

**ACPL ITEM
DISCARDED**

Selected
Political
Writings
of
ROSA
LUXEMBURG

Selected
Political
Writings
of
ROSA
LUXEMBURG

Edited and Introduced
by Dick Howard



New York and London

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We do not face the world in doctrinaire fashion, declaring, "Here is the truth, kneel here!" . . . We do not tell the world, "Cease your struggles, they are stupid; we want to give you the true watchword of the struggle." We merely show the world how it actually struggles; and consciousness is something that the world *must* acquire even if it does not want to.

—*Marx to Ruge, September 1843*

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Introduction

With the growth of a New Left during the past decade, a *practical* reflection on the bases of socialism has again begun after years of Stalinism and silence. More recently, attempts to *theorize* the new practice have been undertaken, despite the familiar argument that theory is only for intellectuals. In the renewed debate, the name of Rosa Luxemburg is more and more frequently mentioned. Were she alive, she would no doubt be displeased by the rebirth of "Luxemburgism." The practical, tactical measures which she developed were always situation-specific; the development of capitalism has long since passed them by. In her eyes, her theoretical work was nothing but a consequent application of the dialectical method which had enabled Marx to uncover the secrets of the capitalist system. Her advice to those of us engaged in rethinking and revivifying the socialist project would be to return to Marx, to study his dialectical method, and to apply it to our own problems.

Yet, precisely because her political writings are attempts to theorize the actual practice of the socialist movement of her times, the publication of these texts is opportune. Not only is Rosa Luxemburg a kindred spirit, the reading of whom cannot fail to force us to reflect on our own situation with new, critical eyes and a methodological self-consciousness. She herself was an historical thinker for whom the history of the class struggle was an ever fresh source of theoretical and practical inspiration. She was active in the German, Polish, and Russian movements, whose past she dealt with as part of the historical present; and she was an active member of the International

Bureau who never hesitated to give her views on the development of the international socialist movement. Her internationalism was a part of her very being, and she was convinced that for “a fighting party, the history of socialism is the school of life” (p. 280).¹

As a revolutionary movement, the New Left is the heir and bearer of the socialist tradition. It is of course not the heir of that movement which collapsed in social-patriotic ignominy on August 4, 1914, in the first flames of world war; nor must it reproduce any of the fixed forms and static modes of thought which happened to predominate at one or another historical moment. The heritage of the New Left is not an intellectual one; it is the spiritual heritage of the continuing revolutionary struggle by the working masses of the world to free themselves from the domination of capital. Though it is “new” in many ways, in this very important sense the New Left is “old,” and must take pride in and learn from its past.

The writings presented in this volume are intended to serve the theoretical and practical reflection undertaken by the present bearers of the historical struggle for socialism. Because of the concrete nature of that heritage, each group of texts is preceded by an historical introduction, explanatory footnotes have been added, and a Glossary has been supplied. For this reason, rather than devote this introduction to a biographical sketch of Rosa Luxemburg,² it will be more useful to look

¹ The page numbers in parentheses refer to this book.

² Two biographies of Rosa Luxemburg are available in English. J. P. Nettl's two-volume *Rosa Luxemburg* (Oxford University Press, 1966; also available in a one-volume abridged edition) is a masterpiece of bourgeois biography. The book is an important contribution particularly because of its use of hitherto inaccessible Polish materials, and because of the author's knowledge of the period in which Rosa Luxemburg lived and struggled. The book is marred, however, by its attempt to remain apolitical. In this sense, the biography by Paul Frölich is to be recommended. Frölich was a founding member of the German Communist Party, and took part in the 1918–19 revolution. He was assigned by the CP to edit Rosa Luxemburg's works, but before the task was completed, he was expelled from the Party. Frölich's attempt to understand Rosa Luxemburg from the point of view of a militant activist adds to the value of his book. His book is entitled *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (1940; reprint edition, New York: Howard Fertig, 1970).

briefly at the dialectical methodology which served both her practice and her attempts to theorize that practice.

The term "Social Democracy" recurs throughout Rosa Luxemburg's writings. Social Democracy means Marxism; it means the organization of the class-conscious and revolutionary proletariat whose goal is the institution of the socialist order. "Social Democracy," writes Rosa Luxemburg, ". . . is the very movement of the working class" (p. 290). When she speaks of Social Democratic theory, Rosa Luxemburg means nothing other than dialectical materialism. "Marxist theory gave to the working class of the whole world a compass by which to fix its tactics from hour to hour in its journey toward the one unchanging goal" (p. 325). Rosa Luxemburg never attempted to convince anyone of the "truth" of the Marxist system; it was beyond any doubt that dialectical Marxism is "the specific mode of thought of the rising class-conscious proletariat" (p. 127). In her polemic against the opportunist practices of German Social Democracy, she was content to show that "in its essence, in its bases, opportunist practice is irreconcilable with Marxism" (p. 130).

Though she never undertook a serious methodological analysis of the bases of Marxism,³ and criticized the first volume of *Capital* for "its overloading of rococo ornaments in the Hegelian style,"⁴ Rosa Luxemburg's political writings show an intuitive understanding of the Marxian dialectic.⁵ The key to the Marxian dialectic is the notion that the final goal of the

³ The one exception to this, the discussion of the reproduction schemas of Volume II of *Capital*, on which *The Accumulation of Capital* is based, shows a misunderstanding of the theoretical role of these schemas within the dialectical structure of *Capital*. On this problem, into which we cannot delve here, cf. Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Marxschen "Kapital"* (Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1968).

⁴ Letter to Hans Diefenbach, March 8, 1917, in *Briefe an Freunde* (Europäische Verlagsanstalt), p. 85.

⁵ This thesis was first argued by Georg Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*. It has since been developed in more detail (though with less theoretical acuteness) by Lelio Basso in his introduction to the Italian edition of Rosa Luxemburg's works. Basso's introduction was recently translated into German as *Rosa Luxemburgs Dialektik der Revolution* (Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969).

proletarian movement, socialism, is a necessity. The necessity of the final goal provides that teleology which makes it possible to understand the present as a process of becoming. Without this insight, history appears to be merely a series of disconnected, random facts. Without the teleology provided by the final goal, bourgeois society would have to be accepted as essentially eternal and unchanging, and social analysis would be reduced to empirical, inductive methods which are incapable of dealing with capitalism as a totality. The dialectic deals with totalities; the present, the “facts,” are transitory, and can only be understood in terms of what they were and what they are becoming within the social totality. Without the dialectic of the final goal, the proletariat seems to be only what it is in the discrete present: a seriality of individuals joined together by external necessity on the shop floor, but with no true social and political relation to one another. From the dialectical point of view, however, the proletariat is seen as a process, a movement in which each activity has a significance beyond the mere empirical dollars-and-cents terms in which it appears in isolation.⁶

Rosa Luxemburg was fully conscious of the function of the final goal in political analysis, stressing that “it is the final goal alone which constitutes the spirit and content of our socialist

⁶ It would take us too far afield to discuss the implications of the teleology of the final goal for the understanding of history, and for concrete social analysis. The analysis of the development of the mass strike movement in Russia is a clear example of the former. As to the relation of the final goal to social analysis, the following passage from Rosa Luxemburg’s reply to Bernstein’s argument that *Capital* is “utopian” is suggestive: “The secret of Marx’s theory of value, of his analysis of money, his theory of capital, his theory of the rate of profit, and consequently of the whole existing economic system is—the transitory nature of the capitalist economy, its collapse, thus—and this is only another aspect of the same phenomenon—the final goal, socialism. And precisely because, *a priori*, Marx looked at capitalism from the socialist’s viewpoint, . . . he was enabled to decipher the hieroglyphics of capitalist economy” (p. 101).

The methodological problems of the dialectical analysis have not been taken seriously enough by socialist thinkers, and the problem of the relations of Marxism and philosophy, posed in the early 1920’s by Karl Korsch’s book of the same title, and Georg Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*, still need elaboration today.

struggle, which turns it into a class struggle" (p. 39). In isolation, the actions of the working class do not appear to be revolutionary. The struggle for the eight-hour day, parliamentarism and electoral action, demonstrations, strikes in different branches of industry, etc. are not in themselves "revolutionary." Only within the totality of the capitalist system and the necessity of the proletarian revolution do these actions take on their full significance as part of the revolutionary process. This is why, in her polemic against Bernstein's famous statement that "the final goal is . . . nothing . . . the movement is everything," Rosa Luxemburg wrote that "the final goal of socialism is the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labor movement from a vain attempt to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle *against* this order, for the suppression of this order . . ." (p. 53). Though other political movements may proclaim the same final goals, "that which separates the Social Democratic position from those of other movements is . . . its conception of the relationship between the immediate tasks of socialism and its final goals" (p. 179). The day-to-day tasks of a socialist movement make sense only within the long-term perspective of the revolution; and, more important from the dialectical point of view, the revolution is not just the result of *one* act, the taking of political power, but of *all* the acts which prepare the objective *and subjective* conditions of the socialist society.

Socialism is not a state of affairs existing in some far-off future, a utopia postulated in order to make the actions of the present seem meaningful. This would be an idealism, the kind of Kantian ethical appeal to an "eternal justice" which was typical of many leading Marxists of the Second International. *The final goal is the totality of the process by which it is achieved; it is not a state but a becoming.*⁷ ". . . The ABC's of socialism,"

⁷ This is the Hegelian position as well; for example: "For the subject matter is not

writes Rosa Luxemburg, “. . . teach that the socialist order is not some sort of poetic ideal society, thought out in advance, which may be reached by various paths in various more or less imaginative ways. Rather, socialism is simply the historical tendency of the class struggle of the proletariat in the capitalist society against the class rule of the bourgeoisie” (p. 201). The notion of the final goal as totality explains why Marx himself always refused to discuss the details of the future socialist order, concentrating his attention on the development of the present. It also explains why socialism cannot be created from the top down, but demands a democratic mass movement.

The dialectical analysis in terms of the necessity of the final goal is based upon the revolutionary methodological postulate that a positive future can be built on the basis of a negative present. Socialism is not the result of the gradual amelioration of capitalism through a series of reforms; it results from the continual and unchecked development of an internally self-contradictory system which must eventually break down and lead to a revolutionary transformation. This is why Marx wrote a book called *Capital*, subtitled “A Critique of Political Economy,” and not a book called *Socialism*. *Capital*, wrote Marx, is “a presentation of the system, and through the presentation a critique of that system.”⁸ Marx’s goal was not positive but negative: to prove that capitalism is an unstable system which, by the force of its own internal laws, must break down. When the negative nature of the capitalist system, its internal contradictions and necessary breakdown, are denied, as they are by revisionists, following Bernstein, who see socialism as gradually growing out of capitalism, this denial implies the rejection of the socialist future, and its consequences for political practice are obvious.

exhausted in its *goal*, but in its *being carried out*; nor is the *result* the *actual* whole, but rather the result along with its becoming.” (Preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952), p. 11.

⁸ Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle, February 22, 1858. In *Marx-Engels Werke*, Volume 29, p. 550.

It was because Rosa Luxemburg understood the implications of the negative analysis of capitalism that she attacked Bernstein's revisionism, and concentrated her attention on the problems of expanded capitalist reproduction and imperialism, problems which she thought she had solved theoretically in *The Accumulation of Capital*.⁹ This analysis explains her attack on the idea of socialist cooperatives which, she argues, are a return to a precapitalist stage and therefore cannot lead to socialism because they are not the product of a revolution in a fully developed capitalism (p. 106). Rosa Luxemburg's attitude toward trade-union and parliamentary struggles is also determined by her dialectical position. The trade-union struggle, she argued, is a "labor of Sisyphus" (p. 105); by its very definition it is a defensive struggle in which the proletariat seeks to achieve the highest wages and best conditions possible *within the capitalist system*. The same is true of parliamentarism: ". . . the idea of the conquest of a parliamentary reformist majority is a calculation which, entirely in the spirit of bourgeois liberalism, preoccupies itself only with one side, the formal side, of democracy but does not take into account the other side, its real content" (p. 83), namely, the fact that it takes place within the limits of the capitalist totality. For Rosa Luxemburg, the secret of the socialist transformation "consists precisely in the change of simple quantitative modification into a new quality, or to speak more concretely, in the transition from one historical period, one social order, to another"

⁹ Rosa Luxemburg's reply to the critics of her *Accumulation of Capital*, written in her prison cell during the war, is a sustained demonstration of the importance of the negative analysis of the capitalist present in understanding the path to the socialist future. Cf. *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals, oder Was die Epigonen aus der Marxschen Theorie gemacht haben: Eine Antikritik*, especially pp. 36–37, and p. 117. In the latter passages, Rosa Luxemburg stresses the dialectical point which will be made below: namely, that the negative analysis does not mean that socialism will result automatically, with some kind of metaphysical necessity, from the economic crises of capitalism; rather, the negative analysis is the precondition for understanding the formation and development of the subjective factor, the class consciousness of the proletariat, without which socialism remains a pious wish or a Stalinist nightmare.

(p. 115). Socialist revolution is, to use the famous phrase, the negation of the negation.

The socialist future is not the result of a mechanical necessity, nor of some sort of Darwinian evolution. In the last analysis, socialism depends on the proletariat, for “only the working class, through its own activity, can make the word flesh” (p. 369). The proletariat is the subject-object of history: it is produced by the economic conditions of capitalism, yet it is a “product” which is itself subjective, capable of becoming conscious of its situation *as a class*, and of changing it. The goal of socialist political action, therefore, is to awaken the consciousness and revolutionary will needed to end the class society.

The crux of the problem lies in the dual nature of the proletariat.

Man does not make history of his own volition. But he makes it nonetheless. In its action, the proletariat is dependent upon the given degree of ripeness of social development. But social development does not take place apart from the proletariat. The proletariat is its driving force and its cause as well as its product and its effect. The action of the proletariat is itself a co-determining part of history. And though we can no more skip over a period in our historical development than a man can jump over his shadow, it lies within our power to accelerate or to retard it (p. 333).

To accelerate the development of the coming revolution, the proletariat must acquire the revolutionary will to transcend the present. But “the masses can only form this *will* in a constant struggle against the existing order, only within its framework” (p. 131). Because it operates within the capitalist order, the socialist movement must continually steer a course between “two reefs: abandonment of the mass character or abandonment of the final goal; the fall back to sectarianism or the fall into bourgeois reformism; anarchism or opportunism” (p. 142; cf. also p. 304). The history of socialism to our day shows how many movements have sunk on one or the other of these rocks, and Rosa Luxemburg returns often to the problem of

the zig-zag movement of proletarian politics. She writes, for example, that

the solution to this apparent paradox lies in the dialectical process of the class struggle of the proletariat fighting for democratic conditions in the state and at the same time organizing itself and gaining class consciousness. Because it gains this class consciousness and organizes itself in the course of the struggle, it achieves a democratization of the bourgeois state and, in the measure that it itself ripens, makes the bourgeois state ripe for a socialist revolution (pp. 180–81).

The revolution can only be made when the material conditions are ripe. But one of the “material conditions” is the proletariat, the “product” of capitalist society, without whose action and will there can be no socialist revolution. Yet, because of the nature of the proletariat, the formation of its class consciousness is dialectical; “the proletarian army is first recruited in the struggle itself, and too, only in the struggle does it become aware of the objectives of the struggle” (p. 289). This is not an argument for the supposed “spontaneity” of the masses,¹⁰ but simply a recognition of the dialectics of revolution.

This dialectical approach explains some seeming inconsistencies in the political thought of Rosa Luxemburg. It is not contradictory to argue that the parliamentary and trade-union struggles should not be considered as means of taking power and, at the same time, to stress that without parliamentary democracy and open trade-union struggles, a socialist revolution is impossible. It is not contradictory to assert that bourgeois democracy is a mere formality, an empty hull veiling the class domination of the bourgeoisie, and to argue that bourgeois democracy is absolutely necessary for the organization of the proletariat and that, moreover, the true support of democ-

¹⁰ The famous “spontaneity theory” of Rosa Luxemburg was invented by the Stalinists during the struggle for control of the German Communist Party in the 1920’s. Considering Rosa Luxemburg’s continual attempt to distinguish her position from that of the anarchists (especially in the “Mass Strike” essay), this Stalinist accusation must be rejected in its crude form. If Rosa Luxemburg was a “spontaneist,” then it is important to see why she would hold such a position, and if it is correct.

racy in an age of imperialism can only be the proletariat. A position which maintains that unless the objective structure of capitalism continues its development toward the breakdown, revolution is impossible, is not opposed to one which stresses the role of the class-conscious masses whose efforts alone can make the revolution. To argue that the Leninist organizational principles are overly centralist, and that the role of the leaders is only to be the "speaking parts" while the masses are the active chorus is not contradictory to the insistence that the word of the Party Congress or the International is socialist law. Nor is it pure idealism to oppose a super-activist politics in favor of a more gradual development of proletarian class consciousness and revolutionary will, and then to submit to the will of the majority and lay down one's life in the premature revolution which follows.

Proletarian politics is the totality of the objective and subjective process whose unity is the revolution, the final goal, socialism. The activity of the working class manifests itself in three distinct and interrelated moments: it is the trade-union struggle in the factories for human wages and working conditions; it is the political struggle within the established order for the creation of the political and social conditions which make possible the growth and organization of the class-conscious proletariat; and it is the periodic revolutionary struggles which give the historical dimension to the revolutionary consciousness. Because the nature of the capitalist totality makes a partial victory impossible, none of these forms of struggle suffices alone: isolated, the first is anarcho-syndicalism; the second is reformism; the third is Blanquism. Their dialectical unity is Marxism. This is what is meant in the *Communist Manifesto* when it is said that "in the various phases of evolution through which the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie passes," the communists "always advocate the interests of the movement as a whole." This is what Rosa Luxemburg meant when she wrote that "Social Democracy is in itself the summation of both the parliamentary and trade-union struggles in a

class struggle directed at the abolition of the bourgeois social order" (p. 254).

The unity of the proletarian struggle is most clearly manifested during revolutionary periods. Discussing the mass strike tactic used during the Russian Revolution of 1905, Rosa Luxemburg writes:

Each new rising and new victory of the political struggle simultaneously changes itself into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle by expanding the external possibilities of the latter, increasing the inner drive of the workers to better their situation and increasing their desire to struggle. After every foaming wave of political action a fructifying deposit remains behind from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth. And vice-versa. The ceaseless state of economic war of the workers with capital keeps alive the fighting energy at every political pause. It forms, so to speak, the ever fresh reservoir of the strength of the proletarian class, out of which the political struggle continually renews its strength. And, at the same time, it at all times leads the untiring economic-boring action of the proletariat, now here, now there, to individual sharp conflicts out of which, unexpectedly, political conflicts on a large scale explode.

In a word: the economic struggle is that which leads the political struggle from one nodal point to another; the political struggle is that which periodically fertilizes the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually change places. . . . And *their unity* is precisely the mass strike (p. 241).

The mass strike cannot be "propagated" any more than one can go door-to-door selling the idea of "revolution." The "policeman's theory" according to which some conspiratorial group of agitators and demagogues is responsible for the revolution is nonsensical. "The mass strike is rather the sign, the totality-concept of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps decades" (p. 237). The role of the "leadership" in the struggle is limited:

to give the slogans, the direction of the struggle; to organize the *tactics* of the political struggle in such a way that in every phase and in every moment of the struggle the whole sum of the available and already released active power of the proletariat will be

realized and find expression in the battle stance of the party; to see that the resoluteness and acuteness of the tactics of Social Democracy never fall *below* the level of the actual relation of forces but rather rise above it . . . (p. 247).

The important thing is that in the struggle, "the masses will be the active chorus, and the leaders only the 'speaking parts,' the interpreters of the will of the masses" (p. 270).

During the German Revolution of 1918–1919, Rosa Luxemburg expanded and reaffirmed her analysis of the unity of the struggle. The programmatic demands of Social Democracy are not important, she argues; "far more important . . . is the way in which that program is interpreted in action" (p. 380). There can be no division between the minimal and maximal demands of the proletariat; the sole task is the realization of socialism.¹¹ "Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be established by any government, however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created" (pp. 396–97). The economic character of the revolution now comes to the forefront:

It was characteristic of the first period of the revolution . . . that the Revolution remained exclusively political. We must be fully conscious of this. This explains the uncertain character, the inadequacy, the half-heartedness, the aimlessness of this Revolution. . . . It then becomes an economic revolution, and therefore with a socialist revolution. The struggle for socialism has to be fought out by the masses, by the masses alone, breast to breast against capitalism, in every factory, by every proletarian against his employer. Only then will it be a socialist revolution (p. 396).

¹¹ Rosa Luxemburg had always accepted the formulation of the tasks of Social Democracy as presented in the Erfurt Program of German Social Democracy. Yet her interpretation of this dualism was not that of most members of the party. For her, the minimal and maximal demands were parts of a whole; the minimal demands made sense only within the context of the struggle for the realization of the socialist revolution, the final goal, the maximal demand. Cf. her critique of the Erfurt Program in "Our Program and the Political Situation."

