

to the bourgeoisie even before their political degeneration and betrayal which culminated in the capitulation to Hitler and fascism.

How shall we account for this shift? Is it because the representatives of Socialism and Communism have all become knaves and blackguards? To assume that would be too simple. No matter how many rascals and blackguards there may be among them, the reason for this shift lies deeper. It must be sought in the changed conditions of party organizations, in the changed times. These changes have become apparent and obvious.

The old social-democratic movement arose during the first phase of the capitalist era, the one we can refer to as the phase of private capitalism (*laissez-faire*). From it social-democracy received the impulse of its origin, the conditions for its growth, the structure of its mass-organizations, the field, tactic and weapons for its struggles. Its substance was derived from the substance of the system in which it lived and fought, and which it hoped to vanquish. Though striving to be the opposite, it could not help but be like it in every way.

This system entered its last phase with the first World War. It is now in a life-and-death struggle against the ascending new phase, which we describe as state-capitalistic. Just as the first one found its ideological and political expression in Liberalism and Democracy, so the second finds its expression in Fascism and Dictatorship. Democracy was the state form of capitalist ascendancy, of its struggle against feudalism, monarchism and clericalism, of the unfolding of all individual powers for the victory and rise of the capitalist economic system, for the social setting and cultural endowment of the bourgeois order. This ascending period ended long ago. Democracy becomes more and more inadequate and unbearable for present day capitalism, for the capitalistic interests can no longer live and grow under it. They demand new social and political conditions, a new ideology and a new state form — a new ruling apparatus. The democratic phase is discarded and demolished in order that fascism can take its place. For only under fascism can state-capitalism develop and thrive.

When democracy ceases to be the valid and dominant state-form, that movement which received its impetus, its right to and form of existence from democracy, also ceases. It cannot continue to live on its own power. Its parliamentarism, its party-machine, its authoritative-centralistic organization methods, its agit-prop technique, its military strategy, its compromising tactic, its rationalizations as well as its metaphysical-irrational illusions—all these it received from the rich arsenal of the bourgeoisie, all of it was part and parcel, flesh of the flesh of the bourgeois-democratic-liberal world. Because all this has ended, the movement has collapsed, becomes but a shadow of its former self. It can only toss and groan under the cover of the torn and tattered cloak of dying democracy until its own death overtakes it.

Private capitalism—and with it democracy, which is trying to save it—is obsolete and going the way of all mortal things. State capitalism — and with it fascism, which paves the way for it — is growing and seizing power.

The old is gone forever and no exorcism works against the new. No matter how hard we may try to revive Democracy, to help her once more stand on her legs, to breathe life into her, all efforts will be futile. All hopes for a victory of democracy over fascism are the crassest illusions, all belief in the return of democracy as a form of capitalist government has only the value of cunning betrayal and cowardly self-delusion. Those labor leaders who today are on the side of the democracies, and are trying to win the workers' organizations to that side, are doing only what their particular governments and general staffs are doing; namely, recruiting workers and homeless, hopeless emigrants into their armies to hurl them against fascist fronts. These volunteer recruiting officers, hirelings of the democracies, are gentlemen no finer than those kidnappers who supply death-ships with shanghaied sailors. Sooner or later even the democracies will be forced to rid themselves of them, for it becomes more and more obvious that the democratic governments do not desire a real and serious war against fascism. They afforded no real help to Poland. No serious attempt was made to save Finland. They sent badly armed soldiers to Norway. They sign economic pacts with Russia, the accomplice and camp-follower in the service of Hitler. Everything they are doing is only calculated to force Germany into such a difficult and untenable position that she will be willing to enter into a capitalist-fascist business partnership which will enable both sides to enslave the whole world. Both methods of government are getting more similar every day. What real democracy was there in Czechoslovakia? in Poland? What democracy did the Spanish refugees and other emigrants find in France where all human rights and human dignity have been thrown to the dogs? And how democratic is the rule of monopoly capitalism in the U.S.A.? All democracy is practically dead. And all the hopes of workers to revive it through their efforts are sheer illusion. Are the experiences of the Austrian, German and Czechoslovakian social democracies not frightful enough? It is the misfortune of the proletariat that its obsolete organizations based upon an opportunistic tactic make it defenseless against the onslaught of fascism. It has thus lost its own political position in the body politic of the present time. It has ceased to be a history-making factor of the present epoch. It has been swept upon the dungheap of history and will rot on the side of Democracy as well as on the side of Fascism, for the Democracy of today will be the Fascism of tomorrow.

