

anthology of Dietzgen extracts.³⁰

Essentially, Pannekoek says that the history of philosophy reconstitutes the various successive forms in which the ideas of the dominant classes have been clothed. Besides, in course of time, the philosophic and religious systems have integrated the discoveries made "by the human mind both about itself and about the universe." This is somewhat so in the case of Kant, who holds that "God and Liberty are concepts whose truth is non-demonstrable, unlike the natural truths drawn from experience." This attitude was in perfect accord with the contemporary condition of scientific and economic development. At the time, science was dependent on the inductive method with a strictly materialistic basis: experiment and observation. But religious faith persisted nonetheless, and ignorance concerning the origins of life and of man made it possible to uphold the ideal of a system of supernatural ethics.

"Kantian ethics mirrors the inner antagonisms of bourgeois society: the antagonism created by the fact that the character of production is individual on the one hand and social on the other, which engenders omnipotent but incomprehensible social forces which rule the destiny of mankind." This antagonism lies at the root of the contradictions and the pronounced dualism of Kantian philosophy.

Furthermore, these internal contradictions were to bring about the bankruptcy of the entire system at the very moment when the contradictions within the bourgeoisie were becoming obvious. However, to deal them a decisive blow it was necessary to grasp the material origins of morality, its relative and non-absolute character. "Marx's discovery of class struggle and capitalist production dislodged faith from its ultimate sanctuary."

Contemporary with the restoration of monarchic power in Germany, the philosophy of Hegel was triumphing over the "bourgeois dualism" of Kant. Pannekoek recounts the essential features of the Hegelian system, in which "the revolutionary dialectic, the theory of evolution, regarding all completed things as provisional, leads to a conservative conclusion by ending all new development as soon as absolute truth is attained. All forms of knowledge of the time were assigned a place at one of the stages of development. Many scientific concepts later discovered to be erroneous were presented within this framework as necessary truths resting on deduction rather than experience." Whence the impression, very widespread at the time, that Hegel regarded empirical research as useless and its influence on the natural sciences as insignificant. But it was quite otherwise as regards the "abstract sciences."

The Hegelian conception of history as a progressive evolution "in which the

previous state appears as a necessary and preparatory stage to the subsequent states, and therefore as natural and rational, represented a great advance for science." Furthermore, it uncovered the constant interactions and the contradictory relations existing between individuals and social units (the family, civil society, the state), moral precepts, expressions of the general will, "represented in the natural laws of civil society and in the authoritarian laws of the state." In its monarchic form, the latter appears as the ultimate consummation of social evolution.

The theory of the restoration, therefore, was bound to make a radical criticism of the revolutionary bourgeois philosophy without, however, rejecting it root and branch: like the latter, it preserved a faith in the supernatural tinged with scepticism. However, the Hegelian system could not survive the test to which it was subjected as soon as "capitalism, reaching maturity, began to revolt against the shackles which the reaction was trying to place upon it." Feuerbach set out to bring religion down "from the transcendental heights of abstraction to the physical man." Marx then showed that the ultimate reality of bourgeois society is class antagonism, and discovered that real historical development rests on that of material production. Nevertheless, "Hegel's philosophy is of very great importance even in our age, since it constitutes an excellent theory of the human mind as long as we strip off its transcendental character." This was the import of "the dialectical and materialist theory of knowledge" conceived by Dietzgen.

It is the merit of Dietzgen, writes Pannekoek, "to have raised philosophy to the position of a natural science, as Marx did with history. The human faculty of thought is thereby stripped of its fantastic garb. It is regarded as a part of nature, and by means of experience a progressive understanding of its concrete and ever-changing historical nature can be gained." There is no longer any question, therefore, of a philosophic system pretending "to give absolute truth," since, as Dietzgen emphasizes, one deals at best with "partial truths" which, however, deserve preservation insofar as they are valid. This new conception is fundamentally materialist, but not in the sense of the old bourgeois materialism: "matter to it means everything which exists and furnishes material for thought, including thoughts and imaginings." From this viewpoint, the human mind appears as a component of the universe, with "an equal place among the other parts of the universe," and "its content is only the effect of the other parts." Thus Dietzgen establishes a permanent, direct relation of the mind to the world, and highlights the way the mind reacts to the world in forming ideas. The cerebral activity of man comprises a constant systematization, one of whose expressions is science. Of course, as a result of the mode of production this systematization can take the form of

30. J. Dietzgen, *The Positive Outcome of Philosophy* (Chicago, 1906), pp. 7-37.

transcendental beliefs, for instance, "the bourgeois idols: Freedom, Right, Spirit, Force, which Dietzgen shows to be only fantastic images of abstract conceptions with a limited validity."³¹

The present-day reader may not be familiar with the work of Dietzgen, which was published more than a century ago. But in a period such as ours—a period which, in many respects, is living on its capital of general ideas without being able to expand that capital—the reader may well accept these reflections on Dietzgen by Pannekoek, since, although their source is old, they are still valid as a categorical refutation of every species of dogmatism: "The mind is the faculty of generalization. Out of concrete realities, a continuous and unbounded stream in perpetual motion, it forms abstract conceptions that are essentially rigid, bounded, stable, and unchangeable. This gives rise to the contradiction that our conceptions must always adapt themselves to new realities without ever fully succeeding; that they represent the living by what is dead, the absolute by what is incomplete; and that they are themselves finite in partaking of the nature of the infinite. This contradiction is understood and reconciled by insight into the nature of the faculty of understanding, which is simultaneously a faculty of combination and of distinction, which forms a limited part of the universe and yet encompasses everything; it is solved, moreover, when the nature of the world becomes intelligible. The world is a congregation of infinitely numerous phenomena and comprehends within itself all contradictions, so that they become relative and balance each other. Within it there are no absolute opposites: it is the mind which constructs them, because it has not only the faculty of generalization but also that of distinction. The practical solution of all contradictions is the revolutionary practice of an infinitely progressing science which molds old conceptions into new ones, rejects some, substitutes others in their place, improves, connects and dissects, striving for an always greater unity and an always wider differentiation."

"If a worker wants to take part in the self-emancipation of his class," Dietzgen once remarked, "the basic requirement is that he should cease allowing others to teach him and should set about teaching himself." If Pannekoek did not specifically adopt this formula, he clearly acted on it, as on the rest of the tenets of proletarian materialism. Everything in his political writings, and therefore in his militant action, tends to provide instruments for

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-32. In *Lenin as Philosopher*, Pannekoek reports with approval this aphorism of Gorter: "Marx has clarified what the social matter makes of the mind; Dietzgen, what the mind itself does." H. Gorter, *Het historisch materialisme* (Amsterdam, 1920) first edition, 1907), p. 98, n. 1.

thought and for action. Was he not convinced, with Karl Marx, that "theory changes into material force as soon as it penetrates the masses?" He was, of course, aware that this penetration is linked with great historical conflicts, with an enormous upsurge of forces which itself is the fruit of a whole complex of circumstances; but he was equally aware that consciousness is an element of these forces. He said so—on one occasion among many, since every theoretician inevitably repeats himself—in one of his most remarkable studies: "Historical Materialism."³²

Here especially one finds the idea, developed by Dietzgen, that spiritual factors such as "love of freedom, patriotism, conservatism, the feeling of frustration, the spirit of submission, the revolutionary will," act equally with material factors as determinants of human action. But this in no way implies the primacy of the one over the other since, in fact, they are inseparable. Thus, "the domain of technique includes not only machines, factories, mines, railways, and other material things, but also the capacity to create them and the science from which they issue. The natural sciences, what is known about natural forces, the capacity to implement them by work, must therefore be equally regarded as productive forces. Hence it is that technique includes not only a material element but also a powerful spiritual element. From the viewpoint of historical materialism this is self-evident since, in contrast to the fantastic abstractions of bourgeois philosophers, it places the living man and his corpus of physical needs at the center of evolution. The material element and the spiritual element in man constitute a unity so firmly established that they cannot be separated. Thus, when we talk about human needs, we are not referring merely to the stomach's needs but equally to the needs of head and heart, both types of need being by their nature at once material and spiritual. Human work, even at its simplest, inevitably exhibits these two aspects, and any attempt to separate them involves an artificial abstraction.

"No doubt this abstraction has an historical meaning. By the very fact that it has entailed division of labor and separation into classes, historical evolution has partly transformed the spiritual element linked with the labor process into a distinct function peculiar to certain people, to certain classes, and has thus induced a shrinkage of 'human quality' at both levels. Hence, these specialists, the intellectuals, are coming to regard their work, the spiritual, as a higher form; they are thereby becoming blind to the organic, social unity of these two elements. That is why their idea of historical materialism cannot fail to be wrong in every particular."

32. Anton Pannekoek, "Het historisch materialisme," *De Nieuwe Tijd* (1919). There is a French translation of this in *Cahiers du communisme de conseils*, 1 (1968).

It does not follow from this that ideas determine historical events; their influence, says Pannekoek, is beyond question, but cannot of itself account for such events. In an article published in 1937³³ he offers the following solution: "The thoughts and aims of an active man are considered by him as the cause of his deeds; he does not ask where these thoughts come from. This is especially true because thoughts, ideas, and aims are not as a rule derived from impressions by conscious reasoning, but are the product of subconscious spontaneous processes in our minds. For the members of a social class, life's daily experiences condition, and the needs of the class mold, the mind into a definite line of feeling and thinking, to produce definite ideas about what is useful and what is good or bad. The conditions of a class are life necessities to its members, and they consider what is good or bad for them to be good or bad in general. When conditions are ripe, men go into action and shape society according to their ideas. The rising French bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, feeling the necessity of laissez-faire laws, of personal freedom for the citizens, proclaimed freedom as a slogan, and in the French Revolution conquered power and transformed society."

Of course, this class saw in freedom only what suited its own interests. It was an abstract formula whose real meaning remained hidden. "The materialistic conception of history explains these ideas as caused by the social needs arising from the conditions of the existing system of production." However, to interpret the French Revolution "in terms of a rising capitalism which required a modern state with legislation adapted to its needs does not contradict the conception that the Revolution was brought about by the desire of the citizens for freedom from restraint. . . . Man is a link in the chain of cause and effect; necessity in social development is a necessity achieved by means of human action. The material world acts upon man, determines his consciousness, his ideas, his will, his actions; and so he reacts upon the world and changes it."³⁴ This is poles apart from the "mechanical materialism" which "assumes that our thoughts are determined by the motion of atoms in the cells of our brains. Marxism considers our thoughts to be determined by our social experience observed through the senses or felt as direct bodily needs."³⁵ Nor is there any absolute necessity acting on man "as a fatality to which man has to submit," but instead a constant interaction between man and the world through "historical activity."³⁶

33. Anton Pannekoek, "Society and Mind in Marxian Philosophy," *Science and Society*, 1:4 (1937).

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 448-449.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 445.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.

The bourgeois ideologists of the early part of the century attributed (indeed in a more primitive way than do their present successors) a unilateral determining role not to ideas alone but also to personalities. In this connection Pannekoek was to attack the ideas of philosophers such as Dilthey and Windelband as well as those of neo-Kantians *à la* Max Adler.³⁷ We are interested in this article only insofar as it contains the formulation of an essential concept—the popular masses, a concept which thoroughly scandalized the platitudinous orthodox Marxists.³⁸ Here, as elsewhere in his writings, Pannekoek does not strain after originality since, in his thinking, what is new is so intimately linked with classical elements—at least with their enduringly valid aspects—and is expressed in so straightforward a way, that it does not always emerge at the outset, and sometimes appears only in the conclusions.

"... History is not the history of persons, but that of masses. Whereas with the individual personal qualities always play a considerable role, these qualities lose their prominence among masses, where exceptional traits merge into an average. We are dealing, therefore, with something general, something which can be the object of an interpretive science. Incidentally, here the reason comes to light why all bourgeois efforts to create a science of society are necessarily doomed.

"If one considers the mass in general, the mass as a unit, the people as a whole, one sees that the removal of mutually opposed ideas and wills does not by any means result in an indecisive, fickle, passive mass, constantly divided between apathy and frenetic activity, volatile, oscillating between irrepressible brutal impulse and the most dismal indifference—in accordance with the picture which liberal publicists see fit to present. In fact, this picture could not be otherwise as long as bourgeois writers continue to regard the people simply as a characterless mass, since such writers are convinced that, given the endless diversity of individuals, abstraction of the individual can lead only to the abstraction of everything which makes man an active being endowed with a will. They see no intermediate category between the smallest unit, the person, and the totality in which differences are obliterated, the inert mass. They are unaware of the existence of classes. In contrast, the strength of the socialist theory of history lies in the fact that it introduces order and system into the endless diversity of individuals, by means of the division of society into classes. Whatever its kind, a class brings together

37. Anton Pannekoek, "Teleologie und Marxismus," *Die Neue Zeit*, XXII, 2, 1905, pp. 428-35, 468-73.

38. Pannekoek took up the passage cited below during his famous controversy with Karl Kautsky in 1912.

individuals whose interests, aims, and feelings are to all intents and purposes identical and opposed to those of other classes. The chaotic representation to which we have just alluded disappears as soon as one distinguishes, within the mass movements, the classes which compose them. There immediately emerges a clear and distinct class struggle, whose aspects vary in the highest degree: offense, retreat, defense, victory, and defeat. In this regard it is enough to compare Marx's account of the 1848 revolution with those of bourgeois writers. Within society, the class constitutes a totality endowed with a particular content; suppress this particular content in order to secure an undifferentiated 'total man,' and even the slightest positive element no longer exists."

