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LENINISM OR MARXISM?

--- by ROSA LUXEMBURG.

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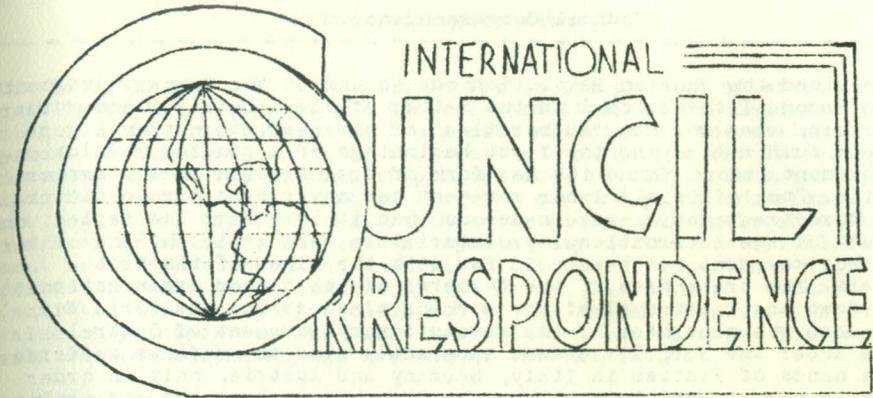
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First Complete English Translation

*** LENINISM OR MARXISM? ***

By ROSA LUXEBURG.

Introduction.

"Sensitive souls will again lament," wrote Rosa Luxemburg at the end of her quarrel with the pseudo-Marxists of the Second International, "that Marxists wrangle among themselves, and that approved "authorities" are combatted. But Marxism is not a handful of individuals who confer upon each other the right of "expert judgment" and before whom the great mass of believers is expected to die in a state of blind confidence. Marxism is a revolutionary view of the world which must constantly strive for new insights, which eschews nothing so much as the holding on to forms which have lost their validity, and which best preserves its vital strength in occasional clashes of self-criticism".

These sentiments of Rosa Luxemburg, written in jail during the World War, deserve to be repeated today louder than ever. The cry for unity which is now so much in favor, and which, after the frightful defeats of the international proletariat, serves merely to veil the fact that with the present labor organizations the forming of a genuine proletarian class front is impossible, must be answered by the revolutionary workers with unsparing criticism. The old, outlived labor movement excludes any real united front, which is possible only upon the basis of the genuine class struggle and not upon that of organizations. The unity of the dead form is the death of the fighting spirit of the working class. The proper concern is rather with breaking up the organizations which have become a fetter upon the class struggle, in order to make the working class fit for struggle. And what today must be broken up are not only the wretched remains of the dilapidated organizations of the Second International and of the trade union movement, but also the organizations of the "heirs" of the reformist movement, the Third International and its various 'right' and 'left' offshoots.

Scarcely had the Russian Revolution put an end to the "expert judgment of the Second International in the matter of class betrayal and murder of workers, when the new "authorities" of the new international were in their turn destroying the first beginnings of a genuine revolutionary movement, which found its new form of organization in the workers' councils. The 'official' labor movement has never been more contemptible, more treasonable, more nauseous than it is today. The neglect on the part of the international proletariat to make a violent end of the old labor movement has been paid for with the blood of its best fighters. The brazenness of the "owners" of the "labor organizations" lived down their betrayal of the working class during the World War, lived down the slaughter of the revolutionary movement of Central Europe after the War, lived down apparently also the defeats suffered at the hands of Fascism in Italy, Germany and Austria, only in order to make a new attempt to continue the treacherous business and prolong its parasitical existence at the expense of the workers. Though the organizations of both the Internationals are politically done for, they nevertheless still persist as traditions in the minds of the workers and poison the first attempts at the forming of genuine fighting instruments. They must further be shattered even as a tradition, and within the scope of this necessity lies also the destruction of the Lenin legend so artificially built up.

The history of the Leninist, pseudo-communist parties of the Third International is the history of uninterrupted inner crises. Their development could really take no other course; for the whole ideological and tactical baggage of the Third International is a mixture of social-democratic traditions and so-called 'experiences' of the Bolshevik Party--combined with the needs of Russian national policy (directed toward making Russia one of the Great Powers), which determine the political line of that International. Yet one of the elementary truths of the materialist dialectic is that the methods and means of struggle which are proper to a given period and to a determinate place prove inept when transferred to another period and to other localities and relations. For this reason, the tactic of the Third International did not, and does not, meet the needs of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat; and still less in harmony with this struggle is Russian domestic politics.

The defiling of Marxism, from opportunistic considerations, at the hands of Lenin's international, is no less extensive than that which it has suffered through the Second International. Neither of them has any connection with revolutionary Marxism. The un-Marxist character of Lenin's thought, for example, may be glimpsed in the fact that, misled by the ideological backwardness of the Russian workers while at the same time accepting the mechanistic conceptions of Plechanoff and Kautsky, he came to the philosophical conclusion that the working class will never be capable of developing a revolutionary class-consciousness but that such consciousness must be 'imposed' on the masses by the revolutionary party, which gets its ideas from the intellectuals. In his pamphlet "What's To Be Done", this view is given the clearest possible expression, and the upshot is that without a party, and, here again, a sharply centralized and strictly disciplined party, a revolutionary movement is -- possible, no doubt, but can in no case be a successful one. His principle of organization and revolution is of a disarming simplicity; the objective situation creates revolutionary ferments, which it is the duty of the Party to exploit.

The Party is the most important factor in the process of overthrow. The quality of the Party, of the central committee, of the leaders, of the slogans, the proper turns at the proper moment - on these alone depends, in the last instance, the weal and woe of the revolutionary movement. Hence the forming of professional revolutionists and the demand for fanatic discipline in carrying out the party decisions, without regard for the fact that in this way history again becomes the "work of great men". The role of spontaneity in the historical development was misunderstood and underrated; it was of importance only in so far as it could be influenced by the Party. The workers' councils (soviets) arising spontaneously out of the masses themselves were of value only insofar as the Party was able to control them. The Party itself was the beginning and the end of the Revolution.

Such a position is idealistic, mechanistic, one-sided, and certainly not Marxist. To Marx, revolutionary consciousness occurs not only as ideology, but the proletariat as such, without regard to ideological factors, is the actualization of revolutionary consciousness. The Party to Marx, is welcome and a matter of course, but not unconditionally necessary; quite apart from the further consideration that revolutionary consciousness can also manifest itself in other than the party forms. Even without the existence of a Party, without a central committee, and without a Lenin, the revolution must finally come about, since it receives its strongest nourishment from the increasing social forces of production and not merely from the productive relations. The ideology corresponds to the social relations, but the driving forces of the revolution lie deeper; they are identical with the proletariat, as the strongest force of production. Class consciousness, to Marx, is not merely the revolutionary ideology crystallized in the Party, but the truly practical class struggle, through the growth of which (not the growth of the Party) the revolutionary movement is necessarily brought to a successful issue. To Marx, there is no separation between workers and Party; the existence of the Party is merely an expression of the fact that only minorities can do consciously what the masses themselves are compelled unconsciously to do. Even without a knowledge of the dialectical laws, the genuine movement remains dialectical. The minority is a part (though not the decisive part) of the revolutionary process; it does not produce the process but is produced by it. For Lenin, however, that minority is identified with the revolution itself.

The Leninist conception contradicts all historical experience as well as all theoretical considerations, and yet it is generally accepted today in the labor movement. The reason for this, however, consists merely in the fact that its untenability has been very largely obscured through the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia. The traditional enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution is still so strong that the countless defeats which the international proletariat has suffered through the agency of this same Party has, to be sure, shattered the confidence reposed in Lenin's epigones but not in his principles. Even those parties which take a position outside the bolshevik International, such as the Trotsky group or the American Workers Party, hold fast to the principles of this International, without considering that by so doing they convert their whole opposition into one which is purely tactical and hence impossible.

