

price below its value; the purchaser takes advantage of the seller's weak position, and cheating takes the place of fair exchange. But it is precisely this inhuman exploitation which forces the workers to resist and to organize themselves. When the trade union succeeds in waging war on these barbarous practices and in imposing somewhat fairer working conditions, it is essentially doing no more than applying a fundamental principle of all normal capitalism—that exchange of values takes place on a basis of equivalence. Thus the trade union destroys the hegemony of the employer; henceforward, employer and worker confront each other from positions of equal strength, and reach agreements by which work is paid for at its value."

This is the principal task of the trade unions "and the reason why they should remain 'neutral' in the sense of not imposing any particular political or philosophic opinions on their members. They should muster all the workers who want to fight the employer for a betterment of their working conditions, and also demand higher union subscriptions because, *without well stocked coffers*, it is impossible to keep up a strike or to withstand a lock out. They also need *salariated officers*, because the administrative duties, the conduct of the war, and the negotiations with employers, cannot be discharged on a part-time basis, and demand very specific aptitudes and knowledge which can be acquired only by practice." Formerly, the strike was a spontaneous explosion of despair; but, with the development of trade unions, it increasingly becomes a carefully prepared undertaking, and the conflicts between the trade unions and the employers' federations come to resemble wars between two great powers.

"In the course of these wars, the trade unions do not act *by any means as adversaries of capitalism*, but take their stand *on the same territory as capitalism*. They do not deny the fact that labor is a type of merchandise, but, on the contrary, seek to obtain the best possible price for it. The trade unions cannot, in effect, end the reign of the capitalist at the factory, since the capitalist is of course the owner of the merchandise he has bought and uses it for his own ends; they can only curb any arbitrary conduct on his part, which is simply an excrescence, an abuse. *Their tasks do not carry them outside the framework of capitalism*. That is why one frequently finds middle class politicians or sociologists taking a sympathetic attitude towards them; the trade unions fight the greed of the *individual* capitalist, not the class as a whole or the system as such. On the contrary, when they secure better conditions for the workers, the misery and revolt of the exploited masses are to that extent reduced; and, in this sense, they even act as a conservative force consolidating capitalism.

"But this characteristic is *only one aspect* of their nature. The employers,

against whom the unions war, also form the middle class, the class that exercises State power. The workers who wage this war are also those who must carry on the political conflict, the war for socialism.

"If capitalism were a peaceful, stagnant and unaltering form of production, the trade unions would present the same picture. A condition of equilibrium would therefore result, to the great satisfaction of the capitalists who, with the workers receiving fair pay for an agreed working week, could then quietly pocket all the remaining surplus value."

Under the spur of competition, however, capitalism is forced to move forward, to accumulate more quickly ever increasing masses of capital. That is why it vigorously opposes pay demands, replaces men by machines and qualified workers by unskilled labor from the country areas or from abroad. Periods of prosperity alternate with periods of crisis, during which massive unemployment enables the employers to take back the concessions yielded grudgingly under pressure from the unions. The latter are then obliged to renounce these conservative traits, "which delight their middle class friends," and to support the action of the political party. "The trade unions form, however, a necessary element of capitalism in its phases of rapid expansion; they alone can thwart, by constant warfare, the tendency of capitalist development to reduce the working class to misery and thus prevent production from suffering as a result."

"However, the trade unions also constitute an *element of revolutionary transformation of society*. This does not mean that they need to take on tasks in addition to those they are already fulfilling, but simply that they carry out their specific mission as well as possible. Far from being ascribable to a deliberate intention or to a program, *it is the reality of the situation itself that makes them organs of revolution*. Once more we see how intimately the proletarian's revolutionary objective is linked to and develops from daily practice."

No doubt, the trade union conflicts contribute less than does the political one to develop proletarian strength. But they do awaken class consciousness in the workers, make them recognize the need for constant combat, and shatter their illusions. Soon the worker develops beyond this still limited stage; he sees that he must confront not just an isolated employer but capitalist society in its totality. It is the political conflict which alone makes him capable of this wider view. But the trade union, "the natural organizational form of the working class," musters the workers within a strong organization and, more important still, inculcates in them the discipline necessary to the everyday struggle, the feeling of solidarity, and the conviction that collective interest must take precedence over personal interest. "Isolated

until then, and still preserving through their lower middle class origins the habit of acting in an individualistic way, the workers see themselves changed into new men with new habits, into men who feel closely united with their comrades as integral parts of a body animated by one and the same will. It is in this new character that the fighting strength of the proletariat resides. . . . Of the two major factors of this strength, knowledge and organization, the second is essentially the result of trade union action. The work of the trade unions, in which their importance to the revolution consists, is the enormous task of moral education required to transform the weak worker into a conqueror of capitalism.

"This conception of the role and significance of the trade union movement is peculiar to Marxism, which is alone in proclaiming that the revolutionary transformation of society is germinally contained in the ordinary conflicts of today. The middle class view, however, is that the objective of these daily conflicts is a direct improvement of living conditions, without there being any question of their linkage with the great proletarian war of freedom; but it can also happen that, through a realization of the revolutionary meaning of trade unions, an effort is made to give a specific direction to their present practice. The English trade unions provide a classic example of the first of these conceptions; the second, the revolutionary trade union conception, is much more evident in the French counterpart.

"In France, the reformist policy of the socialist party despises the class viewpoint; the unions have therefore experienced in their ranks, under the guise of reaction, an explosion of very pronounced revolutionary sentiments, a lively opposition to parliamentarianism. Their objective is not the conquest of political power, but the seizure of workers' control over industry. The true workers' movement consists in a struggle whose course is decided by the workers themselves, not by their representatives. These trade unionists have as their slogan *direct action*.¹⁴ Only the masses can win their own freedom; their leaders and representatives cannot do it for them. The working masses must think and feel for themselves; it is not enough that they unite, simply with a view to obtaining higher wages and a shorter working day.

"Trade union practice here and now should be in strict conformity with these ideas. The unions are the only genuinely working class organizations. It is also up to them to wage political war on the government—at least when the latter attacks them, for any question of the State leaves them otherwise cold.

14. For a good definition, see Victor Griffuehles, *L'Action syndicaliste* (Paris, 1908), p. 23: "Direct action means action by the workers themselves, that is, action directly taken by those directly affected. . . . Through direct action, the worker himself creates his struggle: it is he who conducts it, determined not to hand over to others his own task of self-liberation."

The conquest of social power is to take place through a general strike, during which the organized workers will stop all work and will quite simply let the capitalists founder. The mission of the trade unions is to develop the revolutionary sentiments necessary to the implementing of an action on such a scale, and to do so, not only by exhortation, but also and especially by the practice itself of the strike. Thus the latter becomes an end in itself, or rather a *revolutionary gymnastic exercise*, and that is why it matters little whether its immediate outcome is victory or defeat in relation to the improvement of living conditions.

"Experience has shown that these principles are not the basis for a strong trade union movement,¹⁵ and that the objective it sets itself cannot be attained in this way. This allegedly revolutionary practice is not at all successful in mustering the proletarian masses who are still without class consciousness—for this is something which can be achieved only by a persevering conflict solely aimed at small and gradual improvements. It presupposed in the worker a revolutionary attitude of mind which can only be the *final* result of long practice. The trade unions continue to be small groups of workers with revolutionary sentiments, whose fervor does not make up for weakness of organization. Through lack of centralization, the progress noted from time to time remains a passing phenomenon. Seeking to take on a function other than its own—namely, to act as a political party—the trade union finds itself unable to fulfill its proper function, the improvement of working conditions. It neglects what is incumbent on it, the organization of the masses; and the revolutionary education which it does attempt, it does wrongly.

"As regards trade union action, revisionism has an importance of quite another kind. In effect, it finds, in the natural existential conditions of these unions, an area much more favorable to its expansion than that of the political movement." Of course, the trade unions do not, any more than does the party, separate the fight for immediate demands from the fight for the overthrow of capitalism; but the party action is at an infinitely more general level, and that is why it also demands more general ideas and arguments and

15. In 1910, the French CGT numbered 358 thousand members (an estimate probably greatly exaggerated), while the German "free trade unions," linked with Social Democracy, could claim a membership of more than two million. On the development of the *Freien Gewerkschaften* between 1890 and the war, see especially: Heinz Varain, *Freie Gewerkschaft, Sozial-Demokratie und Staat . . . (1890-1920)* (Düsseldorf, 1956) especially the bibliography; Gerhardt Ritter, *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelmischen Reich*, (West Berlin, 1959); and, above all, Heinz Langerhaus, "Richtungsgewerkschaft und gewerkschaftliche Autonomie," *International Review of Social History*, 11, 1 and 2, 1957. See also Emile Pouget, *la Confédération Générale du Travail* (Paris, 1908), pp. 47-48.

adopts objectives which are equally so. In the domain of trade unionism, however, "the arguments are ready-made and decided by the most immediate interest. It is not necessary, therefore, nor is it always desirable, to press the distinction any further. The task of trade unionism is to regroup the masses in relation to a common and immediate objective; therefore it does not take kindly to ideas which are in danger of not being understood, because it thereby clashes with certain prejudices and even shocks many people, the consequence being possible injury to the unity of the movement. So it is that the trade unions are led to confine themselves to the immediate, and to regard as disastrous, as revolutionary 'romanticism,' whatever goes beyond this.

"There is yet another reason why revisionism is so welcomed within the trade unions. The latter fight on the terrain of the middle class political order, of the liberal State. In order to develop, they need the right of coalition and a solidly guaranteed quality of rights, but nothing more. The trade unions *as such* have as their ideal, not a socialist order, but freedom and equality within the middle class State. *When they possess these fully, as in England, they become upholders of the status quo; when these rights are not fully acknowledged, as is still the case in Germany, they declare for political democracy, and hence make common cause with the revisionists and the middle class progressives.*

"Let a trade union movement succeed in wresting some notable improvements, and the idea easily spreads that the proletarian condition can be permanently improved within the framework of the capitalist system. In such circumstances, a conservative spirit makes its appearance, complacent and little inclined to share in revolutionary aspirations. A workers' élite forms who, while seeking to raise itself by its own efforts, profoundly distrusts the mass of miserable and unorganized laborers. At the same time, Social Democracy finds itself thwarted in its efforts to raise the workers to an effective level of class consciousness.

"The trade unions do, of course, constitute the organization of the proletarian masses. But unaided and lacking as they do any ideals and long-term view, which the political movement cultivates *par excellence*, they are incapable of inducing unity among the proletariat. The trade union organization, in effect, resembles certain federations of trade or of industry, which remain separate from one another, each rarely benefiting from the active help of the others. . . .

"However, as major industry develops, the class war becomes more and more lively, and large employers' associations come into being who meet partial strikes with a general lock-out, thereby further extending the war and

speeding up the centralization of trade unions. Decision-making, the power to declare industrial war or to end it, reverts more and more to the trade union leaders and to the central bodies; and more and more the local groups lose their right to make such decisions. The conflicts change into giant clashes in the course of which, exactly as in international wars, huge armies are directed by a supreme command. To safeguard the democratic character of the organization, recourse is had to a system of representatives of the parliamentary type, thus provoking a new rise of bureaucratism. One is faced with a phenomenon similar to that connected with the parliamentary conflicts: the influence of the leaders becomes decisive, while that of the masses declines. Success or failure appears to depend on the personal qualities of the leaders, on their strategic skill, on their ability to read a situation correctly; while the enthusiasm and experience of the masses themselves are not regarded as active factors. Within the workers' movement, just as within the State, a whole hierarchy forms whose particular ideas often prevail over those of the masses.

"The revisionist tendencies in the trade union movement have the further disastrous effects . . . of inducing feelings of complacency and an anti-revolutionary attitude of mind, of strengthening the corporative spirit and weakening both democratic awareness and the confidence of the masses in their own strength. Since these tendencies originate directly in the very nature of the trade union movement, the powerful development of the latter" is bound to strengthen them in an equally natural way; on the other hand, a campaign of propaganda centered on principles may confine their growth. "For such propaganda is something quite other than a fully armed means of salvation. The reality of the situation not only engenders revisionist tendencies but also causes the ground to slip away beneath them. *Capitalism is not only an existing reality; it is one that constantly overthrows everything that exists.* It is in the nature of the *existing* capitalist reality to transform trade union wars into a carefully calculated skirmish . . . , but it does not necessarily follow that these conditions are eternal and immutable." On the contrary, they undergo incessant change and, "to the extent to which the latter urge toward revolution, the long-term revolutionary role of the trade unions becomes an immediate reality."

While industry grows at an increased rate and, with it, the number of workers, the class war takes on a massive character, with a multiplication of major strikes in every country and hundreds of thousands of men involved in them. "Every major strike now takes on the appearance of an explosion, of a minor revolution."¹⁶ The trade unions find themselves forced to abandon

16. We again remind the reader that between 1903 and 1913, huge and violent strikes

something of their immediate demands in order to adapt to a political context. The old corporative limitations are shattered—and, of course, their overthrow will be the more effectively and readily secured if assisted from the outset by a lively propaganda.”

The State power reacts to this by repression, and the workers must face up to this. “Political action and trade union action merge more and more into a united front of the working class against the ruling class. This shows, therefore, that only temporary conditions peculiar to a particular phase of the class war were separating the first time of action from the second and were causing each to develop its own characteristics in a distinct way. In the ‘parliamentary’ phase, the proletariat has to adapt its war tactics to exterior conditions—in other words, to the middle class hegemony within the State, a hegemony that had continued undisputed throughout a whole generation without undergoing any basic modification. Hence, these war tactics—the political type and that of trade unionism—were able to develop each in its own way, so as to assume independent existence. The conditions peculiar to this phase left so deep an impression that many considered it foolish to suppose that they could ever disappear, the domain of ‘practical’ politics and tactics being doomed in that case to destruction. These conditions were not, such people believed, destined to change in the foreseeable future, and merely to envisage a shifting of the war to another terrain was regarded as romantic illusion. To gauge the effects of this period, it is enough to recall the reluctance very often shown in trade union circles to discuss the conditions and the possibilities of the general strike.¹⁷

“But a *third period of the proletarian class war* is being inaugurated. . . . The mass strike as an everyday tactic, during the parliamentary phase, was, in its ‘revolutionary gymnastics’ form, a piece of childishness without practical value; henceforth, it is becoming something real.” Political conflict and trade

occurred in succession in various European countries, and this in spite of the determination of the big workers’ organizations to limit such movements; thus this formula corresponded to the facts. Did it not take a world war—engendered of course by other causes as well—to put an end, provisionally, to this social agitation?