The socialist revolution differs from bourgeois revolutions “in which it sufficed to overthrow that official power at the center and to replace a dozen or so persons in authority. We have to work from beneath, and this corresponds to the mass character of our revolution . . .” (p. 407). The technique by which the revolution must work, argues Rosa Luxemburg, is the formation of workers’ and soldiers’ councils which will take over both the economic and administrative power in the state and the local enterprises:

. . . we have not merely to develop the system of workers’ and soldiers’ councils, but we have to induce the agricultural laborers and the poorer peasants to adopt this council system. We have to seize power, and the problem of the seizure of power poses the question: what does each workers’ and soldiers’ council in all Germany do, what can it do, and what must it do? The power is there! We must undermine the bourgeois state by putting an end everywhere to the cleavage in public powers, to the cleavage between legislative and executive powers. These powers must be united in the hands of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils (p. 405).

If the revolution does not succeed today, it will vanquish tomorrow, for it is “the only form of ‘war’ . . . in which the final victory can be prepared only by a series of ‘defeats’ ” (p. 413). In its revolutionary experience, the consciousness of the proletariat acquires that historical depth which will enable it to triumph.

The stress on class consciousness as the basis of the unity of the class struggle does not imply the rejection of a proletarian political party—though it does imply the refusal of certain political forms. It must not be forgotten that socialism, the final goal, is the totality of the moments by which it is reached. “The essence of socialist society consists in the fact that the great laboring mass ceases to be a dominated mass, but rather, makes the entire political and economic life its own life and gives that life a conscious, free, and autonomous direction” (p. 368). The qualities which make for the institution of social-

ism are created in the actual struggle for socialism. This is why Rosa Luxemburg opposed the idea of a conspiratorial revolution which is "not based on the immediate class consciousness of the working masses" (p. 288). In the conspiracy, even the members of the revolutionary group would be "transformed into pure implements of a predetermined will lying outside of their own field of activity—into tools of a central committee" (p. 289). Because it reproduces this error, Leninist ultra-centralism must be rejected for the same reason as the bureaucratic reformist structures of the German Social Democratic Party, for in both "the mass of comrades are denigrated to a mass incapable of judging, whose essential virtue becomes 'discipline,' that is, passive obedience to duty" (p. 264). Socialism must result from a mass, democratic movement in the development of which also grow the qualities which make socialist man.¹²

It is significant that Rosa Luxemburg speaks about the "masses," the "popular masses," the "laboring masses," the "working class," the "people," "a large popular class," etc., just as often as she does of the "proletariat." Though she never faced the problems which today's socialist movements must confront—that of defining the "revolutionary subject," and the relation of the "vanguard" to that subject¹³—this "imprecision" indicates how she might have reacted. Arguing against Lenin, she wrote:

¹² Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the role of the party is discussed in the introduction to Part III. It should be noted here, however, that the vagueness of her "theoretical" position on the question is a result of the fact that, beyond the few guidelines determined by the general nature of the revolutionary process, the solution depends on the concrete historical situation. Thus, Rosa Luxemburg's resistance to the formation of an independent German party during the war does not mean that she was opposed to all splits, as is seen in her Polish activities. By the same token, the decision today to form a new socialist party in the United States would have different grounds than such a choice in France or Italy.

¹³ It is doubtful that Rosa Luxemburg would accept this overly static formulation of the problem which ignores the fact that the proletariat is an historical process of becoming. The "proletariat" cannot be "defined" by empirical, statistical methods; it must be grasped within the totality of the capitalist system and its movement, and must be understood as created by that system at the same time that, with the development of its class consciousness, it creates itself.

Further, it is totally erroneous to think that it is in the interest of the labor movement to repel the massive afflux of recruits which are set free by the progressive dissolution of bourgeois society. The proposition that Social Democracy is the representative of the class interests of the proletariat but that it is at the same time the representative of all the progressive interests of society and of all oppressed victims of bourgeois society is not to be understood as saying that in the program of Social Democracy all these interests are ideally synthesized. This proposition becomes true through the process of historical development by means of which Social Democracy, as a political party, gradually becomes the haven of the different dissatisfied elements of society, becoming a party of the people opposed to a tiny minority of capitalist rulers (p. 303).

The idea that the proletarian party *becomes* the party of the majority, while *at the same time* remaining the expression of the politics of the proletariat, has to be understood *historically*.

Rosa Luxemburg was one of the few Social Democrats aware that the imperialist phase of world capitalism carried with it the imminent threat of world war. Already before the turn of the century, in "Militia and Militarism," she pointed out "the fundamental significance of militarism for the contemporary state" (p. 146).¹⁴ She hoped that the proletarian International would be the weapon which would defend mankind from the horrors of war. Together with Lenin, she pushed through a sharp amendment to the mild resolution of the 1907 Stuttgart meeting of the International, arguing that if war broke out, the duty of socialists was to oppose it and to use it to make the revolution. Yet, on August 4, 1914, not only did the war begin, but the International collapsed in a humiliating show of social patriotism.

From her prison cell, analyzing the effects of the outbreak of the war on the international socialist movement, Rosa Luxemburg wrote in the *Junius Pamphlet* of "the choice":

Either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degen-

¹⁴ "Militarism," in this context, refers to the whole apparatus of what today is called the "military-industrial complex."

eration, a vast cemetery. Or, the victory of socialism, that is, the conscious struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method: war. This is the dilemma of world history, an Either/Or whose scales are trembling in the balance, awaiting the decision of the class-conscious proletariat. . . . If the proletariat learns from this war to assert itself, to cast off its serfdom to the ruling classes, to become the lord of its own destiny, the shame and misery will not have been in vain (p. 334).

The choice is *socialism or barbarism*.

At this moment, one glance around us will show what a reversion to barbarism in bourgeois society means. This world war—that is a reversion to barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the destruction of culture, sporadically during a modern war, and forever if the period of world wars which has just begun is allowed to take its course to its logical end (p. 334).

In *The Accumulation of Capital*, Rosa Luxemburg had attempted to show that the imperialist phase of capitalism was necessitated by the internal laws of the system. In the *Junius Pamphlet*, she analyzed the political conflicts which had led to the world war, and would lead to another, no matter which capitalist group won the war. In an illegal Spartacus pamphlet, distributed during the war, she drew the conclusion:

Whether in peace or in war, the proletarian class struggle must be concentrated above all against imperialism. For the international proletariat, the fight against imperialism is at the same time the fight for political power in the state, the decisive settling of accounts between socialism and capitalism. The ultimate goal of socialism will be realized by the international proletariat only when it stands up against imperialism all down the line and, with its full strength and the courage to make extreme sacrifices, makes the slogan “War on war!” the guideline of its practical politics (p. 349).

The revolution still has to begin at home, within the capitalist national state. However, the effects of imperialist wars on the proletariat increasingly become one of the means by which class consciousness develops; and with the ever greater interdependence of the imperialist lands, the first outbreak will be a

spark for still others, for the world revolution of the proletariat.

The historical choice which the growth of capitalism brings with it explains Rosa Luxemburg's view that the party of the proletariat *becomes* the party of the people while remaining still the representative of the class politics of the proletariat. The capitalist order can only maintain itself by a series of barbaric wars, and by internal repression. Yet "an 'order' which must be periodically maintained by bloody butchery is steadily approaching its historical destiny, its doom" (p. 410). Today still, the historical necessity of socialism for *all* the people manifests itself only too concretely, and the choice, *socialism or barbarism*, is still with us. Only a politics based on and made by the proletariat is capable of stopping capitalism's headlong rush toward the abyss.

The materials selected for this book were chosen with the intention of providing an overall view of Rosa Luxemburg's political thought. Obviously, many important works had to be left out because of limitations of space. Thus, not only is the famous speech before the court at Frankfurt omitted, but also Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the Russian Revolution, as well as her economic works and letters.¹⁵ There was no other way. Over half a century ago, Lenin ordered the publication of the complete works of Rosa Luxemburg, yet today these are not available in *any* language!

This book is the product of the ideas and help of many people, and is very much a product of the international New Left. After taking part in the May Revolution in France, where I was a student at Nanterre, I traveled through Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland before returning to the

¹⁵ The Frankfurt speech is excerpted at length in Nettl's *Rosa Luxemburg*, and the article on the Russian Revolution is available in an Ann Arbor paperback of the same name. *The Accumulation of Capital* has been published by Monthly Review Press. One section of the *Introduction to Political Economy* is available from Merit Publishers. The letters to Karl and Luise Kautsky are available in an English translation from the 1920's.

United States, trying to get a better idea of the development of the New Left in an international setting. It was clear at that time that the movement in the United States was the most parochial of the New Left movements, both in terms of its understanding of and sympathy for the actual political situation in Europe, and in terms of its understanding of and feeling for the history of the international socialist movement. Because of the importance of the latter problem, I accepted the suggestion of comrades in Berlin and elsewhere to undertake this book.

The translations in this volume are also the product of the work of many people. I want to think John Heckman, Tom Herbst, Martin Nicolaus, Rosmarie Waldrop, and Peggy Fallen Wright for contributing their labor to this project, the royalties from which are being contributed to *Radical America*. I also want to thank Bill Duell and Harry Braverman for their aid and suggestions, as well as Brigitte Howard, who helped on all phases of this work, from beginning to end.

Several of the works included here were previously available in English translation. Those translations, however, were either incomplete or inaccurate; consequently, *all* the material presented here is newly translated.¹⁶ The various translators attempt to follow the originals as closely as possible, making no attempt to force any interpretation on them. This may mean that certain ambiguities remain in the texts, and that long sentences are not broken up as often as they might have been; nonetheless, it is hoped that in this manner Rosa Luxemburg's own style and mode of thought will make themselves felt. I have checked all the translations against the original texts, and have tried to make the style of the whole self-consistent.

Rosa Luxemburg published revised versions of the pam-

¹⁶ The new translations make use of the existing ones, correcting their errors and attempting to make them more readable. The old translations are the Integer version of *Social Reform or Revolution*, and the Eden and Cedar Paul version of "Our Program and the Political Situation," and the anonymous translations of "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" and the *Junius Pamphlet*.

phlets *Social Reform or Revolution* and *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions*. For both of these pamphlets, I have used the text of the first edition, indicating changes and additions by means of brackets and footnotes. In cases where parts of a work are omitted, I have provided a brief summary of the material which had to be left out for lack of space, except for the *Junius Pamphlet*, of whose hundred-odd pages only the first part is printed here. I have also added explanatory footnotes and a Glossary in order to make the texts more understandable to the reader.

DICK HOWARD

Bonn

March 2, 1970

I



Against Revisionism and Opportunism

The terms “revisionism” and “opportunism” have become so commonplace today that it may be useful to consider briefly the context within which the categories and practices grew. As usual, in the beginning was the Act. The Word, at once explaining and concealing, broadening and reifying, followed only later.

Despite Bismarck’s antisocialist laws—which led to over 1,500 arrests, 500 forced exiles and an untold number of voluntary ones, and which closed down nearly all Social Democratic newspapers and made all political activity other than electoral campaigning illegal—German Social Democracy and its trade-union offspring grew throughout the 1880’s.¹ During the period of illegality, Social Democracy did not attempt to transform itself into a tightly knit conspiratorial party; on the contrary, it continually declared, in its *illegal* leaflets, that its task was to convince the state that Social Democracy was a legitimate phenomenon which, because it was rooted in the people, could not be destroyed by any edict. Even though it was illegal, German Social Democracy counseled its adherents to follow the path of legality.

Social Democracy celebrated its return to legality at the Erfurt Party Congress in 1891. The program adopted at Erfurt was a work of brilliant compromise into which one could read the interpretation he wished. The Erfurt Program contains a

¹ Some electoral figures for the SPD: 1878 (before the antisocialist laws): 437,000 votes (7.5 percent); 1881 (under the antisocialist laws): 312,000 votes (6.1 percent); 1884: 550,000 votes (9.7 percent); 1887: 763,000 votes (7.1 percent); 1890 (end of antisocialist laws): 1,427,000 votes (19.7 percent).

formal affirmation of faith in the principles of Marxism (as interpreted and popularized by Kautsky), and a practical program, written by Bernstein, which accepts the capitalist terrain as the foundation of Social Democratic tactics. In it, the notion of a *minimal* and a *maximal* program is introduced, distinguishing the *final goal*—socialist revolution—from the *immediate* (trade-union and parliamentary) *tasks*. The “revolutionary nature” of the final goal was left vague in order not to provide the government with an excuse to again drive Social Democracy into illegality. The “anarchist” group, the Junge, who refused to accept the parliamentary road to power, were expelled from the Party. Though there was a conflict with the right wing of the Party, led by Vollmar, the latter was not expelled.

Though the hybrid origins of the Erfurt Program account in part for the zig-zag relation of Social Democratic theory and practice, there is another side to the story. As it grew, Social Democracy became more and more a state within the state. Compensating for the near-pariah situation of the workers within the highly structured and traditionalist German state, Social Democracy created its own little world with its own organizations, values, and morals, within which it was in effect possible to live from cradle to grave.² The Marxism of German Social Democracy, the theoretical foundation of its Reich, was

² Some figures can give an idea of the state of affairs at the time. Between 1891 and 1912, the trade unions (which must be seen as a part of Social Democracy) paid out the following sums (in millions of marks):

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------------------|------|
| Support of tourism | 13.6 | Sick pay | 66.8 |
| Unemployment compensation | 54.3 | Invalid pensions | 4.6 |
| Compensation to those fired | 9.4 | Moving costs, help | |
| Strike support | 121.4 | in cases of need | |
| Legal aid | 3.6 | or death | 24.3 |

In 1907, the trade unions had a capital of 33 million marks; the SPD, 1.3 million. Further, there existed socialist organizations for sports and gymnastics, cycling, swimming, rowing, athletics, singing, tourism, hiking, etc., and even a temperance organization. There were socialist women’s organizations, schools, and a central school for developing cadres.

basically a nondialectical, determinist view of the world which argued that socialism was objectively necessary and would—somehow—grow out of the capitalist order. A strong element of Darwinism was mixed into this belief. Among the masses, the belief in a socialist future was not unlike a religion. A sociological study from 1912 records statements like the following: “I am not without hope, for one who is so filled with socialism as myself believes in a liberation like a new Evangel” (a twenty-nine-year-old metal worker). “It was the political and trade-union movement which first gave a goal to my being, a content to my life” (a thirty-nine-year-old metal worker).

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the growth of the Social Democratic organization became an end in itself, a substitute for the revolution. The nondialectical determinism of the Erfurt Program veiled the real situation, and made it possible to justify a program of gradual reforms as a positive step toward revolution. The rhetoric of Social Democracy could be highly revolutionary; yet its actions, governed by the leaders’ fear for their slowly built and precious organization, were a far cry from its words. When, for example, at the height of the debate on revisionism, Parvus proposed that Bernstein be expelled from the Party, Bebel wrote to Kautsky: “To have the Party congress solemnly declare that it stands for social revolution—that would really be all we need.” It was in this climate that Robert Michels, once a Social Democrat, developed his famous “iron law of oligarchy.”

Social Democratic practice, then, was not what its theory pretended. Still, the theory was dogma; at the beginning of every Party congress, the Erfurt Program was solemnly reaffirmed as the guiding light of Social Democracy. During the 1890’s, the “practical politicians” in the Party initiated a number of actions (which Rosa Luxemburg criticizes in the selections presented below) which were formally at variance with the tablets engraved at Erfurt. Entirely consistent within the logic of bourgeois parliamentarism and reformism, these

tactical moves violated the canons of the Party, and were solemnly condemned at the Party congresses. Yet practice continued, unhindered by the theoretical scholasticism of those who in expounding doctrine were defending the revolutionary nature of the Party. The initiators of "practical" actions insisted that theoretical debates were only for "intellectuals," and that the day-to-day work of the Party should be left in the hands of those who had thus far successfully built the organization.

The separation between theory and practice became a burning problem especially after Eduard Bernstein attempted to formulate the theory of the actual practice of the Party. Bernstein had been a member of the SPD since its foundation, and had edited its central journal during the period of the antisocialist laws. He lived in exile in London, where he had worked closely with Engels, whose executor he became. In London, he gradually came under the influence of the Fabians. Between 1896 and 1898, Bernstein published a series of articles, "Problems of Socialism," in which he attempted to analyze and theorize the practice of Social Democracy, adopting as his motto a line from Schiller's *Maria Stuart*: "What it is, it should dare to appear."

At first, Bernstein's views attracted little notice in Germany. When they were attacked by the Englishman Belfort Bax, Bebel and Kautsky defended their old comrade, arguing that his "opinions" were too strongly influenced by English conditions. Then Parvus began the attack on Bernstein in Germany in a series of polemical articles whose tone was so strong that Bernstein interrupted his series to answer. The debate began in earnest, and on an international scale, with Plekhanov, Jaurès, and Labriola joining in. It was in this climate that Rosa Luxemburg published the series of articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* which later became the first part of her pamphlet *Social Reform or Revolution*.

Bernstein was, frankly, shocked by the attacks on his views. He insisted that his work was not a program or a system, and agreed fully with the point of view of the Party leadership, ex-

pressed by Bebel: "A correct tactic is more important than a correct program." The feelings of the Party leaders were well expressed in the famous letter of Auer to Bernstein: "My dear Ede. What you suggest is not formally decided. One does not say such things—one does them."

At the Stuttgart Party Congress in 1898, the opponents of revisionism mounted to the attack. Since Bernstein was still in exile, his views were defended by the "practical politicians," especially Wolfgang Heine and Georg von Vollmar. Rosa Luxemburg attended the Stuttgart Congress as a delegate from Polish Silesia, where she had gone to prove to the Party leadership that she was capable of practical as well as theoretical action. She did not hesitate to join the attack, choosing Heine as a surrogate for Bernstein, and later exchanging sharp words with Vollmar. Seeing that the debate was becoming too "theoretical," and too heated, the Party leaders suggested a one-year moratorium on the question, hoping that the whole affair would blow over and that then business could continue as usual. It was proposed to Bernstein that he elaborate his views in a book.

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Bernstein's book, *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, appeared before the 1899 Party Congress in Hanover. Rosa Luxemburg hastened to reply to it, writing the articles which became the second half of *Social Reform or Revolution*. She was convinced that her work would be a success, writing to Leo Jogiches that "even Bebel at Hanover will simply repeat from my pamphlet." During this time, she also wrote the "Militia and Militarism" series of articles, an attack on the opportunist views expressed by Max Schippel on the questions of militarism and tariff policy. "Militia and Militarism" was published later as an appendix to the pamphlet *Social Reform or Revolution*.

At the Hanover Party Congress in 1899, the revisionists came under heavy attack, this time from the Party leadership as well. Rosa Luxemburg joined in, and her resolution condemning the tactics of the Bavarian wing of the Party, led by Vollmar, was carried by a large majority. Due to the position

of the leadership, and to the fact that revisionism could be condemned as violating the sacrosanct principles of Erfurt Marxism, the resolution condemning revisionism was carried 215-21. This victory was, however, more symbolic than real, for even those who were most guilty of revisionist practices voted against that *theory* which purported to describe their practice.

The revisionist debate was by no means exhausted after the Hanover decision. Revisionism showed itself frequently in the ranks of Social Democracy, taking on now one form, now another. In Rosa Luxemburg's eyes, revisionism was identical with opportunism, which she defines in "Militia and Militarism" as the consequence of the "practical politics" which, because it has no principles, because it rejects the socialist final goal, attacks a manifestation of the system and not the system as a totality. Opportunism and revisionism are characterized economically by their "vulgar economic standpoint"—by the fact that their analysis is made from the point of view of the individual capitalist for whom there is a harmony of interests between capital and labor for the simple reason that the capitalist system is seen by the individual capitalist as eternal and immutable. Politically, they are characterized by their willingness to sacrifice the final goal to the practical needs of the moment. In so doing, they take a part for the whole, neglect the totality, and fall back into what might be called a "vulgar socialism." These are "theoretical" characterizations of revisionism-opportunism. But the debate had to be pushed back to its roots, and "no coarser insult, no baser defamation can be thrown against the workers than the remark: 'Theoretical controversies are only for intellectuals.' " By going to the theoretical roots, Rosa Luxemburg is able to make her objections against the specific practices far more clearly, and her pamphlet had a far greater resonance than, for example, Kautsky's attack on Bernstein's violation of dogma.

The "practical" tendencies within German Social Democracy grew stronger and took on different forms as the organiza-

tion grew and the political situation changed. The ultimate consequence of this politics was the vote of August 4, 1914, which gave formal approval to the German war effort, and declared that the class struggle was "adjourned" until after the war. The selections presented in this section show the first stages of Rosa Luxemburg's struggle against these tendencies. Their relevance is more than merely historical, for Rosa Luxemburg was always conscious of the need to make explicit the *principles* which determined her practical actions. "Militia and Militarism" is certain to make the contemporary reader think twice about his own attitudes, for what Rosa Luxemburg calls "militarism" is something more akin to what is now called the "military-industrial complex" than it is to modern "militarism."