Let anyone compare the programs of these opposition groups with those of the bolsheviks. He will see at once that these new organizations

merely seek to restore what has already landed on the junk pile of history. All these formations are haunted by the ghost of Lenin who carried to its logical conclusion what had developed in the Second International; that is, the complete surrender of the working masses to the private needs of the professional bureaucracy in the organizations. "Back to Lenin" as people are so fond of shouting today, means to repeat the building up of labor organizations which of necessity, by reason of their very structure, must become obstacles to the revolutionary movement.

In the current debates on questions of organization of the proletarian revolution, it is significant that they are conducted upon a level far beneath that of 1916--in fact, as will be clear from the work of Rosa Luxemburg herewith presented, far beneath the 1904 level. Just let us compare, for example, the political conclusions drawn by Karl Liebknecht from the treason of the Second International with those of the neo-bolshevist movements of 1934, and it becomes clear at once that these latter have forgotten everything and learned nothing. "The interest of the professional bureaucracy within the labor movement," writes Karl Liebknecht, ("Nachlass" written 1916 in the house of detention) "aims at nothing so much as the avoidance of any serious discussion, any decisive conflict. It is directed toward official relations, toward the continuance of a labor movement which goes along at an even pace, one which is well tolerated and even looked upon with favor by the ruling classes. The movement must never endanger the 'organizations' and the positions of the bureaucrats. To them, the organization is an end in itself, not a means to the revolutionary end. The struggle of the organizations among themselves, that is, of the source of existence of the professional leaders, for the purpose of winning members, is the one end for which they can be had for struggles at all -- struggles within local limits, to which they give their consent reluctantly at the insistence of the masses. They are not revolutionists, but reformists at most; they are completely "above the battle"--a paradoxically parasitic element attached to the capitalistic social order.

"That is the fatal circle in which these organizations move--the great centralized affairs provided with functionaries living on a fixed salary and, considering their previous class level, a very good salary. In this professional bureaucracy they not only produce an element which is absolutely hostile to the revolutionary interests of the proletariat, but convert that element into their leaders with full powers, who easily become their tyrants. Meanwhile the mental and moral independence, the will, the initiative, the personal action of the masses is suppressed or quite eliminated. To this professional bureaucracy also belong the salaried parliamentarians.

"There is only one remedy at hand for this evil; removal of the salaried bureaucracy, or its elimination from the forming of all resolutions and limiting its functions to technical assistance. To which may be added: No reelection of any official after a certain tenure,--a measure which would serve at the same time to increase the number of proletarians familiar with organizational and technical matters; possibility of recall at any time during the term of office; restriction of the competency of authorities; decentralization; vote of all members on important questions. In the election of officials, the decisive weight must be laid upon their having stood the test of decided, mili-

tant, revolutionary action, of revolutionary fighting spirit, of unreserved self-sacrifice inclusive of staking their whole existence for the cause. The training of the masses and of each individual for mental and moral independence, for skepticism regarding authority, for decided self-initiative, for readiness and capacity for free action, forms the only sure foundation for the development of a labor movement equal to its historic task, as well as the most essential pre-supposition for the eradication of bureaucratic dangers."

That was in 1916. A little later, Liebknecht and Luxemburg, and, with them, all true revolutionists saw with aversion that with the consolidation of party rule in Russia, with the degeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat into the dictatorship of the bolshevist bosses, the real content of the revolution of 1917 was again dissipated. With the putting down of the German revolutionary movement, with the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, everything which had already been won by revolutionary criticism was lost again in the false enthusiasm for the Russian bogus socialism. We now have to start again from the beginning.

The collapse of the Third International was first required in order to bring about a real decision in the theoretical struggle which took place between Lenin and Luxemburg thirty years ago. History has decided in favor of Rosa Luxemburg. In laying her criticism of the opportunistic principles of Lenin before the proletariat again today, we are conscious of the fact that her argument might be considerably extended, that her standpoint was not a final one, that her position was still influenced (and necessarily so) by the Social Democracy. But regardless of the extent to which her criticism can no longer be regarded as having more than a historic interest, what she had to say against the Leninist form of organization is more to the point today than when it was written. The need for destroying the Lenin legend, as a prerequisite for a complete reorientation of the labor movement, restores to the work of Rosa Luxemburg a contemporary value. This pamphlet will be followed by others in which the question will be taken up at the point where Rosa Luxemburg was obliged to drop it when her life was snuffed out by the capitalistic gunmen of the Social Democracy.

- UNITED WORKERS PARTY OF AMERICA.-

NOTICE.

 * A few pages of this pamphlet by Rosa Luxemburg *
 * have been published in English before, but this *
 * is the first time the whole subject has been *
 * covered entirely with but a few sentences omit *
 * ted which today have no meaning or relation *
 * ship to the subject. *
 * *
 * - Editor - *

LENINISM or MARXISM?

By Rosa Luxemburg.

Part I.

Organizational Questions of the Proletarian Revolution.

In the Social Democracy, organization too is a different thing from that of the earlier, utopian attempts at Socialism; being not an artificial product of propaganda but an historical product of the class struggle, a product into which the Social Democracy brings nothing more than the political consciousness. Under normal conditions, that is, where the class rule of the bourgeoisie precedes the social-democratic movement, the first political welding together of the workers has in large measure been the work of the bourgeoisie itself. "On this plane," says the Communist Manifesto, "the drawing together of workers in mass is not yet the consequence of their own union, but the consequence of the union of the bourgeoisie." In Russia there has fallen to the Social Democracy the task of consciously stepping in and taking over a part of the historical process and of leading the proletariat, as a fighting class which is conscious of its goal, from political authoritarianism, which forms the foundation of the absolutist regime, direct to the highest form of organization. Thus the organizational question is especially difficult to the Social Democracy of Russia not merely because its work must be done without any previous experience of bourgeois democracy, but especially because it has to create, in a sense, like the good Lord himself, "out of nothing", without the political raw material which is elsewhere ready prepared by bourgeois society.

The problem on which the Russian Social Democracy has been working the last few years is precisely the transition from the dispersed, quite independent circles and local organizations, which corresponded to the preparatory and primarily propagandistic phase of the movement, to a form of organization such as is required for a unified political action of the masses throughout the nation.

Since, however, the most prominent trait of the old form of organization, now grown unbearable and politically surpassed, was dispersion and complete autonomy, or the self-sufficiency of the local organizations, it was quite natural that the watchword of the new phase, of the preparatory work for the great organization, should become-- centralism. The emphasis on this thought was the leitmotif of Iskra in its brilliant three-year campaign for preparing the last and really constituent party congress, and the same thought dominated the entire young guard of the party. However, it was soon to appear at the Congress, and still more so after the Congress, that centralism is a slogan which is far from exhausting the historical content, the peculiarity of the social-democratic type of organization; it has been shown once more that the marxist conception of Socialism is not susceptible of being fixed in formulas.

The present book of Comrade Lenin, one of the prominent leaders and debaters of Iskra in its campaign preliminary to the Russian Party

Congress (*), is the systematic exposition of the views of the ultra-centralist wing of the party. The conception which has here found expression in penetrating and exhaustive form is that of a thorough-going centralism of which the vital principle is, on the one hand, the sharp separation of the organized bodies of outspoken and active revolutionists from the unorganized though revolutionarily active masses surrounding them, and on the other hand, strict discipline and direct, decisive and determining intervention of the central authorities in all expressions of life in the party's local organizations. It suffices to note, for example, that the central committee, according to this conception, is authorized to organize all sub-committees of the party, hence also has power to determine the personal composition of every single local organization, from Geneva and Liege to Tomsk and Irkutsk, to give it a set of self-made local statutes, to completely dissolve it by a decree and create it anew, and finally in this manner to influence the composition of the highest party authority, the Party Congress. According to this, the central committee appears as the real active nucleus of the party, and all other organizations merely as its executive organs.

In the union of such a strict centralism in organization with the social-democratic mass movement, Lenin perceives a specific marxist-revolutionary principle, and has succeeded in bringing into the field a large number of facts to support his conception. Still, let us look into the matter a bit more closely.