Hope for the final uprising of the proletariat and its historical deliverance does not spring from the miserable remnants of the old movements in the still-democratic countries, and still less from the shabby fragments of those party traditions that were scattered and spilled in the emigration of the world. Nor does it spring from the stereotyped notions of past revolutions, regardless of whether one believes in the blessings of violence or in "peaceful transition". Hope comes rather from the new urges and impulses which will animate the masses in the totalitarian states and will force them to make their own history. The self-expropriation and proletarianization of the bourgeoisie by the second World War, the surmounting of

nationalism by the abolition of small states, the state-capitalistic world-politic based on state federations, the spreading of the class concept until it fosters a majority interest in socialism, the shift of gravity from the typically laissez-faire form of bourgeois competition to the unavoidable collectivization of the future, the transformation of the class-struggle from an abstract-ideological category into a practical-positive-economic category, the automatic rise of factory councils after the unfolding of labor democracy as a reaction to bureaucratic terror, the exact and rational regulations and directions of human activities and conduct through the abolition of the power of the impersonal, unconscious and blind market economy — all these factors can make us aware of the enormous upsurge of energies made free when the primitive, mechanical, raw and brutal beginnings of a social collectivism, such as fascism presents, are at last overcome.

As yet we do not see by what means fascism will be overcome. We feel, however, justified in assuming that the mechanics and dynamics of revolution will undergo fundamental changes. The familiar concept of revolution stems primarily from that period which saw the transition from the feudal to the bourgeois world. This concept will not be valid for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The effect and success of the revolution may be perceived from the fact that the present forced collectivization, which is even now bursting its bureaucratic fetters, develops its own dynamics toward a higher and wider balance, consolidation, and distillation. The final sublimation must lead to an orientation based upon the principle of liberty, equality and fraternity so that the free development of every individual will become the precondition for the free development of all.

This is by no means a Utopia, but an aspect of a very real development within the next historical epoch, which the second World War is ushering in. To focus attention upon this development, to reckon with this basically universal and profoundly revolutionary process, to help strengthen this process by one's conduct and action, to defend it against hindrances and distortions is the revolutionary task confronting us today. In the second World War both fronts, the democratic as well as the fascist, are likely to be defeated — the one militarily, the other economically. No matter to which side the proletariat offers itself, it will be among the defeated. Therefore it must not side with the democracies, nor with the totalitarians. For class-conscious revolutionaries there is only one solution, the solution which breaks with all traditions and all remnants of organizations of the past, which sweeps away all the illusions of the bourgeois-intellectual epoch and which really learns from the lessons of discouragements and disillusionment suffered during the infantile stage of the working-class movement.

Otto Ruehle.

WHY PAST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS FAILED

Thirty years ago every socialist was convinced that the approaching war of the great capitalist powers would mean the final catastrophe of capitalism and would be succeeded by the proletarian revolution. Even when the war did break out and the socialist and labor movement collapsed as a revolutionary factor, the hopes of the revolutionary workers ran high. Even then they were sure that the world revolution would follow in the wake of the world war. And indeed it came. Like a bright meteor the Russian revolution flared up and shone over the earth, and in all countries the workers rose and began to move.

Only a few years later it became clear that the revolution was decaying, that social convulsions were decreasing, that the capitalist order was gradually being restored. Today the revolutionary workers' movement is at its lowest ebb and capitalism is more powerful than ever.

Once again a great war has come, and again the thoughts of workers and communists turn to the question: will it affect the capitalistic system to such a degree that a workers' revolution will arise out of it? Will the hope of a successful struggle for freedom of the working class come true this time?

It is clear that we cannot hope to get an answer to this question so long as we do not understand why the revolutionary movements after 1918 failed. Only by investigating all the forces that were then at work can we get a clear insight into the causes of that failure. So we must turn our attention to what happened twenty years ago in the workers' movement of the world.

II.

The growth of the workers' movement was not the only important nor even the most important fact in the history of the past century. Of primary importance was the growth of capitalism itself. It grew not only in intensity — through concentration of capital, the increasing perfection of industrial technics, the increase of productivity — but also in extensity. From the first centers of industry and commerce — England, France, America, Germany — capitalism began to invade foreign countries, and now is conquering the whole earth. In former centuries foreign continents were subdued to be exploited as colonies. But at the end of the 19th and at the

beginning of the 20th centuries we see a higher form of conquest. These continents were assimilated by capitalism; they became themselves capitalistic. This most important process, that went on with increasing rapidity in the last century, meant a fundamental change in their economic structure. In short, here was the basis of a series of world-wide revolutions.

The central countries of developed capitalism, with the middle class — the bourgeoisie — as the ruling class, were formerly surrounded by a fringe of other, less-developed countries. Here the social structure was still entirely agrarian and more-or-less feudal; the large plains were cultivated by farmers who were exploited by landowners and stood in continuous, more-or-less open struggle against them and the reigning autocrats. In the case of colonies this internal pressure was intensified through exploitation by European colonial capital that made the landowners and kings its agents. In other cases this stronger exploitation by European capital was brought about by financial loans of governments, which laid heavy taxes upon the farmers. Railways, introducing the factory products that destroyed the old home industries and carried away raw material and food, were built. This gradually drew the farmers into world commerce and aroused in them the desire to become free producers for the market. Factories were constructed; a class of business men and dealers developed in the towns who felt the necessity of better government for their interest. Young people, studying at Western universities, became the revolutionary spokesmen of these tendencies. They formulated these tendencies in theoretical programs, advocating chiefly national freedom and independence, a responsible democratic government, civic rights and liberties, in order that they might find their useful place as officials and politicians in a modern state.