The pamphlet *Social Reform or Revolution* contains the kernel of Rosa Luxemburg's principled attacks on Social Democratic opportunism. The title itself is an indication of the dialectical development of her thought. The pamphlet was not written to convince the uncommitted; all of Rosa Luxemburg's writing was for Party audiences. Yet, despite the fact that he speaks of its "Talmudic subtleties encased in Hegelian splints," J. P. Nettl also adds that "it is almost certainly true that more people at the time found their early way to Marxism through *Social Reform or Revolution* and other writings of Rosa Luxemburg than through any other writer." Paul Frölich, her comrade and biographer, comments that "the work is certainly strongly influenced by the *Communist Manifesto* in the audacious flow of ideas, the broad perspectives, and the monumental style." The pamphlet is indeed a dialectical masterpiece, both in its treatment of the economic problem of the breakdown, and the evolution of capitalist society, and in its discussion of the subjective and objective elements of proletarian politics. The principles laid down in *Social Reform and Revolution* were those to which Rosa Luxemburg held all her life.

Speeches to the Stuttgart Congress (1898)

Speech of October 3, 1898

The speeches of Heine and others have shown that an extremely important point has been obscured in our Party, namely that of understanding the relation between our final goal and our everyday struggles. It might be said that our program has a pretty passage concerning the final goal, which, while it certainly shouldn't be forgotten, has no immediate relation to our practical struggles. Perhaps there are some comrades who think that speculations about final goals are really academic questions. To them I would say that for us, as a revolutionary proletarian party, there exists no more practical question than that concerning ultimate goals.

Think about it: what really constitutes the socialist character of our whole movement? The really practical struggle falls into three categories: the trade-union struggle, the struggle for social reforms, and the struggle to democratize the capitalist state. Are these three forms of our struggle really socialism? Not at all. Take the trade-union movement first! Look at England: not only is it not socialist there, but it is in some respects an obstacle to socialism. Social reform is also emphasized by Academic Socialists, National Socialists, and similar types.¹

These are the texts of speeches made to the Stuttgart Congress of the German Social Democratic Party in 1898, in the discussion on questions of tactics. The texts are from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 28-33.

¹See Glossary for identification of persons and political parties.

And democratization is specifically bourgeois. The bourgeoisie had already inscribed democracy on its banner before we did.

Then what is it in our day-to-day struggles that makes us a socialist party? It can only be the relation between these three practical struggles and our final goals. It is the final goal alone which constitutes the spirit and the content of our socialist struggle, which turns it into a class struggle. And by final goal we must not mean, as Heine has said, this or that image of the future state, but the prerequisite for any future society, namely the conquest of political power. [*Shout: "Then we do agree!"*] This conception of our task is closely related to our conception of capitalist society; it is the solid ground which underlies our view that capitalist society is caught in insoluble contradictions which will ultimately necessitate an explosion, a collapse, at which point we will play the role of the banker-lawyer who liquidates a bankrupt company.

But if we take the position that we want to bring to fruition the interest of the proletariat, then it is impossible to make statements such as those that Heine has recently made to the effect that we can also make concessions on the question of militarism; it is impossible to make statements such as those of Konrad Schmidt to the central committee of the socialist majority in the bourgeois parliament, impossible to say, as Bernstein has, that once we take over command of the ship, even then we will not be in a position to do away with capitalism. When I read that, I said to myself: what a stroke of luck that the French socialist workers weren't that bright in 1871, for then they would have said: "Children, let's go to bed, our hour has not yet struck, production is not yet sufficiently concentrated for us to maintain control of the ship." But then, instead of a moving drama, instead of a heroic struggle, we would have seen a different scenario, for then the workers would not have behaved like heroes, but like old women. I think that arguments about whether, once we come to power, we will be able to make the production process serve society, whether things are ripe for that, *that* is an academic question. For us

there can never be any question that we must struggle to seize political power. A socialist party must always have a response appropriate to the situation; it can never shrink back from its task. Therefore our views on what our final goals are must be fully clarified. And we will fulfill them, in spite of storm, wind, and weather. [*Applause*]

Speech of October 4, 1898

Vollmar has bitterly reproached me with trying to preach to older veterans when I am still a young recruit to the movement. That is not the case. It would be superfluous, since I am convinced that the veterans stand firmly on the same ground as I. It is not at all a question of preaching to anyone, but of expressing a particular tactic clearly and unambiguously. I know that I still must earn my epaulets in the German movement; but I want to do it on the left wing, where people struggle against the enemy and not on the right wing, where people seek out compromises with the enemy. [*Objections*]

But when Vollmar counters my factual presentations with the argument, "You greenhorn, I could be your grandfather," that proves to me that his logical arguments are on their last legs. [*Laughter*] In fact, in the course of his presentation he made a series of statements which, coming from a veteran, are confusing, to say the least.

To Vollmar's sarcastic quotation from Marx on labor laws, I oppose another quotation from Marx, that the introduction of labor laws into England meant nothing less than the salvation of bourgeois society. In addition, Vollmar claimed it was false not to treat the trade-union movement as socialist and pointed to the [English] trade unions. And doesn't Vollmar know anything about the difference between old and new trade unionism? ² Doesn't he know that the old trade unionists

² The "old" trade unions were professional unions which, by the 1890's, had been fully integrated into the system. The "new" unions, the first of which was led by Tom Mann, John Burns and the Fabian W. A. Morris, wanted to unite the workers of

stood hard and fast on the side of the bourgeoisie? Doesn't he know that it was none other than Engels who expressed the hope that the socialist movement might now advance in England because England had lost its supremacy on the world market and that therefore the trade-union movement must take a new path? Vollmar trotted out the specter of Blanquism. Doesn't he know the difference between Blanquism and Social Democracy? Doesn't he know that for the Blanquists it is a handful of emissaries who are to take power in the name of the working class; for Social Democrats it is the working class itself? That is a difference that no one who is a veteran of the Social Democratic movement should forget.

Thirdly, he insinuated that I lust for violent means. I have not given any pretext for such an accusation, either in my statements or in my articles on Bernstein in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*.³ I take exactly the opposite position. I say that the only violent means that will bring us victory are the socialist enlightenment of the working class through day-to-day struggle.

One could find no higher compliment for my statements than to say that they are completely self-evident. They are certainly self-evident to any Social Democrat; but they are not self-evident for everyone here at the convention ["Oh!"], for example, not for Comrade Heine with his politics of compensation. How does this relate to the seizure of power? In what does a policy of compensation consist? We demand the strengthening of people's rights, of democratic freedoms; the capitalist state demands the strengthening of its own forces

whole industries. Their efforts led to the dockers' strike in August 1889, and the formation of the dockers' union. The "new" unions grew rapidly, and fought a number of successful struggles. They then formed the Independent Labour Party, which eventually led to the formation of the Labour Party. As W. Abendroth puts it, "the new trade unions were the first systematic, independent struggle by the working class since the demise of Chartism."

³ The reference is to the first part of *Social Reform or Revolution*, which appeared in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* from September 21 to 28, 1898.

and its cannon. Even given the most advantageous case, that such an agreement is honorably concluded and kept by both sides: what we get is only a piece of paper. Börne has already said: "I would not advise anyone to take a mortgage on a German constitution, for all German constitutions are like so many pieces of furniture." Constitutional freedoms, if they are to have any permanent worth, must be won through struggle, not through agreements. But what the capitalist state would get by securing an agreement with us has a firm, brutal reality. The cannon and soldiers to which we would agree will shift the objective material balance of power against us. It was none other than Lassalle who said: "The true constitution of any country consists not in its written constitution, but in the real balance of power." The inevitable result of a politics of compensation is that we agree to relationships which appear favorable on paper, but which in objective reality favor our opponents; that we basically weaken our own position and strengthen that of our opponents. I ask whether anyone can say that someone who suggests such a thing is seriously trying to take political power? I think that the anger with which Comrade Fendrich emphasized the obviousness of this tendency was erroneously addressed to me; it is basically aimed at Heine. It was only an expression of the sharp contradiction that Heine created between his position and that of our Party's proletarian convictions when he dared to speak of a politics of concessions toward the capitalist state.

Then take the statement of Konrad Schmidt, that the anarchy of capitalist rule can be overcome through trade-union struggles, or some such. If anything in our program gives credence to the necessity for the seizing of political power, it is the conviction that no medicinal herbs can grow in the dirt of capitalist society which can help cure capitalist anarchy. Anarchy—the terrible sufferings of the working class, the insecurity of people's existence, exploitation, the distance between rich and poor—increases every day. Can anyone say that someone who wants to solve these problems through capitalist means

sees the necessity for the seizure of political power by the working class? Even here, Fendrich's and Vollmar's anger is not directed at me, but at Konrad Schmidt.

And then the well-known statement [by Bernstein] in the *Neue Zeit*: "The final goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me; the movement is everything!" Anyone who says that does not stand for the necessity of seizing political power. You see that some comrades in the Party do not stand for the final goals of our movement, and that it is necessary to express that fact unambiguously. If ever it was necessary, now is the time. The blows of reaction shower on us like hail. This debate must answer the Kaiser's latest speech. Like the Roman Cato, we must say sharply and clearly, "In addition, I am of the opinion that this state must be destroyed." The conquest of political power remains the final goal and that final goal remains the soul of the struggle. The working class cannot take the decadent position of the philosophers: "The final goal is nothing to me, the movement is everything." No, on the contrary, without relating the movement to the final goal, the movement as an end in itself is nothing to me, the final goal is everything. [Applause]

Translated by John Heckman

Speech to the Hanover Congress (1899)

Comrades, it would be like carrying water to the sea if I were to address myself to the theoretical side of the problem after Comrade Bebel's excellent presentation. Bebel handled these questions so thoroughly and brought so many new facts to bear against Bernstein that it would be superfluous to say any more about it. Still, I must speak to answer some of David's comments, which were in part aimed at me. I shall not concern myself with his remarks on agriculture. The question of artificial fertilizer played such an important role in his presentation that I couldn't help thinking of the speech of an old Pomeranian farmer in an agricultural club meeting, in which he said: "I think you will all agree with me when I close my presentation with the words: Manure is the soul of agriculture." [*Great amusement and "Oho"*]

The weakest side of Bernstein and his followers' theoretical conception is their theory about the so-called *economic power* which the working class must first achieve within the framework of today's social order before it can successfully carry out a political revolution. David and Bernstein's other followers often reproach us with using empty phrases and having a predilection for models. But, as I shall prove, on the question of the seizure of economic power they are the ones who use phrases and models.

It is well known that Marx proved that specific economic

This is the text of a speech made to the Hanover Congress of the German Social Democratic Party on October 11, 1899, in the discussion on Bernstein. The text is from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 78-86.

relations lie at the base of every political class movement. Marx showed that all previous historical classes rose to economic power before they arrived at political power. And now the Davids, the Woltmanns, and the Bernsteins slavishly apply this model to contemporary relationships. This proves that they understand neither the essence of earlier struggles nor the essence of current struggles.

What does it mean to say that previous classes, namely the Third Estate, took economic power before their political emancipation? Nothing else but the historical fact that all previous class struggles can be traced to the economic fact that every new ascendant class also created a new form of property on which it finally based its class dominance. The artisans' struggle against the city nobility in the first part of the Middle Ages depended on the fact that, as opposed to the property of the nobility which consisted in land, they created a new form of property which depended on labor. That was a new economic creation which finally burst the political chains and reshaped in its own image the remnants of feudal property, which had become meaningless. The same thing was repeated at the end of the Middle Ages when the middle classes led their fight against feudalism, when new capitalist property, which depended on the exploitation of outside labor, was created and finally brought the Third Estate into political as well as economic power.

Now I ask: can this model be applied to our situation? No. Precisely those people who prattle on about the economic power of the proletariat overlook the huge difference between our struggle and all previous class struggles. The assertion that the proletariat, in contrast to all previous classes, leads a class struggle not in order to institute the rule of one class, but to do away with the rule of any class, is no empty phrase. It has its basis in the fact that the proletariat creates no new form of property, but only extends the form of property created by the capitalist economy by turning it over to the possession of society. Thus, it is an illusion to believe that the proletariat could

create economic power for itself within current bourgeois society; it can only take political power and then replace capitalist forms of property. Bernstein criticizes Marx and Engels for applying the schema of the great French Revolution to our situation. Yet he and other adherents of “economic power” apply the *economic* schema of the great French Revolution to the struggle of the proletariat.

David has presented a whole theory on undermining capitalist property. I don’t know whether his conception of socialist struggle in fact leads to undermining anything: I strongly doubt it. But it is beyond any doubt that such a conception presupposes that we have holes in our heads. [*Gaiety, protestations*]

David and Bernstein’s adherents look at our position on trade unions and cooperatives from the point of view of economic power. We are accused of seeing them as a necessary evil. Now I am convinced that there is not a single comrade among us—even among the so-called politicians, as those who want to distinguish artificially between politicians and union men would express themselves—no one who does not clearly see that in the area of trade-union organizing the greatest part of our job remains to be done and that we must put all our energies into this task. All of us clearly see that if trade-union fights were to be taken away from us or if such fights could not be continued, then the political struggle would also suffer greatly; for the first prerequisite [to taking power] is educating a broad mass to the necessity of class struggle, and fights around trade unions are the best means to that end. But in a certain sense, those who accuse us of being only halfway friendly toward trade unions are perhaps correct, particularly when by “friendly” they mean furthering illusions in relation to trade unions. If the trade unions are presented not only as a means of winning workers to the class struggle, of enlightening them, and of improving their current situation; if it were thought that trade unions can also serve directly to transform capitalist property into socialist property, to undermine it—

then not only might we not approve, but rather we must disown any support for such a conception. [*“Quite right!”*] In its struggle, the working class has no greater enemy than its own illusions. Fundamentally, those who support such a view [of the role of the trade unions] are not at all friends of the trade unions, for they are necessarily working toward a later disillusionment.

Notions along that line are even more false in relation to cooperatives. I will make only a few observations here. It has become popular to put cooperatives on the same level of importance as trade unions, or even to say that they are a form of political struggle. No, cooperatives are of wholly different cloth. Even when we look only at their positive meaning, their significance for the working class, one thing remains: cooperatives are not class struggle. [*“Quite right!”*]

Secondly, those who imagine that the cooperatives already contain the seed of a socialist order forget an important factor in the contemporary situation: the reserve army [of the unemployed]. Even if we suppose that cooperatives gradually put all capitalist enterprises out of business and replace them, we certainly cannot entertain the fantastic notion that, given the current market relationships, the demand for goods could be filled without a general plan to determine production relationships. The question of the unemployed would remain open, as before.

And one more thing. I don't know which cooperatives people think of as an ideal, as an abstract scheme. I only know that the English cooperatives, which have been trotted out as models for the cooperative movement, do not at all realize socialist ideals in their process of production. [*Shout: “Our models are the Belgian ones!”*] At the [English] trade-union congress, a tailors' union demanded that the union's parliamentary committee should cooperate with the Corporations to force its members to abide by the wages and working conditions which had been determined by the parliamentary committee: so capitalist exploitation has not been done away with at all.

The Bernstein faction's theory about the *general socialization of capitalist society* is connected with this economic conception. After David's speech, it would indeed be superfluous to refute extensively every expression of this idea. For, among other things, he even gave the example of tariff unions as a partial socialization of capitalism. Those comrades obviously conceive of socialism in the following way: all practical policies would remain just as they are now, with the possible exception of greater attention to cooperatives, and then everything is quite simple: just stick the label "socialism" on them, and there you are! They only forget that, as Engels once said, if you classify a clothes brush as a mammal, it won't grow breasts for quite a while. [*Amusement. Shout: "But that is quite true!"*]

One more observation, on the so-called *breakdown theory*. Of course, if we called everything we are already doing socialism, it would be completely superfluous to drag in a breakdown. But those comrades who believe such a crazy notion [*Fendrich calls: "More respect!" The President rings for order*—excuse me, I didn't mean to offend, I meant "mistaken." Those comrades who hold such a mistaken notion of socialism conceive of the theory of evolution in a way that, with a small correction in the dialectical conception of history, history is once again a smooth and straight path. They just snip the concept of a breakdown, of a social catastrophe, out of the pattern of evolution as Marx and Engels conceive it, and get a nice comfy notion of evolution: just what an [Academic Socialist like] Herr Brentano would want. If we want to learn from history, we see that all previous class struggles have gone as follows: through legal reforms and small steps forward, the rising class grew stronger within the limits of the old society, until it was strong enough to cast off its old shackles *by means of a social and political catastrophe*. It had to be done that way, in spite of the fact that the rising class could develop its economic power to its highest point within the womb of the old ruling class. For us that upheaval will be ten times more necessary. Comrades who think they can lead society into socialism peacefully, without a cata-

clysm, have no historical basis in fact. By revolution we do not have to mean pitchforks and bloodshed. A revolution can also take place on a cultural level, and if ever there were any prospect of that, it would be in the proletarian revolution, since we are the last to take up violent means, the last to wish a brutal, violent revolution on ourselves. But such matters do not depend on us, they depend on our opponents. [*“Quite right!”*] We must put aside the question of the form through which we will take power; that is a question about conditions which we cannot predict. We are interested in the essence of the process, and that is that we are striving for a complete transformation of the ruling capitalist economic order, which can be attained only through seizing state power and never on the path of social reform within the confines of existing society. Those who give in to such a hope take a stand which is based either on ignorance of the past, or on optimism about the future.

Now another, more practical question. Bebel polemicized brilliantly for six hours against Bernstein. I ask: would that have happened if we could suppose that Bernstein were the only one among us who believed these theories, if the differences of opinion stemmed from the realm of abstract theory? We are a practical, fighting political party, and if nothing else had happened except a theoretical deviation from the usual party line on the part of one man, however important and worthy, then such a speech by Bebel would never have been made. But we have in our Party a number of comrades who take the same position, and the differences of opinion do not relate only to theory, to abstractions; they relate also to practice. It is a generally known fact that for over a decade we have had within our ranks a fairly strong tendency in sympathy with Bernstein's notions, who want to present our current practice as being already socialism, and thus—unconsciously, of course—to transform the socialism for which we are fighting, the only socialism which is not an empty phrase or a figment of the imagination, into a mere revolutionary slogan. Bebel was correct in saying disparagingly that Bernstein's no-

tions are so confused, so full of implications, that they cannot be grasped in a clear outline without his being able to say that he has been misunderstood. Previously, Bernstein did not write that way. This lack of clarity, these contradictions, should not be attached to him personally, but to the tendency, to the content of his essays. If you follow Party history over the last ten years, and study the transcripts of the Party congresses, you will see that the Bernstein tendency has gradually gotten stronger, but has not yet completely matured. I hope it never will. In its current stage, it is impossible for it to be clear about itself; it cannot find the right language to express itself. That is how Bernstein's lack of clarity must be understood. To see how this Bernsteinian tendency would lead to making a pile of nonsense out of our socialism, let me take a small example from the last few days. At a Munich meeting which was to take a position about this Congress, a speaker who was talking about the Schippel case¹ said the following: "Schippel was speaking about the militia, whereas our program talks about a people's army"—a distinction which completely escapes me, but let that be. Then he said: "In defense of Schippel one can say that this passage of our program actually says that for the present we must work for a reduction in the time of military service!" I don't want to anticipate the debate about the militia which will come in the next few days, but rather give the example as typical of the method. Our minimal program has a very specific meaning. We know that socialism cannot be introduced all at once, as if it were shot from a pistol, but only if we force small reforms from the existing order by leading a sharp class struggle on an economic and political basis in order to increase our economic and political strength, to take power, and finally to wring the neck of today's society. To that end our minimal demands are tailored to the present. We will take everything they give us, but we must demand the entire political program. [*"Quite right!"*] But instead of point three, which explic-

¹ The "Schippel case" is discussed below in "Militia and Militarism."

itly contains a demand for the militia, the comrade in Munich put forth a demand for the reduction in the length of military service as the Party's practical demand. If we were, in this fashion, to make a small fraction of our minimal program into the real practical minimal program, then what we now see as our minimal program would become our ultimate goal, and our true ultimate goal would be entirely cut off from reality and would indeed become merely "revolutionary sloganeering." [*Lively applause*]

Translated by John Heckman

Social Reform or Revolution

Preface

At first view, the title of this work may be surprising. Social reform *or* revolution? Can Social Democracy be *against* social reforms? Can it *oppose* social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, its final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The practical daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers Social Democracy the only means of engaging in the proletarian class struggle and working in the direction of the final goal—the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage labor. For Social Democracy there exists an indissoluble tie between social reforms and revolution. The struggle for reforms is its *means*; the social revolution, its *goal*.

It is in Eduard Bernstein's theory, presented in his articles on "Problems of Socialism," in the *Neue Zeit* of 1897–1898, and especially in his book, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die*

Text from *Politische Schriften*, I (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 47–133.

There exist two editions of this work, the first published in 1899 in Leipzig, and the second in 1908 in Leipzig. The latter contains a number of corrections and revisions, taking into account the events of the nine years since the original publication. These corrections concern mainly the problem of crises, and Rosa Luxemburg's demand that the revisionists be eliminated from the Party.

This translation gives the texts of both editions, following the recent German edition in *Politische Schriften*. The text is that of the first edition; passages eliminated in the second edition are bracketed; passages added in the second edition are given in footnotes.

Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie [The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy—D.H.], that we find, for the first time, the opposition of the two moments of the labor movement. His theory tends to counsel the renunciation of the social transformation, the final goal of Social Democracy, and, inversely, to make social reforms, which are the *means* of the class struggle, into its *end*. Bernstein himself formulated this viewpoint very clearly and precisely when he wrote: "The final goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me; the movement is everything."

But since the final goal of socialism is the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labor movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle *against* this order, for the suppression of this order—the question "Reform or Revolution?" as it is posed by Bernstein is, for Social Democracy, the same as the question "To be or not to be?" In the controversy with Bernstein and his followers, everybody in the Party ought to understand clearly that it is not a question of this or that method of struggle, or of the use of this or that *tactic*, but of the very *existence* of the Social Democratic movement.

[From a casual consideration of Bernstein's theory, this may appear to be an exaggeration. Does he not continually mention Social Democracy and its aims? Does he not repeat again and again, and explicitly, that he too strives toward the final goal of socialism, but in another way? Does he not stress particularly that he fully approves of the present practice of Social Democracy? That is all true, to be sure. But it is also true that every new movement, when it first elaborates its theory and policy, begins by finding support in the preceding movement, though it may be in direct contradiction with the latter. It begins by suiting itself to the forms already at hand, and by speaking the language which was spoken. In time, the new

grain breaks through the old husk, and the new movement finds its own forms and its own language.

[To expect an opposition against scientific socialism at its beginning to express itself clearly, fully, and to the last consequence; to expect it to *deny* openly and bluntly the theoretical basis of Social Democracy—would be to underrate the power of scientific socialism. Today, he who would pass as a socialist, and at the same time would declare war on the Marxian doctrine, the most stupendous product of the human mind in this century, must begin with involuntary esteem for Marxism. He must begin by acknowledging himself its disciple, by seeking in Marx's own teachings the points of support for an attack on them, representing this attack as a further development of Marxian doctrine. For this reason, unconcerned by its outer forms, one must pick out the sheathed kernel of Bernstein's theory. This is a matter of urgent necessity for the broad strata of the industrial proletariat in our party.

[No coarser insult, no baser defamation, can be thrown against the workers than the remark "Theoretical controversies are only for intellectuals." Lassalle once said: "Only when science and the workers, these opposed poles of society, become one will they crush in their arms of steel all obstacles to culture." The entire strength of the modern labor movement rests on theoretical knowledge.]

But this knowledge is doubly important for the workers in the present case, because it is precisely they and their influence in the movement that are in the balance here. It is their skin that is being brought to market. The opportunist current in the Party, whose theory is formulated by Bernstein, is nothing but an unconscious attempt to assure the predominance of the petty-bourgeois elements that have entered our Party, to change the policy and aims of our Party in their direction. The question of reform and revolution, of the final goal and the movement, is, in another form, the question of the *petty-bourgeois or proletarian character of the labor movement*.

[It is, therefore, in the interest of the proletarian mass of the

Party to become acquainted, actively and in detail, with the present theoretical controversy with opportunism. As long as theoretical knowledge remains the privilege of a handful of "intellectuals" in the Party, it will face the danger of going astray. Only when the great mass of workers take in their own hands the keen and dependable weapons of scientific socialism will all the petty-bourgeois inclinations, all the opportunist currents, come to naught. The movement will then find itself on sure and firm ground. "Quantity will do it."]

PART ONE

1. The Opportunist Method

If it is true that theories are reflections in the human consciousness of the phenomena of the external world, then it must be added, concerning Eduard Bernstein's theory, that these theories are sometimes inverted images. Think of a theory of instituting socialism by means of social reform in face of the complete stagnation of the reform movement in Germany. Think of a theory of trade-union control over production in face of the defeat of the metal workers in England. Consider the theory of winning a majority in parliament after the revision of the constitution of Saxony and the most recent attempts against universal suffrage. However, in our opinion, the pivotal point of Bernstein's system is not located in his conception of the practical tasks of Social Democracy. It is found in what he says about the course of the objective development of capitalist society which, of course, is closely bound to his conception of the practical tasks of Social Democracy.

According to Bernstein, a general breakdown of capitalism is increasingly improbable because, on the one hand, capitalism shows a greater capacity of adaptation and, on the other hand, capitalist production becomes more and more varied. The capacity of capitalism to adapt itself, says Bernstein, is manifested, first, in the disappearance of general crises thanks

to the development of the credit system, employers' organizations,¹ wider means of communication and informational services. It shows itself, secondly, in the tenacity of the middle classes, which follows from the continual differentiation of the branches of production and the elevation of vast strata of the proletariat into the middle class. It is furthermore proved, argues Bernstein, by the amelioration of the economic and political situation of the proletariat as a result of the trade-union struggle.

From this is derived the following general conclusion about the practical struggle of Social Democracy. It must not direct its activity toward the conquest of political power but toward the improvement of the condition of the working class. It must not expect to institute socialism as a result of a political and social crisis but by means of the progressive extension of social control and the gradual application of the principle of cooperation.²

Bernstein himself sees nothing new in his theories. On the contrary, he believes them to be in agreement with certain declarations of Marx and Engels, as well as with the general direction of Social Democracy up to the present. Nevertheless, it seems to us that it is difficult to deny that they are in fundamental contradiction with the conceptions of scientific socialism.

If Bernstein's revisionism consisted only in affirming that the march of capitalist development is slower than was thought before, he would merely be presenting an argument for adjourning the conquest of power by the proletariat on which up to now everybody agreed. Its only practical consequence would be a slowing down of the pace of the struggle.

¹ By "employers' organizations" Rosa Luxemburg and Bernstein refer to cartels and trusts, terms which are used synonymously in this pamphlet.

² Bernstein attributes an important role to cooperatives as a way of introducing socialism as it were under the very noses of the capitalists. Rosa Luxemburg shows the economic impossibility of this scheme below. Cf. also the speech to the Party Congress at Hanover, above.

But that is not the case. What Bernstein questions is not the rapidity of the development of capitalist society but the path of the development itself and, consequently, the transition to socialism.

Socialist theory up to now declared that the point of departure for a transformation to socialism would be a general and catastrophic crisis. We must distinguish two things in this theory: the fundamental idea and its external form.

The fundamental idea consists in the affirmation that, as a result of its own inner contradictions, capitalism moves toward a point when it will be unbalanced, when it will simply become impossible. There were good reasons for thinking of that juncture in the form of a catastrophic general commercial crisis.³ But, nonetheless, that is of secondary importance and inessential to the fundamental idea.

As is well known, the scientific basis of socialism rests on *three* results of capitalist development. First, and most important, on the growing *anarchy* of the capitalist economy, leading inevitably to its ruin. Second, on the progressive *socialization* of the process of production, which creates the germs of the future social order. And third, on the growing *organization and class consciousness* of the proletariat, which constitutes the active factor in the coming revolution.

Bernstein eliminates the first of the three fundamental supports of scientific socialism. He says that capitalist development does not lead to a general economic collapse.

He does not merely reject a certain form of the collapse but the collapse itself. He says, textually: "One could object that by collapse of the present society is meant something else than a general commercial crisis worse than all others, namely, a complete collapse of the capitalist system brought about as a

³ With the development of imperialism and militarism during the decade following the writing of this pamphlet, it became more and more clear to Rosa Luxemburg that the crisis of capitalism would come in the form of a world war which would have to be ended by the socialist revolution. The anarchy of capitalism finally turned into the orgy of war, and the choice, as Rosa Luxemburg put it, was "socialism or barbarism!"

result of its own contradictions.” And to this he replies: “With the growing development of society, a complete and almost general collapse of the present system of production becomes not more but less probable because capitalist development increases, on the one hand, the capacity of adaptation and, on the other—that is, at the same time—the differentiation of industry.”⁴

But then the important question arises: Why and how shall we attain the final goal of our efforts? From the standpoint of scientific socialism, the historical necessity of the socialist revolution manifests itself above all in the growing anarchy of capitalism which drives the system into an impasse. But if one admits, with Bernstein, that capitalist development does not move in the direction of its own ruin, then socialism ceases to be *objectively necessary*. There remain only the other two mainstays of the scientific explanation of socialism, which are also consequences of the capitalist order: the socialization of the process of production and the class consciousness of the proletariat. It is these that Bernstein has in mind when he says that with the elimination of the breakdown theory “the socialist doctrine loses nothing of its power of persuasion. For, examined closely, what are all the factors enumerated by us that make for the suppression or the modification of the former crises? Nothing else, in fact, than the preconditions, or even in part the germs, of the socialization of production and exchange.”⁵

Very little reflection is needed to see that this too is a false conclusion. Where does the importance of all the phenomena which Bernstein says are the means of capitalist adaptation—cartels, the credit system, the development of means of communication, the amelioration of the situation of the working class, etc.—lie? Obviously in that they eliminate or, at least, attenuate the internal contradictions of capitalist economy,

⁴ *Neue Zeit*, 1897–98, No. 18, p. 555. (R.L.)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 554. (R.L.)

and stop the development or the aggravation of these contradictions. Thus the elimination of crises means the suppression of the antagonism between production and exchange on the capitalist base. The amelioration of the situation of the working class, or the penetration of certain fractions of that class into the middle layers, means the attenuation of the antagonism between capital and labor. But if the cartels, credit system, trade unions, etc., suppress the capitalist contradictions and consequently save the system from ruin; if they enable capitalism to maintain itself—and that is why Bernstein calls them “means of adaptation”—how can they be at the same time “the preconditions and even in part the germs” of socialism? Obviously only in the sense that they express more clearly the social character of production. But, inversely, by maintaining it in its *capitalist* form, the same factors render superfluous in equal measure the transformation of this socialized production into socialist production. That is why they can be the germs or preconditions of a socialist order only in a conceptual sense and not in an historical sense. They are phenomena which, in the light of our conception of socialism, we *know* to be related to socialism but which, in fact, not only do not lead to a socialist revolution but, on the contrary, render it superfluous. There remains only one foundation of socialism—the class consciousness of the proletariat. But it, too, is in the given case not the simple intellectual reflection of the ever growing contradictions of capitalism and its approaching decline—for this decline is prevented by the means of adaptation. It is now a mere ideal whose force of persuasion rests only on the perfections attributed to it.

What we have here, in brief, is the foundation of the socialist program by means of “pure reason.” We have here, to use simpler language, an idealist explanation of socialism. The objective necessity of socialism, the explanation of socialism as the result of the material development of society, falls away.

Revisionist theory stands before an Either/Or. Either the socialist transformation is, as was admitted up to now, the con-

sequence of the internal contradictions of the capitalist order—then with this order will develop its contradictions, resulting inevitably, at some point, in its collapse. In this case, however, the “means of adaptation” are ineffective, and the breakdown theory is correct. Or, the “means of adaptation” are really capable of stopping the breakdown of the capitalist system and thereby enable capitalism to maintain itself by suppressing its own contradictions. In that case, *socialism* ceases to be an historical necessity. It then becomes anything you want to call it, except the result of the material development of society.

This dilemma leads to another. Either revisionism is correct concerning the course of capitalist development, and therefore the socialist transformation of society becomes a utopia. Or socialism is not a utopia; and therefore the theory of the “means of adaptation” is false. “*Das ist die Frage*, that is the question.”

2. *The Adaptation of Capitalism*

According to Bernstein, the credit system, the improved means of communication and the new employers’ organizations are the important means that bring about the adaptation of the capitalist economy.

Let us begin with *credit*. Credit has diverse functions in the capitalist economy. Its two most important functions, as is well known, are to increase the capacity to expand production and to facilitate exchange. When the inner tendency of capitalist production to expand limitlessly strikes against the barrier of private property (the limited size of private capital), credit appears as a means of surmounting these limits in a capitalist manner. Through stock companies, credit combines in one mass a large number of individual capitals. It makes available to each capitalist the use of other capitalists’ money—in the form of industrial credit. Further, as commercial credit, it accelerates the exchange of commodities and therefore the return of capital into production, and thus aids the entire cycle of the process of production.

The effect of these two principal functions of credit on the

formation of crises is quite obvious. If it is true that crises appear as a result of the contradiction between the capacity for expansion, the tendency of production to increase, and the restricted consumption capacity, then in view of what was stated above, credit is precisely the specific means of making this contradiction break out as often as possible. First of all, it immensely increases the capacity for the expansion of production, and thus constitutes an inner driving force that constantly pushes production to exceed the limits of the market. But credit strikes from two sides. After having (as a factor of the process of production) provoked overproduction, credit (as mediator of the process of exchange) destroys, during the crisis, the very productive forces it itself created. At the first symptom of the stagnation, credit melts away. It abandons the exchange process just when it is still indispensable, and where it still exists, it shows itself instead ineffective and useless, and thus during the crisis it reduces the consumption capacity of the market to a minimum.

Besides these two principal results, credit also influences the formation of crises in many other ways. It offers not only the technical means of making available to an entrepreneur the capital of other owners, but at the same time stimulates bold and unscrupulous utilization of the property of others. That is, it leads to reckless speculation. Not only does credit aggravate the crisis in its capacity as a dissembled means of exchange; it also helps to bring on and extend the crisis by transforming all exchange into an extremely complex and artificial mechanism which, having a minimum of metallic money as a real base, is easily disarranged at the slightest occasion.

Thus, far from being a means for the elimination or the attenuation of crises, credit is, on the contrary, a particularly powerful factor in the formation of crises. This could not possibly be otherwise. Speaking very generally, the specific function of credit is nothing but the elimination of the remaining rigidity of capitalist relationships. It introduces everywhere the greatest elasticity possible. It renders all capitalist forces ex-

tendable, relative, and sensitive to the highest degree. Doing this, it facilitates and aggravates crises, which are nothing but the periodic collisions of the contradictory forces of the capitalist economy.

This leads, at the same time, to another question. How can credit generally have the appearance of a “means of adaptation” of capitalism? No matter in what context or form this “adaptation” is conceived, its essence can obviously only be that one of the several antagonistic relations of capitalist economy is smoothed over, that one of its contradictions is suppressed or weakened, and that thus liberty of movement is assured, at one point or another, to the otherwise fettered productive forces. In fact, it is precisely credit that aggravates these contradictions to the highest degree. It aggravates the antagonism between the *mode of production* and the *mode of exchange* by stretching production to the limit and at the same time paralyzing exchange on the smallest pretext. It increases the contradiction between the *mode of production* and the *mode of appropriation* by separating production from ownership, that is, by transforming the capital employed in production into “social” capital⁶ and at the same time transforming a part of the profit, in the form of interest on capital, into a simple title of ownership. It increases the contradiction between the *property relations* and the *relations of production* by putting immense productive forces into a small number of hands, and expropriating a large number of small capitalists. It increases the contradiction between the *social* character of production and capitalist *private ownership* by rendering necessary the intervention of the state in production (stock companies).

In short, credit reproduces all the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist world. It accentuates them. It precipitates their development and thus pushes the capitalist world forward to its own destruction—the breakdown. The prime act

⁶ The reference here is to the formation of “anonymous societies,” i.e., giant joint-stock corporations which, in theory, are owned by their stockholders.

of capitalist adaptation, as far as credit is concerned, should really consist in breaking and *suppressing* credit. In fact, credit is far from being a means of capitalist adaptation. On the contrary, as it presently exists, it is a means of destruction of the most extreme revolutionary significance. Has not precisely this revolutionary character which leads the credit system beyond capitalism actually inspired plans of "socialist" reform? As such, it has had some distinguished proponents, some of whom (Isaac Pereire in France) were, as Marx put it, half prophets, half rogues.

On closer examination, the second "means of adaptation," *employers' organizations*, appears just as fragile. According to Bernstein, such organizations will put an end to anarchy of production and do away with crises through the regulation of production. It is true that the multiple economic repercussions of the development of cartels and trusts have not been studied too carefully up to now. But they represent a problem which can only be solved with the aid of Marxist theory.

One thing, at least, is certain. We could speak of a damming of capitalist anarchy by capitalist employers' organizations only in the measure that cartels, trusts, etc., become, even approximately, the dominant form of production. But such a possibility is excluded by the very nature of the cartels. The final economic aim and result of employers' organizations is the following. Through the elimination of competition in a given branch of production, the distribution of the mass of profit realized on the market is influenced in such a manner that there is an increase in the share going to this branch of industry. Such organization can only increase the rate of profit in one branch of industry at the expense of another. That is precisely why it cannot be generalized; for when it is extended to all important branches of industry, this tendency cancels its own influence.

But even within the limits of their practical application, the result of employers' organizations is the very opposite of the elimination of industrial anarchy. Cartels ordinarily succeed

in obtaining an increase of the rate of profit in the internal market at the cost of having to sell the produce of the excess portion of their capital—that which couldn't be absorbed by the internal market—on foreign markets at a much lower rate of profit. That is to say, they sell abroad cheaper than at home. The result is the sharpening of competition abroad and an increased anarchy on the world market—the very opposite of what is intended. This is well demonstrated by the history of the international sugar industry.

Generally speaking, employers' organizations, as a manifestation of the capitalist mode of production, can only be considered a definite phase of capitalist development. In effect, cartels are fundamentally nothing but a means resorted to by the capitalist mode of production to hold back the fatal fall of the rate of profit in certain branches of production. What method do cartels employ to this end? It is, essentially, that of keeping inactive a part of the accumulated capital. That is, they use the same method which, in another form, comes into play during crises. The remedy and the illness resemble each other like two drops of water, and the former can be considered the lesser evil only up to a certain point. When the market outlets begin to shrink because the world market has been extended to its limit and has been exhausted by the competition of the capitalist countries—and it cannot be denied that sooner or later this is bound to occur⁷—then the forced partial idleness of capital will reach such dimensions that the remedy will itself be transformed into an illness, and capital, already pretty much "socialized" through organization, will tend to revert again to the form of private capital. In the face of the increased difficulties of finding even a tiny place, each individual portion will prefer to take its chances alone. At that time, the [employers'—D.H.] organizations will burst like soap bubbles and give way to free competition in an aggravated form.⁸

⁷ This argument resembles the thesis later developed by Rosa Luxemburg in *The Accumulation of Capital*.

⁸ In the second edition, the following is added:
 "In a note to the third volume of *Capital*, Engels wrote in 1894:

On the whole, cartels, just like credit, appear therefore as a determined phase of capitalist development which, in the last analysis, only aggravates the anarchy of the capitalist world, expressing and ripening its internal contradictions. Cartels aggravate the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of exchange by sharpening the struggle between producer and consumer, as is the case especially in the United States. Furthermore, they aggravate the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of appropriation by opposing the superior force of organized capital to the working class in the most brutal fashion, and thus increasing the antagonism between capital and labor. Finally, capitalist cartels aggravate the contradiction between the international character of the capitalist world economy and the national character of the capitalist state insofar as they are always accompanied by a general tariff war which sharpens the differences among the capitalist states. We must add to this the decidedly revolutionary influence exercised by cartels on the concentration of production, technical progress, etc.

Thus, when evaluated from the angle of their final effect on the capitalist economy, cartels and trusts fail as "means of adaptation." They fail to attenuate the contradictions of capitalism. On the contrary, they appear to be a means which itself

'Since the above was written (1865), competition on the world market has been considerably intensified by the rapid development of industry in all civilized countries, especially in America and Germany. The fact that the rapidly and enormously expanding modern productive forces grow beyond the control of the laws of the capitalist mode of exchange within which they are supposed to move impresses itself nowadays more and more even on the minds of the capitalists. This is shown especially by two symptoms. First, by the new and general mania for protective tariffs which differs from the old protectionism especially by the fact that now the articles which are capable of being exported are the best protected. In the second place, it is shown by the cartels (trusts) of manufacturers in whole large spheres of production for the regulation of production, and thus of prices and profits. It goes without saying that these experiments are practicable only so long as the economic weather is relatively favorable. The first storm must upset them, and prove that although production assuredly needs regulation, it is certainly not the capitalist class which is fitted for the task. Meanwhile, the trusts have no other mission but to see to it that the little fish are swallowed by the big fish still more rapidly than before.' "

leads to greater anarchy. They encourage the further development of the internal contradictions of capitalism and accelerate the coming of a general decline of capitalism.