17. Theodor Bömelburg, the head of the stonemasons’ union, declared at the Trade Union Congress of 1905: “We ought to suspend all discussion of the general strike, and postpone [the discussion of] future solutions until the appropriate time,” since the present situation “requires calm within the workers’ movement.” The Congress adopted a motion inviting the workers “not to allow themselves to be deflected from the day-to-day activity of building up the organization, by the accepting and propagating of such ideas.” Cited by Karl Kautsky, *Der politische Massenstreik* (Berlin, 1914), pp. 115-18; see also the dossier assembled by Günter Gricke on this theme, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 5, 1963, pp. 919-940. In a general sense, the trade union leaders, whose influence over the party was great, did all in their power to prohibit any discussion of these ideas in congresses, in the press and in public meetings.

union action are merging, thereby entailing a union of political expertise and trade union discipline; the old methods have had their day. “Embodied in the leaders, the two modes of action remained distinct, and yet, at both levels, the masses were made up of the same workers. The organized masses themselves are now entering into the fray, endowed with class consciousness, discipline, and the strength gained in previous conflicts—their organizations, the trade unions, their political knowledge, socialism.”

VII. *The Other Classes*

“If the proletariat and the capitalists engaged in major industry were the only classes in our society, the conflict would represent the very simple pattern of two camps drawn up against each other. But this is not the case. Between the middle class and the proletariat there are *numerous intermediate categories* that shade gradually from one class to the other. On the one hand, there are the vestiges of the old independent middle classes: the small capitalists, scarcely distinguishable from the big ones through whom they have been brought into tight circumstances; substantial farmers and lower middle class people, who partly serve the interests of big capital, which tends to exploit directly the small farmers and the laborers. On the other hand, however, there are classes of recent growth, the officers and noncommissioned officers of the industrial army who range from foremen to technicians, through engineers, doctors, chief clerks, to end in directors. Here the members of the inferior rank are the exploited, the others being the exploiters.

“All these intermediate categories, with their own particular interests, take part in the class war. Some identify their aspirations with those of the proletarians; the rest opt for the other camp. Suddenly, therefore, the class war picture becomes more complicated, and divergences show within the party because of attitudes linked with different interests.”

A long description follows about the condition of the lease-hold farmer and of the lower middle class person, forced to pay high rent to the capitalist, dreaming of a return to a society of small enterprises, but wishing in the interests of his business that the workers had more money to spend. While hating the capitalist, he feels that he is threatened by the workers’ demands, to the extent to which he himself employs a staff. He would like to see competition regulated and military expenses reduced, and, to secure this, he relies on the parliamentary system. In this sense, he is a democrat. “The proletariat can sometimes benefit by these clashes of interests. It did so in England in 1847 to secure the 10-hour day; and in Germany in 1867 to win the franchise—even if these demands triumphed only at the cost of grim

battles. But these clashes of interests remained always of a secondary kind in comparison with the one which separates the proletariat and the middle class. . . , and never amounted to anything more than differences about *the division of the spoils*. . . .

"The so-called *new middle class*—intellectuals,¹⁸ civil servants, salaried employees—form, for their part, a transition category between the proletariat and the middle class. This new variety is distinguished from the old by the following essential trait: since they have absolutely no ownership of means of production, and live by the *sale of their labor*, they have therefore *no interest in the maintenance of private production*, of the private ownership of the means of production. At this level, they stand with the proletariat, with just as little reactionary interest or desire for reaction; they look ahead, not backwards. We have here a *modern class* that is emerging and becoming more and more numerous with the growth of society itself.

"The situation of this class differs greatly, however, from that of the proletariat. As a rule, its members offer a highly qualified type of work, the result of years of costly study. They therefore command much higher salaries than those of the workers. Holding management or scientific posts, they can, if they prove to be highly competent, reach the *highest positions*, and thus the old saying of the independent middle class, 'Everyone is the architect of his own fortune,' is given a new setting. Unlike the situation of the proletariat, misery and necessity do not force them into an implacable war against capitalism; on the contrary, they find this system satisfactory in many respects.

"They do not deliberately decide to fight for an improvement of their condition. Those with top positions feel that they belong with capitalism, and have other means of achieving their objectives. The mass of these employees breaks up into so many groups and categories, with such a variety of salaries and aspirations that they do not form a solidly united body in the manner of the working class. They comprise, so to speak, all the ranks from general to adjutant, whereas the workers represent the mass of private soldiers. The employees do not work in great collectives, but as individuals; they therefore lack the vigorous awareness that the proletariat has owing to its work in common and in large groups. Unaccustomed to hardship, they fear

18. *Der Intelligenz*: the Social Democratic theoreticians have never tried to define exactly the limits of this category. Thus, in his controversy with Bernstein (Kautsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-54), Kautsky used "intellectuals" imprecisely to refer to office or commercial workers, the cadres of industry, and others; he later applied the term only to the cadres in general, and finally he limited it to the members of the intelligentsia as creators and manipulators of leftist ideas. It would be rash to claim that the term is any more precise today.

unemployment more than the workers do. All this makes them unfit for organized trade union action against their capitalist masters. Only the subaltern categories, who are both the worst paid and the most numerous, and whose lot is therefore very similar to that of the better paid workers, are gradually coming round to the idea of organization and of trade union action.

"The intellectuals are also separated from the proletariat at the ideological level. The production of middle class environment, they are naturally imbued with a middle class idea of the world, an idea which their theoretical studies have served only to strengthen. With the intellectuals, the middle class prejudices against socialism take on a scientific coloring. Their particular position within the process of production makes them increasingly convinced of the truth of the ideological idea that the *mind governs the world*. Looking on themselves, therefore, as the vessels of a culture from which everything proceeds, they are filled with a sense of their superiority to the working masses; in business, in their jobs as inspectors or overseers,¹⁹ they regard themselves as at enmity with the workers. That is why they equally hate socialism, the ideal of the proletariat, fearing that the power of the uneducated masses may reach a level equal to that of the industrial hierarchy, and thus destroy the latter's privileges.

"There are numerous factors, therefore, which contribute powerfully to separating the new middle class from the proletariat, and this despite an identity of economic function. Social development will draw the lower categories of this class more and more into the conflict, but they will never be able to wage war with the vigor, the ruthlessness and the intransigence which the working class situation imposes. Their socialism will therefore be of a moderate kind; they will find the bitterness of the proletarian war distasteful, and will emphasize the reformist and civilizing character of socialism.

"It should be noted here that certain categories of workers, whose degree of qualification makes them indispensable, and who, being better paid than the others, constitute a working class elite, are close to and show the distinctive characteristics of these lower categories of the intellectual class."

If one is to believe the revolutionary trade unionists, only trade unionists are fit to conduct the war: "this is to limit the movement to the working class or even to the part of the proletariat who can adhere to union organization." But the proletarian war has wider horizons; furthermore, "Marxism does not repudiate the idea of making common cause with other classes. . . . When the

19. With the increased division of labor, this term has disappeared from the workers' vocabulary.

government and its sustaining social groups bring in measures of a particularly provocative kind, kindling the masses to rage, the members of these intermediate categories—and also the still unawakened proletarians—join our ranks in great numbers, and together we make the government think again. But this action cannot last long; as soon as their immediate interests remove them from us, their middle class character reappears, and we have to press on alone, with our compact proletarian battalions. This change of direction on their part is only to be expected. All things considered, therefore, the proletariat will succeed in securing power only if political events completely discredit the government and draw on it the hatred and distrust of both the middle class and the proletarian masses, and only if the ruling classes lose their confidence and therefore find themselves unable to resist the proletarian assaults. But for all that, it is still possible that a temporary phase of reaction will follow, if the clash of interests between the proletariat and its allies emerges after the common victory.

"However, the revisionists do not find it sufficient that other classes, urged by their own interests, come forward from time to time to stand with the proletariat." The working class, they say, is too weak to impose its wishes, and therefore needs the support of the other classes. This common action should assume a permanent character and consequently it is necessary to modify the Social Democratic program and tactics, to center them on reforms obtained through the parliamentary system, through electoral alliances. In their view, the only means of "transforming the mode of production is to win a majority in parliament. To do this, the party must adopt a policy that favors the greatest possible number of social categories, and therefore must emphasize only the interests common to the proletariat and to the other classes, and play down what sets them against each other. The lower middle class and the farmers find that they are not regarded as employers,²⁰ but ranked among those exploited by capitalism and therefore wholly with us in the fight.

"The basic question, at this level, concerns the farmers. We must win them to our cause; indeed, it cannot be too often repeated that we shall never reach our objective as long as the farmers are against us." To secure their support, the revisionists urge the party to support the protectionist demands of the farmers who, for example, want to see their produce defended, by means of high import tariffs, against foreign competition. "The more efficacious this protection proves, the stronger the situation will become—and the weaker

20. In 1901, at the Lubeck Congress, the question was discussed whether the small entrepreneurs, party members, should be expelled for having refused to meet the demands of their salaried workers; the motion was defeated. Cited by J. Delevsky, *les Antinomies socialistes* . . . (Paris, 1930), p. 357.

will become their common interests with the proletariat. . . . If Social Democracy succeeds within a capitalist regime in freeing the farmers from exploitation, their interest in maintaining the existing order will be increased. Only when the system has been destroyed can the farmers escape from the grip of exploiting capitalism. . . .

"The Marxist line of tactics in no way departs from the principle that all intermediate social categories are always within the camp of big capital, but it brings out clearly that the interests of such categories very often run counter to those of the big capitalists, without thereby enabling the proletariat really to count on their support. Revisionism would reconcile opposed interests and *serve two classes at the same time*. . . . But this is merely the way to compromise the interests of the proletariat and to enable the other classes to take advantage of them."

VIII. Ideology and Class Interests

"Socialism is the ideology of the modern proletariat. Ideology signifies a system of ideas, conceptions and plans, a spiritual expression of the conditions of material life and of class interests. But these spiritual expressions do not exactly correspond to the reality of their context. The ideas and conceptions are expressed in an abstract manner in which the concrete reality whence the ideology has been derived does not always appear, or appears with a variety of different aspects. So the idea of freedom, as a political watchword, derives from middle class interest in free enterprise and free competition; but each class that uses it gives the idea a meaning of its own. Today the word 'liberalism' has a completely different meaning than it had 50 years ago. As an abstract generality, an ideology is apt to obscure real differences so that their existence is not suspected. If later on, in new conditions, these differences emerge clearly and with practical significance, an ideological battle rages to decide the meaning of this or that idea: for example, what precisely does 'liberal' mean and what is real freedom?"

"Socialism, too, as a system of ideas, can cover a wide range of highly different contents and meanings according to what class is putting it forward. We have seen in the previous section how a class, by nature both proletarian and lower middle class, gives to the socialist ideas that it adopts a meaning absolutely different from that given them by the proletariat of big industry. Every class can shape its ideas only on the elements of reality it knows directly; it does not understand, and therefore ignores, whatever is foreign to its own experience. So it is that it projects upon the ideas and ideals it has adopted experiences and desires associated with its particular situation.

"It is easy to see why socialism is successful in winning support outside the

class of workers in the big industrial concerns of Western Europe. Socialism signifies *anti-capitalism*; the socialist party wars against capitalism on principle, as its mortal enemy. But capitalism spreads its oppressive reign over the whole world, and everywhere nations are suffering from its hegemony, are revolting against it and seeking to overthrow it. They see socialism as their solution, and the workers of Western Europe as their natural allies against the common enemy. This is so, we have seen, with small farmers pressurized by capitalism, but it is equally so with overseas regions where capitalism, in its colonial form, has penetrated deeply and whose agricultural resources it is exploiting. The 'socialism' of New Zealand is simply the policy of local farmers and employers who want to neutralize European large-scale capitalism, and to enable a truly native capitalism to flourish. Similarly, the socialism of the Russian intellectuals at the time of the narodniks — which still survives within the revolutionary socialist party — assumed the character of a peasant socialism at grips with the exploitation to which Western European capitalism was subjecting the country.²¹

"Socialism stands for the right of nations to decide their own destiny in the face of all oppression and exploitation, and in the face of absolutism. That is why such a lively sympathy for the socialist cause is found in the oppressed countries. During the Russian Revolution, the oppressed nations — for example, the Caucasians — sent a strong contingent of socialist representatives to the Duma. Numerous Eastern revolutionaries, hunted by police and driven from their countries, escaped to Western Europe, where only Social Democracy vigorously aided and supported them.²² Even when they do not show the least trace of proletarian character, they remain in constant touch with Social Democrats and adopt their slogans and their solutions. The Eastern revolutionary classes feel close to the Western revolutionary class, because they have an identical enemy or at least one of the same kind, Eastern despots being in effect the instruments of European capitalism. In the East, to

21. It could not be said that the *narodnik* theoreticians paid great attention to the penetration of foreign capital into Russia; nor did the subject figure prominently in the electoral propaganda of the many tendencies claiming to be socialist. It took the massacre of the Lena strikers (1912) and, above all, World War I and its disastrous course to raise the problem generally. Thus, years later Pannekoek was to stress that "only vague rumors of the intestine quarrels in Russian Socialism were reaching Western Europe" — and this indicates a more general lack of information. More *au fait* with Russian realities, however, Karl Kautsky had formulated early in the century the basic question: "How is a bourgeois revolution to be effected without the bourgeoisie?" In 1920, Pannekoek persisted in regarding resistance to foreign capital as the determinant factor (at least the only one on which he spoke at length) of the Russian Revolution.