This development in the capitalistic world proper took place simultaneously with the development of the workers' movement within the central countries of big capitalism. Here then were two revolutionary movements, not only parallel and simultaneous, but also with many points of contact. They had a common foe, capitalism, that in the form of industrial capitalism exploited the workers, and in the form of colonial and financial capitalism exploited the farmers in the Eastern and colonial countries and sustained this despotic rulers. The revolutionary groups from these countries found understanding and assistance only from the socialist workers of Western Europe. So they called themselves socialists too. The old illusions that middle class revolutions would bring freedom and equality to the entire population were reborn.

In reality there was a deep and fundamental difference between these two kinds of revolutionary aims, the so-called Western and Eastern. The proletarian revolution can be the result only of the highest development of capitalism. It puts an end to capitalism. The revolutions in the Eastern countries were the consequences of the beginning of capitalism in these countries. Viewed thus, they resemble the middle class revolutions in the Western countries, and — with due consideration for the fact that their special

character must be somewhat different in different countries — they must be regarded as middle class revolutions.

Though there was not such a numerous middle class of artisans, petty bourgeois and wealthy peasants as there was in the French and the English revolutions (because in the East, capitalism came suddenly, with a smaller number of big factories) still the general character is analogous. Here also we have the awakening out of the provincial view of an agrarian village to the consciousness of a nation-wide community and to interest in the whole world; the rising of individualism that frees itself from the old group bonds; the growth of energy to win personal power and wealth; the liberation of the mind from old superstitions, and the desire for knowledge as a means of progress. All this is the mental equipment necessary to bring mankind from the slow life of pre-capitalist conditions into the rapid industrial and economic progress that later on will open the way for communism.

The general character of a proletarian revolution must be quite different. Instead of reckless fighting for personal interests there must be common action for the interests of the class community. A worker, a single person, is powerless; only as a part of his class, as a member of a strongly connected economic group can he get power. Workers' individualities are disciplined into line by their habit of working and fighting together. Their minds must be freed from social superstitions and they must see as a commonplace truth that once they are strongly united that they can take the productive apparatus into their own hands, they can produce abundance and liberate society from misery and want. This is part of the mental equipment necessary to bring mankind from the class exploitation, the misery, the mutual destruction of capitalism into communism itself.

Thus the two kinds of revolution are as widely different as are the beginning and the end of capitalism. We can see this clearly now, thirty years later. We can understand, too, how at that time they could be considered not only as allies, but were thrown together as two sides of the same great world-revolution. The great day was supposed to be near; the working class, with its large socialist parties and still larger unions, would soon conquer power. And then at the same time, with the power of Western capitalism breaking down, all the colonies and Eastern countries would be freed from Western domination and take up their own national life.

Another reason for confusing these different social aims was that at that time the minds of the western workers were entirely occupied by reformist ideas about reforming capitalism into the democratic forms of its beginning and only a very few among them realized the meaning of a proletarian revolution.

III.

The world war of 1914-18, with its utter destruction of productive forces, cut deep furrows through the social structure, especially of central

and eastern Europe. Emperors disappeared, old out-moded governments were overthrown, social forces from below were loosened, different classes of different peoples, in a series of revolutionary movements, tried to win power and to realize their class aims.

In the highly industrialized countries the class struggle of the workers was already the dominating factor of history. Now these workers had gone through a world war. They learned that capitalism not only lays claim on their working power, but upon their lives too; completely, body and soul, they are owned by capital. The destruction and impoverishment of the productive apparatus, the misery and privation suffered during the war, the disappointment and distress after the peace brought waves of unrest and rebelliousness over all participating countries. Because Germany had lost, the rebellion of the workers here was greatest. In the place of pre-war conservatism, there arose a new spirit in the German workers, compounded of courage, energy, yearnings for freedom and for revolutionary struggle against capitalism. It was only a beginning, but it was the first beginning of a proletarian revolution.

In the Eastern countries of Europe the class struggle had a different composition. The land-owning nobility was dispossessed; the farmers seized the land; a class of small or middlesized free landowners arose. Former revolutionary conspirators became leaders and ministers and generals in the new national states. These revolutions were middle class revolutions and as such indicated the beginning of an unlimited development of capitalism and industry.

In Russia this revolution went deeper than anywhere else. Because it destroyed the Tsarist world power which for a century had been a dominating power in Europe and the most hated enemy of all democracy and socialism, the Russian revolution led all the revolutionary movements in Europe. Its leaders had been associated for many years with the socialist leaders of Western Europe, just as the Tsar had been the ally of the English and French governments. It is true that the chief social contents of the Russian revolution — the land seizures by the peasants and the smashing of the autocracy and the nobility — show it to be a middle class revolution, and the Bolsheviks themselves accentuated this character by often comparing themselves with the Jacobins of the French revolution.