But if the credit system, cartels, and the rest do not suppress the anarchy of capitalism, why have we not had a major commercial crisis for two decades, since 1873? Is this not a sign that, contrary to Marx's analysis, the capitalist mode of production has "adapted" itself—at least in a general way—to the needs of society. [We believe that the present calm on the world market can be explained in another way. One has become accustomed to considering the previous commercial crises as the crises of old age, which Marx schematically analyzes. The best proof of this schema seemed to be the approximately ten-year periodicity of the production cycle. However, we believe that this conception is based on a misunderstanding. If one looks more closely at the different causes of all previous great international crises, one will be convinced that they are all not the expression of the weakness of old age of the capitalist economy but rather of its childhood. A brief reflection is sufficient to convince oneself that it was not possible for capitalism in the years 1825, 1836, 1847 to create that unavoidable periodic collision of the forces of production with the limits of the market, as sketched in the Marxian schema as the result of the maturity of capital—for at that time capitalism still lay in its swaddling clothes.]⁹

The crisis of 1825 was, in effect, the result of the extensive

⁹ In the second edition, the bracketed passage was replaced by the following: "The answer followed immediately on the question. Hardly had Bernstein rejected, in 1898, Marx's theory of crises, when a profound general crisis broke out in 1900, while seven years later a new crisis, beginning in the United States, hit the world market. The facts themselves proved the theory of 'adaptation' to be false. They showed at the same time that the people who abandoned Marx's theory of crises only because no crisis occurred within a certain space of time merely confused the essence of the theory with an inessential particularity—the ten-year cycle. The description of the cycle of modern capitalist industry as a ten-year period was to Marx and Engels, in 1860 and 1870, only a simple statement of facts. It was not based on some natural law, but on a series of given historical circumstances that were connected with the rapidly spreading activity of young capitalism."

investments in the construction of roads, canals, and gas works which took place during the preceding decade, particularly in England, where the crisis broke out. The following crisis of 1836–1839 was, similarly, the result of heavy investments in the construction of means of transportation. The crisis of 1847 was provoked by the feverish building of railroads in England (from 1844 to 1847, in three years, the British Parliament gave railway concessions to the value of 1.5 billion taler). In each of the three cases mentioned, a crisis came after *new forms* and new bases for capitalist development were established. In 1857 the same result was brought about by the abrupt opening of new markets for European industry in America and Australia after the discovery of the gold mines, and the extensive construction of railway lines, especially in France, where the example of England was then closely followed. (From 1852 to 1856, new railway lines to the value of 1.25 billion francs were built in France.) And finally, we have the great crisis of 1873—a direct consequence of the formation and first boom of heavy industry in Germany and Austria, which followed the political events of 1866 and 1871.¹⁰

So that up to now, the sudden *extension* of the domain of the capitalist economy, and not its shrinking, was each time the cause of the commercial crisis. That the international crises repeated themselves precisely every ten years was a purely exter-

¹⁰ In 1866, as part of his plan to unify Germany under the hegemony of Prussia, Bismarck diplomatically neutralized France and Russia and then defeated Austria at Sadowa. Prussia was thus established as the leading power of the North German Confederation. In 1870, following a series of diplomatic maneuvers concerning the succession to the Spanish throne, Bismarck sent to France the famous Ems dispatch which made a Franco-German war inevitable. Germany scored lightning victories at Metz and Sedan, and conquered Paris after a four-month siege. The results of this war were, first, that Wilhelm I was crowned Kaiser of all Germany at Versailles on January 18, 1871, thus achieving German unity. Germany also was given Alsace-Lorraine, Moselle, Haut-Rhine, Bas-Rhine, and was to be paid five billion francs reparations, according to the Treaty of Frankfurt which ended the war. With its unity now achieved, and with the huge French reparations, Germany was able to begin its capitalist growth in earnest.

nal and accidental fact. The Marxist schema for crises, as presented by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*, and by Marx in the first and third volumes of *Capital*, applies to all crises in the measure that it uncovers their internal mechanism and their underlying general basic causes.

[As a whole, this schema is more suited to a fully developed capitalist economy in which the world market is presupposed as already given. Only then could the crises repeat themselves in that mechanical way, as a result of the internal movement proper to the process of production and exchange, as it is assumed in the Marxian analysis, without the external inducement of a sudden shock in the relations of production and of the market. If we think of the present economic situation, we must admit that we have not yet entered into that phase of full capitalist maturity which is presupposed in the Marxian schema of the periodicity of crises. The world market is still developing. Germany and Austria only entered the phase of actual large industrial production in the 1870's; Russia only in the 1880's; France is still in large part in the stage of small-scale production; the Balkan states, for the most part, have still not stripped themselves of the chains of a natural economy;¹¹ and only in the 1880's did America, Australia, and Africa enter into a large and regular exchange of goods with Europe. Thus, on the one hand, we now have behind us the sudden and large opening up of new areas of the capitalist economy, as occurred periodically until the 1870's; and we have behind us the, so to speak, previous youthful crises which followed these periodic developments. On the other hand, we still have not progressed to that degree of development and exhaustion of the world market which would produce the fatal, periodic collision of the forces of production with the limits of

¹¹ "Natural economy" is the term used to refer to a precapitalist economy. Such an economy is "natural" in that production and exchange are not based on an abstract measure—labor—but on personal relations; for example, between the serf and his lord. Cf. below, pp. 77ff.

the market, which is the actual capitalist crisis of old age. We are in a phase in which the crises are no longer the accompaniment of the growth of capitalism, and not yet that of its decline. This transitional period is characterized, too, by the weak course of business which has generally been the case for two decades, in which short periods of boom alternate with long periods of depression.

[But, that we are ceaselessly approaching the beginning of the end, the period of the final crises of capitalism, follows precisely from the same phenomena which provisionally condition the absence of crises. If the world market has now more or less filled out, and can no longer be enlarged by sudden extensions; and if, at the same time, the productivity of labor strides relentlessly forward, then in more or less time the periodic conflict of the forces of production with the limits of exchange will begin, and will repeat itself more sharply and more stormily. And, if anything is especially suited to lead us to that period, to rapidly create the world market and to quickly exhaust it, then it is just the phenomena—the credit system, and the employers' organizations—on which Bernstein bases his "means of adaptation" of capitalism.] ¹²

The belief that capitalist production could "adapt" itself to exchange presupposes one of two things: either the world market can spread unlimitedly and to infinity; or, on the contrary, the development of the productive forces is so fettered that it cannot pass beyond the bounds of the market. The first hypothesis constitutes a physical impossibility. The second is rendered just as impossible by the constant technical progress that daily creates new productive forces in all branches of production.

¹² In the second edition, these two paragraphs are replaced by:

"Crises may repeat themselves every five or ten years, or even every eight or twenty years. But what proves best the falseness of Bernstein's theory is that it is in the countries having the greatest development of the famous 'means of adaptation'—credit, perfected communications, and trusts—that the last crisis (1907–08) was most violent."

There remains still another phenomenon which, says Bernstein, contradicts the course of capitalist development indicated above. In the "steadfast phalanx" of middle-size enterprises, Bernstein sees a sign that the development of large industry does not move in such a revolutionary direction, and is not as effective from the angle of the concentration of industry as was expected by the "breakdown theory." He is here, however, the victim of his own misunderstanding. To see the progressive disappearance of the middle-size enterprise as a necessary result of the development of large industry is, in effect, to misunderstand the nature of this process.

According to Marxist theory, small capitalists play the role of pioneers of technical revolution in the general course of capitalist development. They play that role in a double sense. They initiate new methods of production in old, well-established branches of industry, as well as being instrumental in the creation of new branches of production not yet exploited by the big capitalist. It is false to imagine that the history of the middle-size capitalist establishments proceeds unequivocally in the direction of their progressive disappearance. The course of their development is rather a purely dialectical one, and moves constantly among contradictions. The middle capitalist layers, just like the workers, find themselves under the influence of two antagonistic tendencies, one ascendant and the other descendent. In this case, the descendent tendency is the continued rise in the scale of production which periodically overflows the dimensions of the average-size capital and removes it repeatedly from the competitive terrain. The ascendant tendency is, first, the periodic depreciation of the existing capital which again lowers, for a certain time, the scale of production in proportion to the value of the necessary minimum amount of capital [needed to enter business—D.H.]. It is also represented by the penetration of capitalist production into new spheres. The struggle of the average-size enterprise against big capital cannot be considered a regularly proceeding battle in which the troops of the weaker party continue to melt away directly and quantitatively. It should

rather be regarded as a periodic mowing down of small capital, which rapidly grows up again only to be mowed down once more by large industry. The two tendencies play catch with the middle capitalist layers. As opposed to the development of the working class, the descending tendency must win in the end. The victory of the descending tendency need not necessarily show itself in an absolute numerical diminution of the middle-size enterprises. It shows itself, first, in the progressive increase of the minimum amount of capital necessary for the functioning of the enterprises in the old branches of production; second, in the constant diminution of the interval of time during which the small capitalists conserve the opportunity to exploit the new branches of production. The result, as far as the small capitalist is concerned, is a progressively shorter duration of his economic life and an ever more rapid change in the methods of production and of investment; and, for the class as a whole, a more and more rapid acceleration of the social metabolism.

Bernstein knows this perfectly well; he himself comments on it. But what he seems to forget is that this very thing is the law of movement of the average capitalist enterprise. If small capitalists are the pioneers of technical progress, and if technical progress is the vital pulse of the capitalist economy, then it is manifest that small capitalists are an integral part of capitalist development. The progressive disappearance of the middle-size enterprise—in the absolute sense considered by Bernstein—would not mean, as he thinks, the revolutionary advance of capitalist development, but precisely the contrary, the cessation, the slowing down of this development. “The rate of profit, that is to say, the relative increase of capital,” said Marx, “is important first of all for new investors of capital grouping themselves independently. And as soon as the formation of capital falls exclusively into the hands of a few big capitalists, the revivifying fire of production is extinguished. It dies away.”¹³

¹³ *Das Kapital*, Bd. 3, T. 1, S. 241. (R.L.)

[The Bernsteinian means of adaptation thus show themselves to be ineffective, and the phenomena which he considers to be symptoms of the adaptation must be pushed back to other causes.]

3. *The Introduction of Socialism Through Social Reforms*

Bernstein rejects the "breakdown theory" as an historical road to the realization of socialism. Now what is the way to a socialist society proposed by his "theory of the adaptation of capitalism"? Bernstein answers this question only by allusion. Konrad Schmidt, however, attempts to deal in detail with this problem in the manner of Bernstein.¹⁴ According to him, "the trade-union struggle and the political struggle for social reforms will lead to a progressively more extensive social control over the conditions of production," and through legislation, "the rights of the capitalist proprietor will be diminished and he will be reduced more and more to the role of a simple administrator." "The capitalist will see his property lose more and more of its value to him," until finally "the direction and administration of the factory will be taken entirely from him," and the social factory will be introduced.

Therefore, trade unions, social reforms, and—adds Bernstein—the political democratization of the state are the means of the progressive introduction of socialism.

Beginning with the trade unions, their most important function (as was best explained by Bernstein himself in the *Neue Zeit* in 1891) consists in providing the workers with a means of realizing the capitalist law of wages, that is to say, the sale of their labor-power at current market prices. Trade unions enable the proletariat at each moment to utilize the conjuncture of the market for its benefit. But these conjunctures—that is, 1) the demand for labor-power as determined by the state of production, 2) the supply of labor-power created by the proletari-

¹⁴ *Vorwärts*, February 20, 1898, *Literarische Rundschau*. We believe all the more that Konrad Schmidt's exposition goes together with that of Bernstein since Bernstein does not reject the commentary on his views. (R.L.)

anization of the middle strata of society and by the natural reproduction of the working class, and 3) the momentary degree of the productivity of labor—remain outside the sphere of influence of the trade unions. Therefore, trade unions cannot suppress the law of wages. Under the most favorable circumstances, the best that they can do is to impose on capitalist exploitation the “normal” limit of the moment. They cannot, however, suppress exploitation itself, not even gradually.

Konrad Schmidt, it is true, sees the present trade-union movement as a “feeble initial stage.” He hopes that in the future the “trade-union movement will exercise a progressively increasing influence on the regulation of production.” But by the regulation of production only two things can be understood: intervention in the technical domain of the process of production, and fixing the scale of production itself. What is the nature of the influence exercised by trade unions in these two departments? It is clear that, concerning the technique of production, the interest of the capitalist agrees, up to a certain point, with the progress and development of the capitalist economy. It is his own need that pushes him to make technical improvements. But the isolated worker finds himself in exactly the opposite position: each technical transformation contradicts his interests; it aggravates his immediate situation by depreciating the value of his labor-power and rendering his work more intense, more monotonous, and more painful. Insofar as trade unions can intervene in the technical department of production, they can obviously do so only in the latter sense, i.e., taking the point of view of each individual group of workers, and therefore opposing innovations. But here they do not act in the interest of the working class as a whole and its emancipation, an interest which, rather, accords with technical progress and, therefore, with the interest of the individual capitalist. Rather, they act here in a reactionary direction. And in fact we find efforts on the part of workers to intervene in the technical aspect of production not in the future, where Schmidt looks for it, but in the past of the trade-union move-

ment. Such efforts characterize the old phase of English trade unionism (up to 1860) when it was still tied to medieval "guild" vestiges and, characteristically, found inspiration in the outworn principle of "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work."¹⁵

On the other hand, the effort of the labor unions to fix the scale of production and the prices of commodities is a recent phenomenon. We have witnessed such attempts only recently—and again in England.¹⁶ In their nature and tendencies, these efforts resemble those dealt with above. What does the active participation of trade unions in fixing the scale and cost of production necessarily amount to? It amounts to a cartel of the workers and entrepreneurs against the consumer and especially against rival entrepreneurs. In no way is the effect of this any different from that of ordinary employers' associations. Basically, there is no longer a struggle between labor and capital, but the solidarity of capital and labor against the consuming society. Considered for its social worth, it is a reactionary beginning which cannot be a stage in the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat because it represents the very opposite of the class struggle. As to its practical value, it is a utopia which, as shown by a rapid examination, cannot be extended to the large branches of industry producing for the world market.

The activity of the trade unions is limited essentially to the wage struggle and the struggle for a reduction of labor time, that is to say, to efforts at regulating capitalist exploitation within the market relations. But trade unions cannot, by the very nature of things, influence the process of production itself. And, moreover, trade-union development—contrary to what is asserted by Konrad Schmidt—moves in the direction of a complete detachment of the labor market from any immediate relation to the rest of the market. This is shown especially by

¹⁵ Webb, *Theorie und Praxis der Englischen Gewerkvereine*, Bd. 2, S. 100 ff. (R.L.)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, S. 115 ff. (R.L.)

the fact that even attempts to relate labor contracts to the general situation of production by means of a system of sliding wage scales have been outmoded with historical development. The British labor unions are moving further and further away from such efforts.¹⁷

Even within the effective boundaries of its activity, the trade-union movement cannot spread in the unlimited way claimed for it by the theory of adaptation. On the contrary! If we examine long stretches of social development, we see that we are not moving toward an epoch marked by a victorious development of trade unions but rather toward a time when the hardships of the labor unions will increase. Once industrial development has attained its highest possible point, and capitalism has entered its descending phase on the world market, the trade-union struggle will become doubly difficult. In the first place, the objective conjuncture of the market will be less favorable to the sellers of labor-power because the demand for labor-power will increase at a slower rate, and the labor supply more rapidly, than is at present the case. In the second place, in order to make up for losses suffered on the world market, the capitalists themselves will make even greater efforts than at present to reduce the part of the total product going to the workers. Is the reduction of wages not one of the principal means of retarding the fall of profit? ¹⁸ The situation in England already offers us a picture of the beginning of the second stage of trade-union development. Trade-union action is, of necessity, reduced to the simple defense of already realized gains, and even that is becoming more and more difficult. Such is the general trend of things in our society. The counterpart of this tendency is the development of the political and social class struggle.

Konrad Schmidt commits the same error of historical perspective when he deals with social reforms. He expects that so-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, S. 115. (R.L.)

¹⁸ *Das Kapital*, Bd. 3, T. 1, S. 216. (R.L.)

cial reforms "will, with the aid of the trade-union coalition of workers, dictate to the capitalists the conditions under which they will be able to employ labor-power." Seeing reform in this light, Bernstein calls labor legislation a piece of "social control," and as such—a piece of socialism. Similarly, Konrad Schmidt always uses the term "social control" when he refers to labor-protective laws. Once he has thus happily transformed the state into society, he confidently adds: "That is to say, the rising working class." As a result of this operation, the innocent labor laws enacted by the German Bundesrat¹⁹ are transformed into measures for the transition to socialism, supposedly enacted by the German proletariat.

The mystification here is obvious. We know that the present state is not "society" in the sense of the "rising working class." It is the representative of capitalist society, i.e., a class state. Therefore, its reform measures are not an application of "social control," that is, the control by the freely working society of its own labor process. They are forms of control applied by the class organization of capital to the production of capital. Thus, the natural limits of social reforms lie with the interest of capital. Of course, Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt see at present only "feeble beginnings" of this control. They hope to see a long succession of reforms in the future, all favoring the working class. But here they commit a mistake similar to their belief in the unlimited development of the trade-union movement.

The theory of the gradual introduction of socialism through social reforms presupposes as its fundamental condition a certain objective development of capitalist property and of the

¹⁹ Seeing that Social Democracy was gaining strength, the German government under Bismarck enacted certain labor legislation in order to woo the workers away from socialism. The tactic failed. When Wilhelm II came to the throne, he too tried to win the workers to his "social kingship," passing labor-protective laws, limiting the work week to six days, setting an eleven-hour day for women and a ten-hour day for youths, etc. These laws were passed by the Bundesrat, the upper house which was not democratically elected, and not by the Reichstag, where the Social Democratic representatives, elected by universal suffrage, sat.

state. Concerning the former, Konrad Schmidt's schema of future development says: "The rights of the capitalist proprietor will be diminished, and he will be reduced more and more to the role of a simple administrator." Because he thinks that the expropriation of the means of production cannot possibly be effected as a single act, he resorts to the theory of expropriation by stages. With this in mind, he divides property rights into 1) the right of "superior property" [*"Obereigentum"*—D.H.], which he attributes to "society," and which he wants to extend, and 2) the simple right of use, held by the capitalists but supposedly being reduced to the mere administration of their enterprises.

This construction is either a simple play on words, and in that case the theory of gradual expropriation has no real basis; or it is a true picture of juridical development, in which case the theory is totally false.

The division of the right of property into several component rights, an arrangement serving Konrad Schmidt as a shelter wherein he may construct his theory of "expropriation by stages," characterized feudal society, which was founded on a natural economy. In feudalism, the total product was shared *in natura* among the social classes on the basis of the personal relations between the feudal lord and his serfs or tenants. The decomposition of property into several partial rights reflected the manner of distribution of the social wealth of that period. With the passage to the production of commodities and the dissolution of all personal bonds among the participants in the process of production, the relation between men and things (that is to say, private property) became, reciprocally, stronger. Since the division is no longer made on the basis of personal relations but through exchange, the different rights to a share in the social wealth are no longer measured as fragments of property rights having a common object, but according to the values brought by each to the market.

The first great change in legal relations with the advance of commodity production into the medieval city-communes was

the development of absolute private property within the very midst of the feudal legal relations based on divided property rights. This development has progressed at a rapid pace in capitalist production. The more the process of production is socialized, the more the process of distribution rests on pure exchange. And the more private property becomes inviolable and closed, the more capitalist property becomes transformed from the right to the product of one's own labor to the pure right to appropriate somebody else's labor. As long as the capitalist himself manages the factory, distribution is still, up to a certain point, tied to personal participation in the process of production. But as the personal management on the part of the capitalist becomes superfluous—which is the case in the shareholding companies today—the ownership of capital as a right to share in the distribution becomes wholly separated from any personal relation with production. It now appears in its purest, most closed form. The capitalist right of property reaches its most complete development in capital held in the form of shares and industrial credit.

Konrad Schmidt's historical schema, tracing the transformation of the capitalist "from a proprietor to a simple administrator," thus appears as the inverse of the actual development in which, on the contrary, the capitalist tends to change from a proprietor and administrator to a simple proprietor. What happens here to Konrad Schmidt happened to Goethe:

What he has, he sees as in a dream.

What is gone, he thinks is reality.

Just as his historical schema moves backward economically from a modern shareholding company to the stage of simple manufacturing, or even to the artisan's shop, so, juridically, he wishes to lead the capitalist world back into the old shell of the feudal natural economy.

From this point of view, too, "social control" appears in a different light than seen by Konrad Schmidt. What functions today as "social control"—labor legislation, the control of

shareholding companies—has absolutely nothing to do with a participation in property rights with “superior property.” Far from being a reduction of capitalist ownership, it is, on the contrary, a protection of such ownership. Or, expressed in economic terms, it is not a threat to capitalist exploitation but simply the normalization of this exploitation. And, when Bernstein asks if there is more or less socialism in a labor-protective law, we can assure him that, in the best of labor-protective laws, there is no more “socialism” than in a municipal ordinance regulating the cleaning of streets or the lighting of street lamps—which is also “social control.”

4. Tariff Policy and Militarism

The second presupposition for the gradual introduction of socialism is, according to Bernstein, that the state become society. It has become a commonplace to say that the present state is a class state. In our opinion, this too, like everything referring to capitalist society, should not be understood in a fixed, absolute manner, but in a flowing development.

The state became capitalist with the political victory of the bourgeoisie. Of course, capitalist development itself essentially modifies the nature of the state, widening its sphere of action, constantly imposing new functions on it (especially those affecting economic life), making more and more necessary its intervention and control in society. In this sense, capitalist development gradually prepares the future fusion of the state and society. In this sense, one can speak of an evolution of the capitalist state into society, and it is undoubtedly this that Marx had in mind when he referred to labor legislation as the first conscious intervention of “society” in its social life-process, a phrase to which Bernstein refers.

