party in Britain again because of the rise of Jeremy Corbyn. Here in the United States, we see somebody like Sanders rise to the top of the Democratic Party, which is undoubtedly a capitalist institution and has no connection whatsoever to the working class.

We've also come to a very interesting period of contradiction within the rise of these various new formations and parties and the rebirth of social democracy. There's no room inside of the British Labour Party, for example, for young militant workers and students. There's no room absolutely within the Democratic Party for these people. And so it raises the question: Where do we go? Already you see young people saying, "I'll never vote for Hillary, no matter what." This is a tremendous step forward, because for the first time, around a body of convoluted ideas (at best) but ones that at least are expressing the frustrations and the ambitions of young people and young workers, there is a real movement towards some degree of independence—some degree of class independence.

Now is the time for us as Marxists, as Bolsheviks—which is a title that we need to reclaim—to go and make that all-out assault on social democracy again. Not just in the form of polemics and articles, but also in the trenches of the social movements, the labor movement, and union meetings. At rallies like today in downtown Chicago, there has to be a contingent of active revolutionary forces who are capable of pointing the direction forward. Or more accurately pointing the direction backward, about 100 years. As a matter of fact all of these arguments were raised in a much better fashion 100 years ago, with much more competent spokesmen for reformism—people who could actually point to the ascendancy of capitalism and the rising standards of living for the working class people in Germany, Britain, France, and the United States.

Those days are over. There's no more room for social democracy. The contradictions of capitalism that have made it impossible for any sort of reformist ideas to have any breathing space, but it has also made the terrain ripe for a revolutionary perspective within these growing social movements. With the 10,000 people on the streets of downtown Chicago today, armed with a Bolshevik program, we could have had a Chicago Commune, let alone a Paris Commune.

Jack Ross: I'm not entirely certain where to begin. I was led to believe that the panel was specifically on the question: Is there a future for social democracy? The answer I prepared is that it is entirely a function of the ongoing collapse of the European Union, a slow collapse perhaps. Maybe it will get a lot faster with the rise of various anti-EU parties of the Left. The rise of Bernie Sanders certainly has accompanied that as well. I guess that leads back to how much more credit I give to historical contingency than the sort of abstractions elevated by both of my co-panelists.

If you want to just talk about revolutionary socialism before the Russian Revolution or what called itself that, in very many cases Germany was perhaps the exception that proved the rule, and I would argue that even tells you something about the nature of the First World War. It was revolutionary socialists who tended to lead the way in Allied countries, in France and in Italy, and in each country worth noting, there's Georges Sorel in France and of course Mussolini in Italy, who were the loudest pro-war voices. It's fair to say that Bolshevism was to a very large extent merely a stray branch of revolutionary socialism, which in its mainstream led to Mussolini and more recently perhaps to neoconservatism.

Now, what was social democracy? The most powerful Social Democratic Party before World War I was in Germany. But Germany was defeated and the Social Democratic Party was discredited, mostly by the horrible luck of being forced to bear the brunt of the horrors of the Versailles Treaty, and thereby forfeiting credibility in any kind of national reconstruction. And we of course all know what the consequences of that turned out to be.

After World War II, we end up with a reality where social democracy in Europe really is just an adjunct of American policy, the American security umbrella, and based in, or modeled after Cold War liberalism. To bring it back to the present, I partly agree with Karl that what has happened is that with the collapse of Communism, the labor movement outlived its usefulness to the state and in the intervening years, and even for at least a couple decades before that, the capitalist class in this country forgot why a labor movement ever arose in the first place, and it is paying the consequences for that now.

These questions are ultimately very semantic. "Socialist," in the last analysis, has become as useless a political label as "liberal" or "conservative," which is not to say that I don't see significance in the rise of Bernie Sanders. One can't understate the phenomenon of Right-wingers and their careless use of the word "socialist," beginning when Obama was elected—that's mostly what it means to most people who answer these poll questions. By the same token, that's not to say that the generation that has responded favorably to the concept hasn't been very economically hard-pressed, and have very concrete economic reasons for being attracted to a platform such as Bernie Sanders'.