But the workers in the West, themselves full of traditions of petty bourgeois freedom, did not consider this foreign to them. And the Russian revolution did more than simply arouse their admiration; it showed them an example in methods of action. Its power in decisive moments was the power of spontaneous mass action of the industrial workers in the big towns. Out of these actions the Russian workers also built up that form of organization most appropriate to independent action — the soviets or councils. Thus they became the guides and teachers of the workers in other countries.

When a year later, November, 1918, the German empire collapsed, the appeal to world revolution issued by the Russian Bolsheviks was hailed and welcomed by the foremost revolutionary groups in Western Europe.

These groups, calling themselves communists, were so strongly impressed by the proletarian character of the revolutionary struggle in Russia that they overlooked the fact that, economically, Russia stood only at the threshold of capitalism, and that the proletarian centers were only small islands in the ocean of primitive peasantry. Moreover they reasoned that when a world revolution came, Russia would be only a world-province — the place where the struggle started — whereas the more advanced countries of big capitalism would soon take the lead and determine the world's real course.

But the first rebellious movement among the German workers was beaten down. It was only an advanced minority that took part; the great mass held aloof, nursing the illusion that quiet and peace were now possible. Against the rebels stood a coalition of the Social-Democratic party, whose leaders occupied the government seats, and the old governing classes, bourgeoisie and army officers. While the former lulled the masses into inactivity, the latter organized armed bands that crushed the rebellious movement and murdered the revolutionary leaders, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

The Russian revolution, through fear, had aroused the bourgeoisie to greater energy than it aroused the proletariat through hope. Though, for the moment, the political organization of the bourgeoisie had collapsed, its real material and spiritual power was still enormous. The socialist leaders did nothing to weaken this power; they feared the proletarian revolution no less than the bourgeoisie did. They did everything to restore the capitalist order, in which, for the moment, they were ministers and presidents.

This did not mean that the proletarian revolution in Germany was a complete failure. Only the first attack, the first rebellion had failed. The military collapse had not led directly to a proletarian rule. The real power of the working class — clear consciousness on the part of the masses of their social position and the necessity for fighting, eager activity in all these hundreds of thousands, enthusiasm, solidarity and strong unity in action, awareness of the supreme aim: to take the means of production in their own hands — had to come up and grow gradually in any case. So much misery and crisis was threatening in the exhausted, shattered and impoverished post-war society that new fights were bound to come.

In all capitalist countries, in England, France, America as well as in Germany, revolutionary groups arose among the workers in 1919. They published papers and pamphlets, they showed their fellow workers new facts, new conditions, and new methods of fighting, and they found a good hearing among the alarmed masses. They pointed to the Russian revolution as their great example, to its methods of mass action and its soviet or council form of organization. They organized into communist parties and groups, associat-

ing themselves with the Bolshevik, the Russian Communist party. Thus the campaign for world revolution was launched.

IV.

Soon, however, these groups became aware with increasingly painful surprise that under the name of communism other principles and ideas than their own were being propagated from Moscow. They pointed to the Russian Soviets as the workers' new organs for self-rule in production. But gradually it became known that the Russian factories were again ruled by directors appointed from above, and that, the important political position had been seized by the Communist Party. These Western groups promulgated the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in opposition to the parliamentary democracy embodied the principle of self-rule of the working class as the political form of the proletarian revolution. But the spokesmen and leaders which Moscow sent to Germany and Western Europe proclaimed that the dictatorship of the proletariat was embodied in the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

The Western communists saw as their chief task the enlightening of the workers concerning the role of the socialist party and the unions. They pointed out that in these organizations the actions and decisions of the leaders were substituted for actions and decision of the workers, and that the leaders were never able to wage a revolutionary fight because a revolution consists in this very self action of the workers; that trade union actions and parliamentary practice are good in a young and quiet capitalist world, but are entirely unfit for revolutionary times, where, by diverting the attention of the workers from important aims and goals and directing them to unreal reforms, they work as hostile, reactionary forces; that all the power of these organizations, in the hands of the leaders, is used against the revolution. Moscow, however, demanded that communist parties should take part in parliamentary elections as well as in all union work. The Western communists preached independence, development of initiative, self-reliance, the rejection of dependence on and belief in leaders. But Moscow preached, in ever stronger terms, that obedience to the leaders was the chief virtue of the true communist.

Western communists did not immediately realize how fundamental was the contradiction. They saw that Russia, attacked from all sides by counter-revolutionary armies, which were supported by the English and French governments, needed sympathy and assistance from the Western working classes; not from small groups that fiercely attacked the old organizations, but from the old mass organizations themselves. They tried to convince Lenin and the Russian leaders that they were ill-informed about the real conditions and the future of the proletarian movement in the West. In vain, of course. They did not see, at the time, that in reality it was the conflict of two concepts of revolution, the middle class revolution and the proletarian revolution.

