

BERNZWEERSGADE 19

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Dear Comrade Mattick

I received your letter of Jan 10th. Though I ~~do~~ yet know what changes the comrades wish to be made in the paper, I think it necessary to answer already now about some general remarks. You say that publications of your group are always products of common work, and such a personal product ^{as this one} is unusual. But is not every paper written by one (so it is done here in the GJC) and then discussed by the group? Certainly I wished I could have discussed the contents with your group, and explained the meaning and basis of each part, and I am sure I would convince them of the rightness of what at first may look as dubious or uncommon things. But this was impossible. And so the paper must retain its personal character, and the group should give some credit of confidence to the author also in cases where the ideas seem new to them. We are standing at the threshold of new tendencies in the worker's movement; by theory, i.e. by our brains we see that it will come, but practically there is not to see anything of mass actions as yet. So if theoretical insight has to help and to lead us in this, it is not strange that one person sees it better and clearer than another, and that theoretical knowledge, which is often a personal result, must be relied upon and will be of use. What the theorist is doing is to bring the experience of former generations of workers and thinkers and the result of former struggles ~~to~~ the present generation in condensed form. And because I probably have more years than most of you and was working theoretically and practically in the socialist movement my whole life I think - though I know that I am less acquainted with American conditions, and though I acknowledge that everybody brings in a certain personal, different view of things - that my opinion about the value of a paper, and about what is ~~accepted~~ ^{true} and what should be propagated and included in it, deserves some attention and may be accepted also when I cannot explain it to you in personal discussion.

There are two points in your letter, from which I fear that the changes the comrades wish to be applied may seriously damage the paper. Firstly where you speak about repetitions that could be omitted, and secondly about idealistic modes of expression.

As to the second I suppose that you mean the statements that the result of each struggle depends on spiritual factors in the proletariat, on ~~the~~ courage, the self sacrifice, the enthusiasm, the clear knowledge of the workers. Do you think this is not true, or that it sounds not sufficiently Marxian or materialistic? Do you think it is sufficient to tell the workers that their victory and communism are a necessary and unavoidable result of ^{economic} ~~social~~ development? Certainly, in old books of Marxian authors you ~~cannot~~ ^{only} find that, because they were written to show the readers of that time, that social development had its fixed laws and was not arbitrary. And in historical researches it was sufficient to discover the material and economic foundations for historical events; it was not necessary to speak about the living and acting and thinking and struggling men ^(interposed) ^{cause and effect} between ~~them~~, ~~them~~ who by the economic forces were brought into action, displayed their new enthusiasm and knowledge, and in this way built ^{up} the new world. Moreover everybody who knew history knew that all these spiritual qualities were ^{displayed in revolutions;} ~~manifested~~ what they did not know and Marxism had to teach them was that these qualities came from material economic necessities. But now we stand in the midst of a beginning, unfinished revolution; now we see these processes separately, how economic necessities transform the mental qualities of men, ~~bring~~ ^(then) new ideas, new ideals, new powers into them, by which they ~~will then~~ begin to transform society. And our writings are a part of these forces, by which the material world transforms the mind of the workers for that purpose. Now in a survey of the rising and the first struggles of the workers and their further development we can ^(these separate steps,) be silent about the effect of material world upon ^{human} (mind), and of ^{human} (mind) upon material world; because all what is changing in the material world goes ~~by~~ means of human action, hence through human mind.

Not to include this in the propaganda was one of the weaknesses of the old socialist movement. The mechanical conception of Marxism, that economic changes necessarily bring about political revolution — hence the big social revolution would certainly come once, when the time was ripe — bred in the German workers of that time the fatalistic mode of thought, of doing nothing revolutionary. When I (shortly after 1900) was invited by old Mehring to collaborate by means of theoretical propaganda, and afterwards ^(summoned) by Kaubitz and Bebel went myself