22. See the dossier drawn up under the direction of Georges Haupt and Madeleine Rébérieux, *la Deuxième Internationale et l'Orient*. (Paris, 1947).

wage a war both enthusiastic and implacable, the rising middle class has only just adopted the liberal ideology proper to a class which, in the West, has long exercised power and is prey to corruption; socialism, the ideology of freedom, can alone help them. Only when their ideology is hitched to practical tasks, when the revolutionary classes begin to show individual differences and to become conscious of their real interests, do their spokesmen change from red socialists into moderate liberals.²³

"In a revolutionary era, especially where the existence of an absolutist regime demands vigorously conducted warfare, *the most energetic class, the proletariat, is at the head of the movement* to which their ideology serves as a program. In Finland, there is no large industrial proletariat, since this is a country of small farmers. But the latter send a big socialist group to parliament; 40 percent of the electors vote Social Democratic, simply because socialism is synonymous with implacable war against tsarist oppression. In other conditions, these farmers would not elect socialists. The same can be said of the Armenians voted into the Turkish parliament.

"It emerges from all this that it would be absurd to regard all the movements laying claim to socialism as being of one and the same nature. The adherents of Social Democracy, the militants of the Social Democratic party, do not form a homogeneous group with identical ideas about everything. Very diverse classes and groups, whose interests differ in certain respects, are indiscriminately covered by the words 'socialism' and 'socialist

23. Three years later, writing in *Neue Zeit* (Jan. 12, 1912) about an article by Otto Bauer on the "Eastern revolutions" (*Der Kampf*, Dec. 1911), Pannekoek refined this general schema by distinguishing two revolutionary currents in the East: that of the intelligentsia won over to ideas from liberal Europe; that of the violently anti-European masses. The two tendencies, he says, have the same objective; but one seeks to base itself on the masses, the other on the leaders. That is why the first is attempting to fuse with the second by organically linking its political objectives with national traditions and religion. And Pannekoek concludes as follows: "The revolutions of Asia and Africa will give the signal to the European proletariat for their struggle for freedom." This idea, connected with the general theme of imperialism — one of the main axes of the theoretical discussion within the German Party at that time — appears in an article published a few days earlier: "The political revolution in Asia, the insurrection in India, the rebellion within the Arab world, are imposing a decisive obstacle against the expansion of capitalism in Europe. . . . bloody clashes are becoming more and more inevitable. There is a link between the Asian wars of independence and of cononialism and the general struggles among European nations." A. Pannekoek, "la Revolution mondiale," *le Socialisme*, Jan. 21, 1912 (cited by Haupt and Révérieux, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37; German version in the *Bremen Bürger-Zeitung*, 204, Dec. 30, 1911). Lenin expressed an analogous idea when he wrote, for example, in 1907: "The Russian working class will win freedom and will give the impulse to Europe by its revolutionary actions." (Preface to *Lettres de J. Becker*. . . , in *Marx-Engels-Marxisme*, p. 111). On the other hand, Rosa Luxemburg proclaimed a little later: "It is only from Europe, it is only from the oldest capitalist countries, that the signal for the social revolution which will free all men, can come, when the time is ripe." *La crise de la démocratie socialiste*, (Paris, 1934), p. 157.

party.' They merge in a temporary or lasting way where their interests coincide, but, where their interests differ or even clash, they fight among themselves. *These clashes take the form of tactical differences within the party.*

"All the proletarians, all the exploited, have, of course, a basic interest in the overthrow of capitalism. . . . But it can be said that men in general, middle class or otherwise, have an interest in the socialism which will create *for all* the conditions of a better life. . . . However, by 'interests' must be understood immediate interests, such as are engendered here and now in society by a specific situation, and are accepted as such by people whose ideas and conditions are equally shaped by a particular class situation.

"In this sense, the proletariat, the class of the exploited and the oppressed, which Social Democracy regards as its greatest source of militants and which it represents at the political level, is *neither a clearly defined nor an absolutely homogeneous group*. There has been lively controversy about whether the lower middle class proletarian categories and the lower categories of salaried employees belong to it; in fact, the party is infiltrating these social groups, but with much greater difficulty than it meets with the industrial proletariat. The revisionists like to preach that we should unite around us *all* the oppressed and the discontents. Within the American party, there has also been discussion about the proper nature of the proletariat, in the course of which it was suggested that skilled workers attached to the great trade union federation led by Gompers did not properly belong to the proletarian group called upon by the Communist Manifesto to unite, because, it was said, when these workers are ultimately supplanted by machinery, they will lose their privileged position and will adopt reactionary sentiments.²⁴ This idea is on a par with the hostility which the trade union leaders are showing toward socialism. But in a strange way, there is a certain basic truth in the assertion that the proletarian nature of these workers is arguable. Apart from the obvious fact that there are differences of theoretical knowledge, the basic truth is that, within the class itself of industrial workers, there are still considerable divergences of immediate interests.

24. The controversy alluded to here took place in 1908-1909, after the publication in one of the party publications of an article which noted that the qualified worker has always been excessively conservative because he is not proletarian. Thomas Sladden, "The Revolution," *International Socialist Review*, Dec. 1908, pp. 426f. Nothing was so common among the American "industrial" trade unionists as the idea put forward by Bill Haywood, among others, that the qualified worker exploits the non-qualified exactly as the capitalist does. See, Brissenden, *The IWW* (New York, 1919), pp. 84-88. We note, in passing, that Pannekoek was to say a little later of the IWW that "their principles are perfectly sound." *Neue Zeit*, XXX, 2, 1912, p. 203.

"These groups of the industrial proletariat, having secured a privileged situation, a higher salary and a shorter working day through their powerful organizations, do not match the lower categories of the working class in their urgency to overthrow capitalism. There is no doubt that they adapt well to the existing order and form an acknowledged force for negotiating with employers and politicians. Their only ideal is a gradual but constant raising of their living standards; their ideas are close to those of the lower middle class, just as their situation resembles that of the lower categories of the new middle class. . . . It is notorious that the English and American trade unionists form a workers' elite of this kind. To the extent to which they have won political autonomy they advocate a moderate socialist workers' policy, and they will have no truck with class warfare and revolution. Their socialism is 'evolutionary'—the theory of the gradual advancement of the workers and of gradual growth toward the nationalization of the principal branches of production, by a State actuated by ethical and philanthropic principles: in short, revisionist socialism."

Within Social Democracy, revisionism represents the interests of these lower class categories as well as those of the highly qualified workers' elite, as distinct from the interests proper to the masses of the industrial proletariat. "The conflicts between tendencies not only aim at deciding the fitness of certain theories or ideas. . . ; they also represent battles between the changing groups who together make up the proletariat. This is the only explanation for the vehemence and passion with which these battles are carried on. . . , sometimes degenerating into personal attacks. Now, experience shows that from now on we are not dealing with situations of simple, personal destitution."

The interests of the proletariat must be considered before those of the other classes, "the latter's interests running counter to real development; a party which would allow its aims to be shaped by such interests would inevitably find itself drawn into the blind alley of a reactionary policy or, to change the metaphor, into adopting a capitalist policy in socialist clothing. . . ."

"The ideas and conceptions of the proletariat have as their basis a science of society that enables them to foresee the consequences of their actions and the reactions of the other classes. Up to the present, ideologies, lacking awareness of concrete reality, were simply an extravagant reflexion of the economic situation, whereas socialism constitutes a clear scientific theory. Ideology and science are both abstract, general expressions of concrete reality; but *the basic difference between them* is that an ideology constitutes an unconscious generalization, one in which awareness of the corresponding

concrete reality is lost,²⁵ whereas science is a *conscious* generalization whose conclusions make it possible to discern precisely the concrete reality from which they have been drawn. Hence, therefore, ideology is above all a matter of sentiment, while science is a matter of intellection. . . .

"In the preceding sections, we have shown that, while the science of society effectively enables us to find the right way, the differences of opinion concerning tactics are attributable to something quite other than a lack of clarity. These differences, like socialism itself, flow in effect from material conditions. Consequently, they are linked with various stages of capitalistic development in different regions and branches of production, with the dialectic nature of this development, and with the clashes of interests within the working class proper. They are therefore so inevitable that such dissension cannot be credited to the good will or ill will of certain comrades; what comes to the surface in them are the internal clashes between the social interests that play a part in the life of the political organization.

"But this must not lead to stoic acceptance, to the idea that we must just resign ourselves to the fact that these clashes of interests are inevitable, without being able to do anything about them. This is true only to the extent to which one accepts that the classes act solely in terms of their immediate, spontaneously felt interests; in other words, to the extent to which a conscious science of society is lacking. But this is much less true in the case of the socialist proletariat. The working class is guided in all its actions not only by direct, immediately felt interests, but by the general interest of which the science of society enables them to acquire a deep and lasting knowledge. Unlike the other classes, the proletariat has not merely submitted to blind sentiments, but also to conscious reason; and this will be increasingly the case as their theoretical development is perfected and they come to understand socialist theory better.

"The role of theory in the workers' movement is to deflect the will from direct, instinctive, powerful impulses, and to render it responsive to conscious and rational knowledge. Theoretical knowledge enables the worker to escape from the influence of immediate and limited interests, to the great benefit of the general class interest of the proletariat; it enables him to bring his activity into line with the long-term interest of socialism. All tendencies that deflect

25. "Ideology," says Engels, "is a process which the self-styled thinker effects very conscientiously but with a false conscience. He remains unaware of the motive forces which actuate him; otherwise, there would not be an ideological process. Thus, he invents false or specious motive forces," Letter to Mehring, July 14, 1893; *Etudes philosophiques* (Paris, 1947), p. 134. The possibility that Pannekoek was familiar with this text is slight; but is it not one of the keys to the materialist theory of history? And had not Marx used this key in those of his writings already known in 1909?

the proletariat from its objective, thereby making the conflict more prolonged and more difficult, are increasingly rendered less harmful as the workers understand Marxism, the socialist theory, more deeply. If the influence of the labor aristocracy of the trade unions is demonstrably weaker in Germany than in England, it is due in great measure to the socialist theoretical development of the German workers.

"Here also is the means to secure a maximum reduction of the danger which, as a result of the internal conflicts within the exploited class, is threatening the workers' movement. Theoretical enlightenment, a propaganda campaign aimed at deflecting the workers' attention from their particular interests and fixing it on the general context of society, will diminish conflicts, calm passions, and blunt the edge of disagreements. *It is the implementation of theory, the scientific basis of socialism, that will contribute most effectually to both securing for the movement a tranquil and sure course, and to the transformation of unconscious instinct into conscious human action.*"

CHAPTER THREE

THE KAUTSKY-PANNEKOEK CONTROVERSY

By refusing to limit socialist parliamentary activity to the representation of the workers' immediate interests, Pannekoek was taking up again a subject dear to the Left. The difference, perhaps, is that he viewed success as relying not so much on the press or on appeals from party leaders¹ as on the rank-and-file. His revisionist critics were not too far wrong when they accused him of calling for parliamentary action to give way completely to the general strike. This was not wholly true, of course; Pannekoek, however, did not bother to refute the accusation, but instead invoked the resolutions of the congresses that approved the principle of the general strike.²

It might be noted that this conception of "revolutionary parliamentarianism"—designated by the term "orthodox Marxist tactics"—characterized German Social Democracy in its first phase.³ But, as one of its principal leaders later pointed out: "In the early stages, when we had few adherents, we used to go to the Reichstag and used it exclusively or almost exclusively for the propagation of our ideas. But very soon we found ourselves involved in practical matters"⁴—meaning essentially, the urging of immediate demands."⁵ The parties of the Third International were to follow a similar

1. For example, in the period of the mass strike debate, Rosa Luxemburg called upon the party press "to stress more and more the proper power and proper actions of the working class, and not parliamentary battles." And she continued: "We are not concerned with simply criticizing the policy of the dominant class from the viewpoint of the immediate interests of the people—that is to say, from the viewpoint of the present society; we are concerned with going beyond the most progressivist bourgeois policy, and constantly setting up against it the ideal of the socialist society. Hence, the people could be more frequently convinced than they are today of the partial character of the progressivist measures, and realize how necessary it is to overthrow this order in its entirety in order to establish socialism." Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialdemokratie und Parlamentarismus" (1904); *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. III, (Berlin, 1925), pp. 395-396.

2. Cf. *supra*, Chapter Two, note 6. The text of this conference was published under the title: *Die Machtmittel des Proletariats* (Stuttgart, 1910). Pannekoek also stressed on this occasion that he intended to give his conference "the character of a scientific exposé," seeking to establish "what is and what will be" on the basis of "new experiences of the class struggle," and not "what the party ought to do," as defined by the Congresses and their resolutions.

3. Cf. the remarkable work by Kurt Brandis, *Die deutsche SD bis zum Fall der Sozialistengesetz* (Leipzig, 1931).

4. Wilhelm Liebknecht (1897), cited by Edgard Milhaud, *la Démocratie socialiste allemande* (Paris, 1903), pp. 200-201.

5. "Le P.C. et le parlementarisme," *Thèses, manifestes et résolutions de l'I.C.*, (Paris, 1934),

policy. At first, they regarded parliament as "a secondary prop" of the "war of the masses destined to become civil war." That was in 1920, and we know what followed.

Be that as it may, "the long established tactics" that the Left passionately defended (although even these varied from town to town) did not triumph just on paper in the resolutions passed by the various congresses. In 1910, they erupted in the street, in pitched battles and violent brawling designed to achieve universal suffrage and other social reforms.⁶ These struggles strengthened the Left in the large industrial centers; in Bremen, for example, the radical Henke exercised greater and greater influence over the local section. Furthermore, he had editorial control over the town's Social Democratic daily, the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*, for which, beginning in March 1910, Pannekoek wrote a weekly column and frequently articles.⁷

In time, however, the Bremen radicals were to split; the line of demarcation became increasingly clear between the mechanistic radicals of Henke's type and the group of intellectuals that included Radek and Pannekoek as well as Johann Knief, the engaging teacher.⁸ This group of intellectuals was at once informal and distinct. Its activities, when necessary, were applied to the problem of workers' conflicts. Pannekoek once again analyzed it as follows: "The fact that in Hamburg and Bremen a movement of leftist instructors came into existence, whose dynamic nucleus was composed of a group of Social Democratic teachers, proves that the atmosphere in those towns is very different from that of Prussia. . . . The greater freedom and tolerance, which characterized the old commercial cities—and still does so today though to a lesser degree—accompany the economic and political preponderance of mercantile capital."⁹

But let us return to 1910. The party leaders used every means they could to prevent the agitation from assuming proportions that in their view would be excessive. Suddenly, Leftist theoreticians returned to the battle, encouraged

pp. 66-68.