It was only natural that Lenin and his comrades were utterly unable to see that the impending proletarian revolution of the West was quite a different thing from their Russian revolution. Lenin did not know capitalism from within, at its highest development, as a world of enlarging proletarian masses, moving up to the time when they could seize power to lay hands on a potentially perfect production apparatus. Lenin knew capitalism only from without, as a foreign, robbing, devastating usurer, such as the Western financial and colonial capital must have appeared to him in Russia and other Asiatic countries. His idea was that in order to conquer, the Western masses had only to join the anti-capitalistic power established in Russia; they should not obstinately try to seek other ways but were to follow the Russian example. Hence flexible tactics were needed in the West to win the great masses of socialist and union members as soon as possible, to induce them to leave their old leaders and parties that were bound to their national governments, and to join the communist parties, without the necessity of changing their own ideas and convictions. So Moscow tactics followed logically from the basic misunderstanding.

And what Moscow propagated had by far the greatest weight. It had the authority of a victorious against a defeated (German) revolution. Will you be wiser than your teachers? The moral authority of Russian Communism was so undisputed that even a year later the excluded German opposition asked to be admitted as a "sympathizing" adherent to the Third International. But besides moral authority, the Russians had the material authority of money behind them. An enormous amount of literature, easily paid for by Moscow subsidies, flooded the Western countries: weekly papers, pamphlets, exciting news about successes in Russia, scientific reviews, all explaining Moscow's views. Against this overwhelming offensive of noisy propaganda, the small groups of Western communists, with their lack of financial means, had no chance. So the new and sprouting recognition of the conditions necessary for revolution were beaten down and strangled by Moscow's powerful weapons. Moreover Russian subsidies were used to support a number of salaried party secretaries, who, under threat of being fired, naturally turned into defenders of Russian tactics.

When it became apparent that even all this was not sufficient, Lenin himself wrote his well known pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism — An Infantile Disease". Though his arguments showed only his lack of understanding of Western conditions, the fact that Lenin, with his still unbroken authority, so openly took sides in the internal differences, had a great influence on a number of Western communists. And yet, notwithstanding all this, the majority of the German communist party stuck to the knowledge they had gained through their experience of proletarian struggles. So at their next congress at Heidelberg, Dr. Levi, by some dirty tricks, had first to divide the majority — to exclude one part, and then to outvote the other part — in order to win a formal and apparent victory for the Moscow tactics.

The excluded groups went on for some years disseminating their ideas. But their voices were drowned out by the enormous noise of Moscow propaganda. They had no appreciable influence on the political events of the next years. They could only maintain and further develop, by mutual theoretical discussions and some publications, their understanding of the conditions of proletarian revolution, and keep them alive for times to come.

The beginnings of a proletarian revolution in the West had been killed by the powerful middle class revolution of the East.

V.

Is it correct to call this Russian revolution that destroyed the bourgeoisie and introduced socialism a middle class revolution?

Some years afterwards in the big towns of poverty-stricken Russia special shops with plate glass fronts and exquisite, expensive delicacies appeared, especially for the rich, and luxurious night clubs were opened, frequented by gentlemen and ladies in evening dress — chiefs of departments, high officials, directors of factories and committees. They were stared at in surprise by the poor in the streets, and the disillusioned communists said: "There go the new bourgeoisie". They were wrong. It was not a new bourgeoisie; but it was a new ruling class. When a new ruling class comes up, disappointed revolutionaries always call it by the name of the former ruling class. In the French revolution, the rising capitalists were called "the new aristocracy". Here in Russia the new class firmly seated in the saddle as masters of the production apparatus was the bureaucracy. It had to play in Russia the same role that in the West the middle class, the bourgeoisie, had played: to develop the country by industrialization from primitive conditions to high productivity.

Just as in Western Europe the bourgeoisie had risen out of the common people of artisans and peasants, including some aristocrats, by ability, luck and cunning, so the Russian ruling bureaucracy had risen from the working class and the peasants (including former officials) by ability, luck and cunning. The difference is that in the U.S.S.R. they did not own the means of production individually, but collectively; so their mutual competition, too, must go on in other forms. This means a fundamental difference in the economic system; collective, planned production and exploitation instead of individual haphazard production and exploitation; state capitalism instead of private capitalism. For the working masses, however, the difference is slight, not fundamental; once more they are exploited by a middle class. But now this exploitation is intensified by the dictatorial form of government, by the total lack of all those liberties which in the West render fighting against the bourgeoisie possible.

This character of modern Russia determined the character of the fight of the Third International. Alternating red-hot revolutionary utterances with the flattest parliamentary opportunism, or combining both, the 3rd

International tried to win the adherence of the working masses of the West. It exploited the class antagonism of the workers against capitalism to win power for the Party. It caught up all the revolutionary enthusiasm of youth and all the rebellious impulses of the masses, prevented them from developing into a growing proletarian power, and wasted them in worthless political adventures. It hoped thus to get power over the Western bourgeoisie; but it was not able to do so, because understanding of the inner-most character of big capitalism was totally lacking. This capitalism cannot be conquered by an outside force; it can be destroyed only from within, by the proletarian revolution. Class domination can be destroyed only by the initiative and insight of a self-reliant proletarian class: party discipline and obedience of the masses to their leaders can lead only to a new class-domination. Indeed in Italy and Germany this activity of the Communist Party prepared the way for fascism.

