

The Failure of the Working Class

In former issues the ^{has been} problem is posed: why did the working class fail in its historical task? Why did it not offer ~~any~~ resistance to national-socialism in Germany? Why is there no trace of any revolutionary movement among the workers of America? "What has happened to the social vitality of the world working class? Why do the masses all over the globe no longer seem capable of initiating anything new aimed at their own selfliberation?" (November-issue p. 349). ~~Perhaps~~ Some light may be thrown upon this problem by the following considerations.

It is easy to ask: why did not the workers rise ^{up} against threatening Fascism? To fight you must have a positive aim. ~~Against~~ ^{Opposed to} fascism there were two alternatives: either maintaining, or returning to, the old capitalism, with its unemployment, its crises, its corruption ^(its misery) — whereas National Socialism presented itself as ^{an} anti-capitalist, ~~and~~ ^{without unemployment,} reign of labour, of national greatness, of community-politics; Or proceeding to a socialist revolution. Thus, indeed, the real deeper question is: why did not the German workers make their revolution?

Well, they had experienced a revolution; 1918. But it had taught them the lesson that neither the Social Democratic Party, nor the Trade Unions were instruments of ~~their~~ ^{their} liberation; both ~~had~~ ^{were} turned out to be instruments for restoring capitalism. So what ~~should~~ ^{were} they to do? The Communist Party did not show a way either; ~~that~~ it propagated the Russian system of state-capitalism, with its still worse lack of freedom.

^{Could it have been otherwise?}
 The avowed aim of the Socialist Party in Germany — and then in all countries — was State-socialism. According to ~~its~~ ^{political} program the working class had to conquer dominance (over the State) and then by its power had to organize production into a state-directed planned economic system. Its instrument ^{was to} ~~should~~ be the Socialist Party, which developed already into a huge body of 300 000 members, with a million trade-union members and 3 millions of voters behind them, ~~with~~ led

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by a big apparatus of politicians, agitators, secretaries, editors, ^{eager} ready to take the place of the ~~former~~ ^{former} rulers. ^{According to the program then they should} ~~And then by appropriate laws~~ ^{they} expropriate the capitalist class ^(to) organize production in a centrally directed planned system ~~(to increase wages and introduce social laws, so as to abolish the exploitation of the workers)~~

It is clear that in such a system the workers ^{though their ~~food~~ ^{daily bread} may seem to be secured} (are only ^{impartially} partially liberated). The upper stories of society have been changed, ^{then} but the ^{foundations bearing} ~~base~~ ^{with wage-earners} ~~entire~~ building remain the ~~same~~ old ones: ^{the} workers ^{in the} factories ^{under the} ~~command of~~ ^{and} ~~direction of~~ ^{the} managers. So we find it ^{thoroughly socialist} described by ^{who} G. D. H. Cole, ^{(after} ~~his studies on~~ ^{his studies on} ~~his studies on~~ ^{Guild Socialism} ~~and other reforms~~ ^{strongly influenced the trade unions in the direction of socialism.} of the industrial system) He says: "The whole people would be no more able than the whole body of shareholders in a great enterprise to manage ~~the~~ an industry It would be necessary, under Socialism as much as under large scale capitalism, to entrust the actual management of industrial enterprise to salaried experts, chosen for their specialized knowledge and ability in particular branches of the work There is no reason to suppose that the methods of appointing the actual managers in socialised industries would differ widely from those already in force in large scale capitalist enterprise. There is no reason to suppose that socialisation of any industry would mean a great change in its managerial personnel ")

Thus the workers will have got new masters in stead of the old ones. Good humane masters in stead of the bad ^{rapacious} ~~exploitative~~ ^{of to-day} masters. ~~Appointed by a socialist~~ ^{Government of socialists} or at best chosen by themselves. But once chosen they must be obeyed. The workers are not master ^{over} ~~of~~ their shops, they are not master of ^{the means of} ~~production~~. Above them stands the commanding power of a State Burocracy, ~~armed~~

1) G. D. H. Cole "The structure of modern business" (in "An outline of modern knowledge", edited by Dr. W. Rose 1931; p. 674, 675, 676.)