to Germany, they considered me as a specialist in Marxian theory and directed me to teach it to the new generation of ^{the} party ~~workers~~. But soon I had to ~~oppose their~~ fight that mechanical conception, and as then the first mass actions came up, and problems of revolution began to be discussed, this treatment of Marxism as theory of activity found its way in what in the years before the war was called the left-wing radicals, who opposed the Kautskyist centre. Of course the influence of this wing was only small; but these teachings had its influence to prepare the critical opposition during the war and the revolutionary movements after the war. And then soon we had to apply our Marxian theory again in the new communist parties, where my friend Gorter and I were the first ^(in 1920) to oppose Lenin and the 3^d International in their European tactics. Here it was just the reverse mistake; the C.P. taught a strong activity of the workers, but ~~it~~ it forgot that their mind was determined by the material economics of society, and it supposed the high-capitalistic proletarians of Europe and America equal-minded to Russia peasants. You see how this Marxian theory has grown out, by a long history, to the theoretical foundation of our new conceptions of proletarian action; and when there are comrades not acquainted with it, who only know the old mechanical Kautskyist formulation and find that ~~it~~ ^{ours} sounds idealistic, they are wrong - do you think it a shame when they should learn these things from us who learnt them ourselves by a lifetime of studies? You can find them *q.v.* in an old article of mine which was dug out without my knowledge and translated by the comrades here and published "Historischer Materialismus" in one of the earlier nos of the *Paalekorrespondenz*, because it represented their ideas. Or is perhaps the ~~my~~ ^{is} doubt aroused by ~~the~~ ^{such a} statement, that ~~it~~ it is wisdom and unity what the working class wants. It sounds solemnly, certainly, but is it not true? Not so much knowledge as wisdom that includes knowledge ^{as well as} ~~and~~ the wider views for the right action in all difficulties. It is necessary, and in accordance with theory, to tell the workers that their future depends on themselves, on their qualities, and that these qualities gradually develop through their own fights. And their history and their old methods of fighting are considered and criticized from this point of view. When you look through the paper you will see that no parts of it can be omitted without breaking the logical structure of the exposure and so spoiling it entirely. When, however, certain lines, which seem to you ^{to be} (repetitions, are contracted), this will hardly give a considerable shortening of the paper.

I understand the difficulty when you say there is no money to have the paper printed. But, may I ask then, when money for printing propaganda-pamphlets is lacking, why then ask us to write one for you? It has taken us a large deal of time that else could have been used in other ways. Certainly, it was a pleasure for us to do this work for the American working class, to assist you in your propaganda; it was a satisfaction to know that these ~~fundamental~~ fundamental principles could be brought to them. But when it can be printed only in an impaired form, then this satisfaction disappears. ^{If you have a limited amount of money, then, when} ~~the~~ paper is larger than usual, ^{why not?} ~~then~~ let it ^{take} ~~fill~~ the place of two others. When sold, part of the expenses will come back, is it not? What is the amount that is necessary?

I may add some remarks, which perhaps I should have written formerly if I had suspected that there would be difficulties. We cannot assume that ^{all} the workers, who now come to the new council-communism, because they see the collapse of capitalism, will stick to these views when conditions change. You will see that many of them, who now look enthusiastic, afterwards grow uncertain, when e.g. a small wave of prosperity reappears, or when governments change and bring important-looking reforms. It depends whether their opinions grew out of direct temporary conditions, or are solidified by theoretical study into a broad and deep knowledge. When social conditions temporarily change, you will see all kinds of illusions come on, of political or economical character, and lead them astray, often into the old forms of political or trade unionistic movement. Therefore we have treated these forms of movement, ^{that they are not absolute goods or absolutely wrong, to be believed or rejected in dogmatic mode of thought, but} to show why they were necessary and natural ^{at their time,} and why they were ^{at the same time} limited and could not reach the pretended aims. This treatment that applies Marxism theory to the worker's movement, induces ~~them~~ it, so to say, to know itself, and so opposes it - so far teaching can do this - in making detours of taking false side ways. In setting the present conditions into a general picture of the growth of the proletarian revolution at large, it may give broader and firmer views than are got by the present conditions alone. Just these more general foundations will show to be of great value to keep a straight and right course in varying circumstances.

Yours very sincerely
S. R. Pannetier