The Communist Parties that belong to the Third International are entirely — materially and mentally — dependent on Russia, are the obedient servants of the rulers of Russia. Hence, when Russia, after 1933, felt that it must line up with France against Germany, all former intransigence was forgotten. The Comintern became the champion of "democracy" and united not only with the socialists but even with some capitalist parties into the so-called Popular Front. Gradually its power to attract, through pretending that it represented the old revolutionary traditions, began to disappear; its proletarian following diminished.

But at the same time, its influence on the intellectual middle classes in Europe and America apparently began to grow. A large number of books and reviews in all fields of social thought were issued by more or less camouflaged C.P. publishing houses in England, France, and America. Some of them were valuable historical studies or popular compilations; but mostly they were worthless expositions of so-called Leninism. All this was literature evidently not intended for workers, but for intellectuals, in order to win them over to Russian communism.

The new approach met with some success. The ex-soviet diplomat Alexander Barmine tells in his memoirs how he perceived with surprise in western Europe that just when he and other Bolsheviks began to have their doubts as to the outcome of the Russian revolution, the Western middle class intellectuals, misled by the lying praises of the successes of the Five Year Plan, began to feel a sympathetic interest in Communism. The reason is clear: now that Russia was obviously not a workers' state any more, they felt that this state-capitalistic rule of a bureaucracy came nearer to their own ideals of rule by the intelligentsia than did the European and American rule of big finance. Now that a new ruling minority over and above the masses was established in Russia, the Communist Party, its foreign servant had

to turn to those classes from which, when private capitalism collapsed, new rulers for exploiting the masses could arise.

Of course, to succeed in this way, they need a workers' revolution to put down capitalist power. Then they must try to divert it from its own aims and make it the instrument for their party rule. So we see what kind of difficulties the future working class revolution may have to face. It will have to fight not only the bourgeoisie but the enemies of the bourgeoisie as well. It has not only to throw off the yoke of its present masters; it must also keep free from those who would try to be its future masters.

VI.

The world has now entered into its new great imperialistic war. Cautious though the warring governments may be in handling the economic and social forces and in trying to prevent hell from breaking loose entirely, they will not be able to hold back a social catastrophe. With the general exhaustion and impoverishment, most severe on the European continent, with the spirit of fierce aggressiveness still mighty, violent class struggles will accompany the unavoidable new adjustments of the system of production. Then, with private capitalism broken down, the issues will be planned economy, state capitalism, workers' exploitation on the one side; workers' freedom and mastery over production on the other.

The working class is going into this war burdened with the capitalistic tradition of Party leadership and the phantom tradition of a revolution of the Russian kind. The tremendous pressure of this war will drive the workers into spontaneous resistance against their governments and into the beginnings of new forms of real fight. When it happens that Russia enters the field against the Western powers, it will re-open its old box of slogans and make an appeal to the workers for "world revolution against capitalism" in an attempt to get the rebellious-minded workers on its side. So Bolshevism would have its chance once more. But this would be no solution for the problems of the workers. When the general misery increases and conflicts between classes become fiercer, the working class must, out of its own necessity, seize the means of production and find ways to free itself from the influence of Bolshevism.

Anton Pannekoek.

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THE FASCIST COUNTER REVOLUTION

What hope have we revolutionary Marxists, remnants of a past epoch, inheritors of its most advanced theories, illusions, ideologies — what hope have we left for a revolutionary turn of the sweeping counter-revolutionary movement of victorious fascism? The fate of France has finally proved that the old Marxist slogan of "world revolution" has in our epoch assumed a new meaning. We find ourselves today in the midst not of a socialist and proletarian but of an ultra-imperialistic and fascist world revolution. Just as in the preceding epoch every major defeat — the defeat of France in 1871, that of Russia, Germany, Hungary in 1905, 1917, 1918 — resulted in a genuine revolution, so in our time each defeated country resorts to a fascist counter-revolution. Moreover, present-day war itself has become a revolutionary process, a civil war with an unmistakably predominant counter-revolutionary tendency. Just as in a horse race we do not know which horse will win but we do know that it will be a horse, so in the present war the victory of either party will result in a further gigantic step toward the fascisation of Europe, if not of the whole European, American, Asiatic world of tomorrow.

I.

There seem to be two easy ways for the "orthodox" Marxist of today to handle this difficult problem. Well-trained in Hegelian philosophical thought, he might say that all that is, is reasonable, and that, by one of those "dialectical" shifts in which history rejoices, socialism has been fulfilled by the social revolution implied in the victory of fascism. Thus Hegel himself at first followed the rising star of the French Revolution, later embraced the cause of Napoleon, and ended by acclaiming the Prussian state that emerged from the anti-Napoleonic wars of 1812-1815 as the fulfillment of the philosophical "idea" and as the "state of reason" corresponding to the given stage of its historical development.