There can be no doubt that a strong centralistic streak is native to the Social Democracy. Having sprung from the economic soil of capitalism, which is centralistic in its tendencies, and confined in its struggle to the political framework of a centralized great power under the dominance of the bourgeoisie, the Social Democracy is fundamentally opposed to any particularism or national federalism. Called upon to represent, in opposition to all partial and group interests of the proletariat, and within the framework of a given State, the total interests of the proletariat as a class, it reveals everywhere the natural striving to weld together all national, religious and professional groups of the working class into one unified party.

In this respect, there has been and is, for the Social Democracy also of Russia, no question but that it must form, not a federative conglomerate made up of a great number of special organizations on a national and provincial scale, but a unified, compact labor party of the Russian Empire. There is, however, a quite different question also to be considered: namely, the greater or less degree of centralization and the detailed structure within a united and unified party.

From the standpoint of the formal tasks of the Social Democracy as a fighting party, centralism in its organization appears a priori as an indispensable condition upon the fulfillment of which the fighting qualities of the party stand in direct relation. More important here, however, than the consideration of the formal demands of any fighting organization are the specific historical conditions of the proletarian struggle.

The social-democratic movement is the first one in the history of class societies which in all its factors, throughout its course, is (*). N. Lenin: "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward".-Geneva, 1904.

calculated upon the organization and the initiative of the masses. In this respect, the Social Democracy creates a quite different type of organization than did the earlier socialist movements; for example, those of the Jacobin and Blanquist type.

Lenin appears to underrate this fact when he states in his book that the revolutionary Social Democrat is, after all, simply "the Jacobin inseparably linked with the organization of the class-conscious proletariat". In the organization and class consciousness of the proletariat, Lenin perceives the only factors which differentiate the Social Democracy from Blanquism. He forgets that this difference involves also a complete transvaluation of organizational concepts, a quite new content of the many-sided relation between organization and struggle.

Up to this point we have regarded the question of centralism from the standpoint of the general bases of the Social Democracy and also in part from that of the present-day relations in Russia. But the night-watchman spirit of the ultra-centralism championed by Lenin and his friends is by no means, as concerns him personally, an accidental product of errors but is bound up with a thorough-going opposition to ---opportunism.

"The question is," says Lenin, "by means of the rules of organization, to forge a more or less sharp weapon against opportunism. The deeper the sources of opportunism lie, the sharper must be this weapon."

Lenin perceives also in the absolute power of the central committee and in the strict hedging off of the party by statute the one effective dike against the opportunistic current, the specific earmarks of which he denotes as the inborn academic predilection for autonomism, for disorganization, and the wincing at strict party discipline and at any 'bureaucratism' in the party life. Only the socialist 'Literat', thanks to his innate instability and individualism, can, in Lenin's opinion, oppose such unlimited powers of the central committee; a genuine proletarian, on the other hand, must, even as a result of his revolutionary class instinct, experience a sort of rapture at all the stiffness, strictness and smartness of his highest party officials, and subjects himself to all the rude operations of party discipline with joyously closed eyes. "Bureaucratism as against democratism," says Lenin, "that is precisely the organizational principle of the Social Democracy as opposed to the organizational principle of the opportunists." He appeals insistently to the fact that the same opposition between the centralistic and the autonomistic conception in the Social Democracy is becoming noticeable in all countries where the revolutionary and the reformist or revisionist tendency stand facing each other.

First of all, it must be noted that the strong emphasis laid on the inborn capacities of the proletarians for social-democratic organization and the contempt heaped upon the 'academic' elements of the social-democratic movement, is not in itself to be appraised as anything 'marxist-revolutionary'. All that sort of thing can equally well be regarded as bearing a relationship to opportunistic views.

There can, to be sure, be noted in what has hitherto been the practice of the Social Democracy of western Europe an undeniable connection between opportunism and the academic element, and also between opportunism and decentralist tendencies in questions of organization. But when

these phenomena, which arose upon a concrete historical soil, are released from this connection, and converted into abstract patterns with general and absolute validity, -- such a procedure is the greatest sin against the "Holy Ghost" of Marxism, namely, against his historic-dialectical method of thought.

Taken in the abstract, only so much may be definitely stated: that the 'intellectual', as an element stemming from the bourgeoisie and hence by nature foreign to the proletariat, can arrive at socialism not in accordance with his own class feeling but only through overcoming that feeling and by way of the socialist ideology, and is accordingly more predisposed to opportunistic strayings than is the enlightened proletarian, who, insofar as he has not lost the connection with his social origin, the proletarian mass, is provided with a sure revolutionary handhold in virtue of his immediate class instinct. As to the concrete form, however, in which this academic tendency to opportunism appears, particularly in matters of organization, -- that depends in each case on the concrete social milieu in question.

The phenomena in the life of the German as well as of the French and Italian Social Democracy to which Lenin appeals were the outgrowth of a quite determinate social basis, namely, bourgeois parliamentarism. Just as this latter is in general the specific soil of the present opportunistic current in the socialist movement of western Europe, so also have sprung from it the special tendencies of opportunism toward disorganization.

Parliamentarism supports not only all the illusions of present-day opportunism, as we have come to know them in France, Italy and Germany, but also the overestimation of reform work, of the cooperation of classes and parties, of peaceful development, etc. It forms at the same time the soil on which these illusions can be confirmed in practice, in that the intellectuals, who as parliamentarians even in the Social Democracy are still separated from the proletarian mass, are thus in the sense elevated over that mass. Finally, with the growth of the labor movement, the same parliamentarism makes of this movement a springboard for political upstarts, and accordingly easily converts it into a refuge for ambitious and bankrupt bourgeois existences.

From all these factors results also the definite inclination of the opportunistic intellectual of Western European Social Democracy to disorganization and lack of discipline. The second definite presupposition of the present-day opportunistic current is, of course, the presence of an already high stage of development of the social-democratic movement, hence also of an influential social-democratic party organization. The latter then appears as that bulwark of the revolutionary movement against bourgeois-parliamentarian tendencies -- a bulwark which has to be worn down and pulled apart so as to dissolve the compact and active kernel of the proletariat back into the amorphous mass of electors. In this way arise the historically well-grounded and determinate political aims of admirably adapted 'automatic' and decentralistic tendencies of modern opportunism; tendencies which, accordingly, are not to be traced back to the inborn slovenliness and looseness of the 'intellectual', as Lenin assumes, but to the needs of the bourgeois parliamentarian -- not to the psychology of the academic element, but to the politics of the opportunist.

But all these relations have a considerably different aspect in absolutist Russia, where the opportunism in the labor movement is by no means a product of the vigorous growth of the Social Democracy, of the decomposition of bourgeois society, but inversely a product of its political backwardness.

The Russian intelligentsia, from which the socialist intellectual is recruited, has naturally a much more indeterminate class character, is much more declassed in the exact sense of the word, than the intelligentsia of Western Europe. From this there results--in combination, to be sure, with the youthfulness of the proletarian movement in Russia--in general a much wider field for theoretical instability and opportunistic meanderings, which at one time take the form of a complete negation of the political side of the labor movement, and at another time turn toward the opposite belief in the exclusive blessedness of terrorism, and finally rest up in the 'philosophic' swamps of liberalism or of Kantian idealism.

But for the specific active tendency to disorganization, the social-democratic intellectual of Russia lacks, in our opinion, not only the positive hold in bourgeois parliamentarism but also the corresponding social-psychical milieu. The modern writer of western Europe who devotes himself to the cult of his alleged 'ego' and drags this 'master morality' even into the socialist world of struggle and thought, is not the type of bourgeois existence; he is in fact the product of a decadent, corrupted bourgeoisie already hidebound in the worst circle of its class rule. The utopian and opportunistic vagaries of the socialist intellectual of Russia incline inversely, as is readily understandable, rather to assume the inverted theoretical form of self-mortification, of self-flagellation. In fact, that erstwhile "going to the people", that is, among the populists the obligatory masquerade of the intellectual as a peasant, was nothing other than a despairing invention of the same intellectual, just as is nowadays the clumsy cult of the "horny hand" on the part of the pure 'Economists'.

The same reflection also makes clear that centralism in the social-democratic sense is not at all an absolute concept which can be carried out equally well at any stage of the labor movement, but that it must rather be regarded as a tendency, the actualization of which proceeds in step with the enlightenment and political schooling of the working class in the course of its struggle.