Now that the workers begin to realize that state socialism means new letters ~~(and)~~, ~~at the same time~~, that the Trade Unions cannot direct their fight ~~against capital~~ they stand before the difficult task of finding and opening new roads. ~~This is not possible without a deep revolution of their ideas, accompanied by such inner strikes~~ No wonder, that ~~from~~ the vigour of the fight slackens, that they hesitate, divided and uncertain, and seem to have lost their energy.

≠ Before them now the problem arises how to unite freedom and organisation; how to combine mastery of the workers over their work with the binding of all this work into a ^{well-planned} social entirety. How to organize production, in every shop as well as over the whole of world economy, in such a way that they themselves regulate their work as parts of a collaborating community. Mastery ^{over} of production means that the personnel, the bodies of workers, technicians and experts that by their collective effort run the shop and put into action the technical apparatus are at the same time the managers themselves. The organization into a social entirety is then performed by delegates of the separate plants, ^{by} called workers' councils, in in assembly discussing and deciding on the common affairs. The development of such a council organisation will afford the solution of the problem; but this development is an historical process ~~that~~ taking time and demanding a deep transformation of ~~the~~ outlook and character.

of leaders and managers ^(who perform) ~~the~~ ^{and} regulations ~~have~~ the disposal over the ~~products~~. Such a state ^{of things} ~~can~~ ^{can} ~~attract~~ ^{attract} the workers as long as they ^{feel} ~~are~~ powerless, as they feel themselves weak and helpless over against the power of the capitalists; so in their first ^{rise} ~~strong~~ during the 19th century this was put up as ^{the} goal. They ~~were~~ ^{were} not ~~not~~ strong enough to drive the capitalists out of the ~~the~~ command over the producing installations; so they ^{tried} ~~tried~~ the ^{their way out was state-socialism; the government of} ~~detour~~ by bringing ^{high-minded} ~~high-minded~~ socialists into Government, in order that they should ~~establish~~ ^{expropriate the capitalists. and} ~~socialism~~.

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Capitalism, ^{indeed} ~~however~~, cannot be annihilated by a change in the commanding persons; but only by the abolition of commanding. The real freedom of the workers consists in their direct mastery over the means of production. The essence of the ^{future} ~~coming~~ free world-community is not that the working masses get enough food, but that they direct their work themselves, collectively. ^{For the} ~~The~~ real contents of their life ~~is~~ ^{is} their productive work; the fundamental change is not a change in ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{realm of production means that} ~~consumption~~ the passive realm of) but in the active realm of production ^{of them}.

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the personnels, the groups of workers and technicians and experts that by their collective effort run the shop and ^{put in action} ~~manage~~ the technical apparatus, ^{at the same time} ~~are~~ ^{in such a system of production} ~~the managers themselves~~. The organisation of ^{all} ~~the~~ ^{separate} productive units into a social entirety is performed by workers' councils, the delegates of the ^{plants and} ~~separate~~ shops, ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ assembly discussing and regulating the common affairs.

This new vision of a free communism is only beginning ~~now~~ to take hold of the minds of the workers. And so now we begin to understand why former promising workers' movements could not succeed. When the aims are too narrow there can be no real liberation. When the aim is a semi- or a mock-liberation the inner forces ^{aroused} are insufficient to bring about fundamental results. So the ^{German} ~~the~~ socialist movement, because it ~~was~~ ^{provide} ~~was~~ unable to ~~give~~ ^{provide} the workers with ^{such} ~~powerful~~ ^{as} ~~arms~~ ^{successfully} to fight the powerful monopolistic capital, had to succumb. The ^{enough} ~~powerful~~ ^{enough} arms to fight the powerful monopolistic capital, had to succumb. The

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working class had to search for ~~new~~ roads. But the difficulty of disentangling itself from the net of socialist teachings imposed by old parties and old slogans made it powerless against ~~aggressive~~ ^{aggressive} ~~capitalism~~ ^{capitalism}, and brought ^{about} (a period of continuous decline, ^{indicative of the need for a new orientation}).