Or, for that matter, our orthodox Marxist might not be willing, for the present, to go so far as to acknowledge the fascist allies of Stalin as the genuine promoters of socialism in our time. He would then content himself with feeling that the victory of fascism, planned economy, state capitalism, and the weeding out of all ideas and institutions of traditional "bourgeois democracy" will bring us to the very threshold of the genuine social revolution and proletarian dictatorship — just as, according to the teachings of the early church, the ultimate coming of Christ will be immediately preceded by the coming of the Anti-Christ who will be so much like Christ in his

appearance and in his actions that the faithful will have considerable difficulty in seeing the difference.

In so reasoning, our orthodox Marxist would not only conform with the church but would also keep well in line with the precedents set by the earlier socialists and "revolutionary" Marxists themselves. It was not only the moderately progressive bourgeois ex-minister Guizot who was deceived by the revolutionary trimmings of Louis Napoleon's coup d'état of 1851 and, when he heard the news burst out into the alarmed cry, "This is the complete and final triumph of socialism". Even the leading representative of French socialism, P. J. Proudhon, was taken in by the violently anti-bourgeois attitude displayed by the revolutionary imperialist, and he devoted a famous pamphlet to the thesis that the coup d'état of the Second of December did in fact "demonstrate the social revolution".*

Indeed, in many ways that counter-revolutionary aftermath of 1848 is comparable to the infinitely more serious and more extended counter-revolutionary movement through which European society is passing today after the experience of the Russian, the German, and the other European revolutions which followed in the wake of the first world war. Every party and every political tendency had to go through a certain period of bewilderment until it had adapted itself to a totally changed situation. Marx himself, although he utterly despised the imperialist adventurer because of his personal inadequacy, was inclined to believe in the revolutionary significance of the counter-revolutionary coup. He described the historical outcome of the two years of revolutionary defeat from 1848 to 1849 by the paradoxical statement that "this time the advance of the revolutionary movement did not effect itself through its immediate tragi-comic achievements but, the other way round, through the creation of a united and powerful counter-revolution, through the creation of an antagonist by opposing whom the party of revolt will reach its real revolutionary maturity".** And even after the fateful event he most emphatically restated his conviction that "the destruction of the parliamentary republic contains the germs of the triumph of the proletarian revolution".*** This is exactly what the German communists and their Russian masters said 80 years later when they welcomed the advent of Nazism in Germany as a "victory of revolutionary communism".

This ambiguous attitude of Proudhon and Marx toward counter-revolution was repeated ten years later by Ferdinand Lassalle, a close theoretical disciple of Marx and at that time the foremost leader of the growing socialist movement in Germany. He was prepared to cooperate with Bismarck at the time when that unscrupulous statesman was toying with the idea of bribing the workers into acceptance of his imperialistic plans by an apparent

* *Oeuvres Complètes de Proudhon*, vol. VII, Paris 1868

**First article on *Class Struggles in France*. *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, January 1850

*** *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, February 1852

adoption of the universal franchise and some other ideas borrowed from the 1848 revolution and the Second Empire. Lassalle did not live to see Bismarck at the end of the 70's, when he had subdued the liberals and the ultramontane catholic party, revert to his old dream of enforcing a kind of "tory-socialism" based on a ruthless persecution and suppression of all genuine socialist workers' movements.

There is no need to discuss the wholesale conversion of internationalists into nationalists and proletarian social democrats into bourgeois democratic parliamentarians during and after the first world war. Even such formerly Marxists as Paul Lensch accepted the war of the Kaiser as a realistic fulfillment of the dreams of a socialist revolution, and the about-face of the socialists they themselves glorified as a "revolutionization of the revolutionaries". There was a "national-bolshevist" fraction of the German Communist Party long before there was a Hitlerian National-Socialist Party. Nor does the military alliance that was concluded "seriously and for a long time" between Stalin and Hitler in August 1939 contain any novelty for those who have followed the historical development of the relations between Soviet Russia and imperial, republican, and Hitlerian Germany throughout the last twenty years. The Moscow treaty of 1939 had been preceded by the treaties of Rapallo in 1920 and of Berlin in 1926. Mussolini had already for several years openly proclaimed his new fascist credo when Lenin was scolding the Italian communists for their failure to enlist that invaluable dynamic personality in the service of their revolutionary cause. As early as 1917, during the peace negotiations in Brest Litovsk, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been aware of the dreadful danger that was threatening the proletarian revolution from that side. They had said in so many words that "Russian socialism based on reactionary Prussian bayonets would be the worst that still could happen to the revolutionary workers' movement".

It appears from this historical record that there is indeed something basically wrong with the traditional Marxian theory of the social revolution and with its practical application. There is no doubt, today less than at any former time in history, that the Marxian analysis of the working of the capitalist mode of production and of its historical development is fundamentally correct. Yet it seems that the Marxian theory in its hitherto accepted form is unable to deal with the new problems that arise in the course of a not merely occasional and temporary but deep-rooted, comprehensive, and enduring counter-revolutionary development.

II.