The insufficiency of the most important presuppositions for the full realization of centralism in the Russian movement at the present time may, to be sure, have a very baneful effect. Nevertheless it is false, in our opinion, to think that the still impracticable majority rule of the enlightened workers within their party organization may be replaced 'temporarily' by a 'transferred' sole-mastery on the part of the central authority of the party and that the lacking public control on the part of the working masses over the acts and omissions of the party organs would be just as well replaced by the inverted control of a central committee over the activity of the revolutionary workers.

The history of the Russian movement itself furnishes many proofs for the dubious value of centralism in this latter sense. The central committee with its almost unlimited authority of interference and control according to Lenin's ideal would evidently be an absurdity if it should

limit its power to the purely technical side of social-democratic activity, to the outer means and accessories of agitation--say, to the supplying of party literature and suitable distribution of agitational and financial forces. It would have a comprehensible political purpose only in case it were to employ its power in the creation of a unified fighting tactic for Russia and in the release of a great political action. What do we see, however, in the phases through which the Russian movement has already passed? Its most important and most fruitful tactical turns of the last decade were not by any means 'invented' by determinate leaders of the movement, and much less by leading organizations, but were in each case the spontaneous product of the unbound movement itself. So was the first stage of the genuine proletarian movement in Russia, which set in with the elemental outbreak of the great St. Petersburg strike in the year 1896 and which for the first time had inaugurated the economic mass action of the Russian proletariat. Likewise, the second phase--that of the political street demonstrations--was opened quite spontaneously as a result of the student unrests in St. Petersburg in March 1901. The further significant turning point, by which new horizons were opened to tactics, was the mass strike which broke out "all of itself" in Rostov on the Don, with its ad hoc improvised street agitation, the popular meetings under the open sky, the public addresses,--things of which the boldest blusterer among the Social Democrats would not have ventured to think a few years earlier. Of all these cases, we may say that in the beginning was "the deed". The initiative and conscious leadership of the social-democratic organizations played an exceedingly small role. This was not, however, so much the fault of defective preparation of these special organizations for their role--even though this factor may have been a considerable contributing cause--and certainly not of the lack at that time, in the Russian Social Democracy, of an all-powerful central committee in accordance with Lenin's plan. Inversely, such a committee would in all probability only have worked to the purpose of making the indecision of the various party committees still greater, and brought about a division between the storming masses and the procrastinating Social Democracy.

The same phenomenon--the small part played by the conscious initiative of the party leadership in the shaping of tactics--is still more observable in Germany and elsewhere. The fighting tactics of the Social Democracy, at least as regards its main features, is absolutely not 'invented', but is the result of a progressive series of great creative acts in the course of the experimenting and often elemental class struggle. Here also the unconscious precedes the conscious, the logic of the objective historical process goes before the subjective logic of its spokesmen. So that the role of the social-democratic leadership becomes one of an essentially conservative character, in that it leads to working out empirically to its ultimate conclusions the new experience acquired in the struggle and soon to converting it into a bulwark against a further innovation in the grand style. The present tactic of the German Social Democracy, for example, is generally admired for its remarkable manifoldness, flexibility and at the same time certainty. Such qualities simply mean, however, that our party has adapted itself wonderfully to its daily struggle to the present parliamentary basis, down to the least detail, that it knows how to exploit the whole field of battle offered by parliamentarism and to master it in accordance with given principles. At the same time, however, this specific formulation of tactics already serves to much to conceal the further horizon.

that one notes a strong inclination to eternalize that tactic and to regard the parliamentary tactic as the social-democratic tactic for all time. As illustrative of this mood, we may mention the vain efforts which Parvus has been making for years now to bring about a debate in the party press regarding an eventual reformulation of tactics in case of the abrogation of universal suffrage, in spite of the fact that such an eventuality is viewed by the party leaders in full and bitter seriousness. This inertia is, however, largely explained by the difficulty of giving contour and palpable forms to a still in-existent, hence imaginary, political struggle, whatever its weight in the empty air of abstract speculation. To the Social Democracy also, the important thing each time is not the premonition and formulation of a ready-made recipe for the future tactic, but the preservation within the party of the correct historical appraisal for the then prevailing forms of struggle, a lively feeling for the relativity of the given phase and for the necessary intensification of the revolutionary factors from the standpoint of the final goal of the proletarian movement.

But to desire, as Lenin does, to deck out a party leadership with such absolute powers of a negative character would be only to multiply artificially and in a most dangerous measure in conservatism which is a necessary outgrowth of every such leadership. Just as the social-democratic tactic was formed, not by a central committee but by the whole party or, more correctly stated, by the whole movement, so the separate organizations of the party plainly require such elbow-room as alone enables complete utilization of all means offered by the situation of the moment, as well as the unfolding of revolutionary initiative. The ultra-centralism advocated by Lenin, however, appears to us as something which, in its whole essence, is not informed with the positive and creative spirit, but with the sterile spirit of the night-watchman. His thought is patterned mainly upon the control of party activity and not upon its promotion, upon narrowing and not upon unfolding, upon the hemming and not upon the drawing together of the movement.

Such an experiment seems doubly dangerous to the Russian Social Democracy at the present time. The party stands on the eve of great revolutionary struggles for the overthrow of absolutism, before or rather engaged in a period of most intense creative activity in the field of tactics and--a thing which is self-evident in revolutionary epochs--of feverish extensions and shiftings of its sphere of influence. In such times, to insist on fettering the initiative of the party spirit and raising a barbed-wire fence around its capacity for leap-like expansion, would be to make the Social Democracy largely unfit in advance for the great tasks of the moment.

These general considerations on the peculiar content of social-democratic centralism do not, of course, permit of deducing the concrete provisions of the rules of organization for the Russian party. Those depend naturally, in the last instance, upon the concrete circumstances in which the activity unfolds in the given period, and--since we are concerned in Russia with what is, after all, the first attempt at a great proletarian party organization--can scarcely pretend to infallibility in advance, but must rather in each case first stand the test of practical life. What can be inferred, however, from the general conception of the social-democratic type of organization is the

main outlines, the spirit of the organization; and this spirit prescribes, especially in the beginnings of the mass movement, coordination and drawing together instead of regimentation and exclusiveness. If this spirit of political liberty, combined with a sharp eye to stability of principles and to the unity of the movement, has secured a foothold in the ranks of the party, in such a case the defects of any rules of organization, even of those which are awkwardly worded, will soon undergo effective revision through practice itself. It is not the wording of the regulations but the spirit and meaning incorporated into that wording by the active fighters which decides concerning the value of a form of organization.

Blanquism was not calculated upon the direct class action of the working masses, and accordingly did not need a mass organization. On the contrary, since the great mass of the people was not to appear on the scene of action until the time for the revolution, while the preliminary action for the preparation of a revolutionary insurrection was performed by a small minority, a sharp separation of the persons entrusted with this action from the mass of the people was an indispensable condition to the successful carrying out of their task. Such a separation was possible and practicable, since no inner connection existed between the daily life of the masses and the blanquist conspiratorial activity, and likewise the tactic and the more immediate objects of activity--since these had no connection with the soil of the elemental class struggle, but were improvised out of whole cloth--were worked out in full detail in advance, fixed and prescribed as a definite plan. For that reason the active members of the organizations were naturally transformed into pure executive organs of a previously determined will existing outside their own field of activity, into tools of a central committee. Thus we have also the second characteristic of conspiratorial centralism: the absolute, blind subordination of the different organs of the party to their central authority, and the extension of the decisive powers of this latter onto the outermost periphery of the party organization.

Fundamentally different are the conditions of social-democratic action. This action grows historically out of the elemental class struggle. In so doing, it works and moves in the dialectical contradiction that here the proletarian army is first recruited in the struggle itself, where it also first becomes clear regarding the tasks of the struggle. Organization, enlightenment and struggle are here not separate, mechanic and also temporarily disjointed factors, as in the case of a blanquist movement, but are only different sides of the same process. On the one hand--apart from general principles of the struggle--there is no detailed, ready-made fighting tactic established in advance and in which the party membership could be drilled by a central committee. On the other hand, the process of struggle which shapes the organization leads to a constant fluctuation of the party's sphere of influence.