6. Anton Pannekoek, "Prussia in Revolt. Being Chapter One in the History of a Political Revolution," *International Socialist Review*, May, 1910, pp. 966-975.

7. We have only had access to a collection of proofs of articles intended for a Sunday edition of the paper, proofs corrected by the author (the initials A.P. are at the beginning of each text).

8. Knief (1880-1919) is a good example of one of these theoreticians, without whom socialist thought would never have been what it was: clear and bold ideas, deep honesty, infectious enthusiasm, these were some of his qualities. His "works" consist almost exclusively of newspaper articles, often anonymous, but one can also list a large study devoted to Ferdinand Lassalle (Johann Knief, "Lassalle, ein Apostel der Klassenharmonie," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Soz. u.d. Arb. bwg.*, X).

9. Anton Pannekoek, "Der Bremische Liberalismus," *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*. (abridged: *B.B.Z.*), 264A, March 1, 1913.

both by the struggles and by increased support for their own attitude. More than ever, they stressed the need to urge the masses into action to develop their class consciousness.¹⁰ Toward the end of May 1910, in *Neue Zeit*, the theoretical organ of German and international Social Democracy, Rosa Luxemburg was allowed at last to express the left-wing's criticisms of Karl Kautsky. Though this controversy was important and prolonged,¹¹ its historical interest is eclipsed by the one that arose between Kautsky, the incarnation of Marxist orthodoxy, and Pannekoek. This controversy gains its importance, perhaps, from the fact that Pannekoek forced into the open a truth that earlier controversies, concerned as they were with this or that particular type of action, had not led Kautsky to express clearly and directly.

This time—indeed for the first time with such explicitness—Kautsky unconditionally justified the tactics used up until then by Social Democracy: the struggle by delegates who, in the name of the masses, made decisions and negotiated with the various authorities without any desire to move the masses into action. On the other hand, Pannekoek, in line with the ideas of the Left, emphasized direct, mass action; however, he put very particular stress, as always, on the spiritual factor (the *Geistlich*) and on the emergence of organizational forms of a new, unitary kind, in and through the class struggle.

Needless to say, these propositions seemed senseless to anyone for whom the present order was the measure of all things and on which the action of the oppressed could have no effect. For the academic researchers of today, Pannekoek's ideas represent "an apocalyptic spirit,"¹² a "quasi-Platonic idealization of proletarian solidarity," the "imminent expectation of the parousia,"¹³ all of which serve conveniently to distort and dispense with his ideas that are otherwise patently unacceptable. The reactions of reformists naturally, were similar. Kautsky, using a phrase formerly applied to the utopians, spoke of "social alchemy;" and another old radical later expressed his shock at what he called "a metaphysical construction of history expressed in mystical, theological conceptions."¹⁴

Lenin followed the controversy with deep interest, and, in *The State and Revolution*, he used even certain extracts from it that he had made at the

10. Cf. Schorske, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-185.

11. This controversy in its entirety covers 93 pages of the *Neue Zeit*, as against 116 of the Kautsky-Pannekoek controversy. Additionally, however, there are two Pannekoek articles against Kautsky published in the *B.B.Z.* (115, April, 16, 1910; 126, July 2, 1919). The Luxemburg-Kautsky controversy appeared in the *Neue Zeit* in 1913.

12. Schurer, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

13. Schorske, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

14. Curt Geyer, *Der Radicalismus in der deutschen Arb. bwg.* (Jena, 1923), pp. 9-29.

time. He was then concerned mainly with Kautsky (and the Mensheviks); but he did have a few things to say about Pannekoek's ideas. They "erred greatly" in their "lack of clarity and concrete character," even though their central thought remained "for all that, nonetheless clear," even though their author did not bother to give these ideas separate *concrete* identity. Thinking only in terms of a huge, backward country, Lenin saw no need to apply general principles (and therefore to advocate special tactics) that would conform with the more advanced stage of the class struggle in the major industrial countries.

The historians of the Soviet state are no more explicit about this than is their necessary source of reference, *The State and Revolution*. One of them¹⁵ accuses Pannekoek of having written only about "elements of force" and not about the "dictatorship" of the proletariat. The basis of this accusation is clear—namely, that Pannekoek in no way envisaged replacing the old state power by a new one. (Sheer quibbling! Pannekoek had not waited until 1917, as had Lenin, to envisage the state's destruction.) In fact, in Pannekoek's view (and, in this respect, in that of the Marx of "The Civil War in France"), it is the class struggle itself that finally determines the form of social organization. Another criticism from the same source maintains that Pannekoek "ignores the experience of the Paris Commune as Marx summarized it¹⁶—but Pannekoek had already anticipated this criticism by saying elsewhere that what is justified in one phase is not necessarily justified in another. That is precisely why Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and the German Left, as well as many others, have never regarded as decisive the quotations that the Kautskys and the Bernsteins so skillfully dig up to support their cause.

In October 1911, Kautsky—no doubt in order to discourage activist tendencies—published a series of articles on "mass action."¹⁷ Kautsky's starting point was a critique of Gustave Le Bon and of his mob psychology, according to which the masses can only be destructive; and a critique of Kropotkin, who, in his history of the French Revolution (1909), also regarded the masses as incapable of clear-thinking and organization, although he did

15. G.W. Brjunin, "Die Diskussion über den politischen Massenstreik," *Sowjetwissenschaft, Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1955, 5, pp. 669-670.

16. *Ibid.* Pannekoek regarded the Paris Commune as an attempt at municipal self-administration whose extension to the whole country would have called in question the state power: "but it was not a revolution of the workers in the big industries. . . . The effective relationship of forces between the classes worked against it. The mass of the population was peasant, without the least mental receptivity." Anton Pannekoek, "Nach vierzig Jahren," *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*, 163, March 18, 1911.

17. K. Kautsky, "Die Aktion der Masse," *Neue Zeit*, XXX, 1, pp. 43-49, 77-84, 106-117. In November 1911, Pannekoek began a critique of these articles in the Bremen newspaper (Nov. 11, 1911).

not think this all bad. In reality, Kautsky said, mass actions cannot be foreseen and controlled by any party whatsoever, at least during certain historical phases. But as the workers' party gradually organizes the masses, the masses simultaneously mature and learn to foil the provocations of the ruling power aimed at nipping the movement in the bud, Kautsky maintained. But do mass actions today have any chance of success? Engels answered this negatively, in the Preface to *Class Struggles in France*, when he wrote that "the time for blows, for revolutions carried out by small enlightened minorities at the head of unenlightened masses, is past." The proletariat is educated through electoral campaigns and through trade union action. The class struggle does, of course, continue to develop, and so too does action by the masses; but 40 years of exercising political rights and of organization have left an impact. The number of organized and enlightened elements among the masses is now sufficient to warrant a reliance in the future on something other than spontaneous explosions, no matter how powerful and effectively they are channeled. "Some of our friends," Kautsky adds, "think that the conditions of battle have changed, and want to revise their tactics. But is it not the very nature of a spontaneous action that it should escape all control? Hence, all we can do is to be prepared for any eventuality, and so strengthen the party by securing positions of power that will be useful if the need arises. Furthermore, "it is useless to speculate about the unpredictable, and even more so to try to decide on tactics in advance. For 40 years, our party has gone from victory to victory. To consolidate and extend these conquests, it is only necessary to continue along the same path."

Pannekoek opened the controversy in July 1912 in *Neue Zeit*.¹⁸ The question of mass action, he maintained, had been on the agenda ever since the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Prussian political strikes of 1908 and 1910 calling for the reform of suffrage laws. He saw such actions as indications of the increasing strength of the proletariat and as manifestations of imperialism, the new form of capitalism, with its inevitable consequences—impoverishment due to financial pressures linked to the arms race, and the triumph of political reaction.

"Imperialism and mass action are new phenomena whose nature and significance it is important to understand. Our only means of doing so is through controversy. . . , which provokes a lively exchange of ideas and feelings, thereby inducing a new orientation of minds. Up to now, those aware of insurmountable conflicts within the party have regarded them as

18. Anton Pannekoek, "Massenaktion und Revolution," *Neue Zeit*, XXX, 2, pp. 541-550, 585-593, 609-619.

deplorable and painful misunderstandings. That is why it is now necessary to focus these divergences clearly."

The conquest of political power is the precondition for the advent of socialism. But, when dealing with the working class, the exploiting minority has certain sources of strength. The first of these is none other than "its spiritual superiority. As a class living off the surplus value and directing production, it has an all-embracing system of education and indoctrination. Having, therefore, a position from which it can view the whole of society in one comprehensive glance, it can always find new means of duping the masses, even at times when the masses are most seriously threatening it." By its monopoly of education, the press, and religion, the ruling class can impregnate the masses with bourgeois ideas. "This state of spiritual dependence on the bourgeoisie constitutes the principal cause of proletarian weaknesses.

"The ruling class has yet another essential source of strength: its compact organization. A small, well-organized number always prevails over a large, unorganized mass of people. *This organization of the ruling class is state power. . . .* Its internal cohesion derives from the homogeneous will that animates it, starting from the summit"—the government, with an army of officials at its disposal. It gives the impression of being a single organism, in the face of which all men are reduced to powerless atoms, automatically seized and pulverized if they show the least sign of rebellion. "And the masses, conscious of this power, respect it."

However, when the spirit of revolt arises in the masses, dissipating their fear of the state, the "atoms" unite. They could, no doubt, get the better of what may seem a mere handful of officials, but they would then have to face up to the state's material forces—the police and the army, highly organized and heavily armed minorities against whom the masses are defenseless even if they try to arm themselves. But the power of the bourgeoisie is waning. Since its economic functions are becoming more and more superfluous, it is becoming socially parasitic and thus witnesses the gradual disappearance of its sources of powers. It is "losing its prestige and moral superiority, and, ultimately, all that it has left is its hold over state power and its means of repression. If the proletariat is to rule, it must seize state power, the fortress in which the ruling class has entrenched itself. The proletarian battle is not just a battle against the bourgeoisie for state power; it is also a battle *against state power*. The problem of the social revolution can be briefly formulated as the need to raise proletarian power to a level where it exceeds state power; the essence of this revolution is the proletariat's destruction and liquidation of the state's sources of power.

The proletariat's strength lies in its numbers and economic importance and also, says Pannekoek, in the two great sources of power—knowledge and organization—referring his reader to his work *Die taktischen Differenzen* for a more detailed description of how parliamentary and trade union action stimulates the growth of the second of these sources. The bond that unites the individuals, and which is the first requirement for organization, is the discipline that comes from working together in the large modern factories. "Organization is the most effective weapon of the proletariat. The enormous power that organization confers on a ruling minority can be overthrown only if the majority achieves an organization of an even stronger kind.

"Hitherto, the progress of the class struggle has been largely due to parliamentary and trade union action, not through direct political conflict with the state. Basically, the battles have been no more than vanguard skirmishes, while the main strength remains uncommitted on both sides. In tomorrow's battles for power, the two classes will have to use their most powerful weapons and draw upon their most effective sources of strength: *without such a confrontation, there can be no decisive change in the balance of forces*. Faced with a ruling class ready to use bloody repression, the proletariat will resort to mass action in its simplest form, public meetings and street marches, and pass on from these to the most powerful action of all, the mass strike."¹⁹

The state, then, will not hesitate to use the most extreme means; but what can it do against the general strike? In Russia, the transport strike of October 1905 was sufficient to sever all connection between the central power and the local authorities. Of course, it was only a phase of a struggle in which everything depended on the degree of cohesion among the proletariat. "However, battle must begin again, sooner or later. On the one hand, the government is trying to take back from the masses the rights it was forced to give to them and which are the sources of proletarian power; on the other hand, the masses can declare this war at an end only when they hold the keys to state power. . . . The conflict will cease only when final victory has been won, when the state organization has been completely destroyed. The majority organization will then have proved its superiority by the fact that it has annihilated the organization of the ruling minority."

But to achieve this, mass action must first transform the proletariat. In periods of crisis and of intensive warfare, a greater measure of awareness is developed in a few days than was previously developed by a whole year of

19. Lenin, reading with pen in hand, registered approval, most frequently in his *marginalia*. Here, however, he wrote: "wrong. . . but XII-1905." *Leninski sbornik*, XIV (Moscow, 1924), p. 371. Cf. Brujnin, *loc. cit.*, p. 670.

political and trade union action. "The supreme demands which these battles involve, automatically engender, through practical action and the experience of victories and defeats, the means to acquire this political clearheadedness."

And the same holds true for organization. "No doubt, one often hears the contrary asserted, born of the fear that the proletarian organization, the most important of its sources of strength, may well be annihilated in the course of such dangerous conflicts. This is urged most frequently by those who are against all recourse to the general strike, and who today exercise considerable influence in the leadership of the large proletarian organizations. They fear that, in the event of violent clashes between the proletariat's organizations and those of the state, the former may prove to be the weaker, even if the more numerous. For the state still has the power to dissolve the workers' organizations that have the audacity to stand up against it, the power to end their activities, to confiscate their funds, to imprison their leaders. Hence it would be more prudent to be guided only by legal or moral considerations. Such strong measures, however, would be useless to the state, which could use them to demolish only the exterior form, leaving the internal nature unaffected. The proletariat's organization—its most important source of strength—must not be confused with the present-day form of its organizations and associations, where it is shaped by conditions within the framework of a still vigorous bourgeois order. *The nature of this organization is something spiritual—no less than the whole transformation of the proletarian mentality.* It may well be that the ruling class, through legal measures and the police, succeeds in destroying the workers' organizations; but, for all that, the workers will remain as they were—just as effectively stripped of the old individualistic self which responded only to egotism and personal interest. The same spirit, compounded of discipline, cooperation, solidarity, the habit of organized action, will live in them more vividly than ever, and will create new forms of intervention."