Pannekoek then stresses that "the spiritual behavior of classes stems from their material situation" in production, and that one can understand that behavior only "by visualizing oneself in the same situation." There is no attempt here to deny the role of personality but simply to place it, in each case, in its socio-historical framework. Besides, "every man lives only as a part of the mass;"³⁹ and, in this sense, he evolves with the world. But what exactly does this mean? Our author is repeatedly led to clarify "the process by which human consciousness adapts itself to society, to the real world." One of his fullest treatments of this question is found in the conclusion of his 1937 article: "When the world does not change very much, when the same phenomena and the same experiences are constantly reproduced, the habits of acting and thinking become fixed with great rigidity. New impressions on the mind fit into the image formed by previous experience and intensify it. These habits and concepts are not personal but collective: they survive the individual. Intensified by the mutual intercourse among members of a community who are all living in the same world, they are transferred to the next generation as a system of ideas and beliefs, an ideology—the mental apparatus of the community. Where for many centuries the system of production does not change perceptibly, as for example in old agricultural societies, the relations between men, their habits of life and their experience of the world remain practically the same. In such a static situation ideas, concepts, and habits of thinking will petrify more and more into a dogmatic self-enclosed ideological body of eternal truths.

"When, however, as a consequence of the development of the productive forces the world begins to change, new and different impressions enter the mind which cannot be adapted to the old representations. Thus begins a process of reconstruction, partly on the basis of old ideas and partly on new

39 Anton Pannekoek, "Teleologie und Marxismus," pp. 432-433.

experiences. Old concepts are replaced by new ones, former rules and judgments are stood on their heads, new ideas emerge. Not every member of a class or group is affected in the same way or at the same time. Ideological strife arises in close connection with class struggles⁴⁰ and is eagerly pursued, because all the different individual lives are linked in diverse ways with the problem of how to pattern society and its system of production. Under modern capitalism, economic and political changes take place so rapidly that the human mind can hardly keep pace with them. In fierce internal struggles ideas are revolutionized, sometimes rapidly by spectacular events, sometimes slowly by continuous warfare against the old ideology. In such a process of unceasing transformation, human consciousness adapts itself to society, to the real world.

"Hence, Marx's thesis that the world determines consciousness does not mean that ideas are determined solely by the society in which they arise. Our ideas and concepts are the crystallization, the essence, of the whole of our present and past experience. What was fixed in the past in abstract mental forms must henceforth be included with such adaptations to the present as are necessary. New ideas thus appear to arise from two sources: present reality, and the system of ideas inherited from the past. Out of this distinction arises one of the most common objections against Marxism: that not only the real material world but also to a lesser extent ideological elements—ideas, beliefs and ideals—determine man's mind, and thus his deeds and the future of the world. This would be a correct criticism if ideas originated by themselves without cause, or from the innate nature of man, or from some supernatural spiritual source. Marxism, however, says that these ideas must originate in the real world and are related to social conditions.

"As forces in modern social development, these traditional ideas hamper the spread of new ideas that express new necessities. In taking these traditions into account we need not abandon Marxism: quite the contrary. For every tradition is a fragment of reality, just as every idea is an integral part of the real world living in human thought. It is often a very powerful reality in determining human actions. It is an ideological reality that has lost its material roots with the disappearance of the conditions which produced them. That these traditions could persist after their material roots have

40. These lines no doubt refer especially to the religious form. In this connection, we note that Pannekoek traced the "irreligion" of the contemporary proletariat to "the state of mind engendered by intellectual participation in the present struggle for emancipation," and saw it as "a fruit of the knowledge acquired both by theoretical formation and by experience." Without abandoning a materialist propaganda clarifying the origins of religion, he stressed—as did the classic Social Democrats—that "in our party, religion remains a private matter" (*Religion und Sozialismus* [Bremen, 1906]).

disappeared is not simply a consequence of the nature of the human mind, which is capable of preserving the impression of the past in memory or subconsciously. Much more important is what may be termed the social memory, the perpetuation of collective ideas systematized in the form of prevailing beliefs and ideas, and transmitted to future generations through oral communications, books, literature, art and instruction. The surrounding world which determines thought consists not only of the contemporary economic world, but also of all the ideological influences arising from continuous human intercourse. Hence comes the power of tradition, which in a rapidly developing society causes the development of ideas to lag behind the development of society. In the end, tradition must yield to the power of incessant battering by new realities. Its effect upon social development is that, instead of permitting a regular, gradual adjustment of ideas and institutions in line with changing necessities, these necessities, when they come too strongly in contradiction with the old institutions, lead to explosions, revolutionary transformations, by which lagging minds are drawn along and are themselves revolutionized."⁴¹

The activist critical intent of this set of ideas will become clear in the following pages. In one form or another, it constitutes an essential key to understanding not only our author, but also the Marxist revolutionary current in the twentieth century which Pannekoek appropriately called "West European communism." For, needless to say, the preceding relates to the very personality of Anton Pannekoek, whose ideas are inseparable from those of his comrades in arms, whether eminent theoreticians or rank-and-file militants.

That is why we shall not attempt to retrace ideational connections from individual to individual, but shall concern ourselves instead with agreements and divergences linked with the difficult ascent or decline, within a given phase, of new forms of organization and of theoretical awareness, as exercising direct influence on the development of proletarian struggles. (However, space limitations necessitate a very sketchy, incomplete treatment. This is of little consequence in the case of Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks, since there the reader has ready access to many and varied sources of information. Of greater consequence are matters concerning the German Leftists and others, especially Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacus League; however, we have nonetheless decided to give a minimum of information about these tendencies which, at least for the moment, are entirely forgotten.)

This limitation will not prevent us from seeing Pannekoek as an exemplary

figure, and his life as a systematized epitome of the theoretical attainments of the emancipatory movement. He was one of the few Marxist thinkers of his day to follow his conclusions to their ultimate consequences, and to remain consistently faithful to them. According to political proclivities, one may view this attachment to principles which did not necessarily fit the demands of immediate situations either as an incurable utopian whim (we shall return to this) or as a display of personal integrity. However, in the second case, it must be remembered that Pannekoek, during the relatively short time he was a "professional revolutionary," had the advantage of a very special position; and that, generally speaking, his material situation enabled him to escape by the direct and indirect day-to-day restraints of party life. However, the guarantee of intellectual independence is one thing; the use made of it is something else—and at this level personality certainly intervenes. In this connection, to quote Van Albada: "Pannekoek was a man endowed with extraordinary capacities; but first and foremost, he was a pure and upright, courageous and devoted person." To these virtues, we shall add freshness of mind and revolutionary enthusiasm.

41. Anton Pannekoek, "Society and Mind . . .," pp. 452-53.

CHAPTER ONE

GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

When the workers' movement made its appearance in the old countries of Europe in the nineteenth century before it spread with capitalism to most of the world, it took two basic forms: the trade union form and the party form. Both had the same purpose: to promote the specific interests of the workers. The first sought to secure the sale of labor power at its value within the framework of capitalist domination and the capitalist market. However, in the Western Europe of the second half of the nineteenth century—that is, in the course of a more or less completed bourgeois revolution—the workers and others among the most underprivileged sections of the population could not hope to make their interests prevail in a lasting way, or to secure for these interests the authority of law, except through political action whose instrument was the party form. This party form was born and developed, assuming very distinctive characteristics in consequence of the course of this bourgeois revolution during its phase of peaceful growth as a parliamentary system. (The same is true of the trade union form to a much more limited extent since it showed analogous traits, in general, in all the developed regions of Europe during the opening years of the present century.)

In Germany, therefore, the development of the party form was subject to the particular conditions of the bourgeois revolution and the spread of capitalism in that country. The bourgeois revolution—in the classic French meaning of the term¹—had been effectively crushed in Germany in 1848; it continued, no doubt, but under the aegis of a semi-absolutist state power in the hands of the aristocracy (especially in Prussia). Politically vanquished, the bourgeois liberal element was integrally absorbed by an expansion of the economy, whose acceleration, at first irregular, became constant after the Franco-German War of 1871. The oppositional element, doomed to powerlessness at the political level by the relations of forces, took shape in the workers' party. But here let us yield to Pannekoek himself—the Pannekoek of

1. Free political growth of the middle class; administrative centralization secured at the expense of feudal privileges and those of the old state bureaucracy; development of military power; state intervention to facilitate the setting up of new industries; unfettered growth of banking, industry and commerce; etc.

1942, of World War II: "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 modernizing 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 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 organizations 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 organizations—awakened the desire for direct progress in social reform. Though traditional program and theory spoke of revolution 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 mass 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 vigor 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 organizations appeared insufficient and against which even their own ideals seemed to fade. So, in their subconsciousness, 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."²

This provides the best introduction to Pannekoek's *Die taktischen Differenzen in der Arbeiterbewegung* (translated in the next chapter), a work he published more than thirty years earlier (1909). It was born in the heat of controversy, in a blossoming of ideas whose richness the workers' movement in general was not to reach again.

The controversy, of course, was not centered in the realm of pure ideas. It immediately involved the orientation and even the very nature of socialist activity. Up to the end of the last century, a practical movement and a theoretical movement had coexisted within Social Democracy—not without clashes and even violent crises which, however, were nonetheless kept in bounds. While at local and sometimes even regional levels politicians and administrators waged savage war to win seats on municipal councils and other elective bodies, the theoreticians were slowly absorbing the substance of the writings of Marx and Engels.

The party was living on the Erfurt program (1891), which associated with the final purpose, "the abolition of the classes," a whole body of demands

² *Workers' Councils* (Melbourne, 1948), pp. 125-26.

aimed at promoting immediate, day-to-day political action, the *Kleinarbeit*. The practical movement was interested almost exclusively in this second part of the program; it paid its due respects to the first part only during electoral campaigns in working class districts. The aristocrats and the bourgeoisie, for their part, were aware only of the first part and were extremely alarmed by it. The more informed elements among them, however, only made a pretense of being afraid. Bismarck had taught them that this very real fear enabled the state to keep a tight rein on the liberal bourgeoisie (and the princelings) and to administer certain branches of production in their place.

The Bismarckian brand of state reformism was to last only for a short time. As it concerns this discussion, it had two fundamental consequences: firstly, it established the bases of an economic expansion which ended by arousing at least the political ambitions of certain sectors of the bourgeoisie; secondly, over a period of some dozen years, it legislated to prevent Social Democracy from expressing itself as a "revolutionary party" while at the same time opening up the possibility that it could act as the sole legal opposition to the absolutist imperial regime, and thereby snatch electoral victory upon victory and implant itself deeply in the day-to-day life of the nation.

Ultimately, this development could not fail to have repercussions at the theoretical level. Bernstein—whom Engels had in a sense designated as his heir by making him and Kautsky his executors—took particular care to invite the party to bring its theory into line with its practice,³ and to advocate henceforth the adaptation of English-type bourgeois liberalism to German conditions in the guise of an "organizing liberalism." That is why he urged the rejection of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and other "decidedly outmoded" concepts associated with the idea of violent revolution:⁴ in short, the ending of *a priori* opposition (in connection with the budget vote, for example), a permanent subject of discord.

Bernstein, as he himself admits,⁵ did not expect his ideas to create a "sensation." In his view, "Marxist theory" had a twofold character: on the one hand it was "*Blanquist*," because of its insistence on the idea of an expropriation of the bourgeoisie resulting from "revolutionary brawls;" on the other, it had a "pacifically evolutionist" character and extolled "universal suffrage and parliamentary action as means of workers' emancipation." With

3. "In my view, the task of revision lies in the domain of theory, not in that of practical action" (at the Dresden Congress, 1903; *Protokoll über der Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, p. 391. Subsequent references here: *Protokoll*...).

4. E. Bernstein, *Socialisme théorique et social démocratie pratique* (Paris, 1912), pp. 202-237.

5. My articles, he wrote, "were beginning to attract attention in a completely unexpected manner" (*ibid.*, Preface to the French ed., p. vii).

the support of texts, he linked the first of these aspects with a past historical phase, on Engels' own admission.⁶ Bernstein, however, was not just an expert Marxologist; he proposed a fresh analysis of contemporary social development. Rejecting the thesis of the rapid polarization of society into two antagonistic classes, he sought to show with statistics that the income of all social groups had increased, and that the rise in general living standards was bound to continue, given the mitigation of crises through cartellization and credit, or, in a word, through the progressive regulation of the market. Certainly economic expansion had not yet eliminated the distortion between supply and demand in workers' consumption; but with the development of trade unionist, cooperative, parliamentary, municipal and other types of action, the exercise of democracy would remedy it. Thus, without meddling too much with private property (or "even with the principle of individual economic responsibility"),⁷ there would be progress towards a higher civilization, morally more satisfying than the present one. "The movement is everything; the goal is nothing," he concluded in a famous formula.

In a sense, Bernstein touched Marxism at its vulnerable spot. It is a fundamentally critical theory, able to clarify the real significance of a critical phase of history and to incite the direct producers, on this basis, to take their affairs into their own hands. On the other hand, in growth periods, the periods of relative social harmony which Marxism foresaw, its basic concepts lost their critico-activist relevance and served only to describe the economic development after a fashion.⁸ At that level, as a historically specific, dated theory, Marxism could cope with immediate situations only at the price of systematic adjustment. In this respect it is the form of political organization or the class to which the theoretician adheres which dominates the theoretical vision: Bernstein, a defender of the democratic party form, therefore stressed

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 50ff.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

8. Karl Korsch said somewhat the same thing when he wrote as follows concerning the *Bernsteindebate*: "During the long period when Marxism was slowly expanding without having any practical revolutionary task to fulfil, the revolutionary problems had ceased, in the eyes of all Marxists, both orthodox and revisionist, to have any terrestrial existence, even at the theoretical level" (Korsch, *Marxisme et philosophie* [Paris, 1964], p. 100). Pannekoek reached an analogous diagnosis when, in 1919, he wrote: "In phases of accelerated development, the mind glows with enthusiasm; it grows in flexibility and in dynamism, and crushes old ideas more rapidly. In the course of the past few decades, the capitalist system and the proletariat have reached a high degree of development, and the effect of this has been to curb and even to halt the process of political revolution. That is also why, during this period, the process of spiritual development went on at a diminished rate, especially when one compares it with the headlong formation of ideas during the bourgeois revolutions of the past. This was bound to entail, after the preliminary and brilliant emergence of Marxism, a decided recoil: revisionist doubt, revival of the bourgeois critique, and dogmatic sclerosis among some of the radicals." ("le Matérialisme historique," *loc. cit.*).

factors calculated to justify the practical action of that party. However, when social evolution took a critical turn with the economic crises of 1901-02, 1907-09, and 1913, and then with the outbreak of World War I (followed by the first international wave of revolution in history), his thesis was completely enfeebled and his ethical utopian, optimistic prophecies were nullified.