Thus ~~not~~ what is called the failure of the working class is the failure of its narrow socialist aims. The real fight ~~of the~~ for liberation has still to begin; what ~~was~~ ^{is known} as the ~~main~~ workers' movement in the century ^{(as seen in this way,} ~~is~~ ^{is} only a series of skirmishes of advance guards. Intellectuals, who ~~see~~ ^{are wont to reduce} the social struggles ~~to~~ ^{to} the most abstract and simple ^{formulae} ~~forms~~, are inclined to underrate the tremendous scope of the social transformation before us. They think how easy it ~~is~~ ^{would be} ~~to~~ ^{put} write the right name ~~at~~ ^{into} the ballot. ^{box} They forget what a ~~an~~ ^{deep} ~~enormous~~ inner revolution must take place in the working masses, what an ~~amount~~ ^{amount} of ^{clear} ~~insight~~ ^{insight}, of solidarity, of perseverance and courage, of proud fighting spirit, ^{is necessary} ~~will~~ they be able to vanquish ~~the~~ ^{the} immense physical and spiritual power of capitalism.

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The workers of the world, nowadays, have two mighty foes, two hostile and suppressing capitalist powers ~~ag~~ ^{ag} over against them: the private monopolistic capitalism of America and England, and the Russian state capitalism. The former is drifting towards social dictatorship camouflaged in democratic forms, the latter proclaims dictatorship openly, formerly with the addition "of the proletariat",

~~with the development of small business into big business the Trade Unions cease to be fighting instruments of the workers to obtain better working conditions. In modern times, they ever more into organs, by which monopolist capital dictates its terms to the working class. When the workers begin to realize that the Trade Unions cannot direct their fight against capital, they stand before the task of finding and practicing new forms of fight. The working masses now, and in the coming times, have to fight for their freedom. With their fight it is just as it is with their goal, the organization of production: it must be organized from below, not from above. It cannot be directed by leaders; the masses must direct their fight themselves. They will have to take the initiative, to think out time and ways, to decide in every situation, to~~

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The paramount question presenting itself here is, whether there are ^{indications} signs ~~for~~ of ^{an} the existence or awakening fight^s spirit among the working class. Then ^{to} we must leave the field of political party strifes ^{now} chiefly intended to fool the masses, and turn to ^{the realm} where they fight intuitively ^{either} their struggle for living conditions. Here we see, that the field of economic interests, with the development of small business ^{into} big business the Trade Unions cease to be fighting instruments of the working class. In modern times ^{these organisations} ever more turn into the organs by which monopolist capital dictates its terms to the working class.

When the workers begin to realize that the Trade Unions cannot direct their fight against capital, they stand before the task of finding and practising new forms of fight. These new forms are the wild strikes. Here they shake off ~~the~~ direction by the old leaders and the old organisations: ^{here they} take the initiative in their own hands; here they have to think out time and ways, to ^{take the decisions,} ~~decide on every~~ to do all the work of propaganda, of extension, of directing their action themselves. Wild strikes are spontaneous outbursts, the genuine ^{practical} ^{class-} expressions of fight against capitalism, though without wider aims as yet; but they embody a new character already in the rebellious masses. ~~(Egyptian and~~

~~Self-determination instead of determination by~~
 leaders, self-reliance instead of obedience, fighting spirit instead of accepting the dictates from above, unbreakable solidarity and unity with the comrades in stead of duty imposed by memberships. The unit in action and strike is ^{of course the same as the} unit of daily ^{productive} ~~practical~~ work, the personnel of the shop, the plant, ^{the docks} ~~the harbor~~; it is the

~~It is the task of finding out the way how this principle can be put into~~
 practical action.

