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Theses on the fight of the working class
against capitalism.

1. Capitalism in one century of growth has enormously increased its power not only through expansion over the entire earth, but also through development into new forms. With it the working class has increased in power, in numbers, in massal concentration, in organisation. Its fight against capitalist exploitation, for mastery over the means of production, also is continually developing and has to develop into new forms.

The development of capitalism led to the concentration of power over the chief branches of production in the hands of big monopolistic concerns. They are intimately connected with State Power and dominate it, they control the main part of the press, they direct public opinion. Middle class democracy has proved the best camouflage of this political dominance of big capital. At the same time there is a growing tendency in most countries to use the organised power of the state in concentrating the management of the key industries in its hands, as a beginning of planned economy. In Germany a State-directed economy united political leadership and capitalist management into one combined exploiting class. In Russian State-capitalism the bureaucracy is collectively master over the means of production, and by dictatorial government keeps the exploited masses in submission.

2. Socialism, put up as the goal of the workers' fight, is the organisation of production by Government. It means State-socialism, the command of the State-officials over production and the command of managers, scientists, shop-officials in the shop. In socialist economy this body, forming a well-organised bureaucracy, is the direct master over the process of production. It has the disposal over the total product, determining what part shall be assigned as wages to the workers, and takes the rest for general needs and for itself. The workers under democracy may choose their masters, but they are not themselves master of their work; they receive only part of the produce, assigned to them by others; they are still exploited and have to obey the new master class. The democratic forms, supposed or intended to accompany it, do not alter the fundamental structure of this economic system.

Socialism was proclaimed the goal of the working class when in its first rise it felt powerless, unable by itself to conquer command over the shops, and looking to the State for protection against the capitalist class by means of social reforms. The large political parties embodying these aims, the Socialdemocratic and the Labour Parties, turned into instruments for regimenting the entire working class into the service of capitalism, in its wars for world power as well as in peacetime home politics. The Labour Government of the British I.P. cannot even be said to be socialistic; what it does is not liberating the workers but modernizing capitalism. By abolishing its ignominies and backwardnesses, by introducing state management under preserving state-guaranteed profits for the capitalists, it strengthens capitalist domination and perpetuates the exploitation of the workers.

3. The goal of the working class is liberation from exploitation. This goal is not reached and cannot be reached by a new directing and governing class substituting the bourgeoisie. It is only realised by the workers themselves being master over production.

Mastery of the workers over production means, first, organisation of the work in every shop and enterprise by its personnel. Instead of through command of an manager and his underlings all the regulations are made through decision of the entire body of the workers. This body, comprising all kinds of workers, specialists and scientists, all taking part in the production, in assembly decides everything related to the common work. The rule that those who have to do the work also have to regulate their work and take the responsibility, within the scope of the whole, can be applied to all branches of production. It means, secondly, that the workers create their organs for combining the separate enterprises into an organised entirety of planned production. These organs are the workers' councils.

The workers' councils are bodies of delegates, sent out by the personels of the separate shops or sections of big enterprises, carrying the intentions and opinions of these personels, in order to discuss and take decisions on the common affairs, and to bring back the results to their mandatories. They state and proclaim the necessary regulations, and by uniting the different opinions into one common result, form the connection of the separate units into a well-organised whole. They are no permanent board of leaders but can be recalled and changed at every moment. Their first germs appeared in the beginning of the Russian and German revolutions (Soviets, Arbeiterräte). They are to play an increasing role in future working class developments.

4. Political parties up to the present times have two functions. They aspire, first, at political power, at dominance in the State, to take government into their hands and use its power to put their program into practice. For this purpose they have, secondly, to win the masses of the working people to their programs: by means of their teachings clarifying the insight, or, by their propaganda, simply trying to make of them a herd of followers.

Working class parties put up as their goal the conquest of political power, thereby to govern in the interest of the workers, and especially to abolish capitalism. They assert themselves as the advance guard of the working class, acting in its name as its representative. They pretend to be able to liberate the workers from exploitation, an exploited class, however, cannot be liberated by simply voting and bringing into power a group of new governors. A political party cannot bring freedom, but, when it wins, only new forms of domination. Freedom can be won by the working masses only through their own organised action, by taking their lot into their own hands, in devoted exertion of all their faculties, by directing and organising their fight and their work themselves by means of their councils.

For the parties then remains the second function, to spread insight and knowledge, to study, discuss and formulate social ideas, and by their propaganda to enlighten the minds of the masses. The workers' councils are the organs for practical action and fight of the working class; to the parties falls the task of the building up of its spiritual power. Their work forms an indispensable part in the self-liberation of the working class.

↳ Its most dearsighted part, capable of leading the uninstructed majority of the class,

5. The strongest form of fight against the capitalist class is the strike. Strikes are necessary, ever again, against the capitalists' tendency to increase their profits by lowering wages and increase the hours or the intensity of work. Trade Unions have been formed as instruments of organised resistance, based on strong solidarity and mutual help. With the growth of big business capitalist power has increased enormously, so that only in special cases the workers are able to withstand the lowering of their working conditions. The Trade Unions grow into instruments of mediations between capitalists and workers; they make treaties with the employers which they try to enforce upon the often unwilling workers. The leaders aspire to become a recognised part of the power apparatus of capital and State dominating the working class; the Unions grow into instruments of monopolist capital, by means of which it dictates its terms to the workers.

The fight of the working class, under these circumstances, ever more takes the form of wild strikes. They are spontaneous massal outbursts of the long-suppressed spirit of resistance. They are direct actions in which the workers take their fight entirely into their own hands, leaving the Unions and their leaders outside.

The organisation of the fight is accomplished by the strike-committees, delegates of the strikers, chosen and sent out by the personnels. By means of discussions in these committees the workers establish their unity of action. Extension of the strike to ever larger masses, the only tactics appropriate to wrench concessions from capital, is fundamentally opposed to the Trade Union tactics to restrict the fight and to put an end to it as soon as possible. Such wild strikes in the present times are the only real class fights of the workers against capital. Here they assert their freedom, themselves choosing and directing their action, not directed by other powers for other interests.

That determines the importance of such class contests for the future. When the wild strikes take on ever larger extension they find the entire physical power of the State against them. So they assume a revolutionary character. When capitalism turns into an organised world government - though as yet only in the form of two contending powers, threatening mankind with entire devastation - the fight for freedom of the working class takes the form of a fight against State Power. Its strikes assume the character of big political strikes, sometimes universal strikes. Then the strike-committees needs acquire general social and political functions, and assume the character of workers' councils. Revolutionary fight for dominance over society is at the same time fight for mastery over and in the shops. The ~~the~~ workers' councils as the organs of fight grow into organs of production at the same time.

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