But, on the other hand, the same capitalist development brings another transformation in the nature of the state. The present state is, first of all, an organization of the ruling capitalist class. It assumes different functions favoring social development only because, and in the measure that, these interests

and social development coincide generally with the interests of the ruling class. Labor legislation, for example, is as much in the immediate interest of the capitalist class as in the interest of society in general. But this harmony endures only up to a certain point of capitalist development. When capitalist development has reached a certain high point, the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class and those of economic progress begin to differ, even in the capitalist sense. We believe that this phase has already begun. It shows itself in two extremely important phenomena of contemporary social life: *tariff policy* and *militarism*. Both of these have played an indispensable, and in that sense a progressive and revolutionary role in the history of capitalism. Without protective tariffs, the development of large industry would have been impossible in several countries. But now the situation is different. [In all the most important countries, and especially in those which are actively protectionist, capitalist production seems to be at the same level.]²⁰

From the standpoint of capitalist *development*, that is, from the standpoint of world economy, it matters little today whether Germany exports more merchandise into England or England exports more merchandise into Germany. From the viewpoint of this development, the Moor has done his work,²¹ and it is time for him to go his way. More, he *had* to go. Given the condition of reciprocal dependence in which the various branches of industry find themselves today, a protectionist tariff on any commodity necessarily results in raising the cost of production of other commodities inside the country. That is, it impedes industrial development. But this is not the case from the point of view of the interests of the *capitalist class*. While industry does not need tariff barriers for its *development*,

²⁰ In the second edition, this sentence is replaced by:

“At present, protection does not so much serve to develop young industry as to artificially maintain certain aged forms of production.”

²¹ The reference is unclear, although it may have been to Marx, who was nicknamed the “Moor.”

the entrepreneurs need tariffs to protect their markets. That is, at present tariffs no longer serve as a means of protecting a developing capitalist mode of production against another mode. They are now the arm used by one national group of capitalists against another group. Furthermore, tariffs are no longer necessary as an instrument of protection for industry in its movement to create and conquer the home market. Rather, they are indispensable means for the cartelization of industry, that is, means used in the struggle of the capitalist producers against the consuming society. Finally, what brings out emphatically the specific character of contemporary customs policies is the fact that today not industry but agriculture plays the predominant role in the making of tariffs. That is, the policy of customs protection has become a tool for expressing feudal interests, and for coloring them in capitalist form.

In the case of militarism, the same change has taken place. If we consider history as it actually was—not as it could have been or should have been—we must agree that war has been an indispensable feature of capitalist development. The United States, Germany, Italy, the Balkan states, Russia, and Poland all owe the conditions or the rise of their capitalist development to wars, whether they resulted in victory or defeat. From the point of view of capitalism, as long as there were countries marked by internal political division or economic isolation which had to be overcome, militarism played a revolutionary role. But at present the situation is different. [Militarism has no more lands to open up to capitalism.] If world politics have become the theater of menacing conflicts, it is not so much a question of opening new countries to capitalism, but of already existing *European* antagonisms which, transported to other lands, have exploded there. The armed opponents we see today in Europe and on other continents do not range themselves as capitalist countries on the one side and natural-economy countries on the other. Rather, they are states pushed to war precisely as a result of their equally advanced capitalist development. In view of this, an explosion is certain to be fatal

to this development in the sense that it must provoke an extremely profound disturbance and transformation of economic life in all countries. However, the matter appears differently when considered from the standpoint of the *capitalist class*. For it, militarism has become indispensable: first, as a means of struggle for the defense of "national" interests in competition against other "national" groups; second, as a most important means of investment of financial and industrial capital; third, as an instrument of class domination over the laboring population inside the country. All of these interests have nothing in common with the development of the capitalist mode of production. What demonstrates best the specific character of present-day militarism is, first, that it generally develops in all countries as an effect, so to speak, of its own internal, mechanical motive power, a phenomenon that was completely unknown several decades ago. Further, [there is—D.H.] the fatal character of the impending explosion which is inevitable in spite of the fact that its cause, the states which will be involved, and the objectives and motives of the conflict are all unknown. From a motor of capitalist development, militarism has changed into a capitalist sickness.

In the clash between capitalist development and the interests of the dominant class, the state takes a position on the side of the latter. Its policy, like that of the bourgeoisie, comes into *conflict* with social development. It thus *loses* more and more its character as a representative of the whole of society and is transformed, at the same rate, into a pure *class state*. Or, to speak more exactly, these two qualities distinguish themselves more from each other and find themselves in a contradictory relation within the very essence of the state. And precisely this contradiction becomes progressively sharper. For, on the one hand, the functions of the state in the general interest grow, as does its intervention in social life and its "control" over society. But, on the other hand, its class character obliges the state to move the pivot of its activity and its means of coercion more and more into domains which are only useful to the class inter-

ests of the bourgeoisie, as in the case of militarism and tariff and colonial policies. Moreover, the "social control" exercised by this state is at the same time penetrated with and dominated by its class character (think of how labor legislation is applied in all countries).

The extension of democracy which Bernstein sees as a means of gradually introducing socialism does not contradict but, on the contrary, corresponds perfectly with the transformation realized in the nature of the state.

Konrad Schmidt declares that the conquest of a Social Democratic majority in Parliament will lead directly to the gradual socialization of society. Now, the democratic forms of political life are without question a phenomenon expressing most clearly the evolution of the state into society. To that extent, they constitute a stage toward the socialist transformation. But the conflict within the essence of the state, described above, manifests itself even more emphatically in modern parliamentarism. Precisely its form serves parliamentarism to express, within the organization of the state, the interests of the whole of society. But, on the other hand, what parliamentarism expresses here is still capitalist society, that is to say, a society in which *capitalist* interests are dominant—and it is these that parliamentarism expresses. The institutions which are democratic in their form become, therefore, tools of the interest of the ruling class in their content. This manifests itself in a tangible fashion in the fact that as soon as democracy shows the tendency to negate its class character and become transformed into an instrument of the real interests of the people, the democratic forms are sacrificed by the bourgeoisie and its state representatives. That is why the idea of the conquest of a parliamentary reformist majority is a calculation which, entirely in the spirit of bourgeois liberalism, preoccupies itself only with one side, the formal side, of democracy but does not take into account the other side, its real content. All in all, parliamentarism does not appear to be a directly socialist element gradually impregnating the whole capitalist society, as

Bernstein thinks. It is, on the contrary, a specific means employed by the bourgeois class state, helping to ripen and develop the existing antagonisms of capitalism.

In the light of this objective development of the state, Bernstein's and Konrad Schmidt's belief that increased "social control" results in the direct introduction of socialism is transformed into a formula that from day to day finds itself in greater contradiction with reality.

The theory of the gradual introduction of socialism proposes a progressive reform of capitalist property and the capitalist state in the direction of socialism. However, in consequence of the objective facts of existing society, one and the other develop in a precisely opposed direction. The process of production will be increasingly socialized and state intervention, the control of the state over the process of production, will be extended. But at the same time, private property will take on more and more the form of open capitalist exploitation of the labor of others, and state control will be more and more penetrated with the exclusive interests of the ruling class. Inasmuch as the state, that is, the *political* organization of capitalism, and property relations, that is, the *juridical* organization of capitalism, become more *capitalist* as they develop, and not more socialist, they oppose to the theory of the progressive introduction of socialism two insurmountable difficulties.

Fourier's scheme of changing all the water of the sea into lemonade by means of a system of phalansteries was a very fantastic idea. But Bernstein, proposing to change the sea of capitalist bitterness into a sea of socialist sweetness by progressively pouring into it bottles of social-reformist lemonade presents an idea which is merely more insipid but not a hair less fantastic.

The production relations of capitalist society approach more and more the production relations of socialist society. But, on the other hand, its political and juridical relations establish an ever higher wall between capitalist society and socialist society. This wall is not overthrown but, on the contrary, strength-

ened and consolidated by the development of social reforms and democracy. Only the hammer blow of revolution, that is, *the conquest of political power by the proletariat*, can break down this wall.

5. *Practical Consequences and General Character of Revisionism*

In the first chapter, we attempted to show that Bernstein's theory lifts the program of the socialist movement off its material base and places it on an idealist basis. This concerns its theoretical foundation. How does this theory appear when translated into practice?

First, and formally, it does not differ in the least from the practice followed by Social Democracy up to now. Trade unions, the struggle for social reform and for the democratization of the political institutions are precisely that which constitutes the formal content of the activity of the Social Democratic Party. The difference is not in the *what* but in the *how*. At present, the trade-union and the parliamentary struggles are considered as means of gradually guiding and educating the proletariat for the taking of political power. From the revisionist standpoint, this conquest of power is impossible and useless; therefore, trade-union and parliamentary activity are to be carried on only for their immediate results, that is, the bettering of the material situation of the workers, the gradual reduction of capitalist exploitation and the extension of social control.

If we ignore the immediate amelioration of the workers' condition—an objective shared by the Party program and revisionism—the difference between the two conceptions is, in brief, the following. According to the current conception, the socialist significance of trade-union and parliamentary activity is that it prepares the proletariat—that is, the *subjective* factor of the socialist transformation—for the task of realizing socialism. According to Bernstein, the trade-union and political struggles gradually reduce capitalist exploitation itself, remove from capitalist society its capitalist character, and give it a so-

cialist one. In a word, the two forms of struggle are said to realize the socialist transformation *in an objective sense*.

Examined more closely, the two conceptions are diametrically opposed. In the current conception of our party, the proletariat becomes convinced of the impossibility of accomplishing fundamental social change as a result of its trade-union and parliamentary struggles and arrives at the conviction that these struggles cannot basically change its situation, and that the conquest of power is unavoidable. Bernstein's theory, however, begins by presupposing that the conquest of power is impossible, and it concludes by affirming that the socialist order can only be introduced as a result of the trade-union struggle and parliamentary activity.

As seen by Bernstein, trade-union and parliamentary action has a socialist character because it exercises a progressively socializing influence on the capitalist economy. We tried to show that this influence is purely imaginary. The structures of capitalist property and the capitalist state develop in entirely opposed directions. But, in the last analysis, this means that the daily practical activity of Social Democracy loses all connection with socialism. The great socialist significance of the trade-union and parliamentary struggles is that through them the *awareness*, the consciousness, of the proletariat becomes socialist, and it is organized as a class. But if they are considered as instruments for the direct socialization of the capitalist economy, they lose not only their supposed effectiveness, but also cease to be a means of preparing the working class for the proletarian conquest of power.

Eduard Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt suffer from a complete misunderstanding when they console themselves with the belief that even though the program of the Party is reduced to work for social reforms and ordinary trade-union work, the final objective of the labor movement is not therefore lost, because each forward step reaches beyond the given immediate aim, and the socialist goal is implied as a tendency in the movement. This is certainly fully true of the present tactic of

German Social Democracy in which a firm and conscious effort toward the conquest of political power precedes the trade-union struggle and the work for social reforms. But if this presupposed effort is separated from the movement, and social reforms are then made an end in themselves, such activity not only does not lead to the realization of socialism as the ultimate goal, but moves in precisely the opposite direction.

Konrad Schmidt simply falls back on a so to speak mechanical movement which, once started, cannot stop by itself. He justifies this with the saying, "one's appetite grows with eating," and the working class will not content itself with reforms as long as the final socialist transformation is not realized. The last presupposition is quite true, as the insufficiency of capitalist social reforms themselves shows. But the conclusion drawn from it could only be true if it were possible to construct an unbroken chain of continually growing reforms leading from the present social order to socialism. This is, however, a fantasy. In accordance with the nature of things, the chain breaks quickly, and the paths that the movement can take from that point are many and varied.

The most probable immediate result of this is, then, a tactical shift toward using all means to make possible the practical results, the social reforms. As soon as immediate practical results become the principal aim, the clear-cut, irreconcilable class standpoint, which has meaning only in so far as it proposes to take power, will be found more and more an obstacle. The direct consequence of this will be the adoption by the Party of a "policy of compensation," a policy of horse-trading, and an attitude of sage diplomatic conciliation.²² But the movement cannot remain immobile for long. Since social reforms in the capitalist world are and remain an empty promise

²² Wolfgang Heine had proposed a "policy of compensation," arguing that since it was inevitable that the demands for increased military spending be passed by the bourgeois majority, Social Democracy should attempt to negotiate an exchange of its votes for a more democratic system of suffrage. For Rosa Luxemburg, such an attitude was typical of revisionism and opportunism, and she attacked it often and with vigor.

no matter what tactics one uses, the next logical step is necessarily disillusionment in social reform. One ends up in the calm harbor where Professor Schmoller and Co. have dropped anchor after having navigated the waters of social reform, finally letting the course of things proceed as God wills.²³

It is not true that socialism will arise automatically and under all circumstances from the daily struggle of the working class. Socialism will be the consequence only of the ever growing contradictions of capitalist economy and the comprehension by the working class of the unavoidability of the suppression of these contradictions through a social transformation. When the first condition is denied and the second rejected, as is the case with revisionism, the labor movement is reduced to a simple cooperative and reformist movement, and moves in a straight line toward the total abandonment of the class standpoint.

These consequences also become clear when we regard revisionism from another side, and ask what is the general character of revisionism. It is obvious that revisionism does not defend capitalist relations. It does not join the bourgeois economists in denying the existence of the contradictions of capitalism. Rather, its theory is based on the presupposition of the existence of these contradictions, just like the Marxist con-

²³ In the second edition, the following footnote is added:

"In 1872, Professors Wagner, Schmoller, Brentano, and others held a Congress at Eisenach at which they proclaimed noisily and with much publicity that their goal was the introduction of social reforms for the protection of the working class. These gentlemen, whom the liberal, Oppenheimer, calls '*Kathedersozialisten*' [Socialists of the Chair,' or 'Academic Socialists'] formed a *Verein für Sozialreform* [Association for Social Reform]. Only a few years later, when the fight against Social Democracy grew sharper, as representatives in the Reichstag these pygmies of '*Kathedersozialismus*' voted for the extension of the Antisocialist Law. Beyond this, all of the activity of the Association consists in its yearly general assemblies at which a few professorial reports on different themes are read. Further, the Association has published over one hundred thick volumes on economic questions. Not a thing has been done for social reform by the professors—who, in addition, support protective tariffs, militarism, etc. Finally, the Association has given up social reforms and occupies itself with the problem of crises, cartels, and the like."

ception. But, on the other hand, what constitutes precisely the essential kernel of revisionism and distinguishes it fundamentally from the attitude taken by Social Democracy up to now is that it does not base its theory on the suppression of these contradictions as a result of their logical internal development.

The theory of revisionism occupies an intermediate place between two extremes. Revisionism does not want to see the contradictions of capitalism mature, to *suppress* these contradictions through a revolutionary transformation. Rather, it wants to lessen, to *attenuate* the capitalist contradictions. Thus, the antagonism between production and exchange is to be attenuated by the cessation of crises and the formation of capitalist employers' organizations; the antagonism between capital and labor is to be adjusted by bettering the situation of the workers and by conserving the middle classes; and the contradiction between the class state and society is to be lessened through increased control and democracy.

Of course, the present tactic of Social Democracy does not consist in *waiting* for the antagonisms of capitalism to develop to their most extreme point and only then transforming them. On the contrary, the essence of revolutionary tactics is to recognize the *direction* of this development and then, in the political struggle, to push its consequences to the extreme. Thus, Social Democracy has combatted protectionism and militarism without waiting for their reactionary character to become fully evident. Bernstein's tactics, however, are not guided by a consideration of the development and the aggravation of the contradictions of capitalism but by the prospect of the attenuation of these contradictions. He shows this most clearly when he speaks of the "adaptation" of capitalist economy. Now, when could such a conception be correct? All the contradictions of modern society are simply the results of the capitalist process of production. If it is true that capitalism will continue to develop in the direction it has taken until the present, then the unavoidable consequence is that its contradictions must necessarily become sharper and more aggravated instead of less-

ening. The possibility of the attenuation of the contradictions of capitalism presupposes that the capitalist mode of production itself will stop its progress. In short, the general presupposition of Bernstein's theory is the *cessation of capitalist development*. In this way, however, his theory condemns itself in a twofold manner. In the first place, it manifests its *utopian* character in its stand on the establishment of socialism. It is *a priori* clear that a defective capitalist development cannot lead to a socialist transformation. This proves the correctness of our presentation of the practical consequences of the theory. In the second place, Bernstein's theory reveals its *reactionary* character when it is related to the actual rapid capitalist development. This poses the question: given the real development of capitalism, how can we explain or rather characterize Bernstein's position?

In the first chapter, we demonstrated the untenability of the economic preconditions on which Bernstein builds his analysis of existing social relationships (his theory of the "means of adaptation"). We have seen that neither the credit system nor cartels can be said to be "means of adaptation" of the capitalist economy. Neither the temporary cessation of crises nor the survival of the middle class can be regarded as symptoms of capitalist adaptation. But, aside from their incorrectness, there is a common characteristic in all of the above details of the theory of the means of adaptation. This theory does not seize these manifestations of contemporary economic life as they appear in their organic relationship with the whole of capitalist development, with the complete economic mechanism of capitalism. The theory pulls these details out of their living economic context, treating them as the *dissecta membra* of a lifeless machine. Consider, for example, the conception of the adaptive effect of *credit*. If we consider credit as a higher natural stage of the process of exchange and, therefore, as tied to all the contradictions inherent in capitalist exchange, we cannot possibly see it, at the same time, as a mechanical means of adaptation existing outside of the process of exchange any

more than we could consider money, commodities, or capital as "means of adaptation" of capitalism. But, no less than money, commodities, and capital, credit is an organic link of capitalist economy at a certain stage of its development. Like them, it is an indispensable gear in the mechanism of the capitalist economy and, at the same time, an instrument of destruction, since it aggravates the internal contradictions of capitalism. The same thing is true of cartels and the perfected means of communication.

The same mechanical and undialectical conception is seen in the way that Bernstein describes the cessation of crises as a symptom of the "adaptation" of the capitalist economy. For him, crises are simply derangements of the economic mechanism. With their cessation, he thinks, the mechanism could function smoothly. But the fact is that crises are not "derangements"—or, rather, they are "derangements" without which the capitalist economy as a whole could not develop at all. If, in a word, crises constitute the only method possible in capitalism—and therefore the normal method—of periodically solving the conflict between the unlimited extension of production and the narrow limits of the market, then crises are an organic phenomenon, inseparable from the capitalist economy.

In an "undisturbed" advance of capitalist production lurks a threat to capitalism that is much greater than crises. It is not the threat resulting from the contradiction between production and exchange, but from the growth of the productivity of labor itself, which leads to a constantly falling rate of profit. The fall in the rate of profit has the extremely dangerous tendency of rendering impossible the production of small and middle-size capitals, and thus limiting the new formation and therefore the extension of placements for capital. It is precisely crises which constitute the other consequence of the same process. The result of crises is the periodic *depreciation* of capital, a fall in the prices of the means of production, a paralysis of a part of the active capital, and, in time, the increase of profits. Crises thus create the possibilities of new investment

and therefore of the advance of production. Hence, they appear to be the instrument for rekindling the fire of capitalist development. Their cessation—not temporary cessation, but their total disappearance—would not lead to the further development of the capitalist economy, as Bernstein thinks. Rather, it would drive capitalism into the swamps.

True to the mechanical view of his theory of adaptation, Bernstein forgets the necessity of crises as well as the necessity of new placements of small and middle-size capitals. And that is why, among other things, the constant reappearance of small capital seems to him to be a sign of the cessation of capitalist development though it is, in fact, a sign of normal capitalist development.

There is, of course, one viewpoint from which all of the abovementioned phenomena are seen exactly as they have been presented by the theory of “adaptation.” It is the viewpoint of the *individual* capitalist who reflects in his mind the economic facts around him just as they appear when deformed by the laws of competition. The individual capitalist sees each organic part of the totality of our economy as a whole, an independent entity. Further, he sees them as they act on him, the individual capitalist; and he therefore considers these facts to be simple “derangements” or simple “means of adaptation.” For the individual capitalist, crises are really simple “derangements” or “means of adaptation”; the cessation of crises accords him a longer existence. As far as he is concerned, credit is only a means of “adapting” his insufficient productive forces to the needs of the market. And it seems to him that the cartel of which he becomes a member really suppresses industrial anarchy.

In a word, Bernstein’s theory of adaptation is nothing but a theoretical generalization of the conception of the individual capitalist. What is this viewpoint theoretically if not the essential and characteristic aspect of bourgeois vulgar economics? All the economic errors of this school rest precisely on the conception that mistakes the phenomena of competition, as seen

from the angle of the individual capitalist, for the phenomena of the whole of capitalist economy. Just as Bernstein considers credit to be a means of "adaptation," so vulgar economy considers *money* to be a judicious means of "adaptation" to the needs of exchange. Vulgar economy, too, tries to find the antidote against the ills of capitalism in the phenomena of capitalism itself. Like Bernstein, it believes in the *possibility* of regulating the capitalist economy. And, still in the manner of Bernstein, it arrives in time at the desire to *palliate* the contradictions of capitalism, that is, at the belief in the possibility of patching up the sores of capitalism. In other words, it ends up with a reactionary and not a revolutionary program, and thus in a utopia.