Ideas of this kind easily disconcerted narrowly positivist people, such as Kautsky, who make a fetish of the existing organization. Lenin himself, who was not yet formally opposed to these ideas, would several times describe them as "not very adroit,"²⁰ another way of saying that he did not fully understand them. In fact, a fundamental theoretical intuition, linked with the development of a historical form, is sketched in these pages. However, this intuition contains no specific reference to the new form of organization, the Soviets, which had come into existence in a manner both spontaneous and ephemeral during the Russian Revolution of 1905. This omission arises, of

20. For example, in a letter to Chliapnikov of Oct. 27, 1914; Lenin, *Works*, XXXV, p. 164.

course, from Pannekoek's lack of information about the Soviets, but such ignorance was then widespread, both in Russia and elsewhere. If an absolutely new "definite and specific" phenomenon is to be more or less clearly understood in its general significance, must there not first be "recurrence"—a repetition of significant events?²¹ And did not Pannekoek love to stress that it is only very slowly that a new reality can take hold of men's minds?²²

"From the beginning of his article," Pannekoek writes, "Kautsky makes it clear that, by mass action, he naturally does not mean that the action of organized workers will of itself become more and more massive with the growth of the organizations. For him, the term signifies the eruption of the great unorganized masses, assembled in a purely accidental way and therefore entirely liable to disperse again: in other words spontaneous action at street level. . . . Consequently, to say that political and economic action will be increasingly transformed into mass action is not at all the same as saying that any type of mass action—i.e., the type described as action at the street level—is also destined to play a bigger and bigger role. According to Kautsky, there are two extremely different forms of action. On the one hand, there is the present form of workers' conflicts, in which a small group of the labor aristocracy, the organized workers that form about a tenth of the proletariat, lead political and trade union actions. On the other hand, there is the action of the great unorganized masses at the street level who seize upon any chance to erupt into history. In Kautsky's view, it is a matter of deciding whether the first of these will in the future be the only form of the proletarian movement, or whether the second is also destined to play an important role.

"When, in discussions over recent years within the party, stress was laid on the necessity, the inevitability or the utility of mass action, the reference was not in any way" to either of the possibilities suggested by Kautsky, "but to a third possibility: *a new form of specific intervention by the organized workers.* The development of modern capitalism has imposed these new forms of action. Threatened by worse dangers from imperialism, fighting to obtain greater power and more rights within the state, they find it necessary to assert their will vigorously against capitalism, and to do so with an energy they have never shown in expressing their wishes to their parliamentary representatives. They must intervene personally; they must erupt into the political struggle and try to influence the government and the bourgeoisie by their sheer weight of numbers. When we speak of mass actions and their necessity, we mean by

21. J. Witt-Hansen, *Historical Materialism*, 1 (Copenhagen, 1960), pp. 68-70.

22. "le Matérialisme historique," *loc. cit.*

this an extra-parliamentary political intervention by organized workers, the latter acting directly at the political level instead of leaving this completely to their delegates.²³ This intervention is not synonymous with "street" actions; while street demonstrations do represent one of its aspects, the consequence of its most powerful form, the mass strike, is to empty the streets. Trade union battles, through which the masses have always directly intervened, are a transition to political mass actions, since they have considerable political repercussions. As for the practical question of mass action, therefore, it is simply a matter of extending the intervention area of proletarian organization."

The demonstrations of spring 1910 proved that the workers were not cowed by the violence used by the ruling class. The latter will no doubt hesitate to call in the army, "made up as it is of sons of the people and, to an ever increasing extent, of young proletarians who have already absorbed a certain class consciousness in the atmosphere of their own home." No doubt, military discipline, unthinking obedience, will continue to be respected for a certain time, "but nothing more surely destroys it than the obeying of a series of orders to fire on the people, on their own class brethren, merely assembled peacefully or on a peaceful march. . . . Like a shining sword, the army commands respect and can inflict terrible blows,²⁴ but when it is used unworthily, it soon becomes tarnished and its honor is discredited. And when the bourgeoisie loses its most effective instrument of power, it finds itself defenseless.

"The social revolution involves the gradual dissolution of all the power instruments of the ruling class, particularly the state, while simultaneously building up proletarian power to its fullness. At the beginning of this phase, the proletariat should already have reached a high level of class consciousness and enlightenment, of moral strength and of compact organization, in order to be able to face up to the severe conflicts ahead; but all this remains still imperfect. In the eyes of the masses, who see them as inimical to their own interests, the prestige of the state and the ruling class is beginning to diminish, but their material power nevertheless remains intact. At the end of the revolutionary process, nothing remains of this; the workers have attained

23. Lenin clearly understood the meaning of this formula, whether adroit or not, since he wrote in the margin: "Neverno" ("Not true!") *Leninski sbornik*, loc. cit., p. 372.

24. The German Left was not backward in pointing to the connection between bloodshed and bourgeois repression. Thus, at the Jena Congress in 1905, Rosa Luxemburg said: "History shows that all the revolutions were at the cost of the workers' blood. The difference is that, up to the present, the people's blood has been shed for the benefit of the dominant classes, whereas now, when anyone suggests the possibility of the people shedding their blood for their own cause we get a cry of protest from the prudent ones, from the so-called Social Democrats: 'No, this blood is too dear to us!'" *Protokoll* . . . , p. 321.

a high level of organization, they have proved capable of shaping their own destiny, and henceforth they are capable of taking in hand the organization of production."

Pannekoek devotes the second part of a series of three articles to a critique of the "present praxis" of the workers' movement. "Elections, strikes, parliamentary action, indoctrination," he writes, "all continue in the same old way, gradually gaining political weight but making no essential change whatsoever—until the day when, thanks to an extraordinary combination of circumstances, a powerful rising of the masses will occur and will perhaps overthrow the regime. This will follow exactly the old pattern of the bourgeois revolutions, but with the difference that the party organization is fully ready to assume power and to hog the fruits of victory, by appropriating, as the new ruling class, the chestnuts which the masses have snatched out of the fire." Kautsky upheld a theses of passive expectation according to which, the general strike will overthrow the capitalist regime with one single blow and with the strength of an act of nature. Until this happens, it is sufficient to continue parliamentary and trades union practice as before, and it is wrong to criticize the leaders of the party as is often done. "Contrary to our thesis of the revolutionary activity of the proletariat, who build up their power through an ascendant period of mass action and increasingly demolish the bourgeois state power, this theory of *passive radicalism* looks for no decisive change through the active intervention of the proletariat."

Finally, as he would do often,²⁵ Pannekoek, in the third of these articles, links up mass action with the fight against war, "not against enemy invasion, but against war itself, and in order to forestall it." There is no question here, as is done at the international Congresses, of studying the means to prevent war by this or that particular kind of action—a strike in the arsenals, for example—but rather one of directing this protest against the established authorities and extending it, through every form of demonstration, to the whole of the exploited class. In short, the ruling powers must be opposed by a proletarian power built up by proletarian action.

Kautsky's reply was soon forthcoming,²⁶ and it was this which especially interested Lenin, who in *The State and Revolution*, saw Kautsky's attitude as "an abandoning of Marxism for opportunism" and discussed it as such at some length. We refer the reader to Lenin's book for this aspect of the matter.

25. For example, at the Chemnitz Congress (1912), he would stress the fact that mass action is the only practical measure against imperialism; and "the workers can look to themselves alone" to implement this measure (*Protokoll* . . . , pp. 421-23); cf. also, in the same connection, many articles in the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*.

26. K. Kautsky, "Die neue Taktik," *Neue Zeit*, XXX, 2, 1911-1912, pp. 654-664, 688-698, 723-733.

As for the rest—that is, the final form of the organization-process such as it had been presented by Pannekoek—Kautsky accused him of “simplifying Marxism” (and of manipulating quotations!) and of “spiritualizing organization.” Taking up the passage which dealt with the nature (*das Wesen*) of the new organization, he wrote: “Pannekoek himself underlines this phrase, so extraordinary does he find the statement that the organization is not really an organization but something absolutely different, *the mentality of the proletariat*. After this master-stroke of social alchemy, he has no difficulty in showing that the class conflicts, while involving the annihilation of the organization, awaken the working masses and perfect their character, so that the destruction of the organization miraculously becomes the means” of strengthening it. Thus Kautsky reproached Pannekoek for not seeing that “the form of present day organizations and associations” is capable of a better adaptation, as an effect of the class struggle, to new conditions. It is true that the organization transforms the mentality of the proletariat, but Kautsky stressed, a theoretician ought to take into account that this transformation is the result, and not the nature itself, of the organization because otherwise the organization would not have the least consistency and would rest on nothing.

Kautsky categorically rejected the idea of the destruction of the state. If, he said, the general strike is a means of bringing effective pressure on the government, it in no way makes possible the annihilation of state power. Besides, the basic problem is not to discover what form is to be given to a future state, but to establish how the socialist opposition policy is to transform the present state. From this perspective, parliamentary power is daily diminishing, its mechanisms being fouled up by the conflicts of the bourgeois majority; but nonetheless “the majority may change and the machine be re-started.” But in the meantime, since the executive is attempting to curtail the powers of the legislative, it is the latter we must try to consolidate. “The purpose of our parliamentary action remains therefore what it has always been: to win political power by securing a parliamentary majority and creating a government.” That is why mass strikes and disturbances, if they occur sporadically, cannot be regarded as permanent and normal methods of class warfare. Marx once described a type of limited, unilateral action as “parliamentary cretinism;” today, Kautsky concludes that what we have is “mass action cretinism.”

Pannekoek discussed this answer in the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*²⁷ and in the *Leipziger Volkzeitung*,²⁸ both large socialist dailies regularly

27. September 10, 11, and 12, 1912.

28. September 9, 10, and 12, 1912.

left-socialist in their views. He also published, in the *Neue Zeit*,²⁹ an answer from which we here extract only two points, one about method, the other about organization.

First, to the accusation of having “simplified Marxism,” Pannekoek points out (recalling an elementary and much too frequently ignored truth): “when in science we wish to probe an aspect of reality, we must first highlight the essential, the basic, in its simplest form; only then do we introduce the particular aspects and secondary factors in order to correct the first sketch, to complete it, to improve and elaborate on it, and in this way draw closer to reality. . . . In a first approximation aimed at forming a general idea, there can be no question of only two classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; that is why we have attempted to sketch, in its broad lines, the revolutionary process as a development of relationships of forces. Everyone knows, of course, that this reality is much more complicated and that a host of problems remain to be solved before the picture can be completed. The bourgeoisie are not more homogeneous than the proletariat, and in both classes traditions continue to carry weight; among the working masses, one must count the *Lumpenproletariat*, the salaried employees, the petty bourgeoisie and others, whose specific class situation requires the mode of action.” Nevertheless, it is clear that the general tactics cannot be based on these particular aspects and therefore be focused solely on the clashes within the bourgeoisie—i.e., on parliamentarianism.

To Kautsky's complaint that he sees only the spirit of organization and regards its body as of no significance, Pannekoek replied: “In fact, the spirit of organization is one other than the soul giving vital energy to the body and making it capable of action. But this immortal soul cannot hover bodiless in the heavens, in the manner of Christian theology; it ceaselessly creates for itself a body, the organization, because the men into whom it enters unite with a view to common and organized action. Far from being an abstract, imaginary thing, in comparison with the ‘real, concrete organization,’ of the existing forms of association, it is just as real and concrete. . . . No statutory arrangements fixing the rights and duties of the militants, no magic power of well stocked coffers, no democratic constitution, can give unity to a proletarian organization; this can result only from the class spirit, from a complete change of the mentality and the human nature of the proletariat. This metamorphosis is primarily a consequence of the condition of the worker, already educated to common action by the collective exploitation he

29. Anton Pannekoek, “Marxistische Theorie und revolutionäre Taktik,” *Neue Zeit*, XXXI, 1, 1912, pp. 272-281, 365-373.

undergoes as one of a group in the same factory, and then a consequence of his class struggle. For these reasons, the practical life of the organization—the election of officials, the payment of union dues—is reduced to a completely secondary role. . . .³⁰ The purpose of the organization is to engender, through action, men of a new type. The hitherto scattered forces are brought together; these men will now be able to create for themselves an order born of their own action. It will no longer be a question of associating together on the basis of the common and immediate interests of disparate sectors of the workers."

An explanatory parenthesis is needed here. The following year, a wildcat strike was to give Pannekoek a fresh opportunity to illustrate his theoretical views. From July 1913, in the big North Sea ports, the dockers of the naval dockyards were laying down their tools, while the trade union leadership was refusing to recognize their strike. The strikers therefore elected autonomous committees. We might note that the group of Bremen radicals, led by Henke, gave assistance to the trade union leaders in their conciliation efforts which, for more than six weeks, got nowhere; the leftists, needless to say, basically supported the striking dockers.³¹

Shortly after the complete resumption of work, Pannekoek wrote in the *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*:³² "The wildcat strike with its violation of that discipline which has hitherto been the ideal of a developed trade union shows how impossible it is to maintain perfect trade union discipline against the intense oppression exerted by capital. . . . Success of mass movements depends on their capacity for autonomous action, their unquenchable ardor for battle, and the boldness and initiative of the masses. But it is precisely these qualities, the primary condition of the struggle for freedom, that are repressed and annihilated by trade union discipline. In discussions about future political mass struggles, the accent has always been on the autonomous initiative of the masses, without which nothing can be undertaken. Is it not then, a good thing if this initiative leads the masses to take different paths?"

30. For analogous ideas, see Rosa Luxemburg, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, June 27, 1913. Cf. Also Kautsky, "Nachgedenke zu den nachgedenklichen Betrachtungen," *Neue Zeit*, XXI, 2, 1913.

31. Cf. Josef Miller, "Zur Geschichte der linken s.d. in Bremen, 1906-1918," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1958 (Sonderheft), pp. 202-217; August Winning, "Zum Streik auf dem Schiffswerften," *Neue Zeit*, XXXII, 1, 1913, pp. 55-59.

32. Anton Pannekoek, "Gewerkschaftsdisziplin," *B.B.Z.*, 297, Oct. 18, 1913: from the onset of the movement, he spoke against "the strict and slavish respect" for the least article "of the trade union rules," and urged "unshakable cohesion and solidarity." "Der Wertarbeiterstreik," *B.B.Z.* 287, Aug. 9, 1913. In 1910, during a similar strike in the naval dockyards, Pannekoek noted that "the requirements of the mass conflict led the rank-and-file to impose their will on the leaders." "Gewerkschaftliche Demokratie," *B.B.Z.*, Dec. 17, 1910.

Was it necessary to condemn the initiative of the naval dockers simply because they did not conform to the prescribed forms? We need not fall out over this particular instance; but, generally speaking, when we see absolute respect for trade union discipline being exalted as a supreme end in itself, we must proclaim with the utmost urgency that this is a sure way to choke an essential source of the future proletarian victory."