~~workers' wants~~

common work, the common interest against the common capitalist master that compels them to act as one solid body. In their discussions and decisions all the individual ~~possibilities~~ capabilities, ~~and~~ all the forces of character and mind of all the workers, exalted and strained to the utmost, ~~are coöperated~~ ^{are coöperated} to ^{ward} the common goal. ~~The strike-committees,~~

1/6 In the wild strikes we may see the beginning of a new practical orientation of the working class, a new tactics, the method of direct action. ~~They~~ They represent the only actual rebellion of man against the deadening ^{suppressing weight} ~~weight~~ of the ^{world-}dictatorship of world capital. Surely, on a small scale such wild strikes ^{mostly} have to be broken off without success, ~~they act as~~ warning signs only. Their efficiency depends on their ~~own~~ extension over ever larger masses; only fear for such indefinite extension can compel capital to make concessions. If the pressure by capitalist exploitation ^{grows} becomes heavier - and we may be sure it will - ~~the~~ ^{resistance} ~~it~~ will ^{be} aroused ever anew and ^{will} comprise larger masses. When, then, ^{when they assail capitalism in its inner essence, the mastery of the shops,} it ~~takes~~ takes such dimensions as to seriously disturb ^{the} social order, ~~then they hit capitalism in its inner essence, the mastery of the shops.~~ the workers will have to face State-power with all its strong resources. Then their strikes ^{assume} ~~take~~ a political character; then they ~~must~~ have to ~~be~~ broaden their social outlook; then their ~~strike~~ ^{social} strike-committees, embodying their class community, ^{assume} the character of workers' councils. ^{7 wider functions, taking} Then the social revolution, the downbreak of capitalism, comes in sight.

~~has grown in ~~importance~~ ~~importance~~ still more. Is there any chance, then, that~~
~~capitalism will succumb by the workers' class struggle~~
~~classes of society, farmers and intellectuals as well as workers, are involved,~~ ^{of course}
~~fundamental changes in outlook, and will~~ ^{be preceded} ^{and accompanied by} ^{spiritual fights and ~~developments~~ on a} ^{great changes in ~~intellectual~~ ~~basic~~ ~~ideas~~} ^{basic ideas}
These developments ^{should} ~~must~~ be an object of careful study for ^{everyone} ~~all~~ who ~~are~~ ⁱⁿ
~~the~~ communism without dictatorship, in social organisation on the basis of
freedom devoted to ^{seeing} ~~the~~ future of mankind

(9) ~~It is~~ ^{It is} ~~in these short formulas~~ (an extremely complicated historical process that
is condensed in these short formulas, ^{a process} ^{occupies} ^{a whole} ~~and it will~~ ~~take~~ ~~a considerable~~ ~~period~~
of revolution, in which all the producing classes of society, farmers and
intellectuals as well as workers are involved. It implies /

Is there any reason to expect such a revolutionary development in coming times, through conditions that were lacking in the past and till now? It seems that, ^{we can} with some probability, indicate such conditions. In Marx' writings we find the sentence: a production system does not perish before all its innate possibilities have developed. In the persistence of capitalism we now begin to detect some deeper truth in ^{this sentence} it (than was suspected before). As long as the capitalist system can feed and keep alive the masses of the population, ^{they feel} there is no absolute ^{urgent} necessity for ~~them~~ to do away with it. And it is able to do ^{so} ~~that~~ as long as it can grow and expand its realm over wider parts of the world. Hence, as long as half the population of the earth stands outside ^{capitalism}, its task is not finished. The many hundreds of millions thronged in the fertile plains of Eastern and Southern Asia are living still in pre-capitalistic conditions. As long as they afford a market to be provided with rails and locomotives, with trucks, machines and factories, capitalist enterprise, especially in America, may prosper and expand. And it is on the working class of America that henceforward world-revolution depends.

This means that ~~the~~ ^{of revolutionary fight} necessity (will impose itself ~~on~~ ^{once} capitalism, ~~and~~ ^{is going to comprise} the bulk of mankind, and ^{once} a further significant expansion is ~~not~~ hampered.

The threat of wholesale destruction in this last phase of capitalism ~~is~~ ^{this fight} makes it a necessity for all the producing classes of society, the farmers and intellectuals as well as the workers. What is condensed here in these short sentences means an extremely complicated historical process filling a period of revolution, prepared and accompanied by ^{spiritual fights and} fundamental changes in basic ideas. These developments should be an object of careful study to ~~everyone~~ ^{all those to} whom ~~communism~~ ^{community-minded} without dictatorship, ~~is~~ social organisation ~~on~~ the basis of freedom ~~granted to community~~ ^{represent} the future of mankind.