Nonetheless, much to his own surprise Bernstein caused a tremendous hue and cry against himself throughout both the German and the international movement. Had he not invited that movement "to dare to appear as what it is: a movement of social and political reform?" A movement to seek an overt alliance with the liberal middle class whose first indications were only just coming into the open. "The Bebels and the Kautskys, the Victor Adlers, the Plekhanovs and their like heaped abuse on this insolent fellow who had divulged the carefully guarded secret. At the Hanover Party Congress of 1899, during a debate opening with Bebel's six-hour report and lasting four days, Bernstein was subjected to a formal trial. He just managed to escape expulsion. For many years, Bernstein was constantly abused by militants and constituents in the press and at party meetings." It was easy to attack the theory of a particular individual rather than the actual practice which he imprudently but faithfully expressed. With equal ease one thereby verbally safeguarded the revolutionary character of the party, as was to happen later in the "construction of socialism" in Stalinist Russia.⁹

Without going into the details of the discussion, we can note that the two most important critiques of Bernstein at the time were those of Karl Kautsky¹⁰ and Rosa Luxemburg. Both sought to refute the dangerous errors of a *unique*¹¹ theoretician; both summoned a wealth of statistics¹² in their

9. On this point, we cite and follow Korsch ("The Passing of Marxian Orthodoxy," *International Council Correspondence*, 11-12, Dec. 1937). Korsch verifies and enriches a thesis previously advanced by Georges Sorel: "[Bernstein] saw, therefore, no other means to keep socialism within the frame of realities except to suppress anything misleading in a revolutionary program in which the leaders no longer believed. Kautsky, on the other hand, wanted to preserve the veil which hid from the workers the true activity of the party" (G. Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* [Paris, 1930, 3rd edition], pp. 328-29).

10. From the viewpoint that concerns us here, the best biography of Kautsky remains the short essay by Paul Mattick: "From Marx to Hitler," *Living Marxism*, IV, 7 June 1939, pp. 193-207.

11. "Bernstein's theory was the first, but also the last, attempt to provide a theoretical basis for opportunism" (R. Luxemburg, *Réforme ou révolution?* [Paris, 1947], p. 79); later, Rosa incidentally admits that "in the majority of the socialist parties of Western Europe, a link exists between opportunism and the intellectuals" (*Marxisme contre dictature*, [Paris, 1946], pp. 27, 30-32).

12. We note, with the writer of the preface to a Dutch version of *Ethique et socialisme* (*Daad en gedachte*, Nov. 1966, pp. iv-v) that, unlike the other critics of Bernstein who essentially oppose an "orthodox" interpretation to a "heretical" one, Pannekoek gives priority to questions of method, to the materialist analysis of the revisionist current in the broad sense.

support. Kautsky cited Marx extensively, finally, and not without contortions, conceding an eminent role for parliamentary and trade union activity. Luxemburg declared, among other things, that the great days of trade union activity, that "labor of Sisyphus," belonged permanently to the past. But Rosa's expectations proved wrong: in Germany, the membership of the trade unions increased almost tenfold in the twenty years between 1891 and 1912.

At the time Pannekoek wrote *Tactical Differences*, the framework of the discussion had changed profoundly. The avowed revisionist tendency as such remained an insignificant current whose members, generally intellectuals, could claim favor with university liberals; but the attitude toward them in the party was hostile. On the other hand, a radical tendency¹³ firmly implanted in the most industrialized regions of the country—the "red belts" of the big towns—slowly gathered strength as a relatively autonomous force at the local level, where it often controlled the party machine, the body functionaries of permanent salaried officials, and partly controlled the editing of the publications of the party and its peripheral organizations (women, youth, etc.). Things were completely different at the central level. There power was in the hands of executives or administrative bodies which were essentially conservative, even if in times of social crisis they did temporarily rely on the radical tendency—the "leftists," as they were sometimes called. The latter, despite a mode of representation at the congresses which was highly unfavorable to them,¹⁴ succeeded in certain circumstances in securing the adoption of a "line" which was in conformity with their ideas but was doomed to remain a dead letter.¹⁵

As a whole, the rather scattered radical organizations achieved only a poor degree of organic cohesion, which varied with the general situation (or indeed with local personalities). It was only from about 1910 that this current succeeded in taking on a clearer form, especially as a result of intense factional struggles. These confrontations occurred on the basis of a body of ideas inherited from the past: orthodox Marxist "tactics." These tactics sought to assign precise limits to parliamentary and trade union action and to subject that action, at least in its tendencies, to the realization of the "final goal"—socialism.

13. We here translate the German *radikal* as "radical," "extremist," or sometimes, according to context, "Left." On the other hand, it seems inadvisable to render *Radikalismus* by "Leftism" or even "Ultra-leftism," both for this and the subsequent period, since these terms belong to the post-1920 Leninist vocabulary and have little to do with the ideas of Pannekoek and of his political comrades.

14. Cf. Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), Chapter V, *passim*.

15. Thus the famous resolution of the Dresden Congress (1903) condemning revisionist attempts at "adaptation to the existing order," a resolution noted, however, by the revisionist delegates themselves.

Besides, looking upon parliamentarianism and trade unionism in themselves as the principal elements of reformist practice, the leftists vigorously stressed the general strike and mass actions as the supreme means of the class struggle and consciousness.

This was not a purely theoretical attitude. Between the onset of the century and the outbreak of World War I, industrial expansion constantly increased the size of the proletariat, and strikes and demonstrations were numerous and sometimes violent. With a few major exceptions, however, they remained limited in extent: especially in Germany, the leadership or the party and, even more so, of the trade unions was on the alert against any "excesses" and kept a firm hand on the organizational network. Faced with the power of this workers' bureaucracy, radical theoreticians worked out a new concept of organization as a process, whose elements derived largely from reflection on the 1905 Russian Revolution and the mass strikes in Western Europe but were also not unrelated—despite denials as vigorous as they were sincere—to the ideas of certain anarchist thinkers and French trade unionists.

Rosa Luxemburg formulated this concept as follows: "The rigid, mechanical-bureaucratic conception cannot conceive of the struggle save as the product of organization at the certain stage of its strength. On the contrary the living, dialectical explanation makes the organization arise as a product of the struggle. . . . Here the organization does not supply the troops for the struggle, but the struggle, in an ever growing degree, supplies recruits for the organization. . . . If the social democrats, as the organized nucleus of the working class, are the most important vanguard of the entire body of the workers and if the political clarity, the strength, and the unity of the labor movement flow from this organization, then it is not permissible to visualize the class movement of the proletariat as a movement of the organized minority"¹⁶ of the party or the trade unions. She adds that this is the only way in which "that compact unity of the German labor movement can be attained which, in view of the coming political class struggles and of the peculiar interest of the further development of the trade unions, is indispensably necessary."¹⁷ To take up a later notion born in completely different conditions, the "degeneration" of the workers organizations, inevitable in a period of calm, will be surmounted only through the most active class struggle. Although this consequence of the theory was rarely drawn in an explicit way at the time,¹⁸ no one could doubt that the idea of the class

16. Rosa Luxemburg, "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions" in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, ed. Mary Alice Walters (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 196, 198.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

18. Such, for example, was the perspective of Pannekoek himself, during the war.

consciousness process sought, as one of its aims, to "redress" the current course of the party and the trade unions, and to regenerate structures which had become rigid and reactionary. Hence the welcome it got within the party from both revolutionary workers and radical functionaries.

Neither of these groups was considering a breakaway. Fetishism of the organization was sustained by a number of circumstances: the breadth and constant growth of the movement; the extremely wide and varied field of activities it supplied for each and all; the day-to-day advantages it offered with its cooperatives, dispensaries, and cultural and other circles; the strength of habits; the keen hostility which the bosses and the authorities displayed towards it; the salaried or honorary positions secured within the different organizations; also the petty-bourgeois impregnation which Pannekoek noted; and even more, perhaps, the absence up to then of one of those "great historic battles" to which Marx traced the existence of classes.¹⁹ All these circumstances contributed to maintain the unity of German Social Democracy. But it was very different in Holland.

The industrial development of Holland was slower than that of Germany, in whose wake it occurred. On the other hand, the process of bourgeois political and cultural revolution had reached a much more advanced stage in Holland. There the socialist movement had consequently presented, at least in its beginnings, a more "French" character, in the sense that it centered more on anarchism than on Marxism. Its leading light was the highly gifted ex-clergyman, Domela Nieuwenhuis. Elected deputy with the sole intention, originally, of using his parliamentary seat to propagandize the Social Democratic Movement (*Sociaal-Democratisch Bond*), this former correspondent of Marx soon realized that this was a forlorn hope. He turned to anti-parliamentarianism and became a zealous advocate of the idea of the general strike, regarded as the dawn of the "great day."²⁰

Although it was far from securing electoral successes comparable to those of the German Party, the SDB's parliamentary power visibly increased towards the end of the century. After sustained controversies a split occurred in the party and, in 1894, the SDAP came into existence, formed on the German model but even more centralized and authoritarian. Soon the intellectuals lent it their support: Gorter and Henriette Roland-Holst in

19. In his famous letter to Weidemeyer (5 March 1852) published 1907 in *Neue Zeit*.

20. Much later on, Gorter, recalling with what enthusiasm the aged Nieuwenhuis had greeted the Russian Revolution, was to note: "The difference between him and us is that we are for revolutionary methods in a time of revolution, while he advocated them in a completely different period." (Anonymous, "Die Marxistische revolutionäre Arbeiterbewegung in Holland," *Proletarier*, II, 1, Feb. 1922, p. 16).

1897, Pannekoek in 1901 (the latter at first regarded as "one of the bigwigs of Marxist orthodoxy").²¹ This group very soon clashed with the party leadership and with its chief, the lawyer Troelstra, one of whose favorite dicta was: "first life, then theory," meaning that support had to be given to the cause of the small peasants, or approval to government subsidies to the denominational schools.²²

This antagonism increased after the big strikes of dockers and railwaymen in 1903. The party leadership gave lip-service support while attempting to curb the movement,²³ provoking the enraged criticism of Gorter, among others, who reproached the party with contemptuously despising "the proletarian instinct" and "the revolutionary energy" of the masses.²⁴ Things became worse when, in 1905, the party leadership (particularly Troelstra) brazenly violated a resolution adopted by the Party Congress prohibiting all parliamentary support for the liberal bourgeois government (whose political life depended on such supplementary votes.) The left wing, in which Pannekoek was very active, advocated intensive campaigns of agitation among the workers and an attitude of undeviating opposition toward parliament. Troelstra and his followers, the "majority group" who dominated the party machine, regarded the leftists as "dogmatists," "unilateral doctrinaires" unable to appreciate how useful it was to play "on the divisions among the bourgeois groupings," who if they were heeded would reduce the party to a "propaganda club."²⁵ Thus the differences were far more lively than in Germany, since they took on an immediate practical character. In 1907, the minority group financed an independent weekly paper, *De Tribune* (whence their name—"Tribunists"); two years later, the split was complete.

The new party (SDP) was tiny (400 members) and, in the 1913 elections, received ten times fewer votes than its rival. From the viewpoint of electoral effectiveness, which continued to be the viewpoint of the German leftists, this was a singular failure and an added reason for setting aside any idea of a schism.²⁶ While the majority party drew support from the "neutral" trade

21. W. van Ravesteijn: *De wording van het communisme in Nederland 1907-1925* (Amsterdam, 1948), p. 26.

22. Anonymous, *Die Gründung der "Sociaaldemocratische partij in Nederland"* (Berlin, 1909), pp. 4-5.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

24. At the Ninth Party Congress; cited by A. C. Rüter, *De Spoorvegetakingen van 1903* (Leyden, 1935), p. 573. Ten years later, Rosa Luxemburg defined the strike in general in the same terms, as "the expression of a high tension of revolutionary energy" (*Gesammelte Werke*, IV [Berlin, 1928], p. 637; she also regarded it (1910) as "a means of moral and political education"—*ibid.*, p. 613).

25. *Die Gründung...*, p. 14.

26. As Paul Frölich notes in the introduction to Rosa Luxemburg: *Gesammelte Werke*, III

unions of the German kind, the major beneficiaries of the 1903 strikes, the minority party was working in conjunction with a relatively small and anarchistic trade union organization which was active in those years.²⁷

The split of the Netherlands Party could not fail to have repercussions within the Socialist International. In fact, it provided the occasion on which Lenin, for the first time in his political career, took an active position in the organizational life of a Western European party—needless to say, on the side of the Tribunists.²⁸

In the course of the long controversy which preceded the split, Gorter and Pannekoek often criticized "opportunism" and urged their own conception of orthodox Marxism. At that time the special platform for their ideas was *De Nieuwe Tijd*, a leftist-controlled party theoretical organ. But, the two men differed greatly in temperament. Somewhat older than Pannekoek, Gorter (1864-1927) was already famous, perhaps the greatest poet then writing in Dutch. His verses combined rhythmic beauty and perfection of form with inspiration of a pansexualist kind, notably in *Mei* (1889), which was to develop (*Pan*, 1912) towards a lyricism celebrating "the unification of mankind and the cosmos"²⁹ in which the socialist universe appears as the final radiant goal of the human race. Gorter was to resume this theme in the often classically constructed poems of his posthumous collection *De Arbeidersraad* ("The Workers' Council"). Nevertheless, in politics the poet displayed more concrete thinking than the astronomer. An extremely active man, a great sportsman, tribunist, and agitator, Gorter deliberately directed his energies to practical matters and questions of organization, which may partly explain why, after 1920, he was more deeply involved in immediate political activity than was his friend.

The bonds between these two Marxists always remained the closest: in all, they complemented one another admirably. Pannekoek, absorbed in arduous theoretical problems, sometimes hesitated and ignored details of practical application; whereas Gorter flung himself on his adversary, and usually confined his attention to matters of immediate concern. Long after his

(Berlin, 1925), p. 28.