The revisionist theory can therefore be characterized in the following way: it is a theory of socialist standstill justified through a vulgar economic theory of capitalist standstill.

PART TWO²⁴

1. *Economic Development and Socialism*

The greatest conquest in the development of the proletarian class struggle was the discovery that the point of departure for the realization of socialism lies in the *economic relations* of capitalist society. As a result, socialism was changed from an "ideal" dreamed by humanity for thousands of years to an *historical necessity*.

Bernstein denies the existence of these economic presuppositions of socialism in the society of today. In this, his reasoning has undergone an interesting evolution. At first, in the *Neue Zeit*, he only contested the rapidity of the process of concentration taking place in industry, basing his position on a comparison of the occupational statistics of Germany in 1882 and 1895. In order to use these figures for his purpose, he was

²⁴ The second part of this pamphlet considers Bernstein's book *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* [The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy] (Stuttgart, 1899).

obliged to have recourse to an entirely summary and mechanical procedure. But even in the most favorable case, his reference to the persistence of middle-size enterprises could not in the least weaken the Marxian analysis, because the latter does not presuppose, as a condition for the realization of socialism, either a definite *rate* of concentration of industry—that is, a definite *delay* of the realization of the socialist goal—or, as we have already shown, the *absolute disappearance* of small capitals, or the disappearance of the petty bourgeoisie.

In the further development of his ideas in his book, Bernstein furnishes us new proofs: *the statistics of shareholding societies*. These statistics are supposed to prove that the number of shareholders increases constantly and, as a result, the capitalist class does not become smaller but grows continually larger. It is surprising that Bernstein has so little acquaintance with his material, and how poorly he knows how to use the data in his own behalf.

If he wanted to disprove the Marxian law of industrial development by referring to the condition of shareholding societies, he should have resorted to entirely different figures. Namely, anybody who is acquainted with the history of shareholding societies in Germany knows that their average foundation capital ²⁵ has *diminished* almost constantly. Thus, while before 1871 the average foundation capital reached the figure of 10.8 million marks, it was only 4.01 million in 1871, 3.8 million in 1873, less than a million from 1882 to 1887, 0.56 million in 1891, and only 0.62 million in 1892. After this date, the figures oscillated around 1 million marks, falling from 1.78 million in 1895 to 1.19 million in the course of the first half of 1897.²⁶

Surprising figures! Bernstein probably hoped to use them to construct the existence of an anti-Marxian tendency, that of the transition of large enterprises back into small ones. But, in

²⁵ That is, the original investment in a corporation.

²⁶ Van de Borcht, *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, I. (R.L.)

this case, everyone can answer him: If you are to prove anything by means of these statistics, you must first of all show that they refer to the *same* branches of industry, that the small enterprises really replace large ones, and that they do not appear only where, previously, individual enterprises, artisan industry, or miniature industry were the rule. This, however, you cannot show. The passage of immense shareholding societies to middle-size and small enterprises can only be explained by the fact that the system of shareholding companies continues to penetrate new branches of production. Before, only a small number of large enterprises were organized as shareholding societies. Gradually shareholding organization has won middle-size and even small enterprises. (Today we can observe shareholding societies with a capital of less than 1,000 marks.)

But what is the economic significance of the ever greater extension of the system of shareholding societies? It signifies the growing socialization of production within the capitalist form—socialization not only of large but also of middle-size and even small production. Therefore, the extension of shareholding does not contradict Marxist theory but, on the contrary, confirms it emphatically.

In effect, what does the economic phenomenon of a shareholding society actually amount to? On the one hand, the unification of a number of small fortunes into one large productive capital; on the other hand, the separation of production from capitalist ownership. That is, it signifies a double victory over the capitalist mode of production—but still on the capitalist base. In view of this, what is the meaning of the statistics cited by Bernstein concerning the large number of shareholders participating in capitalist enterprises? These statistics demonstrate precisely that at present one capitalist enterprise does not correspond, as hitherto, to a single proprietor of capital but to a whole group, an ever increasing number of capitalists. Consequently, the economic concept “capitalist” no longer signifies an isolated individual. The industrial capitalist

of today is a collective person, composed of hundreds and even of thousands of individuals. Within the framework of capitalist society, the category “capitalist” has itself become a social category; it has been *socialized*.

How can Bernstein’s belief that the phenomenon of shareholding societies stands for the dispersion and not the concentration of capital be explained in view of the above? Why does he see the extension of capitalist property where Marx sees the “suppression of capitalist property”? This is a simple, vulgar economic error. By “capitalist” Bernstein does not mean a category of production but of property rights; not an economic unit but a fiscal unit; not a totality of production but simply a certain quantity of money. That is why in his English thread trust he does not see the fusion of 12,300 persons into one, but fully 12,300 different capitalists. That is why the engineer Schulze, whose wife’s dowry brought him “a large number of shares” from stockholder Müller, is also a capitalist for Bernstein (p. 54).²⁷ That is why, for Bernstein, the whole world seems to swarm with capitalists.²⁸

Here as usual, the theoretical base of Bernstein’s vulgar economic error is his “popularization” of socialism. By transporting the concept “capitalist” from the relations of production to property relations, and by speaking of “men instead of speaking of entrepreneurs” (p. 53), he moves the question of

²⁷ The parenthesized page numbers in this second part refer to the original German edition of Bernstein’s book.

²⁸ *Nota bene!* In the great diffusion of small shares, Bernstein obviously finds a proof that social wealth is beginning to pour shares on all little men. Indeed, who but petty bourgeois and even workers could buy shares for the bagatelle of one pound sterling or 20 marks? Unfortunately his supposition rests on a simple miscalculation. We are operating here with the nominal value of shares instead of their market value, something entirely different. For example, on the mining market, South African Rand mine shares are on sale. These shares, like most mining values, are quoted at one pound sterling or 20 paper marks. But already in 1899, they sold at 43 pounds sterling, that is to say, not at 20 but at 860 marks. And it is generally so in all cases. So that these shares are perfectly bourgeois, and not at all petty-bourgeois or proletarian “bonds on social wealth,” for they are bought at their nominal value only by a small minority of shareholders. (R.L.)

socialism from the realm of production into the realm of relations of fortune—from the relation between capital and labor to the relation between rich and poor.

In this manner, we are merrily led from Marx and Engels to the author of the *Evangel of the Poor Fisherman*, only with the difference that Weitling, with the sure instinct of the proletarian, recognized in the opposition between the poor and the rich the class antagonisms in their primitive form, and wanted to make of them a lever of the socialist movement, while Bernstein, on the other hand, sees the prospects of socialism in making the poor rich, that is, in the attenuation of class antagonisms. For this reason, Bernstein is engaged in a petty-bourgeois course.

True, Bernstein does not limit himself to income statistics. He furnishes statistics of economic enterprises, and from many countries: Germany, France, England, Switzerland, Austria, and the United States. But what kind of statistics are these? They are not the comparative figures of *different periods* in each country but of each period in different countries. Thus, with the exception of Germany, where he reprints the old contrast between 1895 and 1882, he does not compare the statistics of enterprises of a given country at different epochs but only the *absolute* figures for different countries: England in 1891, France in 1894, the United States in 1890, etc. He reaches the following conclusion: "If large exploitation is already supreme in industry today, it nevertheless represents, including the enterprises dependent on it, even in a country as developed as Prussia, at most *half* of the population occupied in production" (p. 84). This is also true of Germany, England, Belgium, etc.

What he proves in this way is obviously not the existence of this or that tendency of economic development but merely the absolute relation of forces of different forms of enterprise or of the various professional classes. If this is supposed to prove the impossibility of realizing socialism, the reasoning must rest on the theory according to which the result of social efforts is decided by the relation of the numerical physical forces of the

elements in the struggle—that is, by the mere factor of *violence*. Here Bernstein, who always thunders against Blanquism, himself falls into the grossest Blanquist misunderstanding. There is, of course, the difference that the Blanquists as a socialist and revolutionary tendency presupposed as obvious the possibility of the economic realization of socialism and built the chances of a violent revolution—even by a small minority—on this possibility. Bernstein, on the contrary, infers from the numerical insufficiency of a majority of the people the impossibility of the economic realization of socialism. Social Democracy does not, however, expect to attain its aim either as a result of the victorious violence of a minority or through the numerical superiority of a majority. It sees socialism as a result of economic necessity—and the comprehension of that necessity—leading to the suppression of capitalism by the masses of the people. This necessity manifests itself above all in the *anarchy of capitalism*.

Concerning the decisive question of anarchy in capitalist economy, Bernstein denies only the great general crises, not the partial and national crises. Thus, he denies that there is a great deal of anarchy; at the same time, he admits the existence of a little anarchy. Concerning the capitalist economy, he is—to use Marx's illustration—like the foolish virgin who had a child “who was only very small.” But the misfortune is that in matters like anarchy, little and much are equally bad. If Bernstein recognizes the existence of a little anarchy, then by the mechanism of commodity economy, this anarchy will be extended to unheard-of proportions—to the breakdown. But if Bernstein hopes, while maintaining the system of commodity production, to gradually transform the bit of anarchy into order and harmony, he again falls into one of the fundamental errors of bourgeois vulgar economics in that he treats the mode of exchange as independent of the mode of production.²⁹

²⁹ The following footnote appears only in the first edition:

“It is true that Bernstein answered our first series of articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* [i.e., Part I of this essay—D.H.] in a seemingly broad manner, but in a

This is not the correct place for a detailed demonstration of Bernstein's surprising confusion concerning the most elementary principles of political economy. But one point, to which we are led by the fundamental question of capitalist anarchy, must be briefly clarified.

Bernstein declares that Marx's labor theory of value is a mere abstraction, a term which for him, in political economy, obviously constitutes an insult. But if the labor theory of value is only an abstraction, if it is only a "mental construct" (p. 44)—then every normal citizen who has done military duty and pays his taxes has the same right as Karl Marx to fashion his favorite nonsense into such a "mental construct," to make

way which merely betrayed his embarrassment. For example, he makes it easy for himself to answer our critique of his skepticism concerning crises by arguing that we have made the whole Marxist theory of crises into music of the future. But this is an extremely free interpretation of our words, for we merely explained the regular *mechanical periodicity* of the crises—more precisely, the ten-year cycle of crises—as a schema which corresponds only to the fully developed world market. As for the *content* of the Marxist theory of crises, we explained it as the only scientific formulation of the mechanism, as well as of the inner economic causes of *all* previous crises.

Bernstein's answers to other points of our critique are still more astounding. To the argument, for example, that already, by their very nature, the cartels could offer no defense against the capitalist anarchy because—as the sugar industry shows—they create an exacerbated competition on the world market, Bernstein answers that this may very well be true, but the exacerbated sugar competition in England created a large fabrication of marmalade and preserves (p. 78). An answer which makes us think of the conversation exercises in Ollendorf's *Teach Yourself Language* book: 'The sleeve is short *but* the shoe is tight. The father is tall *but* the mother has gone to bed.'

In the same logical context, Bernstein answers our proof that *credit* too cannot be a 'means of adaptation' against capitalist anarchy because, on the contrary, it increases this anarchy. Credit, he believes, alongside its disruptive character also has a positive 'production-creative' character which Marx himself is said to have recognized. This argument about credit is not at all new to anyone who, basing himself on Marxist theory, sees in the capitalist society all the positive points of departure for the future socialist transformation of society. The question at issue was whether this positive character of credit which points it beyond capitalism can come to fruition in the capitalist society as well, whether it can master capitalist anarchy, as Bernstein thinks, or whether it itself does not rather degenerate into contradictions and only increase once more the anarchy, as we showed. Bernstein's repeated reference to the 'production-creative capacity of credit,' which in fact forms the point of departure for the whole debate, is in this light merely a 'theoretical flight into the beyond'—of the domain of the discussion."

his own law of value. “Marx has just as much right to neglect the properties of commodities until the latter are no more than the incarnation of quantities of simple human labor as have the economists of the Böhm–Jevons school to abstract all the qualities of commodities other than their utility” (p. 42).³⁰

Thus, Marx’s social labor and Menger’s abstract utility are, for Bernstein, quite similar—pure abstractions. In this, Bernstein forgets completely that Marx’s abstraction is not an invention but a discovery. It does not exist in Marx’s head but in the commodity economy. It has not an imaginary but a real social existence, so real that it can be cut, hammered, weighed, and coined. The abstract human labor discovered by Marx is, in its developed form, none other than *money*. That is precisely one of Marx’s most brilliant discoveries, while for all bourgeois political economists, from the first of the mercantilists to the last of the classicists, the essence of money has remained a book with seven seals.

The Böhm–Jevons abstract utility is, on the contrary, a mere mental construct or, rather, it is a construct of intellectual emptiness, a private absurdity for which neither capitalism nor any other society can be made responsible but only vulgar bourgeois economics itself. With this “mental construct,” Bernstein, Böhm, and Jevons, and the entire subjective fraternity, can remain twenty more years before the mystery of money without arriving at a solution any different from the one reached by any cobbler—namely, that money is also a “useful” thing.

Thus, Bernstein has fully lost all comprehension of Marx’s law of value. However, anybody with a small understanding of Marxian economics can see that without the law of value, Marx’s whole system is incomprehensible. Or, to speak more concretely, without an understanding of the nature of the commodity and its exchange, the entire economy of capitalism, with all its concatenations, must remain an enigma.

³⁰ Böhm-Bawerk and Jevons, like Menger (next paragraph), were leaders of the marginalist school of economics. See Glossary.

But, what precisely is the magic key which enabled Marx to open the door to the deepest secrets of all capitalist phenomena and solve, as if at play, problems that were not even suspected by the greatest minds of classical bourgeois political economy, such as Smith and Ricardo? Nothing other than his conception of the whole capitalist economy as an historical phenomenon—not merely, as in the best of cases with the classical economists, concerning the feudal past of capitalism, but also concerning the socialist future. The secret of Marx's theory of value, of his analysis of money, his theory of capital, his theory of the rate of profit, and consequently of the whole existing economic system is—the transitory nature of the capitalist economy, its collapse: thus—and this is only another aspect of the same phenomenon—the final goal, socialism. And precisely because, *a priori*, Marx looked at capitalism from the socialist's viewpoint, that is, from the historical viewpoint, he was enabled to decipher the hieroglyphics of capitalist economy. And because he took the socialist viewpoint as a point of departure for his analyses of bourgeois society, he was in a position to give a scientific base to socialism.

This is the measure by which we evaluate Bernstein's remarks at the end of his book where he complains of the "dualism" found "everywhere in Marx's monumental work" [*Capital*—D.H.]. "The dualism is found in that the work wishes to be a scientific study and prove, at the same time, a thesis which was completely elaborated a long time before; it is based on a schema that already contains the result to which he wants to lead. The return to the *Communist Manifesto* (that is, to the socialist goal!—R.L.) proves the existence of vestiges of utopianism in Marx's system" (p. 177).

Marx's "dualism," however, is nothing but the dualism of the socialist future and the capitalist present, of capital and labor, of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is the monumental scientific reflection of the dualism existing in bourgeois society, the dualism of the bourgeois class antagonisms.

When Bernstein sees this theoretical dualism in Marx as "a

survival of utopianism,” this is only his naive avowal that he denies the historical dualism of bourgeois society, the existence of class antagonisms in capitalism, that for him socialism itself has become only a “survival of utopianism.” Bernstein’s “monism”—that is, his unity—is but the unity of the eternalized capitalist order, the unity of the socialist who has renounced his aim and has decided to see in bourgeois society, one and immutable, the goal of human development.

However, if Bernstein does not see in the economic structure of capitalism the duality, the development that leads to socialism, then in order to preserve the socialist program, at least in form, he is obliged to take refuge in an idealist construction lying outside of the economic development. He is obliged to transform socialism itself from a definite historical phase of social development into an abstract “principle.” That is why the “cooperative principle”—the meager decantation of socialism with which Bernstein wishes to garnish the capitalist economy—appears not as a concession of his bourgeois theory to the socialist future of society but to Bernstein’s own socialist past.

2. *Trade Unions, Cooperatives, and Political Democracy*

We have seen that Bernstein’s socialism comes down to letting the workers share in the wealth of society, changing the poor into the rich. How will this be brought about? His articles in the *Neue Zeit* (“Problems of Socialism”) contain only vague allusions to this question. Adequate information, however, can be found in his book. His socialism is to be realized in two ways: through the trade unions—or, as Bernstein himself calls it, economic democracy—and cooperatives. The first will suppress industrial profit; the second will do away with commercial profit (p. 118).

Cooperatives—especially production cooperatives—essentially constitute a *hybrid form* in the midst of capitalism. They are small units of socialized production within capitalist exchange. But, in the capitalist economy, exchange dominates production and—as a result of competition, pitiless exploita-

tion, the complete domination of the process of production by the interests of capital—becomes a condition for the survival of the enterprise. The domination of capital over the process of production expresses itself practically in the necessity of making labor as intensive as possible, lengthening or shortening the working day according to the situation of the market and, depending on the requirements of the market, employing or throwing labor-power back onto the street. In a word, all methods that enable an enterprise to stand up against its competitors are practiced. The workers forming a production cooperative are thus faced with the contradictory necessity of governing themselves with the utmost absolutism, of playing the role of the capitalist entrepreneur against themselves. This contradiction accounts for the failure of production cooperatives which either become pure capitalist enterprises or, if the workers' interests continue to predominate, end by dissolving. Bernstein has himself taken note of these facts, but he has not understood them. For, together with Mrs. Potter-Webb, he explains the failure of production cooperatives in England by their lack of "discipline." But what is here so superficially and flatly called "discipline" is nothing but the natural and absolutist regime of capitalism which, it is plain, the workers cannot successfully use against themselves.³¹

It follows from this that cooperatives can survive within the capitalist economy only if they manage to suppress, by means of some detour, the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of exchange which is concealed in this [economic—D.H.] form. They can accomplish this only by removing themselves artificially from the influence of the laws of free competition. And they can succeed in the latter only when they assure themselves beforehand a market, a constant circle of consumers. Such an aid can be furnished them by the con-

³¹ "The cooperative factories of the workers themselves represent within the old form the first breach in the old form, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organization all the shortcomings of the prevailing system." *Das Kapital*, Bd. 3, T. 1, S. 427. (R.L.)

sumers' cooperative. Here—and not in Oppenheimer's distinction between cooperatives that purchase and cooperatives that sell [to which Bernstein refers favorably—D.H.] is the secret treated by Bernstein: the explanation for the invariable failure of independent producers' cooperatives and their survival when they are backed by consumers' organizations.

But if it is true that the conditions of existence of producers' cooperatives in modern society are bound up with the conditions of existence of consumers' cooperatives, then the further consequence follows that the scope of the former is limited, in the most favorable of cases, to the small local market and to products serving immediate needs, especially food products. Consumers', and therefore producers', cooperatives are *a priori* excluded from all of the most important branches of capitalist production—the textile, mining, metallurgical, and petroleum industries, machine and locomotive construction, and ship-building. Forgetting for the moment their hybrid character, production cooperatives cannot be considered a general social reform for the reason that their establishment on a wide scale would presuppose, first of all, the abolition of the world market, the dissolution of the present world economy into small local groups of production and exchange—thus, essentially, a return from large capitalist production to the commodity production of the Middle Ages.

However, even within the limits of their possible realization in the present society, producers' cooperatives are necessarily limited to the role of simple annexes to consumers' cooperatives, which thus step forward as the leading agent of the supposed social change. But in this way the expected reform of society by means of cooperatives ceases to be an offensive against capitalist production, that is, against the principal basis of the capitalist economy. It becomes instead a struggle against commercial capital, especially small and middle-size commercial capital; that is, against the *branches* of the capitalist tree.

According to Bernstein, trade unions are a means of defense against exploitation by capitalist production. We have already

shown that trade unions cannot assure the workers an influence on production, either concerning the *dimensions* of production, or the *technical* process of production.

Concerning the purely economic side, "the struggle of the rate of wages against the rate of profit," as Bernstein calls it, it has already been shown that this is not fought out in the blue sky but within the well-defined framework of the law of wages. The law of wages is not shattered but applied. This becomes clear when one looks at another aspect of the situation, asking what are the actual functions of the trade unions.

According to Bernstein, it is the trade unions that, in the general movement for the emancipation of the working class, lead the real attack against the rate of industrial profit, transforming it gradually into the rate of wages. The fact is that trade unions are not at all able to execute an economic offensive against profit because they are nothing more than the organized *defense* of labor-power against the attacks of profit. They express the resistance offered by the working class to the oppression of capitalist economy. This, for two reasons.

First of all, through their organization the trade unions have the function of influencing the market situation of the commodity labor-power. But the organization is constantly overcome by the proletarianization of the middle layers which continually brings new merchandise to the labor market. Secondly, the goal of the trade unions is to ameliorate the condition of the workers, to increase the share of social wealth going to the working class. This share, however, is being reduced, with the fatality of a natural process, by the growth of the productivity of labor. One does not need to be a Marxist to notice this. It suffices to read Rodbertus' *Zur Beleuchtung der sozialen Frage* [Toward the Explanation of the Social Question—D.H.].