The main deficiency of the Marxian concept of the counter-revolution is that Marx did not, and from the viewpoint of his historical experience could not, conceive of the counter-revolution as a normal phase of social development. Like the bourgeois liberals he thought of the counter-revolution as an "abnormal" temporary disturbance of a normally progressive

development. (In the same manner, pacifists to the present day think of war as an abnormal interruption of the normal state of peace, and physicians and psychiatrists until recently thought of disease and more especially the diseases of the mind as an abnormal state of the organism.) There is, however, between the Marxian approach and that of the typical bourgeois liberal this important difference: they start from a totally different idea about just what is a normal condition. The bourgeois liberal regards existing conditions or at least their basic features as the normal state of things, and any radical change as its abnormal interruption. It does not matter to him whether that disturbance of existing normal conditions results from a genuinely progressive movement or from a reactionary attempt to borrow revolution's thunder for the purpose of a counter-revolutionary aggression. He is afraid of the counter-revolution just as much as of the revolution and just because of its resemblance to a genuine revolution. That is why Guizot called the coup d'état "the complete and final triumph of the socialist revolution" and why, for that matter, Hermann Rauschning today describes the advent of Hitlerism as a "revolt of nihilism".

As against the bourgeois concept, the Marxian theory has a distinct superiority. It understands revolution as a completely normal process. Some of the best Marxists, including Marx himself and Lenin, even said on occasion that revolution is the only normal state of society. So it is, indeed, under those objective historical conditions which are soberly stated by Marx in his Preface to the "Critique of Political Economy".

Marx did not, however, apply the same objective and historical principle to the process of counter-revolution, which was known to him only in an undeveloped form. Thus, he did not see, and most people do not see today, that such important counter-revolutionary developments as those of present-day Fascism and Nazism have, in spite of their violent revolutionary methods, much more in common with *evolution* than they have with a genuine revolutionary process. It is true that in their talk and propaganda both Hitler and Mussolini have directed their attack mostly against revolutionary Marxism and Communism. It is also true that before and after their seizure of state power they made a most violent attempt to weed out every Marxist and Communist tendency in the working classes. Yet this was not the main content of the fascist counter-revolution. In its actual results the fascist attempt to renovate and transform the traditional state of society does not offer an alternative to the radical solution, aimed at by the revolutionary communists. The fascist counter-revolution rather tried to replace the reformist socialist parties and trade unions, and in this it succeeded to a great extent.

The underlying historical law, the *law of the fully developed fascist counter-revolution of our time*, can be formulated in the following manner: After the complete exhaustion and defeat of the revolutionary forces, the fascist counter-revolution attempts to fulfil, by new revolutionary methods and in widely different form, those social and political tasks which the so-

called reformistic parties and trade unions had promised to achieve but in which they could no longer succeed under the given historical conditions.

A revolution does not occur at some arbitrary point of social development but only at a definite stage. "At a certain stage of their development the material productive forces of society come into contradiction with the existing production-relations (or property-relations) within which they hitherto moved. From being forms of development, those relations turn into fetters upon the forces of production. *Then a period of social revolution sets in.*" And again Marx emphasized, and even to a certain extent exaggerated, the objectivistic principle of his materialist theory of revolution according to which "a formation of society *never* perishes until *all* the forces of production for which it is wide enough have been developed." All this is true enough as far as it goes. We have all seen how evolutionary socialism reached the end of its rope. We have seen how the old capitalistic system based on free competition and the whole of its vast political and ideological superstructure was faced by chronic depression and decay. There seemed no way open except a wholesale transition to another, more highly developed form of society, to be effected by the social revolution of the proletarian class.

The new historical development during the last twenty years showed, however, that there was yet another course open. The transition to a new type of capitalistic society, that could no longer be achieved by the democratic and peaceful means of traditional socialism and trade-unionism, was performed by a counter-revolutionary and antiproletarian yet objectively progressive and ideologically anti-capitalistic and plebeian movement that had learned to apply to its restricted evolutionary aims the unrestricted methods developed during the preceding revolution. (More particularly, both Hitler and Mussolini had learned much in the school of Russian bolshevism.) Thus, it appeared that the evolution of capitalistic society had not reached its utter historical limit when the ruling classes and the reformistic socialists — those self-appointed "doctors at the sick-bed of capitalism" — reached the limits of their evolutionary possibilities. The phase of peaceful democratic reforms was followed by another evolutionary phase of development — that of the fascist transformation, revolutionary in its political form but evolutionary in its objective social contents.

The decisive reason that the capitalistic formation of society did not perish after the collapse of the first world war is that the workers did not make their revolution. "Fascism", said its closest enemy, "is a counter-revolution against a revolution that never took place."**** Capitalistic society did not perish, but instead entered a new revolutionary phase under the counter-revolutionary regime of fascism, because it was not destroyed by a successful workers' revolution, and because it had not, in fact, developed all the forces of production. The objective and the subjective premises are equally important for the counter-revolutionary conclusion.

**** Ignazio Silone, *School for Dictators*, 1938