27. Van Ravesteijn, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 127. "The NAS [trade union] was the body, and the SDP [minority party] the head," says even this author, himself of the majority party.

28. At the eleventh reunion of the Bureau of the International; in the article he devoted to this question (*Sotsial-demokrat*, 10 Dec. 1909; *Collected Works*, SVI, pp. 140-44), Lenin fully answered for his part the arguments of the Dutch Left. Rosa Luxemburg would hear nothing of a split. In August 1908 she wrote to her friend Henrietta Roland-Holst: "Nothing more fatal than a splitting of the Marxists. . . . One cannot remain outside the organization, lose contact with the masses! The worst among the workers' parties is better than no party at all!" (Cited by J.P. Nettel, *Rosa Luxemburg* [London, 1966], p. 656).

29. H. Roland-Holst, *Herman Gorter* (Amsterdam, 1938), p. 137.

friend's death, Pannekoek was still defending him against the accusation of having been "a poor politician." He reminds his readers that those who attempt "to help the exploited masses gain the strength to effect their own emancipation are labeled, in parliamentary jargon, poor politicians."³⁰ Undeniably, in this sense Gorter, Pannekoek, and many others were "poor politicians;" and this is to their credit.

Interrupting his university career in 1906, Pannekoek left for Germany accompanied by his wife Anna. They remained there until the delcaration of war. As an orthodox Marxist, Pannekoek had been invited to Germany by the party leadership to teach the history of materialism and of social theories at the school which they had decided to open in Berlin in conjunction with the leaders of the trade unions confederation. However, on the eve of the second school semester the Prussian police threatened to deport both Pannekoek and his colleague, Hilferding, also a foreigner; the two teachers had no option but to submit.³¹ Pannekoek defined as follows the aims of the school (which were also those of all his own work): "We must clearly understand the nature of capitalism, not just to incite the workers to fight it but also to discover the best *methods* of combat. Where this understanding is lacking, tactics are governed by established traditions or by a superficial empiricism. When one merely takes account of the present, the immediate, appearances inevitably prove deceptive and coherence upon solid foundations is neglected."³²

Having had to give up his Berlin teaching post, Pannekoek then became a salaried propagandist. As a journalist and traveling lecturer, he soon gained a considerable reputation as a theoretician in Germany and Eastern Europe.³³ In 1909 he settled in Bremen at the invitation of the party branch and the trade union coalition of that town, where the factional struggle was at its height. In Bremen, the local party machine had been organized "for action" by Friedrich Ebert. When Ebert left for Berlin in 1906 to take on the administrative leadership of the party—and to become, as he was justly called, "*mutatis mutandis*, the Stalin of Social Democracy"³⁴—he left behind him an authoritarian structure of great strength. Nevertheless, the big Hanseatic town was experiencing lively social conflicts; in particular, there

30. "La politique de Gorter," *la Révolution prolétarienne*, 64, Aug. to Sept. 1952, p. 254.

31. The revisionist wing of the party strongly attacked this venture, alleging the "doctrinaire" quality of the teaching.

32. Anton Pannekoek, "The SD Party-School in Berlin," *International Socialist Review*, VIII, Dec. 6, 1907, p. 322.

33. A biography of translations of socialist "literature" into the Serbian language (up to 1914) gives 68 Kautsky titles as against 58 Pannekoek titles (W. Blumenberg, *Karl Kautsky's literarisches Werk* [The Hague, 1960], p. 16).

34. Schorske, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

were frequent strikes among the dock workers (we shall return to this). In the schools a nucleus of teachers was threatening to stir things up in order to suppress religious instruction.³⁵ The opposition, directed by young officials such as Heinrich Schulz, Wilhelm Pieck and Alfred Henke, had vigorous rank and file support. Despite a certain provincialism, the political life of Bremen presented a lively example of correct theoretical controversies.

Pannekoek, however, especially because of his scientific training, was inclined to generalize. His political views were those of the left, the orthodox Marxist tactic conceived in accordance with the basic principle which he himself formulated in *Tactical Differences* when he wrote: "The conditions for revolutionary transformation exist germinally in daily action," and with these conditions, the spread of reform into revolution. No doubt, in his own particular way he stressed the importance of spiritual factors, *geistlich*, in the class struggle and the direct link between the maturation of these factors and the form of organization. But in this as in others matters, the Dutchman was not a precursor; his originality consisted in deeply scrutinizing the theoretical achievement of a particular current of ideas in the spirit of Marx and Engels in close connection with the practical situation.

Some years ago Heinz Schurer, a London political scientist, drew attention to the role played by Pannekoek's ideas in "the origins of Leninism."³⁶ "In fact, commenting on *Tactical Differences*, Lenin said that it contains "deductions whose complete correctness cannot be denied."³⁷ But Pannekoek himself once described this type of abstract research into the kinship of pure ideas as "sterile and misleading," as a distinctive mark of "official academic science," as "the fundamental vice of criticism as professed in modern universities" which ignored everything referring to real historical conditions.³⁸ Schurer has decided to apply this very "method" to the process by which ideas are formed and transmitted within the Marxist workers' movement. However, to regard this process as dependent on individuals is certainly a mistake. Schurer is mistaken when he writes in connection with Pannekoek's *Tactical Differences*, that here, "for the first time in the Marxist camp, an author established that the tactical differences between the right wing and the left wing of the workers' movement originated in the class structure of the latter—namely, that it was weighed down by "the new middle class," the intellectuals, and the "labor

35. Cf. H. Schulz, "Die Bremer Lehrerschaft und der Religionsunterricht," *Die Neue Zeit*, XXIII, 2, 1905.

36. Heinz Schurer, "Anton Pannekoek and the Origins of Leninism," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XLI, 97, June 1963, pp. 327-44.

37. Lenin, "Divergences in the European Workers' Movement," *Zvezda*, Dec. 1910; *Marx-Engels-Marxisme* (Paris-Moscow, undated), pp. 148-55.

38. "Teleologie und Marxismus," *loc. cit.*, pp. 471-73.

aristocracy."³⁹

That theoreticians and militants closely linked with the movement should have remained blind to a phenomenon of such magnitude might seem strange—and indeed, such was not the case. As early as 1895 Kautsky pointed out the existence of “a whole party of ‘intelligentsia’ animated with reformist sentiments,” and recommended that in dealing with them the positions of Democratic Socialism should be maintained unyieldingly in order to win over the best of them, especially among the students, on a clear, explicit basis.⁴⁰ Four years later, in a polemic with Bernstein, Kautsky noted that although the intellectuals who have reached the higher echelons become “the most reactionary of reactionaries,” their constant numerical increase exposes them to the increasing risk of proletarianization, pushing them toward the party. However, these social groups, “regarding themselves as above class antagonisms,” seek “to substitute social reforms for revolution”⁴¹ and to transform the organization “into a party for everyone,” a “popular party.”⁴² In this connection, as we shall see, Pannekoek’s analysis brings him into direct line with a conception widely expressed in the party ranks. He was in no sense an innovator.

The same can be said about the “theory” of the labor aristocracy. Twenty-five years earlier Engels, discussing England and its monopolistic power, had described this social group as a factor in reformism operating through big trade union formations. “The metal lathe workers, the carpenters” and others, he wrote in 1885, “form an aristocracy within the working class; they have succeeded in creating a relatively comfortable situation for themselves, and they regard that situation as fixed and settled.”⁴³ Clearly, therefore, judgments of this kind were current among Marxists of every tendency and in many nations—among German Marxists, needless to say,⁴⁴ but also, as Pannekoek himself pointed out, among

39. Cf. H. Schurer, *op. cit.*, p. 329. This very well documented article provides many indications of the connections between the theoretical work of Pannekoek and the evolution of the political thought of Lenin, Bukharin, and Zinoviev (Cf. also Robert Vincent Daniels, “The State and the Revolution,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, XII, 1 Feb. 1953, pp. 22-43).

40. Karl Kautsky, “le Socialisme et les carrières libérales,” *le Devenir social*, 1895, 2 and 3.

41. Karl Kautsky, *le Marxisme et so critique Bernstein*, (Paris, 1900), pp. 242-54; cf. also Chapter Two, note 18.

42. Letter to Victor Adler, May 5, 1901; Victor Adler, *Briefwechsel...* (Vienna, 1954), p. 355.

43. F. Engels, *Die Neue Zeit*, June 1885; *Marx-Engels Werke*, XXI, pp. 191ff. Considerations of this kind often recur with Engels in this period.

44. Thus about 1900 Bernstein (with qualified approval from Kautsky) stated that “trade unionism will always rest principally on those categories of the working class whom it is usual to call the workers’ aristocracy” (in a preface to the German translation of the Webbs’ “History of

Americans.⁴⁵ It could, of course, be argued that in every case the reference was to the Anglo-Saxon labor aristocracy; but if so, then Pannekoek—and later on Lenin—would merely have generalized an idea which had been kept within arbitrary bounds.

In any case, Pannekoek’s attitude shows that, far from indulging in utopianism and mysticism, he always took his bearings from the realities of the movement and its development and bearings from the realities of the movement and its development and generalized them, not in an arbitrary way but in terms of its practical and theoretical attainments. Besides, he was ready to abandon an idea when it seemed to him ill founded; a case in point being this very notion of a labor aristocracy, to which he never again reverted to the best of our knowledge.⁴⁶ Perhaps, on reflection, he came to realize that in this way one gains only a very incomplete and historically limited truth, further increasing the division and confusion in the “proletarian” ranks (at the time, the worker aristocrat was a salaried artisan, and almost all the German workers’ leaders, including the radicals, had come from this stratum.⁴⁷

The conceptual core of *Tactical Differences* is elsewhere. In a positive way, it lies in a particular emphasis on spiritual factors, on *geistlich*, on social life generally, and on the fundamental role of class consciousness (and not of specialized organizations) in the revolutionary class struggle. Besides, it highlights the idea that the socialist movement does not have, or no longer has, a homogeneous class nature (whence, once again, the necessity for recourse to mass action as a basic cohesive factor). At the national level, in Western Europe and in America, the middle classes weigh on the development of this movement and crystallize in “opposed and unilateral tendencies,” revisionism and anarchism, “although these labels leave much to

Trade Unionism”—a work translated into Russian by Lenin during his exile in Siberia). Cf. also K. Radek, *In den Reihen der deutschen Revolution* (Munich, 1921), p. 316.

45. Cf. Chapter Two, n. 24.

46. Pannekoek makes no allusion to the workers’ aristocracy in an important text which can be regarded as the first sketch for *Die tatischen Differenzen*: “Theorie en beginsel in die arbeiders beweging,” *De Nieuwe Tijd*, 1906. Nor does it appear in his article, “The New Middle Class,” *International Socialist Review*, October 1909, pp. 317-36.

47. With Lenin and his disciples, on the other hand, this idea was to supply an essential key to understanding Social Democratic and trade unionist “opportunism” (for a recent treatment, cf. Eugène Varga, *Essais sur l’économie politique du capitalisme* [Moscow, 1967], pp. 138-56). However, with the spread of a minimum and uniform level of skill, the political and social weight of the workers’ aristocracy, still very considerable at the beginning of the century, has clearly diminished, as Zygmunt Bauman has shown in connection with England (cf. *Studie Soziologiczno Polityczne*, 1958, 1, pp. 25-122). Something quite different, of course, would be a critique of the widespread division of the proletariat into categories with specific and anti-egalitarian demands at the material level and of the over-estimation of levels of competence, one of the ideological bases of the exploitation of man by man on the spiritual plane in the West as in the East.

be desired."⁴⁸ Similarly at the international level, in the East beyond the Vistula,⁴⁹ in an effort to emancipate themselves from the domination of foreign capital the emerging bourgeoisie is attempting to adapt socialism to its interests, given the proven imminent bankruptcy of liberal ideology.

This is a discerning extrapolation, even if it does not accord with immediate empirical data. There is no longer a special concern with refuting an individual theoretician (Bernstein), denouncing an ambitious politician (Millerand, Troelstra), or stigmatizing some controlling body of the party or of the trade unions. Instead, the effort is to move forward a critique of a specific social and historical process which is both detailed and linked with action.

48. Anton Pannekoek, "Theorie en beginsel in die arbeiders beweging," *op. cit.*, p. 13.

49. In Russia at the same period, Waclaw Machajski showed, following Bakunin, that socialism was the "class ideal" of intellectuals destined to succeed the capitalists (cf. the study by S. Utechin in *Soviet Studies*, XX, Oct. 1958, pp. 121-22); and Lenin, often regarded at the time as "anarcho-marxist," ceaselessly emphasize, with proofs, the deeply bourgeois character of other tendencies of Russian socialism.

CHAPTER TWO

TACTICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT¹

I. *The Aim of Class Struggle*

"The tactics of the proletarian class struggle represent an application of science, of theory, which clarifies the causes and the tendencies of social development.

"The capitalist mode of production transforms the production of socially necessary use value into a means of enlarging capital. The owner of capital buys the labor power of the worker, who has no means of production; he uses this labor to set his means of production in motion; and thus appropriates the product of labor, the value created by labor. Since labor power creates a value greater than the value necessary to its reproduction, the exploitation of this labor power constitutes a means of amassing wealth. The surplus value—the value which the worker produces in excess of the value of his labor power—reverts to the capitalist and serves for the most part to augment capital.

"The most important quality of capitalism is not derived, however, from this structure, from this exploitive character in general, but from its constant rapid *evolution* towards new forms. *The driving force of this development is competition.*

"Through the operation of the laws of competition, the total surplus value created by the whole body of capitalist enterprise is not distributed proportionately among the enterprises. Those with the most productive machinery and methods, who therefore can produce at lowest cost, secure a surplus profit, whereas less productive ones make only a small profit, break even, or even register a loss.

"The first result of this situation is *a steady growth of the social productivity of labor.* The discoveries of the natural sciences and their rapid development lead to better methods of labor and improved machinery. The policy is to use the best techniques; less efficient techniques are abandoned; the production capacity of machinery and the labor yield continually increases. . . ."