It follows that social-democratic centralization cannot be based on blind obedience, on mechanical subordination of the party fighters to their central authority; and, furthermore, that no absolute partition can be erected between the nucleus of the class conscious proletariat already organized into fixed party cadres and the surrounding element engaged in the class struggle but still in process of class enlightenment. The setting up of the central organization on these two principles

on the blind subordination of all party organizations, with their activity, down to the least detail, under a central authority which alone thinks, acts and decides for all, and on a sharp separation of the organized nucleus of the party from the surrounding revolutionary milieu, as championed by Lenin--appears to us for that reason as a mechanical carrying over of the organizational principles of the blanquist movement of conspiratorial circles onto the social-democratic movement of the working masses. And Lenin himself has perhaps characterized his standpoint more keenly than any of his opponents could do, in that he defines his "revolutionary Social Democrat" as the "Jacobin linked with the organization of the class-conscious workers". As a matter of fact, however, the Social Democracy is not linked or connected with the organization of the working class, but is the movement of the working class itself. Social-democratic centralism must therefore be of essentially different construction from the blanquist. It can be nothing other than the imperious coordination of the will of the enlightened and fighting vanguard of the workers as contrasted with its different groups and individuals; this is, so to speak, a "self-centralism" of the leading element of the proletariat; the majority rule of that element within its own party organization.

Just from looking into this true content of social-democratic centralism, it becomes clear that the necessary conditions for such a thing are not yet fully realized in Russia. These conditions are, in the main, the presence of a considerable element of proletarians already schooled in the political struggle and the possibility of giving expression to its maturity through the direct exercise of influence (at public party congresses, in the party press, etc.).

It is clear that this latter condition can only be created with the advent of political freedom in Russia. The former condition, however,--the forming of a class-conscious, competent vanguard of the proletariat,--is only in course of achievement and must be regarded as the primary purpose of the next agitational and also organizational work.

All the more surprising is the effect produced by the opposite assurance of Lenin, according to which all the preconditions for the carrying out of a great and highly centralized labor party are already present in Russia. And he betrays once more a much too mechanical conception of social-democratic organization in optimistically proclaiming that even now it is "not the proletariat but a great number of intellectuals in the Russian Social Democracy who lack self-training in the spirit of organization and discipline". The 'discipline' which Lenin has in mind is impressed upon the proletariat not by any means merely by way of the factory, but also through the whole mechanism of the centralized bourgeois State. However, it is nothing short of an improper use of slogans to denote equally as 'discipline' two such opposed concepts as the willlessness and thoughtlessness of a four-legged and many-armed mass of flesh which performs mechanical movements to the accompaniment of the baton and the voluntary coordination of conscious political actions on the part of a certain social element; the lifeless obedience of a governed class and the organized rebellion of a class struggling for its liberation. It is not by adding on to the discipline impressed upon it by the capitalist State--with the mere transfer of the baton from the hand of the bourgeoisie into that of a social-democratic central committee--but by the breaking up and uprooting of this slavish spirit of discipline, that the proletariat

can be prepared for the new discipline, the voluntary self-discipline of the Social Democracy.

If we seek to solve the question of forms of organization, not by way of the mechanical transfer to Russia of inert patterns from Western Europe but through the investigation of the given concrete relations in Russia itself, we arrive at a quite different conclusion. To say of opportunism, as Lenin implicitly does, that it goes in for any one certain form of organization--say for decentralization--is at any rate to mistake its inner nature. Being opportunistic as it is, the only principle of opportunism, even in questions of organization, is - the lack of principles. It always selects its means according to circumstances, with reference to the degree to which those means promote its ends. But if, like Lenin, we define opportunism as the endeavor to paralyze the independent revolutionary movement of the proletariat in order to make it serviceable to the lust for ruling on the part of the bourgeois intelligentsia, one can only say that this purpose can be most readily attained, in the initial stages of the labor movement, not through decentralization but precisely by way of strict centralism, by which the proletarian movement, still unclear in its aims and methods, is turned over, bound hand and foot, to a handful of academic leaders.

Even from the standpoint of the fears entertained by Lenin, that is, the dangerous influence of the intellectuals upon the proletarian movement, his own conception of organization constitutes the greatest danger for the Russian Social Democracy.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing which so easily and so surely hands over a still youthful labor movement to the private ambitions of the intellectuals as forcing the movement into the strait-jacket of a bureaucratic centralism, which debases the fighting workers into a pliable tool in the hands of a 'committee'. And, inversely, nothing so surely preserves the labor movement from all opportunistic abuses on the part of an ambitious intelligentsia as the revolutionary self-activation of the working masses, the intensification of their feeling of political responsibility.

And, in fact, the very thing which Lenin see as a specter today, may easily turn tomorrow into a palpable reality.

Let us not forget that the revolution which we see in the offing in Russia is not a proletarian but a bourgeois revolution, which will greatly change the entire scenery of the social-democratic struggle. Thereupon the Russian intelligentsia also will quickly absorb a strongly pronounced bourgeois content. Whereas today the Social Democracy is the only leader of the Russian working masses, on the morning after the revolution the bourgeoisie, and in the first instance its intelligentsia, will seek to convert these masses into a pedestal for its parliamentary rule. Now the less scope there is given in the present period of the struggle to the self-activation, to the free initiative, to the political sense of the awakened element of the working class, and the more that element is politically bell-wethered and drilled by a social-democratic central committee, the easier will be the game of the bourgeois demagogues in the renovated Russia and the more will the results of the current efforts of the Social Democracy turn to the advantage of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, it is a thoroughly unhistorical illusion to think that the social-democratic tactic in the revolutionary sense can be established in advance once for all time, that the labor movement can be preserved once for all from opportunistic side-leaps. To be sure, the Marxian doctrine provides effective weapons against all basic types of opportunistic thought. Since, however, the social-democratic movement is in fact a mass movement and the dangers by which it is menaced do not spring from human heads but from the social conditions, opportunistic strayings cannot be guarded against in advance; they must be overcome through the movement itself--of course, with the aid of the weapons supplied by Marxism--after they have assumed a definite shape in the course of experience. Regarded from this point of view, opportunism too appears as a product of the labor movement itself, as an unavoidable factor of its historical development. Precisely in Russia, where the Social Democracy is still young, and the political conditions of the labor movement are so abnormal, opportunism might very well at present spring largely from this source, from the unavoidable groping and experimenting in matters of tactics, from the necessity of bringing the present struggle into harmony with socialist principles in quite peculiar and unexampled relations.

But if that is so, one must marvel all the more at the idea that the rise of opportunistic tendencies can be forbidden in the very beginnings of a labor movement by means of this or that form of rules of organization. The attempt to ward off opportunism by such scraps of paper can, as a matter of fact, do no harm to opportunism but only to the Social Democracy itself, and, by restraining within the party the pulsing of a healthy blood, weakens its powers of resistance not only against opportunistic currents, but also--a thing which after all might be of some importance--against the existing social order. The means turns against the end.

In this frightened effort of a part of the Russian Social Democracy to preserve from false steps the aspiring labor movement of Russia through the guardianship of an omniscient and omnipresent central committee we seem to see also the same subjectivism involved by which socialist thought in Russia has frequently been imposed upon in the past. Amusing, in truth, are the somersaults which the revered human subject of history loves to perform at times in his own historical process. The ego which has been beaten down by Russian absolutism takes revenge by setting itself on the throne in its revolutionary thought-world and declaring itself omnipotent--as a conspiratorial committee in the name of a non-existent "popular will". The 'object' shows itself stronger, however: the knout soon triumphs, in that it proves itself to be the 'legitimate' expression of the given stage of the historical process. Finally there appears on the scene, as a more legitimate child of the historical process--the Russian labor movement, which makes a splendid beginning to shape, for the first time in Russian history, a real popular will. Now, however, the ego of the Russian revolutionary quickly stands on its head and declares itself once more to be an almighty ruler of history--this time, in the direction of the social-democratic working masses. In so doing, the bold acrobat overlooks the fact that the only subject to which this role has now fallen is the mass-ego of the working class, which everywhere insists on venturing to make its own mistakes and learning historical dialectic for itself. And by way of conclusion, let us say openly just to ourselves: Mistakes which a truly revolutionary labor movement commits are, in historical perspective, immeasurably more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the very best "central committee."