Let us now return to the 1912 controversy. The two opponents shared at least one peice of common ground of accusation: each censured the other for clinging to a past phase of history. Pannekoek, for his part, maintained that, by avoiding trials of strength and by glorifying discipline and the role of the leaders,³³ one could not fail to discourage the masses and to precipitate the decline of the party. This attitude, he said, belonged to an epoch when, because of the weakness of the workers' organizations, they had "to be protected against the terrorism of the ruling power. In this sense, our divergences are the expression of different degrees of development within the organization."

Kautsky retorted³⁴ that this was to return to the idea of "revolutionary gymnastics," once dear to the French trade unionists but "rejected now that they have become strong." As for the idea of destroying the state, this is nothing less than anarchy. Moreover, "history shows that state power is not simply a means of maintaining the economic domination of any one class, but equally a means of breaking the economic power of and thereby dispossessing a certain class." This emerged clearly during the French Revolution, in the course of which "the state machinery was changed from an instrument of the old class into an instrument of the new." And the *Communist Manifesto* recommends nothing else. In the meantime, how could a political organization subsist which refused to interest itself in electoral activities? "I strongly suspect," concludes Kautsky, "that Pannekoek is actively gathering material for a book whose title could be: 'Mass action by the individual.'"

33. "Marxistische Theorie und revolutionäre Taktik," *op. cit.*, pp. 373f. On this point, Pannekoek had often expressed his ideas; for instance: "As long as a small group decided on matters of vital interest to the masses, there will always be the chance that the masses will suddenly refuse to respond to the group's orders, despite all considerations of prestige and trust. This would be so, especially, if, in such instances, the prudence of the leaders must expect always to prevail, thus giving their ideas precedence over that of the progress of the masses. . . . The old type of party leadership and of trade union leadership, at both local and national level, has given and is still giving good service. However, for some years now, the development of political mass conflicts is imposing new tasks on the party. . . . The idea is increasingly gaining ground, of the need for a close connection between the representative body and the profound changes occurring in the forms of conflict." Anton Pannekoek, "Das Vertretungssystem in der Arbeiterbewegung," *B.B.Z.*, 168, April 4, 1911.

34. K. Kautsky, "Der Jungste Radikalismus," *Neue Zeit*, XXXI, 1, 1912, pp. 636-46.

This is the classic approach of reducing political differences to a mere matter of personalities whose views are no one's but their own.

Be that as it may, Pannekoek, given the last work in this phase of the controversy,³⁵ quietly disposed of the *Communist Manifesto* quotations which Kautsky was invoking with such ardor. In 1847, he recalled one could envision "the proletarian revolution only in the form of a minority dictatorship using the coercive power of the state for the benefit of the working class. Today, a revolution is possible only in the form of revolt and self-government of the masses." The accusation of revolutionary syndicalism, "a term which Kautsky uses because it is repugnant to the comrades," brought this reply from Pannekoek: "Well, so much for revolutionary syndicalism!"

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Pannekoek returned to the subject of this controversy. He then noted that the "whole method" of criticism used by the socialist press ("*Vorwärts* and other newspapers") was "at bottom an attack on the politics of modern grand capitalism from the petty bourgeois standpoint of 'small business' and shows that all understanding of modern political development was lacking. Connected to this was the theory expressed in the scientific organ of the party, the *Neue Zeit*, that the doctrine of Marx, that fiery revolutionary champion, meant a *passive waiting* and that all revolutionary *activity* was nothing but unscientific anarchism." Rejecting out of hand "all autonomous initiative of the masses, every strike declared without the consent of the leadership," the Social Democrats revealed their position: "While the old radicals continually repeated the dictum, 'Governments do not dare to begin war for fear of the proletariat, for war means social revolution,' the revolutionary Left emphasized the fact that the proletariat cannot prevent war by standing passively by, but only by energetic, active intervention." In these circumstances, it was highly improbable "that the masses, accustomed to do only what the party ordered, would now come forward independent of the leaders of the party. . . . The question of how the war could be resisted was never even raised, because the question of whether the war ought to be resisted was not even answered with a decisive *Yes*." Worse still, "in *Vorwärts* and many other party papers the war was termed a 'war against the bloody-czar,' a war against Russian barbarism. They cited Karl Marx, who in 1848 had urged Germany to a war against Russia; they overlooked the fact that it applied only so long as Russia dominated and threatened Europe as its most powerful military state. Thus the war was made popular among the working masses."

In complete contrast to this was the anti-war strategy advocated by the two

35. Anton Pannekoek, "Zum Schloss," *Neue Zeit*, XXXI, 1, 1912, pp. 611-12.

radical newspapers of Leipzig and Bremen—the organs of those with "a clear insight into the fact that today, Russia, as well as Germany, is a capitalist country pursuing a policy of commercial imperialism." They urged that "as soon as danger of war appears and nationalistic demonstrations in favor of war begin, the workers should fill the streets in masses and chase away the nationalists. If the danger becomes more threatening, the demonstrations must become more energetic; under a general strike the masses must be sent into the streets instead of going to the factory, and for these few days they can live wholly for the great political struggle. If the government tries to forbid the demonstrations and to prevent them by force, then they must be kept up all the more. Even if thousands perish, what is that compared with the hundreds of thousands who fall in war? And in war they fall for capital, in the street they fall for the proletarian cause." Pannekoek points out that "the fact that this tactic came to an end after the brilliant conflicts of 1910 means an acknowledgement by the party of its own weakness. Since then, a lukewarm spirit, averse to sharp conflict, gained the upper hand in the movement. The bureaucracy at the top became even stronger and was disinclined to risk itself in revolutionary struggles." He admits that, during this period, "there was an external growth of the organization, which is the necessary prerequisite for a fight," but asserts equally that "they shunned that fight more and more in order not to endanger this precious organization. Every independent initiative of the masses which occasionally broke out in the struggles of the labor unions against the wishes of the leaders, was branded as a 'lack of discipline' and as 'anarchism.'" The main concern, then of the Social Democratic "bureaucracy at the top" was to shield "the precious organization" at all costs.³⁶

It would never have crossed the minds of the Social Democratic notables that the party's attitude was one of the principal reasons why the working masses accepted the war. On the contrary, they maintained that the party itself was simply responding to popular pressures. In reply, Pannekoek deliberately rejected the old excuse about conditions always being unfavorable for action, an excuse which has always been the hallmark of the forces of conservatism. He sought instead to stimulate the development of new forms of conflict and of organization, hitherto embryonic and ephemerally, by means of propaganda, the only weapon of the leftist theoreticians. Analysis and practical conclusions will no doubt seem inadequate to some people, but Pannekoek was not the man to raise, in the name of alleged clarity, questions calling for no answer other than evasion, resignation and complicity.

36. Anton Pannekoek, "The Great European War and Socialism," *International Socialist Review*, XV, Oct. 4, 1914, pp. 201-202.

As for Kautsky, he too was to allude again to this controversy. "How I would love Pannekoek to have been right!" he exclaimed, in referring to the idea that "the socialist worker never said *yes* to the war."³⁷ And yet, who was it then who had sagely declared: "The inevitable attempts of the proletariat to prevent the war,' of which Pannekoek tells us, are notably conspicuous up to the present by their inevitable absence?"³⁸ Was not that the very reproach leveled against the party?—the refusal of all practical initiative, in the name of certainties never seriously put to the test; the crass passivity of a powerful, tentacular organization with enormous resources but acting only as a supplementary mechanism of integration?

37. K. Kautsky, *Sozialisten und Krieg*, (Berlin, 1927), p. 346. Cf. *International Review of Social History*, XI, 2, 1960, pp. 197-227; and Pannekoek, "Deckungsfrage und Imperialismus," *Neue Zeit*, XXXII, 1, 1913, p. 114.

38. K. Kautsky, "Die Neue Taktik," *op. cit.*, p. 663.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORLD WAR AND THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

After the controversy with Kautsky, Pannekoek, like most other left-wing Social Democratic theorists, constantly returned to the central issues: the wave of imperialism and of nationalism, the fight against reformism, and the danger of war.

In 1933, in connection with the armaments race, a wave of unprecedented chauvinism swept Europe, with almost the entire workers' movement caught up in it. Displays of patriotic and militaristic delirium in Germany during celebrations marking the centenary of the great resistance against the French invader encouraged Franz Mehring, a prominent radical, to publish two brochures praising "the fight against pitiless exploitation and oppression."

According to Mehring, the working class had "every reason" to glorify "a war comparable to its own," and that, besides, "the ossification of Marxism into ready-made formulas could through its dogmatism, only strengthen revisionism."¹

Pannekoek, for his part, had already pointed out the connection between growth of nationalist ideology and the rise of imperialism. "The fight against militarism,"² if it is to be effectively conducted, demands a concomitant spiritual fight; for only thus can we properly discover the significance of these traditional (patriotic) ideas. . . . The idea of the *patria* has radically changed. Originally, it signified the bond between the peasant or the petty bourgeois and the place where he lived: anyone threatening his prosperity was the enemy. In contrast, the *patria* of the bourgeoisie covers the full extent of the national territory and becomes emotionally identified with the material interests of that class—interests that the bourgeoisie successfully present as those of the nation as a whole. . . . On the other hand, the workers' *patria* is their class, and this *patria* extends far beyond national frontiers; it includes the proletarians of every country in an international network and unites them

1. Cf. Josef Schleifstein, *Franz Mehring* (East Berlin, 1959), p. 191.

2. Anton Pannekoek, "Patriotismus und Sozialdemokratie," *B.B.Z.* April 5, 1918, which argues against the English socialist Hyndman, who maintained that Germany was as reactionary as Russia had been in Marx's time. Cf. also "Patriotismus vor 100 Jahren und jetzt," *B.B.Z.*, April 4, 1913 (directed against the patriotic celebrations); and the pamphlet, *Klassenkampf und Nation*, Reichenberg, 1912 (aimed in particular against the Austro-Marxists).

in a common battle against the capitalist system as a whole. . . . The present military projects call for more than a campaign against heavy taxes; in addition, they offer an opportunity to fight against disastrous traditional ideas."

The outbreak of the war caused Pannekoek to repeat these arguments. Like the entire international left-wing,³ he saw that imperialism was rooted in the competition among the great powers for raw materials and new markets. Armaments production was linked to this economic competition and exacerbated the national antagonisms in Europe. "The fact that war has broken out proves the extent to which the now soldier-workers (both Social Democrats and revolutionary syndicalists) and their spokesmen in every country have come under the influence of bourgeois patriotism and have joined with the bourgeoisie in sentiments about love of the *patria* and the duty to defend it, while at the same time they are trampling under foot the international solidarity of the proletariat. . . . The outbreak of war is proof of the power of imperialism, proof of the organizational and, especially, the spiritual weakness of the workers' movement. . . . Only a tireless socialist propaganda, urging heartfelt and enlightened commitment to conflict and unity, can in the future create the conditions needed to prevent another war."⁴

The small party of Dutch Tribunists, in an attempt to reorganize, associated with various other radical and leftist activities. It participated in the Zimmerwald Conference of 1915, which laid the foundations of a sect later known as the "Left-Zimmerwaldians," dedicated to the creation of a third International, and it authorized several publications, among them *Vorbote*, edited by Henriette Roland-Holst and Pannekoek.

Pannekoek, in his "Introduction" to the first edition of *Vorbote*, wrote:

3. But not without marked divergences of opinion at the level of basic analysis.

4. Anton Pannekoek, *De Oorlog zijn oorsprong en zijn bestrijding* (Amsterdam, n.d.), compiled from articles published in *De Tribune* at the beginning of the war. Shortly afterward, Pannekoek wrote a pamphlet specifically on the problem of imperialism—*Uit de voorgeschiedenis van de wereldoorlog* (Zuitphen, 1916). He was also again to deal with the subject of nationalism in later writings. For example, in his *Workers' Councils*, composed during World War II, he has this to say: "For the time being nationalism exists as a strong power obstructing the way. For the workers it is necessary not only to destroy all nationalist tradition in themselves, but also in order to avoid illusions, to understand its strength in the hostile class. Nationalism does not belong to the ideologies that as traditions of the past times are gradually extinguished under modern conditions. It is a living ideology, drawing its forces ever anew from a fertile economic soil, standing in the center of fight, the flag of the foe." Anton Pannekoek, *Workers' Councils*, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

5. "Zur Einführung," *Vorbote*, Jan 1, 1918, pp. 1-4. The English version of this text was published under the title "The Third International" in *International Socialist Review*, Feb. 1917, pp. 460-462.

"The collapse of the International caused by the world war is not simply a surrender of international sentiment before the power of intensified nationalism. . . . The present catastrophe indicates more than the proletariat's inability to prevent the outbreak of war: it means that the methods of the era of the Second International failed to increase the intellectual and material power of the proletariat to the point where it could break the power of the ruling classes. Therefore, the world war must be a turning point in the history of the working class movement. . . ." As a result of oppression and suffering caused by the war, "the masses are inspired; they must raise themselves if they are not to be completely submerged." In other words, they must strive for a new spiritual orientation. The proletariat, acting under unprecedented conditions, cannot rely on old ideas and old norms; hence the absolute need for an organizational break⁶ with "those who would make social-democracy a tool of imperialism." And to elaborate the new solutions, the revolutionaries have Marxism: not the "Marxism regarded by the socialist theoreticians as a method to explain the past and the present and degraded progressively into a dry doctrine of mechanical fatalism,"⁷ but a Marxism "which has regained its birthright as a theory of revolution."

In another article,⁸ Pannekoek again stressed that "the proletarian masses should themselves intervene, using methods of active warfare." And he recalled how "the bureaucracy of officers and of leaders, naturally identifying their specific group interests with those of the proletariat, strenuously opposed 'the anarcho-trade-unionist actions.'" Then, speaking of mass actions and of the primordial need to combat state power, he returned to the theme that "the new character of modern capitalism demands a *new socialism*, a new workers' movement."⁹

In short—and Pannekoek stresses this—"the increasing cohesion which the conflict gives to proletarian solidarity and organization makes it possible to shatter, by means of mass actions, the elements of force and the state organization. At the same time, political power comes into the hands of the proletariat, since it is able to create the organs necessary for economic reconstruction. To make the proletariat ripe for socialism through harsh conflict, and thus make it capable of abolishing bourgeois domination—that is the historic meaning of imperialism."