The big firms are the beneficiaries of this evolution. This entails a decline

1. *Die taktischen Differenzen in der Arbeiterbewegung* (Hamburg, 1909), p. 132. Here as elsewhere, all italics are by Pannekoek himself.

of the middle class of small producers and independent merchants, and an increase in the proletariat, this increase comprising "both former members of the petty bourgeoisie and uprooted peasants absorbed into big industry. The natural growth of big capital is not sufficient of itself to secure *concentration of capital*; concentration is accelerated by the fact that the joint stock companies and the banks absorb small capitals and thus create large masses of capital. *Business organization* is transformed; the capitalist who hitherto personally directed production recedes further and further into the background;² control is placed in the hands of salaried employees, managers, commanding a whole staff of departmental chiefs, overseers, technicians, engineers, chemists, and so forth. These managers form a *new middle class* whose dependent situation distinguishes it from the old middle class. The capitalist thus loses all active part in the production process and is reduced more and more to a *mere parasite*.³ Production goes on without him, but continues to serve his interests. . . ."

Thus, while the mass of producers founder in misery and endure insecurity of employment, production is socialized and comes into conflict with the private form of appropriation. Ever-increasing concentration of capital entails a corresponding diminution of competition and the emergence of giant monopolies, which attack the unbounded anarchy of private production and establish a partial control of production. However, this development benefits only the big capitalists. There is no way to suppress them except by "*the socialization of the means of production—socialist production*. The evolution of the capitalist system itself reveals its ultimate end: the contradictions of the system are exacerbated to such an extent that they become intolerable and provoke an upheaval, a social revolution, which leads to the replacement of capitalism by a new mode of production—the socialist mode.

"But these contradictions do not bring about such a revolution in any mechanical way. The latter occurs only insofar as these contradictions are experienced as intolerable constraints. *All production relationships are human relationships*; everything that occurs in society is due to human intervention. The invention and utilization of new machines, the concen-

2. Marx, as we know, already speaks in *Capital* about the expropriation of the capitalist (I, Ch. 22 *in fine*) and emphasizes that the administrative function tends more and more to become separate from the property of capital (III, Ch. XV, 2 *in fine*). Hilferding, more particularly, has studied this problem in one of the most brilliant chapters of *Finanzkapital* (1910).

3. We recall that Pannekoek's analysis is perfectly classic; it was shared at the time by all the theoreticians of Marxist Social Democracy (Bernstein alone contesting the diminution of the competition and of the number of small enterprises). His originality lies in a particular, and highly characteristic, insistence on the human factor.

tration of capital, the creation of bigger and bigger factories, the formation of trusts—all of this is the work of humanity. Of course, these actions are not deliberate parts of a great master plan. Each man sees only his own situation and acts only in response to immediate necessity or need; he pursues only his own interest, sets himself up against others, and tries to get the better of them. Social development is the outcome of all these actions, of all these individual wills. That is why the whole complex of these actions has a result which, compared with that of each of the actions taken separately, assumes the appearance of super human power. This global result emerges as an inexorable, inflexible, natural force. *Society is like a headless body*, deprived of collective thought, in which, without conscious reflection everything is governed by blind laws. Yet this organism is made up of people who, as individuals, reflect in a conscious manner.

"All social events thus flow solely from the fact that men act. *The contradictions of social development are contradictions felt by men, and therefore the overthrow of a mode of production can only be the work of men*. But this is by no means the work of men who regard themselves as above society, as capable of transforming the social body through the power of clearheaded conscious reflection; for in that case, each individual does only what his immediate interests dictate. On the contrary, it is the actions taken necessarily—in a sense, instinctively—in order to satisfy their interests, that have as a global result the overthrow of the mode of production.

"The interests of members of the same class are compatible, whereas the interests of different classes diverge or clash. This is the origin of *the class struggle*. The interests of the exploited workers run counter to those of the capitalist exploiters. The capitalist seeks to increase exploitation as much as possible so that the surplus value supposed to increase his capital will be as large as possible; in addition, he tries to lower wages, to increase working hours, and to intensify the work. The worker, thus condemned to destroy his health and his strength, resists; he wants higher wages and a shorter working day so that he may lead a more human life. Working conditions thus become the object of a struggle in the course of which workers and capitalists begin by confronting one another; but gradually, as they come to understand the class character of their interests, they join others of their own class to form organizations.

"The *proletarian class struggle* develops gradually. It begins with a workers' revolt in some factory against unendurable working conditions. Little by little, these workers set up permanent associations, and perceive that their interests do not just happen to run counter to those of the employers, but that this conflict is permanent. They thus become aware that they form a

particular class, and their outlook widens to include the entire class. At once the battle moves to the political field, where general confrontation unfolds between the classes.⁴

"As long as they regard the State as a supreme power over society, the workers seek, by supplication or demand, to obtain laws designed to end their misery and, above all, to protect them from redoubled oppression. But in the struggle, experience teaches that the capitalists use their hegemony over the State to defend their class interests against the workers. The workers are therefore forced to take part in the political conflict. The more they realize that the State is under the thumb of the exploiting class, and that State power is of decisive importance from the viewpoint of economic interests, the more must they take *the conquest of political power* as their objective. As soon as the working class adopts this goal, it needs to know how it will use political power, and therefore it needs a program for the future. The experience of the class struggle, which gives insight into the nature of capitalism, shows that it is not enough to remedy some of the excesses of the system. . . . To make the revolution, the working class must destroy the existing order, adopting the inauguration of the socialist mode of production through the conquest of political power as their ultimate objective and political program.

"Socialism, therefore, will not come into existence because everyone acknowledges its superiority over capitalism and its aberrations. Since people respond only to their immediate class interests, it must be accepted that they form an unreflecting mass as concerns the conscious control of their social condition. The bourgeoisie knows that their immediate interests are necessarily linked to a system which gives them the means to live by exploitation, and so they want nothing to do with socialism. The latter, an inevitable consequence of a victory of the working class, can be born only of the class struggle. . . .

"The *immediate goal* of every action connected with the day-to-day class struggle cannot be socialism, which is the final outcome of a long period of struggle and of that alone. *Socialism is the final goal of the class struggle*. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between final and immediate objectives. As a final goal, socialism helps the struggling class gain awareness of the course of social development; as a reality destined one day to become fact, it enables this class to judge capitalist relations by comparison and, while the grandeur

4. This scheme clearly follows the classic passage in *Poverty of Philosophy* (ch. 11, par. 5), in which Marx shows how the mass of the workers, with common interests, who form a class vis-à-vis capital, constitute themselves into a class for its own sake in the course of the political struggle. A perfectly orthodox schema, therefore, but the sequel shows that the concept "war of class with class" is here taken in the strictest sense.

of this ideal urges them to fight relentlessly, it gives a critical form to our scientific knowledge of the capitalist system. In contrast, the immediate objective associated with different aspects of day-to-day action can only be an immediate result.

"This immediate result is none other than *the increase of our strength*. . . . The most powerful class is always the one which wields power; therefore, a class seeking to gain power must aim to increase its strength to a degree that will enable it to vanquish the enemy class. Hence *the immediate objective of the class struggle is to increase the social power of the proletariat*."

In the era of their struggles against the feudal system, the bourgeoisie drew its strength from financial riches. In the modern states, its strength comes from the fact that it leads in all the principal branches of production, "whence their moral sway over all the social groups that acknowledge their role as leaders,⁵ at least as long as groups have not become conscious of the antagonisms which set them in opposition to the class in power. . . ."

II. *The Power of the Proletariat*

"First and especially, this power consists in size. Increasingly, the proletariat forms the great bulk of the people; in developed countries, wage-earners account for a considerable majority of the population. But a majority dependent on a minority—a huge *lumpenproletariat*, for example—cannot develop into a group with independent power." The importance of the proletariat has an economic origin; it is indispensable to successful production, as the mass of petty bourgeois and small impoverished peasants are not. "In this respect, the power of the working class is all the greater for its not being dependent on numbers only.

"Numbers and economic importance cannot of themselves confer any power on a class, if that class remains unaware of them. When a class cannot discern its particular situation, its specific interests; when, in a dumb and paralyzed fashion, it endures the domination of its oppressors and even accepts such domination as part of the eternal order of things—then numbers and importance mean nothing. If these advantages are to mean anything, the class must become self-conscious. Only as a result of class consciousness does size take on significance for the class itself, and does it realize that it is indispensable to production; solely through this consciousness can the proletariat promote its interests and attain its goals. Class consciousness alone enables this vast, muscular, inert body to bestir itself into life and activity.

5. A note refers in this connection to the results of the last "American elections," a massive vote of the workers and of the petty bourgeoisie for the "trusts party" (and not for the socialist party).

"The knowledge which confers this power on the working class is not limited to a mere awareness of belonging to a particular class with specific interests. The struggle will be waged more efficiently and with greater success insofar as the proletariat has a basic knowledge of the social framework within which it is fighting. And in this respect, it has an advantage over its enemies: the working class possesses a *science of society* that enables it to elucidate both the causes of its misery and the goal of social development. Thus able to rely on forces that shape political events and to foresee what is about to happen, it gains a quiet energy, a serenity, which helps it through difficulties. The maturity it shows in political struggle has the same foundation. Does not this science enable it to foresee the consequences of its actions and to avoid being beguiled by immediate, passing appearances? The confidence of ultimate victory that this science gives it endows it with a moral solidity; whereas the other classes, which, lacking science, grope about in darkness and are terrified of falling, do not know what direction to take. Thus the knowledge of society—ranging from its simplest form, nascent class consciousness, to its highest form, the doctrine of Marx which we call scientific socialism, socialist theory, or Marxism—constitutes one of the most significant factors of proletarian power.

"Nevertheless, however knowledge is used, it is insufficient when the power to act is missing. What can the thinking head do without a strong arm to carry out what is thought? Large numbers alone are not enough to ensure strong action. The whole history of civilized mankind shows that the popular masses have allowed themselves to be ruled by small minorities and have tried in vain to free themselves, the minorities being strong due to their organization. As long as a class remains splintered in distinct units, each one having a different objective, they cannot pretend to exercise the least power. Organization unifies these disparate wills and roots them in a single will, that of the masses henceforth endowed with cohesion. The enormous power of an army, the power of the State itself, derives from a closed and compact organization which, like a single body, is animated by a single will.

"But what transforms a great number of people into an organization? *Discipline*—the subordination of the individual, of his personal will, to the will that governs the whole. In the army, submission to an external will is involved, military discipline being secured by the fear of severe sanctions for rebellion. In the ranks of the workers, the will to which the individual submits is the general will of the organization itself, expressed through majority vote decisions. Therefore, this is a freely accepted discipline, a ready and willing submission to the will of the organization. This does not mean that the individual renounces his opinions or abdicates his personality; rather does it

show his conviction, the fruit of mature reflection, that the masses cannot become a force unless they are animated by a single will, and that the minority has no right to require the majority to bow to its views.⁶ It is only by pooling his strength with others of his class that the individual can secure his objective. He can do nothing on his own, and that is why rational reflection, if not sheer instinct, impels him to join with others. But it is also necessary that the organization can count on all its members, even if some of them disagree with the majority attitude. Discipline, the cement of organization, thus means the spiritual bond which creates an energetic, compact mass out of hitherto scattered units.

"The power of the working class is thus made up of three essential factors: size and economic importance, class consciousness and knowledge, organization and discipline. Its growth is related to all these factors. The first factor is the fruit of development itself, . . . the effect of economic laws, and therefore increases independent of our will or our action.

"But the other two factors are dependent on our action. They are, of course, also induced by the economic development that helps us better understand society and obliges us to organize ourselves. But economic causes act through the agency of men, inasmuch as they compel us to work, through conscious reflection, for the growth of these two factors. *The purpose of our agitational campaigns, the objective for which we are fighting, is to heighten knowledge and class consciousness among the proletarians, to increase their organization and discipline. Insofar as it depends on our will, this is how proletarian power will increase; and this is the goal of the class struggle.*

"This, too, is the only rational meaning of that movement which Bernstein set up in opposition to the final goal. In our view, not only is the movement not everything, it is nothing, an empty word.⁷ To swing in every direction

6. Within German Social Democracy, the extreme Left as a whole always advocated a rigorous discipline, absolute respect for resolutions adopted by the Party congress, these resolutions being generally inspired by the orthodox Marxist tactic. The extreme Left sought in this way to subordinate the behavior of the trade union chiefs, of the members of the parliamentary sector, etc., to the will of the Party, the primary purpose being the pursuit of the "final objective." (Cf. Carl Schorske, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51 and 222-23). Vain hope! In fact, the German Left were to fall victim to their own ideas in this matter: it was they who, in the hour of truth, when the majority of the Party were wholeheartedly participating in the war effort, found themselves forced to violate this famous discipline. Despite the evidence, they resigned themselves slowly and only with difficulty to this.

7. In 1898, Rosa Luxemburg exclaimed: "The working class must not take up the decadent viewpoint of the philosopher: 'The final objective is nothing; the movement is everything!' On the contrary: the movement in itself and unrelated to the final purpose, the movement as an end in itself, is nothing; *the final objective is everything!*" (*Le But final*, in *Réforme ou révolution?* [Paris, 1947], p. 101). By "the final objective," she meant at that time the "destruction of the State," the "conquest of political power."

without taking a step forward or even backward is also movement. Nonetheless, every expression rests on a proper idea; this idea, in our context, is that here and now, day after day, a change occurs to which we devote all our energies: the increase of power. This in no way runs counter to the final objective, but, on the contrary, is absolutely identified with it. When we adopt as our aim the constant growth of our power, we are already working to achieve our final goal.