II.

Dictatorship of the Party or Dictatorship of the Proletariat(*).

The implicit presupposition of the dictatorship theory in the Lenin-Trotskyist sense is that the socialist overthrow is a matter for which there is a ready-made recipe in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which has only to put it into practice vigorously. That is unfortunately--or otherwise, if you will--not so. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and legal system is a matter which lies completely veiled in the fog of the future. What we have in our program is only a few big sign-posts which show the direction in which the measures must be sought, and mainly of a negative character. Thus we have an idea as to what must be shoved aside in the very first instance in order to clear the way for the socialist economy; but as regards the nature of the thousand concrete practical matters to be dealt with in order to introduce the socialist principles into economics, law and all social relations,--on those points no enlightenment is furnished by any socialist party program or by any socialist textbook. That is no defect, but the superiority of scientific socialism over the utopian brand: the socialist system of society can only be an historical product, arising from its own school of experience, in the hour of fulfillment, from the course of living history which, in precisely the same way as organic nature, of which in the last instance it is a part, has the lovely caprice of bringing forth, together with the genuine social need, also the means for its satisfaction, and with the problem also the solution. If that is so, however, then it is clear that socialism, from its very nature, is not susceptible of being imposed, or introduced by decree. It has as a prerequisite a series of violent measures--against property, etc. The negative part, the work of tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive part, can not. This is new territory, with a thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting mistakes and opening new paths. Only unrestrictedly flowing life hits upon a thousand new forms, makes improvisations, contains creative power, itself corrects all blunders. The public life of the nations with limited freedom is so needy, so poor, so schematic, so unfruitful for the very reason that by excluding democracy it bars the living springs of all spiritual wealth and progress. The whole mass of the people must participate; otherwise, socialism is decreed, imposed from the green table of a handful of intellectuals.

Unconditional public control (according to Lenin's own words) is necessary. Otherwise the exchange of experiences remains only in the closed circle of the officials of the new regime. In place of the representative bodies arising from universal suffrage, Lenin and Trotsky have proposed the soviets as the only true representation of the working masses. But with the suppression of the political life throughout the land, the life of the soviets also must grow more and more paralyzed. Without general elections, unrestricted freedom of the press and of assembly, free conflict of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which the bureaucracy remains alone as the active element. No one can evade this law. The public life gradually falls asleep, a dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless idealism direct and govern. Among these, the actual leadership is exercised by a dozen preeminent brains.

(*) Extract from Rosa Luxemburg's "The Russian Revolution".

and a selected group of the workers is invited to meetings from time to time to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve by unanimous vote the resolutions laid before them. What we have, then, at bottom, is a clique economy--a dictatorship, to be sure, but not the dictatorship of the proletariat. Rather, the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is, dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the Jacobins--in a word, ruling (increasing the interval between the soviet congresses from three to six months!). And what is more: such conditions must be a symptom of the barbarization of the public life.

The basic error of the Lenin-Trotskyist theory is simply this: that they set dictatorship, just as Kautsky does, over against democracy. "Dictatorship or democracy"--that is the question both for the Bolsheviks and for Kautsky. The latter decides, naturally, for democracy, and for bourgeois democracy at that, since he views it precisely as the alternative to the socialist overthrow. Lenin and Trotsky decide, inversely, for dictatorship in opposition to democracy and, in so doing, for the dictatorship of a handful of individuals, that is, for dictatorship after the bourgeois fashion. Two opposite poles, both equally far removed from the true socialist policy. When the proletariat seizes power, it can never more follow Kautsky's advice and renounce the job of carrying through the socialist transformation, under the pretext of the "unripeness of the country", and devote itself merely to democracy, without committing treason to itself, to the International and to the Revolution. It is bound to and must without delay, in the most vigorous, unwavering and thorough-going manner, take socialist measures in hand, hence exercise dictatorship--but dictatorship of the class, not of a party or clique; dictatorship of the class, i. e. in the broadest publicity, with the active participation of the masses, in unlimited democracy. "As Marxists, we have never been idolaters of formal democracy," writes Trotsky. Certainly, we have never been idolaters of formal democracy. Nor have we ever been idolaters of socialism or of Marxism. Does it follow that we are entitled to throw socialism, Marxism, onto the scrap-heap when we find it uncomfortable? Trotsky and Lenin are the living negations of this question. We have never been idolaters of formal democracy; which simply means that we have always distinguished the social kernel from the political form of bourgeois democracy; we have always uncovered the bitter kernel of social inequality and constraint under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom--not in order to reject these latter, but in order to urge the working class not to content itself with the shell but rather to win the political power in order to fill it with new social content. It is the historical task of the proletariat, when it comes to power, to create in the place of bourgeois democracy, socialist democracy, not to do away with democracy itself. Socialist democracy begins, however, not in the promised land after the sub-structure of socialist economy has been formed, as a ready-made Christmas present for the good people who in the meanwhile have loyally supported the handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the tearing down of class rule and the building up of socialism. It begins with the seizure of power, it is nothing else than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner in which democracy is employed, not in its abolition; in vigorous, decided intrusions into the well-established rights and economic relations

of bourgeois society, without which the socialist overturn cannot be actualized. This dictatorship must be the work of the class, and not of a small minority in the name of the class; that is, it must proceed at each step with the active participation of the masses, be subject to their direct influence, stand under the control of unlimited public opinion, proceed from the growing political education of the masses.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND THE PRESENT CRISIS.

With the beginning of 1935 much rumor is heard about a possible major offensive by the A.F. of L. in a number of basic industries. Some superficial observers already see the threat of a nation-wide general strike to be initiated by textile, steel and automobile workers' unions. Vague statements about Labor's awakening, uttered by the pious Baptist who heads the A.F. of L., further alarm the backwoods shopkeepers, and 1935 opens with generally evil forebodings to the middle class and the small business men.

We say middle class and small business men, because big business does not fear the A.F. of L. It knows that no general strike will be countenanced by the labor leaders and even such dangerous consequences as might arise from a textile or steel strike will be curbed before reaching their objective.

It is not merely that Green, Woll & Co., are cowardly, vacillating and reactionary that leads to this conclusion -- it is that the A.F. of L. as an organization, lock, stock and barrel, is not by its nature inclined to take any risks.

The structure and history of the A.F. of L. are such that it can never engage in any struggle that endangers the existing order -- and in these times any major action by the workers will have just that effect.

Organized in 1881, the A.F. of L. represented at that time the revolt of the skilled aristocracy of labor against the contemporary primitive labor organizations. The Knights of Labor, most powerful organization in the eighties, with all its faults had crystallized a potentially powerful movement of unskilled workers. Reactionary officials were unable to stem the tide. "Orderly" strikes developed into major revolts of gigantic proportions. The workers, despite the pious pleadings of reactionary leaders, fought as only the completely disfranchised could fight - with any and all means at their command.

The Gould strike, waged by the Knights of Labor in 1885 in which they whipped the most powerful railroad combination in the United States, was an example of working class revolt that involved skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled laborers on the basis of the slogan "An injury

to one is an injury to all".

The elemental character of the movement which swamped the Knights of Labor is borne out by the membership figures during the growth and decline of the eight-hour agitation. For this period the membership figures for the Knights of Labor and the A.F. of L. were:

Yr.	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888
K.ofL.	19,422	42,517	60,811	104,066	702,924	510,351	259,578	220,607
A.ofL.	40,000	65,000	76,000	105,000	125,000	138,000	160,000	175,000

The slow but steady growth of the A.F. of L. shows the substantial development of a movement of skilled workers, whose preferred position was not conducive to radical, revolutionary sentiment. They had banded together to take advantage of that position to secure further concessions - concessions that an expanding capitalism could well afford to grant. As they consolidated their position they became less inclined to risk it on any "wild revolutionary or socialist schemes".