6. A small minority of the "Zimmerwaldians" (among them the Bolsheviks) held this idea.

7. A similar judgment, supported by ample theoretical and historical justification, can be found in the already cited works of Korsch and Brandis. Cf. also Erich Matthias, "Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus," *Marxismusstudien*, 11 (1957), pp. 151-97.

8. Anton Pannekoek, "Der Imperialismus und die Aufgaben des Proletariats," *Vorbote*, pp. 7-19. The article was first published in Russian in *Kommunist* (1-2, 1915).

9. "Zur Einführung," *op. cit.*, pp. 13ff.

By comparing such views with those of Lenin (in the article in *Verbote* that follows Pannekoek's introduction) on the "overthrow" and "betrayal" of Social Democracy,¹⁰ one can get some idea of where their views converge—in their diagnosis of the problem—and where they diverge—on the prognosis for the communist movement. Lenin aims for the restoration, pure and simple, of the old orthodox Marxist tactics which, according to him have been betrayed by "the opportunism" of the labor aristocracy. Pannekoek, for his part, appeals to an essentially different tactic, in which traditional forms of organization no longer figure prominently, and in which the idea of the administration of the future society is beginning to undergo a profound change.

That is why Pannekoek regards the question of new tactics and of the formation of a new international "of supreme importance." However, one thing is certain: the structure of the traditional workers' parties "of which Social Democracy is the model. It takes the form of a gigantic and powerful organization, almost a state within a state, with its own officials, finances, press, spiritual universe, and specific ideology (Marxism). By its general character, it is adapted to the pre-imperialist peaceful phase. The thousands of officials, secretaries, agitators, parliamentarians, theoreticians and publicists¹¹—who already form a distinct caste, a group with very distinct interests—rule the organization on both the material and spiritual levels; and express its general character. As such, and with Kautsky leading them, it is no accident that they will not hear of a genuine, bitter struggle against imperialism. Their vital interests compel them to oppose new tactics that would endanger their existence as officials. Their tranquil work, in conferences and committees, in offices and editorial rooms, is threatened by the storms of the imperialist era.

"Kautsky's theory and tactics represent an attempt to shield the whole bureaucratic apparatus from the risks of social revolution. In fact, he simply seeks to survive by keeping clear of the hurly-burly, untouched by the revolutionary combat and therefore unaffected by the larger world outside. If the party and its leadership were to adopt the tactics of mass action, state power would undoubtedly strike back at the organizations—the bases of their whole existence, destroying them perhaps, confiscating their funds, imprisoning their leaders. Of course, the state would be quite wrong if it assumed that this would break the back of the proletariat: the workers'

10. Lenin, "Der Opportunismus und der Zusammenbruch der II Internationale," *ibid.*, pp. 19ff. The French text of this is in *Oeuvres*, XXII, pp. 115-128.

11. It is difficult to establish precisely the number of individuals in this famous "apparatus." The estimates vary considerably.

organizational power does not lie in the exterior form of political associations, but in the spirit of comradeship, in the discipline and unity that enable them to create new and better forms of organizations.¹² For the officials, however, this would be the end of everything; the organization is their whole world, and they cannot exist or act outside it. The instinct of self-preservation, the interests of a specific group, force them, therefore, to adopt a tactic yielding to imperialism and making concessions to it. Consequently, what happened both before and at the time of the declaration of the world war was by no means an extraordinary accident. How often had not the officials proclaimed that such dangerous mass struggles would ruin the organization and that care must be taken not to provoke them? That is why the organizations they lead did not resolve to fight imperialism to the utmost. The struggle remained one of words, of accusations, of exhortations—a *fictitious battle* avoiding anything remotely resembling a real one. The most cogent proof of this has been given by Kautsky himself who, while having long hesitated about coming out against social-imperialism,¹³ did not hesitate to describe the workers' street demonstrations as 'reckless actions.' In other words, they fight imperialism with words, but don't dare pass on to action.¹⁴

12. Zinoviev cites this passage in his analysis (1917) of the material bases of Social Democratic policy. Zinoviev, *Der Krieg und die Krise des Sozialismus* (Vienna, 1924), p. 525. He drew on the impressive mass of material assembled by Roberto Michels in his now classic work of 1911 on the "sociology of the political parties." A little later on, Zinoviev writes: "This certainly does not mean that the workers' movement can in the future do without a large organizational apparatus, a whole category of people placed at the service of the proletarian organization. It is a question... of a new stage, in the course of which the spontaneous movement of the masses will subordinate itself to this stratum of officials, destroy the fixed routine, and cause the bureaucratic fungus to disappear and new men to rise up." *Ibid.*, pp. 526-527. This, in a sense, coincides with Michels' theory of the inevitable growth of a "bureaucratic oligarchy," because of "the need felt by the masses to be led and because of their inability to act except through an impulse coming from outside or from above," of "the masses' inability to look after their own interests, an inability which necessitates the existence of officials who act on their behalf." R. Michels, *Les Partis politiques* (Paris, 1914), pp. 36 and 62. Pannekoek, for his part, takes up a position which is not as clear and which, on his own admission, even contains an element of contradiction: on the one hand, he cites the necessity of a new political organization, at both the national and the international levels, but not for an apparatus of a new type; on the other hand, he reaches a final position pretty close to the general idea of the German Left that the development of a new spirit, born through revolutionary class struggle, will make possible the regeneration, the "redressing" of the old party. Need we recall that this undoubted ambiguity is due to the real situation in Western Europe, that is, to the existence of political, trade unionist and other organizations whose spirit deeply impregnated the masses? In Russia, conditions were leading the Bolsheviks to ignore, at the theoretical level, the existence of this contradiction.

13. An extreme tendency of avowed revisionism, which even went so far as to support the colonialist ambitions of the imperial government. Cf. A. Ascher, "Imperialists within German Social Democracy," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XX, 1961.

14. A well-known reformist simultaneously reached a similar diagnosis: "The leaders are obliged to remain radicals in words, in order to conciliate the masses; in fact, they content

"Clearly, therefore, it would be useless to expect the present party bureaucracy to proclaim a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Instead, it will limit itself to futile discussion in Parliament and in the press, to long-winded speeches about secondary matters, to concern with the technicalities of trade union action. Although the reformists are sympathetic to imperialism and the center-leftists are its enemies,¹⁵ they still share a concern with mere criticism and an absence of any desire to engage in combat. They will soon attempt to change the party into one of bourgeois reforms based on the English model, which is satisfied with a few revolutionary phrases and which energetically pursues the day-to-day demands of the workers, without, however, being involved even slightly in any major revolutionary struggle.

"It is incumbent on the revolutionary Social Democrats to show the workers the meaning of mass action and to take every opportunity to enlighten them, to help them, and to draw them into the struggle. However, if this new tactic is propagated only by minorities while the big parties have nothing to do with it, then mass action—by definition inconceivable without the participation of the masses—will surely come to be regarded as mere wishful thinking. This incongruity proves one thing: the kind of mass action that was directed by the Social Democratic Party and praised before the war by the radical German Left is now impossible. Such action is spontaneous, breaking out suddenly when misery and revolt finally compel the masses to react. It may be the involuntary consequence of an affront emanating from the party, an affront small in itself but sufficient in itself to burst the dikes; or it may take the form of opposition to the declared wishes of the leaders (violating discipline). Nonetheless, if it spreads sufficiently, it can involve the organization itself and can force it, for a time, to go along with the revolutionary forces. It is not impossible that, when the war has continued for a while, something of this kind will occur; the symptoms are already appearing.

"One can foresee, therefore, that, in the near future, the existing organizations (parties and trade unions) will play a restraining role in conformity with their nature but counter to the objectives and tasks of the proletarian masses. However, if the new tactics are increasingly used, and if the power of the proletariat gradually increases through mass conflicts, both

themselves with minor reforms which can be secured without much trouble." G. Eckstein, "Bureaucratie und Politik," *Neue Zeit*, XXXIV:1 (1916), pp. 483ff.

15. There is question here of two main currents which were then showing themselves within German Social Democracy, one leftist, the other pacifist; the split was to occur early in 1917 and was confirmed some months later with the founding of the independent Social Democrat Party (USPD).

party and trade unions will find themselves unable to play this role. From then on, their rigid leadership organs will increasingly form a subordinate sector within a larger class movement and within a larger class organization that welds the masses into a powerful fighting collectivity, not through the membership card, but through consciousness of a common purpose."

The second issue of *Vorbote* carried an article in which Pannekoek tried to forecast the effects that the end of the war would have on the workers (widespread unemployment) and on the economy in general (renewal of military equipment and, therefore, a new stage in armaments production).¹⁶

In this connection he writes: "The wartime experience gained during state control over industry and commerce has developed, in a large part of the bourgeoisie, the idea of state 'socialism.' The advantages of a centralized system of production over private ownership are well known today. The major industries could quite easily be nationalized and reconverted to war production. The bourgeoisie could find this an answer to the problems that would arise with the return of soldiers looking for jobs. . . . And this would have other advantages. In the first place, it would lower prices through the elimination of middlemen. Everyone knows what economic benefits would derive from a state organization of production. It would be the means of preserving all the technical and organizational improvements developed during the war, and of regulating unemployment. Equally, of course, the wages and salaries could be fixed, and the trade unions would find themselves powerless against a new employer with enormous powers. As for the workers, their dependence would be increased and their freedom of labor-mobility would be less than it was under the regime of private property. The nationalization of these major industries would also signify militarization. . . . a means of taking the masses in hand and of repressing their inclination toward political opposition.

"This state socialism can only aggravate the proletarian condition and strengthen oppression. In spite of this, one can foresee that a large sector of Social Democracy will not oppose it, and will even support it. Its old ideology will, in effect, link Social Democracy with the new system of state exploitation. . . . *Nationalization of enterprises is not socialism; socialism is the force of the proletariat.*¹⁷ But since, in the ideal world of present Social

16. Anton Pannekoek, "Wenn der Krieg zu Ende Geht," *Vorbote*, April 2, 1916, pp. 22-27.

17. Pannekoek already had occasion to broach this problem, as when, for instance, he wrote: "Nationalization of the big industries would mean merely the replacing of private capitalists with a much more powerful entrepreneur, against whom the workers would be much more effectively stripped of their rights. . . . socialism is the force created by workers consciously united by the struggle against the capitalist class, within powerful and self-administering organizations." Anton Pannekoek, "Sozialismus und Verstaatlichung," *B.B.Z.*, May 27, 1917. We might note in

Democracy, socialism and state-controlled economy are more or less regarded as synonymous, this party will find itself without spiritual arms when brought face to face with state socialist measures intended to reduce the proletariat to a condition of slavery.

"The task of revolutionary socialism is to lead the proletariat to declare war on this new servitude. The slogan 'fight state socialism!' should serve to explain to the proletariat its condition under the new imperialism. If the imperialist state increasingly emerges as the oppressor and exploiter of the workers, a situation will automatically occur, which, by its very nature, will cause the proletariat to see the state as the supreme enemy against which they must fight, primarily with the weapon of mass action. Thus the Kautsky tradition, which seeks above all else to preserve the state and to bend it to socialist purposes, will be shattered by the sheer logic of events. . . .

"When, both during the after the war, the workers resume the political battle, they will need a clear program of action. The fight for socialism cannot be other than the class struggle for the immediate and essential interests of the proletariat, and its character is decided by the methods and means used. No doubt, some of the old demands will still have their place in the new program of action: for example, the struggle for complete and full democracy within the state, and the struggle against militarism. Both of these, however, will take on a new strength and a new meaning when, as a result of the accelerated progress of state socialism, economic exploitation and militarist servitude are seen as clearly bracketed with political oppression."

Vorbote went out of existence with this second number. On one point at least, clear divergences of opinion were emerging. Radek's theses on imperialism and oppression unequivocally condemned the call for the right of national self-determination, while Lenin took the very opposite viewpoint, letting it be known privately that *Vorbote's* failure of the enterprise was due to the "intrigues" of Radek, who, he said, "deprived us of our editors."¹⁸ It seems clear, however, that in reality, neither Lenin nor the editors of the review had decided to subscribe unconditionally to Radek's view.

passing that one of the principal theoreticians of the Hamburg Left, Heinrich Laufenberg (1872-1932) also said something similar. "Sozialdemokratie und Verstaatlichung," *Die Neue Zeit*, XXXII, 2, 1914.

18. Lenin, *Works*, *op. cit.*, pp. 407-408.

CHAPTER FIVE

RUSSIAN SOVIETS AND GERMAN RAETE

World War I marked a decisive state in the transition from liberal capitalism to modern Western capitalism. In disarray following the war, the new economic structure nevertheless resulted in permanent changes, especially in the institutions serving the workers' immediate political and economic interests.

Prior to the war, party and trade union leaders had found it necessary to challenge economic and political power, as a result of the pressure from the large industrial centers and the authorities' impassioned concern to retain undiminished power. The war changed that; not only did it clearly reveal the deep patriotism of party and trade union leaders—i.e., their attachment to the status quo and their lack of any practical will to revolution—but it also made it imperative for the state to maintain social peace.

When German Social Democratic deputies (with one ludicrous abstention) approved the war credits on August 4, 1914, they sealed a choice that the majority of them had made much earlier, at least unconsciously. "The party had long before chosen its way, the way of reformism," wrote former editor in chief of *Vorwärts*, the central organ of German Social Democracy, in the bitter hour of defeat and exile.¹ In the midst of the agony, a Bremen Leftist could say of the vote: "This was no accidental disaster; on the contrary, it was a logical step for a movement whose evolution, since the Erfurt Congress, had been in this direction."² An observer noted at the time: "The mortal enemies of the bourgeoisie are accommodating well to being members of the state order."³

Certainly, the absorption of party and trade union leadership into

1. Friedrich Stampfer, *Die vierzehn Jahren der ersten deutschen Republik* (Karlsbad, 1936), p. 19.

2. Johann Knief, *Arbeiterpolitik*, June 24, 1916. In the eyes of leftists such as Pannekoek and Knief, to merely denounce the "treason" (as the *Spartakusbund* was doing) avoided the issue of the future form of organization and its purposes; they therefore linked the treason with the old form of organization. Knief unhesitatingly described as "social traitors" those who postponed fulfilling their solemn commitments because of the circumstances (cf. *infra*, final section of this chapter).