"One sometimes hears it said that *the immediate purpose of all our actions is to obtain reforms.*" In fact, certain reforms—the right of coalition, freedom of the press and, still more, universal suffrage—strengthen the working class, while other reforms are conceded by the bourgeoisie in order to weaken the workers' class consciousness. "Social reforms, therefore, do not, as is often maintained, constitute stages on the road to the final objective, in the sense that this objective is something other than the sum total of a series of reforms. We are striving today to secure measures which in no way constitute a partial realization of what we intend to achieve in socialist society. For example, the legal sanction limiting the length of the working day, insurance against industrial accidents,⁸ etc., are at present reforms of the highest importance; but when capitalism has disappeared these laws will become completely superfluous, as will all legislation protecting the workers against the arbitrary decisions of the capitalists. Social reforms *forcibly won by conflict* represent so many stages on the road to the final objective, in that they involve an increase of proletarian strength. It is only as such, as an increase in power, that they are of any interest for socialism. . . ."

A long development follows on "the science of society"—Marxism—"engendering for the first time among the proletariat something which may be called the self-consciousness of society."

III. The Tactical Differences

In its first phase, the socialist movement, both German and international, was split by two energetically opposed tendencies, in a confrontation that still continues. "It has often been said that this conflict was a kind of *childhood ailment*⁹ which the movement had to put up with in its beginnings, when workers were still lacking in knowledge and experience. In a certain sense, this is true. The science of society, the knowledge of the objectives and the

8. Under discussion at the time and finally promulgated in 1911, this law excluded the trade unions from acting as cashiers; it was very ill received by the Social Democrats of every tinge, who unanimously regarded it as an instrument designed to consolidate the imperial regime.

9. I have before me a copy of the present pamphlet corrected by the author for a new edition (probably in Switzerland during the war). This phrase is underlined anew. It should also be pointed out that, in this copy, the term "revisionist" is everywhere replaced by "reformist."

method of the struggle, cannot be acquired in a quasi-academic way outside the conflict of which, in reality, they are the fruits. Subjected to oppression and exploitation, the workers find themselves stirred instinctively to resistance. However, they are still imbued with illusions and prejudices fostered in school and in church, which their present way of life continues to feed. When they set about defending themselves, they thereby show that they have lost one of their illusions, but only one: the illusion that the capitalists are fathers to them, and that they can rely on their humanitarian feelings. Later, experience of conflict gradually dissipates the other illusions and prejudices—their trust both in the bourgeois government and in the bourgeois opposition parties. In this way the tactical and political knowledge of the workers increases and, at the same time, their organization. The Marxist theories are increasingly well understood, because they correspond more and more closely to the experience of all. *Thus the battlefield represents both school and exercise yard. . . .* The workers should, therefore, seek their way and deepen their knowledge through the class war; although the theoretical writings of scientific inspiration undoubtedly help toward a better and quicker understanding, they are no substitute for struggle. That is why differences and spirited conflicts, with resultant false orientations and deceptions, are inevitably involved in the development of the workers' movement. . . ."

After the decline of anarchism around the 1890s, new differences emerged, this time between Marxists and revisionists. This occurred both in Germany and throughout the world; while in France and Italy revolutionary trade unionism—known in Germany as anarcho-socialism¹⁰—made its appearance. "The fact that the workers' movement has always been marked by internal conflicts shows that this is not a matter of anomalies, of mere childhood ailments, but of normal and inevitable reactions to natural situations. Hence one must take care not to treat them as childish squabbles and meaningless cavilling. . . . Among the most direct causes of the tactical differences are the following: the unequal rhythm of development in the different regions; the dialectical nature of social development; the existence of other classes besides capitalists and wage-earners." A passage, omitted here, maintains in effect that the mass of new party members, being raw

10. A current originally made up of trade unionists who rejected the ever increasing centralization of the trade union organizations (and their dogma of "political neutrality"), whence their name—"localists." They grouped themselves, in 1897, into a "Free Association of Trade Unions" (FVDG). Cf. Fritz Kater, *The Tendency of the Free Association of German Trade Unions*, (Berlin, August 1904), p. 7; Dr. Friedeberg, *le Mouvement socialiste*, nos. 139-140, Aug.-Sept. 1904; for a history of German anarcho-trade unionism, see the articles by Gerhard Aigte in *Die Internationale* (organ of the FAUD), nos. 7, 8-9, 10, (1931).

recruits, often repeated the errors committed by the movement in its early years and took up illusions that had long disappeared from the socialist movement.

"Socialism, both as an objective and as a class organization, is in every respect a *product of the conditions specific to large industry*. These conditions bring home to the workers the possibility and the necessity of a socialist order, also teaching them that, in the masses, they have the power to create this order. Confidence in their own strength and in their ability to take power are the fruits of these conditions.

"A movement that seeks to conquer the whole State, to transform the whole of society, cannot, however, be limited to the large towns and cities. It must also extend into small towns, villages, and rural areas. Besides, promoters will find such widespread discontent and oppression there that they will be heard eagerly. . . . But these people live in conditions that lead them to take quite another view of society and of our purposes. And since the immediate reality of their situation continues to shape their views, they may themselves come to doubt the validity of our theory—and of the tactics based on it—since this theory is linked with conditions in large industry. This is a primary source of differences that are as basic as tactical differences.

"Highly developed capitalism opens a bottomless gulf between the class owning the means of production and the working class, while the independent middle classes disappear or lose their autonomy. On the other hand, in the underdeveloped regions one still finds a large, well-off middle class acting as a buffer between the extreme classes. This middle class consists, on the one hand, of independent craftsmen, who rarely employ anyone; and, on the other, of petty bourgeois, who generally have very few employees. The line of demarcation between laborers and craftsmen is not very pronounced; they mix socially as a matter of course, and the relations between worker and employer are trustful and relaxed, or, in the larger business concerns, patriarchal. Often the capitalist himself has only just left the ranks of the skilled workers, so that there are workers who remember him working by their side and speaking familiarly with them. Hence, in these innocuous forms, where the wage-earning condition seems to be determined by personal circumstances and personal bonds, it would require great powers of abstraction to discern exploitation by greedy capitalism and the beginnings of the class struggle. The conditions of rural life are even less in accord with the picture of major industry presented by our theory. In the country the bonds between peasants, families, farm laborers, maid servants, remain primitive. Of course, the general norms of capitalism can be seen here in effective, widespread operation: exploitation, the thirst for profit, and the clash of

interests; but, by comparison with their clear and indisputable form in big industry, here they must be traced under the cover of primitive appearances.

"In these regions, the workers form a scattered minority and the petty bourgeoisie frequently looks down on them. Socialism awakens in them the idea that they have rights and claims that should be pressed. But the idea of wishing to be everything, of wresting power from the other classes, seems to them *an unrealizable utopia*. The goal of the struggle—ceaselessly to increase class power—seems to them unattainable. Their objective is something quite different. In these regions, wages are generally very low, and consequently the living conditions of the worker are miserable. He sees the improvement of his immediate situation as an objective that has at least the merit of being feasible. . . . since circumstances, personal relations, are matters that can be discussed, transacted, and understood.

"Again, a considerable part of the petty bourgeoisie feels threatened by capitalism and has every reason to hate it, the more so since the multiplication of factories makes competition more and more ruthless and life more and more harsh. The petty bourgeoisie is often forced to oppose the intrusion of big capital into the political field, and thus to ally itself with the workers—for example, in defense of democracy. In such circumstances, the theory of opposition between the classes can seem ill-founded and one-sided.

"Marxism, as a theory of the revolutionary proletariat, induces a complete change of mental attitude. Therefore it is welcomed warmly by those who have every reason to change their attitude in view of the considerable transformations of which they are at once the witnesses and the victims. The development of modern giant industry destroys ancient traditions, throws down old customs, and makes a *tabula rasa* of minds, which then become capable of accepting absolutely new ideas. But in the country, in remote corners where even the whisper of such mighty changes has scarcely been heard, the people continue to inhale deeply the poisonous air of tradition. . . . and there socialism does not appear as a completely new world-vision, but as a series of practical and limited objectives that can co-exist perfectly with the traditional ideas of the bourgeoisie.

"Furthermore, it is understandable that the penetration of our party into backward regions would provoke a reaction of doubt there about socialist theory and about certain aspects of our tactics as shaped in the large industrial centers." But ultimately, it is big international capital that is decisive and the middle class of the small towns who find themselves inevitably left behind. The workers of the large centers are destined to make their weight felt more and more, whence their preponderant influence as regards the transformation of society. "No doubt, the situation in the

backward regions also exercises an influence, but its only role can be *to curb the movement*. . . . That is why it would be absurd to attempt to gain new militants there by humoring prejudices. The work of theoretical explanation is, indeed, as necessary in such regions as it is difficult."¹¹

IV. Revisionism and Anarchism

"The dialectical character of social development is a second reason why heterogeneous tendencies occur in the workers' movement. In this connection the importance of the philosopher Hegel should be stressed. He was the first to point out that the development of the world is effected through contradictions and that internal contradictions are the driving force of all evolution. Essentially, the world is simply the *unity of contraries*. In their content these contraries reciprocally exclude one another, and therefore appear to naive thought as irreconcilable contradictions. They do not coexist in peace, but, on the contrary, their disappearance as a result of development gives rise to new situations. Consequently, these contradictions form only transitory stages of the development; yet the whole of history consists only of stages of this kind, which follow one another and alternate. As a result of this dialectical mode of thinking, Marx was able to elucidate completely the nature of capitalism and to show that it involved a *development ceaselessly engendering new contradictions and actuated by them*. . . .

"The dialectical nature of capitalism in turn determines the highly contradictory character of the modern workers' movement, so incomprehensible even to reflective bourgeois observers. Sometimes they see in the socialist movement a full-blown attempt to incite peaceful populations to replace an absurd social order by another order shaped by human sagacity. Sometimes they seek reassurance in the thought that Social Democracy is only a reform party representing the interests of the workers within the naturally stable pattern of capitalism, and to seek the suppression of certain disadvantages affecting the workers, but destined to disappear automatically once these errors have been corrected; in short, a 'temporary phenomenon.' The first of these ideas overlooks the fact that the new order develops organically from the old; the second, that the struggle to make the workers' interest prevail and to establish reforms will lead to a social revolution. Anyhow, both are wrong because they take into account only one aspect of the workers' movement. In reality, this movement comprises two inseparable aspects that are divided in appearance only (a completely superficial appearance).

11. Lenin had this passage in mind, perhaps, when he wrote: "If he [Pannekoek] seems to allude sometimes to Russia, it is only because the basic tendencies. . . are also appearing in our midst." Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

"Socialism is a *natural product* of capitalism and at the same time its *mortal enemy*. One cannot speak, therefore, of a power external to capitalism that will someday attack and overthrow it; on the contrary, socialism lives in the heart of the system and draws all its strength from the system. The struggle it wages is not artificial; it will last as long as capitalism itself; and its praxis consists in everyday action, which, however, is only one part of it. Because of the intolerable misery that it engenders, capitalism drives the working class to combat this misery; and, by so doing, it cannot prevent that class from improving its living conditions. But, at the same time, it constantly tends to reduce them to misery, and the workers must often fight hard to keep the advantages they have won. If at first sight it may seem that the answer is quite simply to put an end to these aberrations, and so at one stroke to make capitalism endurable and to perpetuate it—as bourgeois reformers believe—the whole course of the conflict soon shows that these 'aberrations' are at the very essence of capitalism, and that, to combat them, struggle must be waged against the system as a whole.

"These two aspects, which socialism harmoniously unites, may be called the *reformist* aspect and the *revolutionary* aspect. . . . One or other of these aspects prevails according to the economic situation and to both personal and social circumstances. When a situation favors the workers—even if only at a local level as in England during the 19th century, or exceptionally for a limited period—and when attempts to profit by this situation are crowned with success, awareness of the revolutionary character of the movement is lost; in other words, it comes to be accepted that a change of society by stages is possible, thanks to gradual improvement and to the cooperation of the class in power, or, at least, without bitter opposition from this class and without violent revolution. The opposite situation exists in times of crisis, when great political catastrophes awaken large-scale discontent and agitation. It then becomes easy to persuade people that capitalism can be leveled by a single revolutionary blow, without the need for partial, patient, preparatory day-to-day action.

"One of the two tendencies in which these sentiments and ideas are incorporated is *revisionism*. It is interested only in reformist social practice, and regards all talk about revolution and the revolutionary character of our movement as empty formulas serving only to distract praxis. In this view, not the final objective but the movement itself is what is important. Indifferent to the sharp antagonism between socialism and capitalism, they focus attention only on their organic relationship. According to the revisionists, society transforms itself toward socialism gradually, insensibly and without sudden spurts; a slow evolution is guaranteed; the theory of political and

social revolution is, in their opinion, simply a theory of catastrophes. They maintain that the reforms secured constitute an element of socialism within the capitalist system. That is why they refuse to make a clear distinction between our movement and the activities of bourgeois reformers whose aim is also to secure reforms (but for a purpose quite different from ours; that is, to strengthen capitalism against us), and why they see only a gradual differentiation between timorous reformers and consequential ones. For them, the passage to socialism is not tied up with a basic change in mental attitudes, nor does it involve a break with the past; all that is required is a new attitude toward simple, practical questions; hence they see with jaundiced eyes any exposition which recommends uprooting established middle-class traditions, since they fear that this would be a shock and a setback for the masses.

"The other one-sided idea of socialism is the very opposite of all this; its adherents reject day-to-day action and are concerned only with the final objective. The revolution, they say, will effect an immediate and complete change, will establish a new order; meantime, there is nothing else to do except keep insisting on this fact. In capitalism they see only unjust tyranny and exploitation, but they are completely blind to the organic relationship between the two systems that ensures that socialism develops naturally from capitalism. They consider social reforms not as progress but as danger, since the workers are thereby lulled into acquiescence and may well give a lukewarm reception to revolution. The slow work that secures progress does not interest them; their sole dream is to overthrow capitalism at one blow, and as soon as possible. This idea has lately spread among the anarchists. Today, the term 'anarchism' covers the most diverse tendencies, from the most pacific and unworldly Tolstoyism to the unfortunate rejects of society, feverishly hungry for homicide. Here we are concerned with anarchism only insofar as it plays a part within the workers' movement, and to the extent to which it is distinguishable from Social Democracy by the qualities we have listed. After the 1897 London congress, at which this current of ideas was outlawed from the workers' movement, the majority of these qualities reappeared in revolutionary trade unionism or anarcho-socialism, which has meantime undergone a certain development...."