America, the growing industrial giant, presented certain conditions that constantly frustrated a revolutionary labor movement. The continuity that characterized European movements was absent here. The possibility of rising into the petty bourgeoisie, of becoming farmers, etc., coupled with recurring crises of a violent character submerged completely recurrent labor organizations. Added to this the comparative scarcity of skilled labor in the United States enabled the latter to enjoy a standard of wages and living much higher than the unskilled or any of the European workers could boast of. The violent recurring strikes of the unskilled workers imposed sacrifices on the skilled which the latter were unwilling to make.

The American Federation of Labor represented above all things the effort of the skilled labor aristocracy to break away from the lower strata of labor. They were unwilling to submerge their interests to those of the whole. They wanted to occupy a preferred seat at the capitalist table at the expense of their less fortunate fellows.

Thus, while the growth of the A.F. of L. was slow, it was predicated virtually upon a property interest. Its growth was more substantial, making up in essence what it lacked in numbers. The Knights of Labor disappeared from the field. The eight-hour movement, fought courageously by the rank and file and betrayed miserably by the leaders came to a bloody conclusion in the murder of the Haymarket "Anarchists"; but the A.F. of L. succeeded in keeping its hands unsullied by any radical activity at that time.

By 1894 Eugene Debs had organized the American Railway Union and in the Pullman strike of that year the class struggle flared anew, only to be suppressed with federal troops. The A.F. of L. repudiated the A.R.U. strike.

The Western Federation of Miners at this time developed a militant movement which broke away from the A.F. of L., and by 1905 resulted in the organization of the I.W.W. Until shortly before the world war the I.W.W. represented the best and most militant elements of the labor movement. The ignored and submerged unskilled workers saw reason

for new hope, but the A.F. of L. kept its hands off except where it was possible to break "Wobbly" strikes and assist vigilante mobs in lynching-bees.

When the United States entered the world war, the A.F. of L. entered into an industrial peace pact with the master class and concentrated on sending American workers into the European slaughter. The I.W.W. was destroyed; its leaders sent to jail by the hundreds, and the A. F. of L. exulted with the rest of the jingoes at 20 year sentences handed out to "Wobbly" organizers.

With the close of the war, the revolutionary upsurge in Europe had its reflex in America in the growth of radical sentiment. Heeding reluctantly the insistent demands from below, the A.F. of L. entered upon a campaign to organize the steel industry. The steel workers responded enthusiastically only to be attacked on two fronts - by the forces of the national, state and local governments, and by the old-line A.F. of L. Union of skilled steel workers, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Tin and Steel Workers, who sabotaged the strike to the extent of scabbing. Jurisdictional disputes between the affected crafts played a good part in making the strike ineffective. The strike was lost.

When the present depression broke, the A.F. of L. had no plans to offer. The bureaucracy at the top was out of touch not only with the broad masses, but it was out of touch with its own membership as well. Its membership fell off. Already the possibility of complete collapse appeared when Roosevelt II saved the tottering structure. The decline in membership had been going on at a terrific pace. Dropping from four million members in 1920, it declined to two and one-half million by 1932. But with the help of the NRA, workers were again herded into the A. F. of L.

The president's attitude may have been surprising, but there was nothing extraordinary about his action in view of the conditions. The world chaos threatened by the never-ending depression left its mark on American politics as it did on those of Europe. The capitalists of the world are preparing for two eventualities - war and revolution. In each country they prepare for this in their own way: Italy with Mussolini, Germany with Hitler, and the United States with Roosevelt and NRA. The differences of approach and method do not alter the fundamental nature and purpose of this movement. In each case the capitalist class of each country consolidates its forces against the coming war and revolution, and in each case that process of consolidation may accurately be called the process of fascism. This process calls for the utmost concentration of the forces of the national capitalist class as a whole. This accounts for its nationalism. Individualistic and reckless capitalists must be curbed, subordinated to the interests of the whole class; thus the socialism of fascism.

The workers must be controlled or their organizations destroyed, - and since working class organization can never be entirely destroyed under capitalism, machinery is set up to control them. Here the A.F. of L. presents itself, offers itself as the willing and eager henchman of capitalism. No doubt even it will become superfluous or bothersome, or too ineffective in time to be of further use to the masters.

But at this time it is usable. Mr. Roosevelt holds out glowing vistas to the labor skates. Their mouths water as they peer into the promised land. Only one cent per month per member flows into the A. F. of L. treasury from members of affiliated international unions. But here is a chance to organize the unskilled into "federal Unions" paying 35¢ a month per capita, and the president had practically told them to go ahead and organize to their hearts' content.

Roosevelt's friendly smile and naive radio talks might indicate the good natured clown, but his policies are those of a far-seeing capitalist who uses all methods necessary to prolong the existence of the present order. In this period of chaos and collapse, the most exploited and starving layers of the working class form a distinct menace of revolution. He hands out relief to the starving and lets the A.F. of L. take care of the exploited. The unskilled are to be herded into the A.F. of L. AND KEPT IN CHECK THEREBY.

The labor skates have delivered. They throttled the militant miners in the East. They surrendered to the steel industry; they scotched an attempt at an automobile industry strike and joyously broke the 'Frisco general strike from within.

With a reactionary history to its credit, a form of organization susceptible to no changes, an officialdom so firmly entrenched as to be immovable, a rank and file that is either impotent or as reactionary as its leaders, the A.F. of L. at this time is much too useful to the master class to be discarded. It is expected to fulfill the work in America of the Nazi "labor front" in Germany, and so far it has realized all the hopes Roosevelt placed in it. Its job is to prevent strikes, to regiment and curb the workers, to duplicate the Fascist labor organizations of Europe.

General strikes are not a part of Fascist routine. So a question whether the A.F. of L. will initiate a general strike movement in 1935 is indeed laughable.

** "MARXISM WITHOUT DOCTORS" **

Review on: The Inevitability of Communism. by Paul Mattick. (*)

It has been the misfortune of Marxism in the United States that its greatest development took place under the influence of the Russian Revolution. Our native radicals have displayed a pig-headedness almost equal to that of the bourgeoisie itself in continuing to regard 'Leninism' or 'Marxism-Leninism' as synonymous with, or at least a logical extension of Marxism, and Bolshevism as synonymous with Communism. Even two such embattled antagonists as Sidney Hook and Max Eastman--the one wanting to be a Marxist and the other a Leninist--are in fundamental agreement on this point, and their heated disputes accordingly reduce largely to a mere matter of words. It has not yet dawned upon the American intellectuals that the Bolshevik Revolution was essentially only a bourgeois revolution directed to

(*) A 48 page pamphlet just published by Polemic Publishers, 122 East 25th St., New York City. - 25¢ per copy, postage prepaid from publisher; or order from U.W.P.-1604 N. California Ave., Chicago, Ill.

overthrowing Czarism and doing away with the vestiges of feudalism in Russia, thus preparing the way for an unrestricted state-capitalist development.

It has been the misfortune of Mattick personally--apart from the circumstance that he brought with him from Germany a philosophic mind and style--that his work is directed to breaking down these illusions and prejudices and to "cleansing Marxism from the filth of epigonity. He recognizes that Marxism in its pure and original form was impossible of application during the upgrade period of capitalism; that it was necessarily adapted to suit the needs of the governing bureaucracy of the old labor movement, and that it is only now, in the "permanent crisis" when the objective conditions are ripe for the overthrow of capitalism, that it is really possible for Marxism to come into its own. Which is merely another manner of saying that Marxism can be actualized only through the revolutionary proletariat in the act of throwing off the fetters of capitalism. Mattick accordingly rejects all forms of marxian 'orthodoxy', including particularly those associated with the names of Lenin and Kautsky. Yet, he is an 'orthodox' Marxist himself--but with a difference. In the first place, he makes a distinction between mere lip-service to Marxism, or the use of revolutionary phrases to conceal reformist or counter-revolutionary practice, on the one hand, and the practical application of marxist principles in the proletarian struggle against capitalism on the other. And secondly, to him, as to George Lukacs, orthodox Marxism "does not mean an uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations, does not mean a 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred book'. Orthodoxy in questions of Marxism relates rather exclusively to the method. It is the scientific conviction that in dialectical Marxism the correct method of investigation has been found, that this method can be developed, extended and deepened only in the sense of its founder, and that all attempts to overcome or 'improve' it have led, and necessarily so, merely to flatness, triviality and eclecticism".