I do not think revolutionary socialism is something that is going to result from all this. I suppose that if in fact the political chaos of this past year does sooner or later mean the disintegration of the two-party system—I'm still not quite convinced of that but I certainly acknowledge the possibility—one scenario then in which I could see an independent party of the Left or of labor perhaps emerge is if Hillary Clinton is the next president and the Republicans do not manage to reinvent themselves with a sane and competent candidate who recognizes what Trump has gotten right. If Hillary is the next president and barring that Republican reinvention, then there definitely could be an opening for a break with the Democratic Party. I certainly expect that to be as social democratic and non-revolutionary as SYRIZA or Podemos or Jeremy Corbyn's support in the Labour Party.

Opposition to the two-party system was a very formative political experience for me. I've been somewhat disillusioned, not with basic principles but with who the options have been. Having laid out this scenario for how an independent party of the Left could emerge in the foreseeable future, I'm certainly not at this stage prepared to rule out the larger variety of other scenarios in which the Democratic Party could be successfully taken over by supporters of Bernie Sanders, and I don't say that out of any sentimentality for the Democrats or the two-party system, but simply as an observation.

Chris Cutrone: I would like to begin by addressing some key terms for our discussion, some of which was already discussed in the preceding presentations. Communism, I take to be an ancient concept of the community sharing everything in common. It has its roots in religious communes. Socialism by contrast is a modern concept that focuses on the issue of "society," which is itself a bourgeois concept. Marx sought to relate the two concepts of communism and socialism to capitalism. Social democracy is a concept that emerged around the 1848 Revolutions which posed what was at the time called the "social question," namely the crisis of society evident in the phenomenon of the modern industrial working class's conditions. Social democracy aimed for the democratic republic with adequate social content.

Marxism, has in its various periods of history, used all three concepts—communism, socialism and social democracy—not exactly equivalently or interchangeably, but rather to refer to and emphasize different aspects of the same political struggle. For instance, Marx and Engels distinguished what they called "proletarian socialism" from other varieties of socialism such as Christian socialism and Utopian Socialism, which were themselves modern—rather than ancient—phenomena of the 19th century. What distinguished proletarian socialism was two-fold: the specific problem of modern industrial capitalism that needed to be overcome; and the industrial working class as a potential political agent of change.

Moreover, there were differences in the immediate focus for politics, depending on the phase of the struggle. So, "social democracy" was understood as a means for achieving socialism; and socialism was understood as the first stage of overcoming capitalism on the way to achieving communism. Small propaganda groups like Marx and Engels's original Communist League, for which they wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, used the term "communism" to emphasize their ultimate goal. Later, the name Socialist Workers Party was used by Marx and Engels's followers in Germany to more precisely focus their political project specifically as the working class struggling to achieve socialism.

So where did the term "social democracy" originate, and how was it used by Marxists—by Marx and Engels themselves as well as their immediate disciples? The concept of the "social republic" originates in the revolution of 1848 in France, specifically with the socialist Louis Blanc, who coined the expression "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" to describe the goals of the society to be governed by the democratic republic. Marx considered this to be the form of state in which the class struggle between the workers and capi-

talists would be fought out to conclusion.

The essential lesson that Marx and Engels learned from their experience of the Revolutions of 1848 in France and Germany, as well as more broadly in Austria and Italy, was what Marx, in an 1852 letter to his colleague and publisher Joseph Weydemeyer, called his only "original discovery," namely the "necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat," or, as he had put it in his summing up report on the Revolutions of 1848 in his address to the Central Committee of the Communist League in 1850, the need for "the revolution in permanence," which he thought could only be achieved by the working class taking independent political action in the leadership of the democratic revolution.

This was a revision of Marx and Engels's position in the earlier *Communist Manifesto* on the eve of 1848, which was to identify the working class's struggle for communism with the democratic revolution. They claimed there that, "communists do not form a party of their own, but work within the already existing [small-d!] democratic party." Now, after the experience of the failure of the Revolutions of 1848, Marx asserted the opposite, the necessary separation of the working class from other democratic political currents.