Since these anarchists regard parliamentary action as a source of corruption, they have turned to trade union action and have even come to regard the trade unions as organs of revolution. But they either entrench themselves in day-to-day action, in immediate demands and in these alone, or else their activity degenerates to the level of discussion circles in which they dream of 'the great day.' Since the revisionists, for their part, are solely

concerned with reforms, they attempt at all costs to ally themselves with the bourgeois parties, at least with those which openly favor democracy and reforms; and lest they frighten off such parties, they studiously avoid any clear statement of their basic principles.

"In order to support the liberal and progressive middle class against the reactionary elements, the revisionists join them in a concerted policy to set up a coalition government. They scarcely realize that all this mere illusion. In effect, little or nothing of the hoped-for reforms will materialize, since it is necessary to mobilize all available forces to repel the attacks of the reactionaries. And even if they succeed in doing so and the day comes when a government is formed in which promises must be kept and substantial concessions made to the proletariat, the outcome will be reminiscent of the story of the man who sought to teach his horse to live without eating: at the very moment when the beast had become used to this, it was killed accidentally. Similarly, when the coalition government seeks to implement great reforms, it loses—quite accidentally, of course—middle class support, and the cabinet is overthrown.

"If, in one respect, the gain is so slight, in another the loss is great. When it tries to lead the workers to expect wonders from the alleged sympathy of the middle class toward them, revisionism *ruins the class consciousness so painfully won*, and plays the game of the ruling class; for, if the workers are induced to expect more from middle class good will and enlightenment from their own efforts, they will be that much less inclined to form strong organizations. The external, organizational strength of the proletariat and its internal, spiritual strength will both be weakened. Besides, the movement will thereby lose its power to attract the proletariat. The large number of workers—who, while lacking any deep understanding of all that socialism stands for, have nevertheless a class consciousness as solid as it is instinctive—turn away from the party, which they now see parading under the colors of a middle-class party, and lay on it part of the blame for all the oppressive measures legislated by the government. In France and in Italy, the reformist tactics, the policy of coalition with the liberals and with ministerialism, strengthened anarcho-trade unionist sentiments—hostility toward all political action—in a section of the proletarian class, without consolidating organization or increasing class consciousness, those two pillars of working class power.

"Obviously, of course, these theoretical ideas are not the only basic cause of this development; on the contrary, indeed, the emergence of these limited conceptions of socialism can be explained by a mediocre degree of economic development and by specific political circumstances. On the other hand, in

regions where big business is making giant progress, the workers are compelled to wage a fierce class war, to build up large organizations *and, in face of repression*, conduits to link up more and more closely the two aspects of the workers' movement, which are embodied in the Marxist theory. . . ."

Capital created the middle class society, whose juridical basis is the freedom and equality of all. It thus emancipated the masses of the people from the bonds of personal dependence that characterized the feudal system. The worker therefore became a free and equal partner with the capitalist, to whom he sells his labor. "His juridical freedom is the necessary condition of his economic bondage. Capitalism is a highly developed mode of production that has no need of slaves obedient only to the whip or of coolies deprived of all rights. Using a highly evolved technique and subject to commercial regulations, it needs workers with a high sense of responsibility and educated to a standard incomparably higher than that of a slave or a serf.

"This anomaly involved in the condition of the proletariat, the fact of being at once free and dependent, constitutes the most important contradiction of the capitalist system." On the one hand, capitalism finds itself compelled to acknowledge that workers' organizations have rights; on the other, it is constantly trying to limit those rights by force. But, in the second of these cases—to take a concrete instance, the prohibition in Bismarck's regime against the Socialist Democratic Party's propagating its ideas—the result does no more than arouse the workers' sympathy for the socialist cause. In the first, the result is much more positive: the workers' movement grows in numbers and in solidarity.

"Thus the ruling class constantly oscillates between two methods of government embodied in two opposed political tendencies. In the first place, the political antagonisms within the ruling class assuredly derive from clashes of interest between the different groups of that class. Historically, they stem from the antagonism between the two major middle class parties, found everywhere in the world: the antagonism between the magnates of industry and the wealthy landed proprietors, to which are then joined the clerical lower middle class. However, in reaction to the development of capitalism, the proletariat grows to be a threat to all its exploiters; furthermore, the extension of capitalism into the rural areas, with the participation of the rich nobility in industrial enterprises, gradually effects an eclipse of the old antagonisms. The result of all this is a continual lessening of the opposition between the middle class parties. But these antagonisms appear anew—imbricated, however, on what remained of the old—and associated with them are different ideas about the best way to repress the proletariat. The 'conservative' or 'clerical' party advocates strong measures; the liberal

party, the maximum liberty of movement; nevertheless, the old party demarcations tend to become increasingly blurred, so that both parties are eventually composed of landed proprietors, manufacturers, farmers and the lower middle class. Hence the terms 'conservative' and 'liberal' take on a new meaning. The progressivist section of the middle class can no longer limit itself to the recognition of the workers' political liberty and certain rights; it must also seek a remedy for the 'aberrations' of capitalism, which are the causes of the workers' discontent. Hence, in contrast with the old dogmatic liberalism of the Manchester School type, the new liberalism finds itself compelled to opt for reforms, democracy, and the intervention of the State in the economic life of the country.

"Such transformation of political parties occurred in an integral way only in the countries of Western Europe which have a truly democratic constitution. Germany, for its part, ignores the constitutional regime; it is under a government which behaves as an autonomous power over which all the classes seek to exercise a determining influence, without ever succeeding in entirely doing so. Faced with the aristocrats and the workers, liberalism continues, therefore, to represent the exclusive interests of the industrial middle class; the new liberalism, the democratic current and the sympathy for the workers, are still at the stage of the fine phrase.

"It is in terms of given economic and political events that one or other of these tendencies is predominant, and that the mass of lower middle class electors opt for one or other of these methods of government. The development of the workers' movement is also governed by these factors, and that is why it is bound to stray to the right or to the left when theoretical knowledge is lacking, when it is without the sure means of recognizing the recurrence of the crisis by whose aid it can move towards its objective. When the ruling class resorts to reactionary policy, and represses the workers' organizations, the idea gains ground that nothing can be expected by legal measures, and that violence must be met by violence. The feeling of powerlessness which grips the workers pushes them towards nihilism; since ordinary political action is excluded and secret agitation alone remains possible, a contempt for day-to-day action sets in and the workers see the final solution as some far off 'day of wrath.' Very soon, the mere fact of sticking firmly to existing conditions of acting at the parliamentary level, seems a betrayal of the workers' cause.

"But everything changes with the circumstances, when the crisis has passed and the ruling class are now trying a policy of sweetness and light. When the vice-like grip is loosened, the working class can breathe again, can flex their muscles, and organize their forces—and the whole prospect becomes rosy.

The new attitude of the ruling class is regarded as an absolute law of development, signifying a *permanent softening of the class war, a lasting democratization of society, and an increasingly strong tendency towards reforms*, which will lead to socialism."¹²

The socialists, unanimous in desiring a real policy of reforms, approve of the following formula drawn up by Vollman (a declared revisionist): "The more the development takes place in a peaceful, orderly and organic way, the better is it both for us and for the collectivity." "But the development is in no way dependent on our wishes. At that time, no doomed class decided to go under with dignity and honor, nor any social order to founder, without first using up every ounce of strength in an attempt to remain afloat. And, today, the capitalist class is not showing any readiness to pave the way for socialism by means of real social reforms and of a democratic and progressive regime. There is no so-called 'logic of events' which, by shaping the course of history, will force this class to choose the way of democratic reform; on the contrary, concern for their economic interests will dissuade them from this, so long as they see such a step as strengthening and raising the enemy. For *the positive purpose of the liberal policy is to mislead the workers*. . . . Middle class social reforms are mere pretense and charlatanism. Only the vigilance of the workers' representatives, who ceaselessly urge the demands of the workers, can secure anything of value from such a situation. . . .

"At first sight, the two tendencies designated by the general names *anarchism* and *revisionism* seem to be absolutely opposed. However, since they have a common ground in both being distortions, but in contrary directions, of Social Democrat tactics, they are closely akin. Both, in effect, originate in a middle class outlook, radically different from the proletarian one. . . .

"The proletariat have their own dialectical idea of necessary social development, whose stages can be grasped only in terms of antagonist notions—for example, revolution and evolution, theory and practice, final objective and movement. Especially proletarian is the idea that all apparently opposed situations are simply movements in a major process of development. The proletariat does not reason along logical either/or lines—for example, either revolution or evolution—but sees in two such elements simply two aspects of one and the same development. . . . The middle class, non-dialectical way of thinking takes account only of the accidental, which

12. These clearly empirical considerations are primarily inspired by the experience of German Socialism both in the period of the "law against the dangerous intrigues of Social Democracy" (1878-1890), and afterwards. *Mutatis mutandis*, they still retain, however, some value as regards other countries, and even other times.

for the most part is merely a passing phenomenon, and so it swings from one extreme to the other. It notices contradictions only in the form of 'on the one hand. . . on the other hand,' but without seeing in them the driving forces of development; in its view, a development is to be seen as a slow evolution which, while it no doubt ends by effecting some change, leaves the essential quality intact.

"This first opposition is closely connected with the second. While the proletarian outlook is materialist, the middle class outlook is ideological; dialectic and materialism go hand in hand, as do ideology and non-dialectic. For the proletariat, it is material forces that govern the world, forces outside the scope of the individual; for the middle class, development depends on the creative forces of the human mind. The material reality is dialectical; that is, it can be truly grasped only as a unit made up of opposed ideas. By contrast, in the notions and ideas which, according to the middle class way of thinking, constitute the driving force of development, the terms of the contradiction mutually exclude one another *as notions*; for example, evolution and revolution, liberty and organization. *We are concerned in the middle class context with abstract ideas, with incompatible essences, no account being taken of the underlying material reality*: either revolution or evolution, without the possibility of a third term. So, when revolution is regarded as the only true principle, minor reforms are automatically declared anathema; or, *vice versa*, the minor reforms are alone considered as valid.

"*In this sense, anarchism and revisionism both represent middle class tendencies within the workers' movement; they unite a middle class view of the world with proletarian sentiments*. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the proletariat, they mean to espouse their cause, but without assisting to effect radical changes in mental attitudes and to substitute the knowledge which characterizes scientific socialism. They borrow their concepts and patterns of thought from the middle class world, and are distinguishable one from the other only by the fact that they derive from different periods of history. By and large, it can be said that the middle class, in the period of its ascension to power, professed revolutionary ideas; whereas, in the period of its decline, it no longer wants to have anything to do with upheavals, even in the natural sciences, and believes only in slow and gradual evolution. Anarchism, continuing the traditions of the middle class revolutions, thinks only about staging revolution; while revisionism adopts as its own the theory of slow evolution, proper to middle class decadence.

"More accurately, we are dealing with lower middle class rather than middle class tendencies. For, unlike the complacent upper middle class, the lower middle class has at all times constituted a class of discontents, always

inclined to oppose the existing order. Social development does not, in effect, favor this class. Left in the cold, it inevitably plunges from one excess to another. Sometimes it is intoxicated with revolutionary slogans and tries to seize power by means of putsches; sometimes it crawls shamefully at the feet of the upper classes and tries, by cunning and deceit, to wheedle reforms from them. *Anarchism is lower middle class ideology gone mad; revisionism, the same ideology with its teeth drawn.* This close kinship explains why each can be so easily changed into the other. The history of the workers' movement contains only too many instances of ardent 'revolutionaries' metamorphosed into peaceable reformists. In 1906, many revisionists suddenly become convinced of the possibility of engineering a minor revolution; but, when they discovered the uselessness of the attempt, they then relapsed into a reformism of the most blatant kind.¹³ Only the external form had changed; fundamentally, the conception had remained exactly as it was, opposed to Marxism and refusing to see development as the unity of contraries.

"Furthermore, these two tendencies have in common the cult of the individual and of personal liberty. Marxism regards the powerful economic forces which move the mass of mankind as factors of the social dynamic; while the middle class theory places in the heart of its philosophy *the free and unshackled personality.*" This was the doctrine of old style liberalism, and this is the doctrine of anarchism, always ready to defend the individual freedom of the producer against interference by the state, while ignoring the fact that the principal function of state power is to oppress the working classes, and that this power must be suppressed, as must all forms of authority in general, to give way finally to real freedom. While revolutionary trade unionism does not coincide on this point with pure, individualistic anarchism, because it developed in a milieu of already organized workers, it proclaims no less distinctly that its objective is the perfect autonomy of the individual. For its part, revisionism extols moral liberty, so dear to Kant. Besides, both anarchism and revisionism repudiate the Marxist conception of economy,

13. Toward the end of 1905, certain segments of the Social Democratic Party, under the impetus of the Russian Revolution (and, its repercussion on the level of ideas in the famous mass strike debate) launched an intensive press campaign with a view to securing the abolition of the suffrage restrictions. This movement took on vast proportions, and was accompanied by political strikes, demonstrations and clashes with the police. However, the party and, to a greater extent, the trade union leaders used every means to break it and succeeded some months later. The active campaigns against militarism, colonialism or the armaments race having been essentially the work of youth organizations, the campaign, resumed in 1908 and 1910 in support of voting rights constitutes one of the rare moments when the German Party took up toward the authorities an attitude other than one of peaceful criticism. However, the choice of this example shows that Pannekoek is here attacking general tendencies much more than political currents with clear contours.

according to which "capitalist production presents a twofold character, itself deriving in turn from the twofold character of the merchandise: its usage value and its exchange value. Consequently, all labor is simultaneously concrete, a creator of usage values, and abstract, a creator of exchange values. In the capitalist system, production is also production of usage values for society and production of surplus value. This second function, the formation of surplus value, constitutes for the capitalists the essential purpose of production, but the first is indissolubly linked with it. Hence it is that capitalist production is at once *production of necessary objects*, without which society could not exist, and *exploitation of the workers.*"

The anarchist persists in ignoring this twofold character. He sees modern industry, that "great organizing power," as an oppressive power and as that alone. Generally a highly qualified tradesman or technician, he feels that industry is threatening to declass him socially. Furthermore, he dreams of leveling the middle class by means of the general strike, in the anarchist sense, not realizing that, in conjunction with big business, certain elements of the future society are taking shape within the present society, and that these elements must be developed, not thrown in disarray. This is recognized by the revisionist; but, since for him the difference between the capitalist and the socialist modes of production is simply a matter of degree, he believes that the passage from one to the other can occur gradually, without preliminary conquest of political power. "Both involve *a relapse into the old utopianism.* . . . Since they refuse to regard the coming of socialism as an inevitable result of economic development, they are obliged to resort to lucubrations and claptrap. We know that the anarchists delight in elaborate arguments in which they eagerly try to reconcile this or that communist system with freedom; they regard the Social Democrats as people who want to establish a definite social order, collectivism, with a purpose completely different from their own communist final objective. Similarly Bernstein is most anxious to know what must be understood, in our program by saying that we want to 'statize.' In both cases, this is to ignore the fact that a new mode of production must evolve of itself, and that it cannot be introduced ready made, in conformity with a plan fixed in advance.