Such a view of orthodoxy enables Mattick to be the most uncompromising of Marxists, and at the same time one of those who are least hampered by traditions. He recognizes the historical character of all the traditional forms of the labor movement, inclusive of parliamentarism and the political party. The political party, for instance, is just an expression of formal democracy--one which will be permitted to function only so long as the bourgeoisie can afford so much leniency--but the revolution itself, under modern conditions in highly developed capitalist countries, "is not a party matter, but the affair of the class" (of the proletarian class, be it understood, and not of a proletarian-peasant alliance such as was indispensable to the overthrow of Czarism). All expressions of "formal democracy", inclusive of labor organizations, became more and more intolerable to the bourgeoisie in the permanent crisis, when the continued existence of capitalism depends on a perfectly smooth functioning of the economic organism; but the class struggle itself cannot be suppressed--it is simply obliged to assume new forms adapted to the new conditions. These new forms are essentially embraced in the workers' councils (soviets), led by committees of action--that is, under the direct control of the workers themselves, hence not dependent upon the existence of parties, not subject to the personal sway of professional "labor leaders", but functioning over the heads of all

parties and bureaucracies and hence capable of effecting a real united front and waging a really common struggle against capitalism in its final and more or less 'fascist' form.

Ever since fascism first made its appearance in Italy, shortly after the War, and particularly since the rise of Hitler in Germany and the suppression of the Social Democracy in Austria, a reorientation of the labor movement has been under way. In this process are revealed two opposite tendencies. One is headed in the direction of compromise with capitalistic prejudices, abandonment of revolutionary principles and winning the middle classes, as best illustrated in this country by the recent "American Workers' Party" (now combined with the Communist League to form the "Workers Party"). The other sees in the proletariat itself the only reliable instrument of the communist revolution and avoids all compromise with revolutionary principles as merely calculated to throw confusion into the ranks of the workers. It is that latter position which is represented by Mattick, in harmony with the "United Workers' Party" of America and the "Groups of International Communists" of the various countries throughout the world. It is essentially the same position as that combatted by Lenin under the name of Left Communism--a position which, from the point of view of the Russian Revolution, with its petty-bourgeois and jacobinical ideology, was naturally anathema at the time to any Bolshevik--as it was also to Noske and Ebert-- but which from the international proletarian point of view is revealing itself as the one truly revolutionary force in contemporary society.

In the present pamphlet, "The Inevitability of Communism," as well as in various other writings, such as his critique of the American Workers Party (*), Mattick has taken pains to show the disastrous consequences of the compromising attitude and of the reformist position in all its phases. He understands that fascism itself is merely an Ablenkungsmanoever, an attempt to mislead the workers by the use of pseudo-revolutionary or at least pseudo-radical phrases, as illustrated in the Hitlerian "National-Socialist German Labor Party." Fascism has copied the tactics of the bolshevik movement in Russia and of the national bolshevik parties controlled by the Third International. Fascism too pretends to be aiming at a form of "socialism", that is, state capitalism, which generally passes for socialism not only among the workers and petty-bourgeoisie but even among the so-called socialists themselves. What wonder, then, that the workers turn to fascism--a form of 'socialism' which can be introduced by the simple process of voting, without the necessity of a revolution with all its unpleasant connotations. Thus when the members of the reformist, petty-bourgeois parties--a term which includes even the self-styled revolutionary political parties--reproach the workers with being stupid, they fail to consider that these parties themselves are largely responsible for that 'stupidity', in that they put reformist notions into the heads of the workers and fail to make a clear-cut distinction between capitalism (in its fascist form) and communism (as conceived by Marx, the "society of free and equal producers"). Thus reformism in its various aspects, including participation in capitalist politics, leads logically to fascism, and all the reformist parties (regardless of their revolutionary phrases or intentions) will be forced in the end either to capitulate to fascism or be suppressed by it--or even both at the same time, as in

(*) "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward".--The Modern Monthly, Dec. 1934

the case of the German C.P., which had lost all revolutionary character and become almost as fascist as the Nazis, but which nevertheless has to be swept aside as unadapted, or at least less adapted than Hitler's party, to the needs of the bourgeoisie in the permanent crisis.

These two opposed tendencies in the labor movement imply, of course, differences in theoretical base, involving questions not merely of psychology but of philosophy and economics. The reformist position is essentially opportunistic and undialectical. It is accordingly superficial, content with momentary successes, however won and with the aid of whatever elements, without regard for ulterior effects on the revolutionary movement and the form of society resulting from it. It fails to see in the capitalistic relations themselves and in the growth of the forces of production (in particular, the growth of the proletariat) the circumstance which makes the eventual triumph of communism inevitable, however long that triumph may be postponed by fascism and other varieties of reformism. On the other hand, the truly revolutionary tendency, which sees in the proletariat itself the antithesis engendered by capitalism, and in communism the synthesis resulting from this antagonism, is not concerned with catering to the petty-bourgeoisie but with developing the strength and the consciousness and the self-confidence of the workers, so that these latter will be capable of leading the petty-bourgeoisie instead of being led by it. In other words, as Mattick makes plain in the concluding sections of his work, it is not so much a question of 'educating' the workers in communist ideology, but one of developing their militancy. Education, in the sense in which the word is employed by Sidney Hook and on which he lays so much stress--in common, we might say, with socialists and reformists generally--is a matter in which the capitalists, so long as capitalism endures, will always have the advantage, if not practically a complete monopoly. The great mass of the workers, under capitalist conditions, cannot be reached by education at all; and hence to depend upon education and propaganda as the main forms of pre-revolutionary activity is merely to play into the hands of the reactionaries by indulging the sort of illusions characteristic of the socialists, who hold that nothing can be done about a new state of society until they have convinced enough people of the desirability of socialism to vote the socialist ticket into office. But to promote the militancy and self-confidence of the workers, even to the exclusion of communist ideology and what is generally referred to as class consciousness in its more intellectual form, is to make the collapse of capitalism inevitable in the shortest possible space of time. Their economic struggles under existing conditions naturally tend to assume a political form and acquire a revolutionary character; the workers may not be Marxists or conscious revolutionists while engaged in these struggles, but, as Mattick says, "the revolution makes them Marxists."

NO attempt will be made in this brief review to indicate the wealth of theoretical material which Mattick brings to the support of his views. Our aim is merely to point out the revolutionary significance of his work and to suggest the manner in which it differentiates itself from the 'orthodox' and all forms of 'vulgar' Marxism. The pamphlet was written mainly as a reply to Sidney Hook's book "Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx" which is perhaps the one distinctively American contribution to Marxism which could be named as in any

sense worthy of such a critique. Mattick and Hook are, of course, in agreement on many specific points (omitted as obvious in the present pamphlet), and their differences are sometimes more a matter of emphasis than of fundamental opposition. But Hook, in common with all the other people who have tried to "make sense of Marx" has, we think Mattick clearly shows, merely succeeded in reducing what is essentially science to the 'common-sense' level of understanding and not only abandoned Marxism himself but made it all the easier for liberals and 'nice people' generally to feel that they were perfectly justified in never concerning themselves with the matter or never taking it seriously if they did. Mattick reveals that Marx is more modern than all his critics, whether of the pseudo-scientific radical camp like Max Eastman, or of the purely liberal type like Stuart Chase. Marx is not only the symbol of revolution, which is the only present alternative to world-wide fascism; he is also the man who has provided the most profound understanding of capitalist society, and that insight into economic laws and the movement of social classes which is the only sure guide to pursuing a really radical course of action under capitalism in its stage of decline. And Mattick, in spite or because of his comparative youth, has brought into marxist theory and the political labor movement a freshness of insight and depth of understanding gained in the course of years of experience here and abroad and hitherto lacking in this country.

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