3. Cited by Werner Richter, *Gewerkschaften, Monopolkapital und Staat . . . 1914-1916* (East Berlin, 1959), p. 66. This represents the most important work on the subject.

officialdom, as organizers and representatives of labor, was the culmination of a process begun long before; but it was now undergoing astounding development. With the continuation of the war, this body gave increasing support to the war effort, together with the municipal and industrial authorities. When the draft was introduced in 1916, Legien, the leader of *Kraft-Zentrale*, a major trade union council, secured from the war minister concessions—the recognition of trade union rights and the setting up of industrial committees and parity organs of arbitration—in recognition of “the workers’ active cooperation.”⁴ Thus, without recourse to “mass action,” the traditional form of organization had achieved its major goals. Two years earlier in August 1914, its administrators were trembling with apprehension, convinced—not without reason—that the associations were in danger of being dissolved, their newspapers suppressed, their funds confiscated,⁵ and their militants placed under the control of the state.⁶ The new status of party and trade union leaders banished these fears.

It was quite otherwise for the workers. Many had patriotically cheered the declaration of war; now the price had to be paid. In 1913, there had been 300,000 days lost through strikes; in 1915 there were 15,000. The threat of prompt dispatch to the front was sufficient to calm rebellious spirits, but working conditions soon became intolerable. Undernourishment, fear, inflation, in contrast to the huge profits of the employers, the arrogance of both minor and major authorities, and the luxurious living of the black market profiteers—all this, was the price workers had to pay for renouncing the class struggle.

However, this trend was gradually reversed with the onset of wildcat strikes. In April 1917 and January 1918, major strikes were called by committees elected by the rank and file. Workers also took an active role in the old party, now organizationally split into the Majority Party (SPD-M) and the Independents (USPD), corresponding respectively to the old Center-Left (Kautsky) and to the radicals. The latter, claiming fidelity to traditional tactics and program, increased their protest against the war and became more and more frustrated at their lack of political power that resulted from the dictatorship of the General Headquarters, in league with the large industrialists.

To the left of the two major political organizations of the workers’ were various splinter groups persistently swimming against the stream. Their

4. Robert Armeson, *Total Warfare and Compulsory Labor* (The Hague, 1964), pp. 73ff.

5. Cf. Fritz Opel, *Der deutsche Metallarbeiterverband* . . . (Hanover, 1957), pp. 38-40.

6. Cf. Johannes Kampfner (J. Marchlewski), *Kriegssozialismus in Theorie und Praxis* (Berne, 1915).

“literature” appealed to confirmed militants,⁷ and their contacts scarcely reached beyond personal relationships in a country that continued to submit to the constraints of war. One of these splinter groups, the *Spartakusbund*, while maintaining contact with the masses through the Independents, published internationalist pacifist pamphlets denouncing the Majority Party and its open alliance with the bourgeoisie. These attacks, under the direction of Leo Jogisches (Tysko)—a friend of Rosa Luxemburg—were expressed in the language of the old left and broke little new theoretical ground.

A second splinter group, the *Internationalen Kommunisten Deutschlands* (IKD), made up of communists from Bremen and various other local groups, moved in a different direction. From December 1916, the Bremen group severed all ties to the two major factions of Social Democracy (which were both seeking to gain control of the local organization), vigorously denouncing them. Its official organ, *Arbeiterpolitik*, was devoted to “scientific discussion” of theoretical problems. It sometimes opened its columns to “outside” contributors, notably Radek, Zinoviev and Pannekoek. Renewed worker interest encouraged the Bremen section and it opened once again debate on the structure of workers’ organizations.

The Bremen section advocated not only a decentralized party separate from Social Democracy but also a “unitary organization” (*Einheitsorganisation*) linking the workers on both a political and a trade union basis. Thus, they argued against a “new party of leaders” on the old model.⁸ “One must choose the tactics of mass action unfettered by leaders, or one must keep the leadership structure, as the Spartacus League is doing, and thereby renounce a proletarian policy.”⁹ Even so, *Arbeiterpolitik* (or at least some of its editors) was not yet rejecting “revolutionary parliamentarianism.” *Arbeiterpolitik* welcomed news of the October Revolution, emphasizing that the victory had occurred because “in Russia, there was an independent, left-wing party, which fought for social revolution.”¹⁰

In Holland, too, the Dutch Social Democratic Party—the “tribunist”—was

7. Cf. Gilbert Badia, *le Spartakisme* (Paris, 1967), pp. 280ff.

8. This idea made its appearance in *Arbeiterpolitik* in March 1917 (11, 16, March 21, 1917); it was taken up again there, and simultaneously in the publications of the other IKD “local groups” and of the Hamburg group; in November 1918, it also appeared in *Rote Fahne*, the organ of the Berlin *Spartakusbund* 1, 15, November 21, 1918; reproduced in *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arb. bwg.*, 11, 2, p. 431).

9. *Arbeiterpolitik*, 11, 12, June 9, 1917.

10. J. Knief, December 15, 1917. It seems, however, that the Bremen group had no precise idea of the Bolshevik conceptions of the party, as can be seen through Radek’s “memoirs” (“I pointed out to him [Knief] that his ideas had nothing in common with Bolshevism;” cited by Badia, *op. cit.*, pp. 404-405). We shall see later that this lack of awareness was also shared by Pannekoek (and by all the rest of Western European Leftists, with few exceptions).

sharply divided into a parliamentarian faction characterized by militant francophilia (and which won two seats in the 1917 legislature) and a faction centered around Gorter, which advocated a strict internationalism. Pannekoek, however, appears to have refrained from aligning himself with either group.¹¹ On the other hand, it was he who wrote a series in *Nieuwe Tijd* tracing the significance of the Russian Revolution.¹² The author's solidarity with the Bolsheviks is clear from the first lines; and the main characteristics of the February Revolution are emphasized.

"What has never occurred in earlier revolutions in Western Europe—where fragmentation and powerlessness always followed political action—has become an enduring reality in Russia: the revolutionary masses are forming a powerful organization. As in 1905, the delegates of factories and revolutionary regiments are building in the form of *workers' and soldiers' councils*, a people's representation which speaks out vigorously against bourgeois government and exploiters."

Various political viewpoints are found in the councils; but the Bolshevik Party, "which under the Czar already had great influence over the proletariat, is becoming increasingly the representative of the Petrograd workers, albeit they are a small minority in proportion to all the country's workers. The soldiers' councils, mainly peasants, are dominated by Mensheviks and revolutionary socialists."¹³

"Russia, with its huge peasant population and its limited capitalist development, is not yet ripe for socialism; power must remain in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This is at least what some dogmatic quasi-Marxists maintain, unaware that socialism can only result from a long process in which the maturity of a society is measured by the proletariat's ability to struggle for power. But even in Russia they were intimidated by the enormity of the task, which was augmented by the confusion resulting from the war and Czarist legacy of administrative deficiency. They imagined the bourgeoisie alone to be capable of bringing the country out of chaos and relied on its leadership to do so. Such quasi-Marxists saw only one solution: a capitalist government that would keep all its power, with the proletariat continuing to allow itself to be exploited. They failed to understand the central issue—that the government's lack of power arose not from its 'socialism,' which consisted of empty rhetoric, but from the absence of a true socialist character.

"The Bolsheviks have shown what a truly socialist government would have

11. Van Ravesteyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137; this author, however, is not always reliable.

12. Anton Pannekoek, "De russische revolutie," *De Nieuwe Tijd*, XXII, 1917, pp. 438-52, 548-60, XIII, 1918, pp. 31-46, 119-42.

13. These lines are dated August 1917.

done. Faced with the submissiveness of the social patriots, who only paid lip service to socialism, the Bolsheviks drew up a program of direct reform designed to meet specific problems, to free the country and the proletariat, from intolerable coercion and to open the path to socialism. Thus, the Bolsheviks became the vanguard of revolutionary socialism, on the rise throughout the world.

"And, first of all, regarding the organization of production, if capitalists close their factories in a move against the workers or in response to decreased profits, these factories must be confiscated and production resumed, but under the direction of workers and technicians. If the landed proprietors refuse to cultivate their lands, their lands should be seized and returned to the peasants. Unconcerned with property rights, the peasants can be counted on to place their products at the disposal of the general population, and would be supplied with low-cost agricultural tools and machinery.¹⁴ Rigorous surveillance of commercial transactions would reduce interest rates, while the nationalization of profitable war industries and major banks would create a sizable source of revenue. Moreover, a revolutionary government ought to start by cancelling war debts, which enable the shareholders of Europe and of the West to exploit the Russian people through exorbitant rates of interest.

"However, one measure overshadows all the others: a swift end must be put to the war, which is causing millions of deaths, exhausting the country, and sacrificing production to the needs of armaments manufacture. That is why the Bolsheviks have focused their program around the call for peace—peace, not just as an escape from bankruptcy and famine but also as a rallying cry against the bourgeoisie. . . . And for these reasons the revolutionary proletarian party challenges the Provisional Government."

Pannekoek, while emphasizing the need for and the difficulties of a reorganization of production and distribution, carefully examines the evolution of the political situation in Russia. In general, he justifies the measures recommended by the Bolsheviks and defends them, at least implicitly, against the criticisms of the pro-Entente "Tribune." However, in his view and in that of the German and Russian left wing, the future of the Russian Revolution is tied to the development of the revolution in Western Europe. This perspective emerges in the following postscript to an article

14. Three months later, Knief expressed a similar opinion when he stressed that the Bolshevik slogan, "The land to those who cultivate it!" while not having a socialist character, did aim at closing the gaps between town and country—gaps inherited from Czarism. But, "State support and the supplying of farm implements will establish solid bonds between the peasants and the industrial workers" (*Arbeiterpolitik*, November 17, 1917; and *Dokumente und Materialien* . . . , II:1, pp. 16-17).

dated October 1917: "What we were hoping for has just been realized. On October 24 and 25 the workers and the soldiers of Petrograd swept away the Kerenski government. It is likely, but not yet certain, that this revolution will spread to the whole of Russia. A new age is dawning, not only for the Russian Revolution, but also for the proletarian revolution in Europe. For the first time since the Paris Commune, the proletariat, allied with the petty bourgeoisie, has seized political power, not just in one city, but in a large country. For the first time, modern social leaders have invited the proletariat to take part in reconstructing a society. But it is an extremely difficult task, especially in light of the complete disintegration and bankruptcy of the social order, all within the framework of world war. But none of this precludes the establishment of peace. There are still more remote difficulties, connected with Russia's predominantly agricultural character. Whether the Bolsheviks succeed or fail, at the very least they will have served as a model to the international proletariat. We salute the victory of our Russian comrades as that of our brave advance troops on the road to socialism."¹⁵

Rosa Luxemburg's views differed in certain respects from Pannekoek's. Publicly she declared her solidarity with the Bolsheviks; privately, as the Russian experiment progressed, she criticized its principles.¹⁶ On two points—the questions of land reform and national self-determination—she condemned the Bolsheviks for having succumbed to the "spontaneous movement" of the peasants who were taking over the land and to nations seeking to establish their independence; she also believed that the legitimization of these "two petty-bourgeois slogans" violated the principles of socialism. Pannekoek was in favor of the first point; he never declared himself on the second.¹⁷ On the other hand, he unreservedly approved the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the constituent assembly, the third and principal area of Luxemburg's criticism. In this connection, she said, "Trotsky and Lenin reject in principle national representations established by general elections and want to rely only on soviets."¹⁸ Primarily concerned with the development of the new institutions that had just reappeared in Russia, i.e., the workers' councils, Pannekoek agreed with the Russian revolutionaries, as is evident in a 1919 pamphlet:¹⁹

"Democracy, it is said, is government by the people, but the people as such do not exist; in reality, society is divided into classes...When we talk of the

15. Pannekoek, "De russische revolutie," *De Nieuwe Tijd*, XXII, p. 560.

16. Rosa Luxemburg, *la Révolution russe* (Paris, 1946).

17. Cf. below, Chapter 9.

18. Luxemburg, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

19. Anton Pannekoek, *Bolschevismus und Demokratie* (Vienna, 1919), p. 8.

people, we mean the masses as distinct from the propertied minority. It is this people, the poor and laboring people, the proletarian class, who should govern themselves." The present parliamentary system can ensure only the triumph of the interests of capital.

"We have recently criticized universal suffrage. Men are not equal, and therefore their votes cannot all be of equal value. A man who lived solely off his capital without working, a social parasite, cannot be equated with a worker whose labor serves to keep society in existence; in a certain sense, this is an ethical concept. Going a step further, our policy is aimed at organizing society on socialist foundations. So completely opposed to the interests of the bourgeoisie is this policy that they will seek to put every obstacle in its way and make it fail." All collaboration with the bourgeoisie must therefore be ruled out.

In Russia, "a form of democracy superior to formal democracy, enabling the masses to express their vital interests" has begun to develop: "the workers' councils in the towns, the peasants' councils in the rural areas, the councils charged with various administrations that form the basis of the government. The municipal bodies are elected by the workers' councils of the towns, and the workers' councils of a given branch of production elect the administrators of this branch for the whole country. A general congress of soviets is held from time to time and decides on general policy, but congresses are also held about matters concerning each branch: industry, agriculture, transport, health services, education. The local soviets send their most competent members as delegates to these congresses, experiences are compared, and decisions are made in common.

"It is the real need to reorganize social life that has led the Russian people to establish this flexible administrative machinery, which also constitutes the organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat in which the bourgeoisie cannot participate. The bourgeoisie will not be excluded in any artificial way from government, for instance, by losing its right to vote; quite simply, it will be barred from this organization, which is based not on the people but on labor... The ex-manager or owner of an industry who cooperates as a technical officer under the guidance of the workers' council can claim equality with other factory personnel. The intellectual workers—doctors, teachers, artists—form their own councils, which collectively decide about matters concerning them. All these councils remain in close, permanent contact with the masses, their membership constantly renewed and replaced. The formation of a new bureaucracy is thus prevented, and a monopoly in administrative skills is broken.

"In comparison to this true self-government, one sees how even the most