"Revisionism and anarchism represent, therefore, opposite and one-sided distortions of socialism. Since neither understands what is meant by Marxism, which unifies in itself the two aspects of the workers' movement, each of these tendencies regards the other as Marxist and attacks it as such. The revisionists describe the Marxist tactics as revolutionary romanticism, and, though the facts give them the lie, regard the Marxists as enemies of immediate claims, of day-to-day action, and of reforms. This is only to be expected, seeing that for

them reform and revolution are mutually incompatible, and that they cannot understand how one can advocate the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat without at the same time abandoning the idea of minor reforms. Anarchists and revolutionary trade unionists see things from a strictly opposite viewpoint: they regard revisionist tactics as the necessary consequence of Social Democracy, and they combat the latter by accusing it of reformist theories and actions."

V. *Parliamentarism*

"Political institutions serve to establish both the laws which men must obey as members of society, and the laws required by the dominant mode of production for its proper exercise; they must also see to the implementing of such laws. These rules restrain the freedom of the individual in the interests of all, or of what it has been found convenient so to describe. The power of the State must necessarily originate in the division of society into the ruling class and the ruled, exploited class; it constitutes the instrument which the rulers use to repress the ruled. The more complicated the social machinery becomes, the more are the functions of State power extended, and the more does this power take on the appearance of an autonomous organization, ruling over the whole of social life. State power has become the objective of the class war, because whichever class possesses it has also at its disposal the immense strength of the State, and can, by means of laws, impose its will on the whole of society. . . . Legislation, the police, the judiciary, the administrative authorities, the army, are all institutions which are used more and more as weapons in the war against the working class. The proletariat is therefore compelled to adopt as its objective the conquest of the state.

"*Parliamentarianism is the normal form of political domination with the middle class. . . .* But, if this is so, why do the workers wage the parliamentary war? Why do they go to such lengths to secure universal suffrage? The importance of parliamentarianism is to be sought in quite another direction. In effect, it constitutes *the best way to increase the strength of the working class*. If today, in every country dominated by capitalism, one sees great socialist parties forming to enlighten the proletariat and, above all, to lead the war against the dominant order, this power, grown to such considerable proportions, is due essentially to the parliamentary struggle.

"It is easy to understand why parliamentarianism has made these results possible. The first effect of the parliamentary conflict is to *enlighten the workers about their class situation*. Of course, this can also be done by means of pamphlets and public meetings, but it is difficult to use these means at a time when the movement is still weak and when it comes up against a

veritable wall of prejudice and indifference: . . . whereas the voices of the workers' representatives in parliament echo in even the most remote areas. . . .

"That seats in parliament are of such importance is undoubtedly because they serve as a means of agitation, but still more because the outcome of parliamentary conflict is the enlightenment of the alerted workers. If our representatives go into parliament, it is not primarily in order to make stirring speeches, but to combat the middle class parties there. In so far as such a distinction is possible, seeing that we are discussing an activity which can only be verbal, it is by their actions, not their words, that the workers are educated to socialism. . . . It is by following the parliamentary debates attentively that the workers acquire the political awareness which they need. When, day after day, senators of every party, seeking to impose their views, attack the general theory and outlook of the workers' representatives, the workers gain a radical knowledge of their own attitudes as opposed to those of the others. The parliamentary conflict is not, of course, the class war itself: however, it does in a sense constitute *the essence of the class war*. In the speeches of a small group of labor members of parliament, the interests and ideas of the masses are expressed in a condensed form. . . .

"What is more, parliamentary conflict appeals not only to the understanding, but also to spontaneous feelings. Besides giving the worker political knowledge, it increases his moral sense, in the spirit of proletarian morality, of solidarity, of the feeling of belonging to a class. And organization is thereby strengthened. . . . The laborers feel themselves to be Catholics, progressivists, or Protestants, and not workers; they do not feel that they are members of one and the same class. The entry of a Social Democrat into Parliament, where he deals with their situation as the most important part of his policy, and where he therefore speaks *in the name of the working class*, can suddenly fan into flame the class consciousness that has been smoldering within them. This and this alone gives them an awareness of their common brotherhood in one specific body, even if as yet they cannot rise above the middle class ideas which are sundering them.

"The trade union movement also arouses a lively feeling of belonging; it unites the workers, but only at the immediate basis of trade and craft. Within the trade union movement, the working class fights in skirmishes and with small detachments against various capitalists or groups of capitalists. The political conflict musters all these battalions, and then the uncommitted workers begin to join in their thousands. It activates *the working class as a whole*, without regard to trade or condition, and throws them into the war against the whole middle class. For Social Democracy attacks not only

industrial capital, but also banking, landed, colonial capitalism. *The political conflict is the class war generalized.* That is why participation in this war engenders in the workers, on a massive scale, the feeling of belonging to a class. *It sets the seal on class unity;* in its absence, as in 19th-century England, for example, the trade union organizations readily give way in a limited cooperative spirit. The political conflict unites together with secure bonds all the separate sections of the whole working class; it transforms it into a homogeneous body and thus increases its organizational strength.

Parliamentarianism has, in a sense, completely changed the proletariat created by the enormous development of capitalism, into a self-aware and organized class, ready for combat. It is there that its value lies, and not in the illusion that the electoral system can guide our ship through calm waters to the harbor of the future State.

"As against the idea of parliamentarianism just outlined, there is an opposite view, widespread among the revisionists, which regards it, not as a *means of increasing proletarian power*, but as *the battle itself for this power*. . . . If one holds that the political conflict should occur exclusively within parliament, then the parliamentarians are the only people called upon to wage it. It is not the working masses who are involved, but their representatives who fight on their behalf. The masses figure only at the ballot boxes; the only contribution they can make to their own emancipation is to choose the proper candidates and campaign vigorously for them during the elections. . . .

"The party deputies thus take up a vanguard position; they become a special class, the 'guides.' It is only natural that the most capable comrades, having the profoundest knowledge of socialism, should by what they say exercise a powerful influence over the party." However, the comrades elected are not generally those whose attitude most clearly expresses class consciousness, but others who are chosen with the further aim of wooing the middle class vote. "The strength of our parliamentarians does not therefore reside primarily in the socialism which they profess and in the strength of the masses who support them, but in their personal qualities and in their political skill. Through their technical knowledge in juridical and administrative matters, through their familiarity with the petty combines, intrigues and calculations of day-to-day politics, they regard themselves as superior to the non-parliamentarians. In their view, they themselves are best able to judge as experts what are really matters for approval by all, since they alone can delve deeply into such matters. When their ideas clash with those of the rank and file, they simply override all criticism: the comrades must remember that, since as non-parliamentarians they do not know enough about these

problems, they must trust their 'delegates' to reach decisions in their 'soul and conscience.' In this way, the parliamentary section places itself above the people and the party, by virtue of 'the superiority of their political knowledge.' When the masses accept such tutelage, democratic sentiments are doomed to disappear from within the party. . . .

"There are those who regard the Social Democratic Party as indistinguishable from the middle class parties, and are blind to its absolutely different character. Naturally, their methods move closer and closer to those of middle class politics. Under the name of 'politics of the workers,' they shape a policy designed to secure for the workers as many specific advantages as the other parties seek to obtain for the middle class—for heavy industry, finance, small holders. In this way, a mediocre 'policy of interests' replaces the Social Democratic policy which embodies the permanent revolutionary interest of the proletariat. Instead of a class war clearly rooted in principles, the aim is to exercise an indirect 'political influence' through parliamentary coalitions and blocs. This is to forget that Social Democracy, by the fact that its attitude is dictated by principles, covers directly the whole field of middle class politics. Hence it is that participation in a governmental majority or the entry of socialists into the government, becomes the natural consequence of this viewpoint. . . . The quest for immediate positive results, nearly always a vain quest, is pursued to the detriment of our great objective, which is to enlighten and unify the working class.

"This is so, in the first place, because the chief aim of these advocates of indirect political influence is to win over as many electors as possible. The floating voters are by no means socialists but, on the contrary, are imbued with middle class ideas. Some of them undoubtedly approve our immediate demands; however, deeply imbued as they are with their class prejudices, they do not adopt our ultimate aims, our ideas as a whole. Really to turn them into solid, convinced militants, requires a campaign against their narrowness of mind, a liquidation of their old, lower middle class prejudices, by a long and arduous process of education. But the immediate outcome of this may well be to frighten them off. It is much easier to win their votes, and much less embarrassing to respect their prejudices. . . . It is even worse when, to win the votes of the peasants and of the lower middle class, they bind themselves to promises of an immediate improvement of their condition, promises which are poles removed both from our theory and from real development. Lower middle class ideas are strengthened and socialist enlightenment thwarted by a campaign of this kind, which sacrifices the essential objective to immediate electoral gains.

The tactic of "exclusive parliamentarianism" is also harmful to

organization. When the workers are persuaded that their deputies will make all decisions for them, they have no further reason for forming a major organization to conduct their own affairs themselves. In effect, all they have to do is to vote in electoral years, and all the thinking they need to do is about the choice of the best candidate. . . . The result is that many workers of revolutionary leanings, disgusted at the sight of socialist deputies behaving exactly like those of the middle class, leave the organization. . . . The unilateral revolutionary wing of the workers' movement thus takes on an anti-political character, while the reformist wing expresses itself correspondingly in middle class parliamentarianism. In France and in Italy, coalition politics and ministerialism have increased the following of revolutionary trade unionism, and are causing trade unions to become inimical to the party."

Anarchism sees in oppressive institutions, such as the state, the source of all the trouble. "That is why it rejects our objective, the conquest of the state, since such conquest would involve only a simple transfer of powers, while the principle itself of authority would continue as before. It advocates the overthrow of State power, the abolition of all constraint, so that men become absolutely free. Finally, they refuse to participate in the politico-parliamentary conflicts, which in their view serve merely to corrupt the workers, since they only contribute to *replace one set of rules by another*. . . . The parties are no more than politicians' groups for strengthening the deputies' positions and for securing their promotion to cabinet posts.

"From the anarchist viewpoint, the State constitutes an autonomous power, which rules at its summit thanks to violence and cunning, and at its base thanks to superstition and slavishness. The State, the parties and the politicians are no longer in any real sense in contact with their origins, and the classes subjacent to them sink into insignificance. One finds the same errors and the same basic idea among the revisionists. Both they and the anarchists are victims of the same politico-superstition: for the former, the 'democracy' or the 'republic' represents a saving divinity; for the latter, the State is the malignant devil. . . .

"Marxism always tried to establish the causal nexus of all social phenomena; under the political forms, it never fails to trace the economic connections, the class connections. But this nexus cannot be expressed as a simple formula, straightforward and easy to remember. This is especially true of the State. The State, the government, is an organization created by the ruling class to defend their interests. But those who exercise State power do not use it solely in the interests of the ruling class, whose representatives they are, but also in their own immediate interests. State power in the service of

the middle class takes on a certain autonomy, and suddenly seems independent. Bureaucracy is a *specific class with very special interests* which they seek to assert even against the middle class.

"This independence is, of course, merely a deceptive appearance. Bureaucracy can attempt to secure its own interests in *minor matters*, because in *major matters* it serves those of the middle class. The latter support it as a lesser evil, because they could not impose their interests to the same extent without this bureaucracy. In Germany, the government of *junkers* (aristocrats) is adapting itself to a bureaucracy which is enriching itself at their expense, because it needs strong State power against the working class. Bureaucracy is recruited among the middle class, who see in the many and ever increasing government and administrative posts, so many soft jobs for sons and relatives. It too is therefore an exploiting class who deducts its share of the overall surplus value from the proceeds of state duties and monopolies and, from time to time, opposes the other classes' right to its part of the surplus value. In countries with parliamentary government, such as France, the bureaucratic summit comprises a *clique of politicians*; in countries with a two-party system, such as England and the U.S.A., two cliques take turns in governing, and secure for their friends the plum State jobs. The middle class as a whole sometimes resents having to put up with such a band of parasites, but is nevertheless content with the system, since bureaucracy sees to its general interests and to its profit. It is in appearance only that the state power is independent of the middle class. . . ."

VI. The Trade Union Movement

"The trade unions are the natural form of proletarian organization, and the direct manifestation of its social function—i.e., to act as vendor of the merchandise represented by work. The worker's immediate interest strictly consists in selling his work at the best price. To him, his employer, his direct exploiter, is the embodiment of the capitalist class, and the war against the employer for an improvement of working conditions represents the first, instinctive form of the class war.

"However, the trade unions are not the direct organ of the revolutionary class war, since their objective is not the overthrow of capitalism. On the contrary, they form a necessary element for the stability of a normal capitalist society. In regions where workers are not yet organized and are therefore incapable of serious resistance, the employers simply dictate the working conditions. Consequently, they pay barely enough to keep the workers at the subsistence level and to enable them to work; the workers are prematurely exhausted by the excessive length of the working day. *The work is bought at a*