What had happened to effect this profound change in political perspective by Marx and Engels? Marx had come to characterize the failure of the Revolutions of 1848 in terms of the treacherous and conservative-reactionary role of what he called "petit bourgeois democracy," which he found to be constitutionally incapable of learning from its political failures and the social reasons for these failures.

The historical horizon for petit bourgeois democratic discontents in the social crisis of capitalism was too low to allow the contradiction of capital to come within political range of mere democracy, no matter how radically popular in character. The problem of capitalism was too intractable to the ideology of petit bourgeois democracy. The problem of capitalism exceeded the horizon of the French Revolutionary tradition, even in its most radical exponents such as Gracchus Babeuf's Jacobin Conspiracy of Equals. Such democracy could only try to put back together, in essentially liberal-democratic terms, what had been broken apart and irreparably disintegrated in industrial capitalism.

This was not merely a matter of limitation in so-called "class interest or position," but rather the way the problem of capitalism presented itself. It looked like irresponsible government, political hierarchy and economic corruption, rather than what Marx thought it was, the necessary crisis of society and politics in capitalism, the necessary and not accidental divergence of the interests of capital and wage labor in which society had been caught. Capital outstripped the capacity for wage labor to appropriate its social value. This was not merely a problem of economics but politically went to the heart of the modern democratic republic itself.

The petit bourgeois attempt to control and make socially responsible the capitalists and to temper the demands of the workers in achieving democratic political unity was hopeless and doomed to fail. But it still appealed nonetheless. And its appeal was not limited to the socioeconomic middle classes, but also and perhaps especially appealed to the working class as well as to "enlightened progressive" capitalists.

The egalitarian sense of justice and fraternal solidarity of the working class was rooted in the bourgeois social relations of labor, the exchange of labor as a commodity. But industrial capital went beyond the social mediation of labor and the bourgeois common sense of cooperation. Furthermore, the problem of capital was not reducible to the issue of exploitation, against which the bourgeois spirit itself rebelled. It also went beyond the social discipline of labor—the sense of the duty to work.

For instance, the ideal of worker owned and operated production is a petit bourgeois democratic fantasy. It neglects that, as Marx observed, the conditions for industrial production are not essentially the workers' own labor but rather more socially general: Production has become the actual property of society. The only question is how this is realized. It can be mediated through the market as well as through the state—the legal terms in which both exchange and production are adjudicated, that is, what counts as individual and collective property: issues of eminent domain, community costs and benefits, etc. Moreover, this is a problem that is global in character. I expect the foreign government of which I am *not* a citizen to nonetheless respect my property rights, including the right to my own personhood, the right to my own life. Bourgeois society already has a global citizenry, but it is through the civil rights of commerce not the political rights of government. But capitalism presents a problem and crisis of such global liberal democratic sentiment.

Industrial capital's value in production cannot be socially appropriated through the market, and indeed cannot be appropriated through the exchange-value of labor. The demand for universal suffrage democracy arose in the industrial era out of the alternative of social appropriation through the political action of the citizenry via the state. But Marx regarded this state action no less than the market as a hopeless attempt to master the social dynamics of capital.

At best, the desired petit bourgeois political unity of society could be achieved on a temporary national basis, as was effected by the cunning of Louis Bonaparte, as the first elected President of Second Republic France in 1848, promising to bring the country together against and above the competing interests of its various social classes and political factions. Later, in 1851 Louis Bonaparte overthrew the Republic and established the Second Empire, avowedly to preserve universal (male) suffrage democracy and thus to safeguard "the revolution." He received overwhelming majority assent to his coup d'état in the plebiscite referendum he held both at the time of his coup and 10 years later to extend the mandate of the Empire.

Marx and Engels recognized that to succeed in the task of overcoming capitalism in the struggle for proletarian socialism it was necessary for the working class to lead the petite-bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution. This was the basis of their appropriation of the term "social democracy" to describe their politics in