Thus, the objective conditions of capitalist society transform the two major functions of the trade-union struggle into a sort of labor of Sisyphus.³² This labor of Sisyphus is, nevertheless,

³² Rosa Luxemburg earned the undying hatred of the trade unionists because of this

indispensable if the worker is to obtain the rate of wages due him in accordance with the situation of the market, if the capitalist law of wages is to be realized and the effect of the depressing tendency of economic development paralyzed—or, to be more exact, attenuated. However, if one thinks of the trade unions as a means for the progressive reduction of profit in favor of wages, this presupposes the following social conditions: first, the cessation of the proletarianization of the middle strata and of the growth of the working class; second, a cessation of the growth of the productivity of labor. We have, in both cases, just as with the realization of the society of consumers' cooperatives, *a return to precapitalist conditions*.

Both of Bernstein's means of socialist reform—cooperatives and trade unions—are thus seen to be totally incapable of transforming the *capitalist mode of production*. This is really understood by Bernstein, though in a confused manner. He refers to them as means of reducing the profit of the capitalists, and thus of enriching the workers. In this way, he renounces the struggle against the *capitalist mode of production* and attempts to direct the socialist movement to struggle against *capitalist distribution*. Again and again, Bernstein refers to socialism as an effort toward a distribution which is "just," "juster" (p. 51), and "still more just" (*Vorwärts*, March 26, 1899).

Of course, the direct cause leading the popular masses to the Social Democratic movement is the "unjust" mode of distribution of the capitalist order. When Social Democracy struggles for the socialization of the entire economy, it aspires to a "just" distribution of social wealth at the same time. But, guided by Marx's insight that the mode of distribution of a given epoch is a natural consequence of the mode of production of that epoch, Social Democracy does not struggle against distribution

phrase, which they interpreted as saying that their efforts were totally useless. When Karl Kautsky took over the phrase in his book *Der Weg zur Macht* (*The Road to Power*), the trade unionists published a series of articles and a book attacking this notion as "anarcho-syndicalism"—a sin equally grave in the eyes of Social Democracy as that of "Blanquism."

within the *framework* of capitalist production. It struggles instead for the suppression of commodity production itself. In a word, Social Democracy wants to establish *socialist distribution* by eliminating the *capitalist mode of production*. Bernstein's method, precisely on the contrary, proposes to combat *capitalist distribution* in the hope of thereby gradually establishing the *socialist mode of production*.

But in that case, what is the basis of Bernstein's program for socialist reforms? Does it find support in definite tendencies of capitalist production? No. In the first place, he denies such tendencies. In the second place, as was shown above, the desired form of production is for him the result and not the cause of distribution. He cannot give *his* socialism an economic base. After he has inverted the aims and means of socialism, and therefore its economic conditions, he *cannot* give a materialist base to his program; *he is obliged* to construct an idealist base.

"Why represent socialism as the consequence of economic compulsion?" we hear him say. "Why degrade man's *understanding*, his *feeling for justice*, his *will*?" (*Vorwärts*, March 26, 1899). Bernstein's most just distribution is to be realized thanks to man's free will, the will which is not in the service of economic necessity; or more precisely, since this will itself is only an instrument, by means of man's comprehension of justice—in short, by means of the *idea of justice*.

We thus quite happily return to the principle of justice, to the old warhorse on which the reformers of the earth have rocked for ages, for lack of surer means of historic transportation. We return to that lamentable Rosinante on which all the Don Quixotes of history have galloped toward the great reform of the world, to return home with a black eye.

The relation of the poor to the rich taken as a social base for socialism; the "principle" of cooperation as its content; the "most just distribution" as its aim; and the idea of justice as its only historical legitimation—with how much more force, more spirit, and more fire did Weitling defend *this sort* of socialism fifty years ago! Of course, the ingenious tailor did not yet know

scientific socialism. If *today* the conception torn to bits by Marx and Engels a half-century ago is patched up and presented to the proletariat as the last word of science, that, too, is the art of a tailor—but not an ingenious one.

Trade unions and cooperatives are the economic points of support for the theory of revisionism. Its principal *political* presupposition is a continual growth of *democracy*. The present manifestations of political reaction are to revisionism only “twitches” which are seen as accidental, momentary, and not to be considered in the elaboration of the general direction of the labor struggle.

[It is not, however, a question of what Bernstein thinks about the durability of the reaction on the basis of oral or written assurances of his friends,³³ but of the inner, objective relation between democracy and the actual social development.]

According to Bernstein, for example, democracy is an inevitable stage in the development of modern society. To him, as to the bourgeois theoreticians of liberalism, democracy is the great fundamental law of historical development in general whose realization must be served by all of the active forces of political life. However, presented in such absolute form, this is totally false; it is a petty-bourgeois and superficial schematization of the results of a very short peak of bourgeois development, roughly the last twenty-five or thirty years. We reach entirely different conclusions when we examine more closely the historical development of democracy and at the same time the general political history of capitalism.

Concerning the former, democracy has been found in the most dissimilar social formations: in primitive communist societies, in the slave states of antiquity, and in the medieval city-communes. Similarly, absolutism and constitutional monarchy are found in the most varied economic contexts. On the other hand, at its beginnings—as commodity production—capitalism calls into being a democratic constitution in the

³³ Bernstein was at this time still in political exile in England.

city-communes of the Middle Ages. Later, in its more developed form, as manufacturing, capitalism found its corresponding political form in the absolute monarchy. Finally, as a developed industrial economy, it brought into being in France alternatively the democratic Republic (1793), the absolute monarchy of Napoleon I, the nobles' monarchy of the Restoration period (1815–1830), the bourgeois constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe, then again the democratic Republic, and again the monarchy of Napoleon III, and finally, for the third time, the Republic. In Germany, the only truly democratic institution—universal suffrage—is not a conquest of bourgeois liberalism. Universal suffrage in Germany was an instrument for the fusion of the small states, and it is only in this sense that it has any importance for the development of the German bourgeoisie, which otherwise is quite satisfied with a semi-feudal constitutional monarchy. In Russia, capitalism prospered for a long time under the regime of Oriental personal rule without the bourgeoisie manifesting the least desire for democracy. In Austria, universal suffrage was above all a life line thrown to a decomposing monarchy [and how little it is actually tied together with true democracy is shown by the domination of Paragraph 14.³⁴] Finally, in Belgium, the conquest of universal suffrage by the labor movement was undoubtedly due to the weakness of militarism, consequently to the particular geographic and political situation of the country; and, above all, it is a “bit of democracy” that has been won not *by* the bourgeoisie but *against* it.

On closer examination, the uninterrupted ascent of democracy, which to our revisionism, as well as to bourgeois liberalism, appears as a great fundamental law of human history and, at the very least, of modern history, is shown to be a phantom. No absolute and universal relation can be constructed between capitalist development and democracy. The

³⁴ Paragraph 14 of the Austrian Constitution gave the Habsburg monarchy the right to suspend constitutional liberties, a right which it often used.

political form is always the result of the whole sum of political factors, domestic as well as foreign. Within its boundaries it admits all variations of the scale, from absolute monarchy to the democratic republic.

We must therefore abandon all hope of establishing a general law of the historical development of democracy even within the framework of modern society. Turning to the present phase of bourgeois history, we also see here factors in the political situation which, instead of assuring the realization of Bernstein's schema, lead rather to the abandonment by bourgeois society of the democratic conquests won up to the present.

On the one hand—and this is of the greatest importance—the democratic institutions have largely played out their role as aids in the bourgeois development. In so far as they were necessary to bring about the fusion of small states and the creation of large modern states (Germany, Italy), they have become dispensable. Economic development has meanwhile effected an internal organic healing [, and the surgical dressing, political democracy, can thus be taken off without any danger for the organism of bourgeois society!]

The same thing is true of the transformation of the entire political and administrative machinery of the state from a feudal or semi-feudal mechanism to a capitalist one. While this transformation has been historically inseparable from the development of democracy, today it has been achieved to such an extent that the purely democratic ingredients of society, such as universal suffrage and the republican form of the state, may be eliminated without the administration, the state finances, or the military organization, etc., finding it necessary to return to the pre-March forms.³⁵

If liberalism as such is now essentially useless to bourgeois society, on the other hand, in important respects it has become

³⁵ In German, the expression *Vormärz*, pre-March, refers to the situation before the bourgeois revolution of March 1848 which, though unsuccessful, did win certain reforms.

a direct impediment. Two factors completely dominate the political life of contemporary states: *world politics* and the labor movement. Each is only a different aspect of the present phase of capitalist development.

As a result of the development of the world economy and the aggravation and generalization of competition on the world market, militarism and marinism³⁶ as instruments of world politics have become a decisive factor in the internal as well as in the external life of the great states. If it is true that world politics and militarism represent a *rising* tendency in the present phase, then bourgeois democracy must logically move in a *descending* line. [The most striking example: the North American union since the Spanish war. In France, the Republic owes its existence mainly to the international situation which provisionally makes a war impossible. If a war did come and, as everything leads one to believe, France were not up to the test, then the answer to the first French defeat would be—the proclamation of the monarchy in Paris. In Germany, the new era of great armaments (1893) and that of world politics which began with Kiao-Cheou³⁷ were paid for with two sacrifices of bourgeois democracy: the decomposition of the liberals and the change of the Center Party.]³⁸

³⁶ Marinism is the naval equivalent of militarism. In 1890, under the direction of Tirpitz, Germany set out to build a powerful navy. Previously, under Bismarck, Germany had seen its interests as purely European, and had not sought to become involved in the chase after colonies. The shift in policy in 1890 which was marked by the expansion of the fleet was a clear and direct challenge to England and, as Rosa Luxemburg points out in the *Junius Pamphlet*, led directly to the events of 1914.

³⁷ After the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese war, a new colonialist offensive was begun by the European powers who demanded extraterritorial rights in China. Using the excuse of the murder of two German missionaries, Germany took control of Kiao-Cheou (Tsingtao) in 1898 and held it until 1919. The moralizing liberals, as well as revisionists like Bernstein, argued that if other nations were dividing up China, Germany too had to have its share if it was not to lose its advantages on the world market and therefore bring about less prosperous circumstances at home.

³⁸ In the second edition, the bracketed portion is replaced by:
 “In Germany, the era of great armaments begun in 1893, and the policy of world politics, inaugurated with Kiao-Cheou, were paid for immediately with the following sacrificial victim: the decomposition of liberalism, the change of the Center Party

If foreign policy pushes the bourgeoisie into the arms of reaction, this is no less true of domestic politics—thanks to the rise of the working class. Bernstein shows that he recognizes this when he makes the “legend” of Social Democracy which “wants to swallow everything”—in other words, the socialist efforts of the working class—responsible for the desertion of the liberal bourgeoisie [from a possible alliance with Social Democracy—D.H.]. In this connection, he advises the proletariat to disavow its socialist aim so that the mortally frightened liberals might come out of the mousehole of reaction. In thus making the abandonment of the socialist labor movement an essential condition and a social presupposition for the preservation of bourgeois democracy today, he proves in a striking manner that this democracy is in complete contradiction with the inner tendency of development of modern society. At the same time, he proves that the socialist labor movement itself is *a direct product* of this tendency.

In this way, however, he proves still another thing. By making the renunciation of the socialist goal an essential presupposition and condition of the resurrection of bourgeois democracy, he shows, conversely, how inexact is the claim that bourgeois democracy is an indispensable condition of the socialist movement and the victory of socialism. Bernstein’s reasoning exhausts itself in a vicious circle; his conclusion swallows his premises.

The exit from this circle is quite simple. In view of the fact (which passed from opposition to government). The recent Reichstag elections of 1907, fought under the sign of colonial policy, are at the same time the historical burial of German liberalism.”

In the 1907 elections referred to here (sometimes called the “Hottentot Elections”), the government attacked Social Democracy as the internal enemy of Germany’s external greatness, appealing to nationalist sentiment. The government’s plans were successful: the SPD won only 43 seats in the Reichstag, as compared with 81 in the 1903 elections. This was the first time that the SPD’s continual forward progress on the parliamentary terrain had been checked, and the hangover from this experience was to strongly affect its future policies, as it began to be increasingly afraid of taking radical positions which it feared the people wouldn’t understand.

that bourgeois liberalism has sold its soul from fear of the growing labor movement and its final aim, it follows that the socialist labor movement today is and can be the *only* support of democracy. The fate of the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy; but the fate of democracy, on the contrary, is bound to the socialist movement. Democracy does not acquire greater chances of life in the measure that the working class renounces the struggle for its emancipation; on the contrary, democracy acquires greater chances of survival as the socialist movement becomes sufficiently strong to struggle against the reactionary consequences of world politics and the bourgeois desertion of democracy. He who would strengthen democracy must also want to strengthen and not weaken the socialist movement; and with the renunciation of the struggle for socialism goes that of both the labor movement and democracy.

[At the end of his "Answer" to Kautsky in *Vorwärts* (March 26, 1899), Bernstein explains that he is completely in agreement with the practical part of the Social Democratic program; his objections were only to the theoretical parts of that program. Aside from that, he obviously believes that he can march with full rights in the ranks of the Party, for how "important" is it "if there is a proposition in the theoretical part which no longer agrees with one's conception of the course of development"? This explanation shows best of all how completely Bernstein has lost the sense of the connection of the practical activity of Social Democracy with its general principles, how much the same words have ceased to mean the same thing for Bernstein and the Party. In effect, Bernstein's own theory, as we have seen, leads to the most elementary Social Democratic understanding—that without the fundamental basis, the practical struggle too is worthless and aimless, that with the giving up of the *ultimate goal*, the *movement* itself must be lost.]

3. *The Conquest of Political Power*

As we have seen, the fate of democracy is bound up with the fate of the labor movement. But does the development of de-

mocracy, in the best of cases, render superfluous or impossible a proletarian revolution in the sense of the seizure of state power, the conquest of political power?

Bernstein settles the question by minutely weighing the good and bad sides of legal reform and revolution in almost the same manner in which cinnamon or pepper is weighed out in a consumers' cooperative store. He sees the legal course of development as the action of the intellect, while the revolutionary course is the action of feeling. Reformist work is seen as a slow method of historical progress; revolution as a rapid method. In legislation, he sees a methodical force; in revolution, an elemental force (p. 183).

We have known for a long time that the petty-bourgeois reformer finds "good" and "bad" sides in everything; he nibbles a bit at all grasses.³⁹ But we have known for just as long that the real course of events is little affected by such petty-bourgeois combinations, and that the carefully gathered little pile of the "good sides" of all things possible blows away at the first wind of history. Historically, legislative reform and the revolutionary method function in accordance with influences that are more profound than the consideration of the advantages or inconveniences of this or that method.

In the history of bourgeois society, legislative reform served generally to strengthen the rising class until the latter felt sufficiently strong to seize political power, to overturn the existing juridical system and to construct a new one. Bernstein, thundering against the conquest of political power as a Blanquist theory of violence, has the misfortune to label as a Blanquist error that which has been for centuries the pivot and motive force of human history. As long as class societies have existed, and the class struggle has constituted the essential content of their history, the conquest of political power has continually

³⁹ Rosa Luxemburg is referring here to Marx's critique of Proudhon, who also had a proclivity for picking out "good" and "bad" sides of economic facts. Cf. *Das Elend der Philosophie*, MEW, Bd. 4, S. 131. The problem with this approach is that it violates the phenomena and makes a view of the totality impossible.

been the aim of all rising classes and the beginning and end of every historical period. This can be seen in the long struggle of the peasantry against the financiers and nobility in ancient Rome; in the struggles of the medieval nobility against the bishops, and the artisans against the nobles in the cities of the Middle Ages; and in modern times, in the struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism.

Legal reform and revolution are not different methods of historical progress that can be picked out at pleasure from the counter of history, just as one chooses hot or cold sausages. They are different *moments* in the development of class society which condition and complement each other, and at the same time exclude each other reciprocally as, e.g., the north and south poles, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In effect, every legal constitution is the *product* of a revolution. In the history of classes, revolution is the act of political creation while legislation is the political expression of the life of a society that has already come into being. Work for legal reforms does not itself contain its own driving force independent from revolution. During every historical period, work for reforms is carried on only in the direction given it by the impetus of the last revolution, and continues as long as that impulsion continues to make itself felt. Or, to put it more concretely, it is carried on only in the *framework* of the social form created by the last revolution. Precisely here is the kernel of the problem.

It is absolutely false and totally unhistorical to represent work for reforms as a drawn-out revolution, and revolution as a condensed series of reforms. A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their *duration* but according to their *essence*. The whole secret of historical transformations through the utilization of political power consists precisely in the change of simple quantitative modification into a new quality, or to speak more concretely, in the transition from one historical period, one social order, to another.

He who pronounces himself in favor of the method of legal

reforms *in place of and as opposed to* the conquest of political power and social revolution does not really choose a more tranquil, surer and slower road to the *same* goal. He chooses a *different* goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new social order, he takes a stand for surface modifications of the old order. Thus, the political views of revisionism lead to the same conclusion as the economic theories of revisionism: not to the realization of the *socialist* order, but to the reform of *capitalism*; not to the suppression of the wage system, but to the diminution of exploitation; in a word, to the elimination of the abuses of capitalism instead of to that of capitalism itself.

Perhaps what we have just said about the function of legal reform and revolution is true only of the class struggles of the past? Perhaps now, as a result of the development of the bourgeois juridical system, it is legal reform which will lead society from one historical phase to another, and the seizure of state power by the proletariat has "become an empty phrase," as Bernstein puts it on page 183 of his book?

Exactly and precisely the opposite is the case. What distinguishes bourgeois society from earlier class societies—from ancient society and that of the Middle Ages? Precisely the fact that class domination does not rest on "acquired rights" but on *real economic relations*, that wage labor is not a juridical relation but a pure economic relation. In our whole juridical system there is not a single legal formula for the present class domination. The few remaining traces of such formulae of class domination (such as that concerning servants) are survivals of feudal relations.

How can wage slavery be suppressed gradually, in the "legal way," if it is not at all expressed in laws? Bernstein, who wants to do away with capitalism by reform work, finds himself in the same situation as Uspenski's Russian policeman who tells the story: "Quickly I seized the rascal by the collar! But what do I see? The confounded fellow had no collar!" That is precisely the problem.

"All previous societies were based on the antagonism be-

tween the oppressing class and the oppressed class" (*Communist Manifesto*). But in the preceding phases of modern society, this antagonism was expressed in determined juridical relations and for this reason could accord, to a certain extent, a place to the developing new relations within the framework of the old. "In the midst of serfdom, the serf raised himself to the rank of a member of the town community" (*Communist Manifesto*). How? By the progressive suppression of all feudal privileges in the environs of the city—the corvée, the right to special dress, the inheritance tax, the lord's claim to the best cattle, the personal levy, forced marriage, the right to succession, etc.—which, all together, constituted serfdom. In the same way, "under the yoke of feudal absolutism, the petty bourgeois raised himself to the rank of bourgeoisie" (*Communist Manifesto*). By what means? By means of the formal partial suppression or actual loosening of the bonds of the guilds, by the gradual transformation of the fiscal administration and of the army.

Consequently, if one considers the question abstractly instead of historically, in view of the earlier class relations it is at least possible to *imagine* a purely legal-reformistic transition from feudal to bourgeois society. But what do we see in reality? That there too legal reforms not only did not obviate the need for the seizure of political power by the bourgeoisie, but, on the contrary, prepared it and led to it. A formal social-political transformation was indispensable for the suppression of slavery as well as for the abolition of feudalism.

But the situation is entirely different now. No law obliges the proletariat to submit itself to the yoke of capitalism. Need, the lack of means of production, are responsible for this submission. And, within the framework of bourgeois society, no law in the world can give to the proletariat these means, for not laws but economic development have stolen them.

Further, in the same way, the exploitation *within* the system of wage labor is not based on laws, for the level of wages is not fixed by legislation but by economic factors. And the fact of

capitalist exploitation does not rest on a legal disposition but on the pure economic fact that labor-power appears in the role of a commodity possessing, among other characteristics, the agreeable quality of producing value—and *more* value than the value it consumes in the form of means of subsistence. In short, the fundamental relations of capitalist class rule cannot be transformed by means of legal reforms within the bourgeois system because these relations have neither been introduced by bourgeois laws, nor have they received the form of such laws. Apparently Bernstein is not aware of this, for he speaks of socialist “reforms.” On the other hand, he seems to recognize this when he writes, on page 10 of his book, that “the economic motive appears freely today, while formerly it was masked by all kinds of relations of domination and ideologies.”

But there is still another thing. It is one of the peculiarities of the capitalist order that within it all the elements of the future society, in their development, first assume a form not approaching socialism but, rather, a form moving away from it. Production takes on an increasingly social character. But in what form? In the form of the large enterprise, in the form of the shareholding society, the cartel, within which the capitalist antagonisms, the exploitation, the oppression of labor-power, are augmented to the extreme.

In the army, the development leads to the extension of universal military service, to the reduction of the time of service; consequently, it materially approaches a people’s army. But all this takes place in the form of modern militarism, in which the domination of the people by the militarist state and the class character of the state manifest themselves most harshly.

In political relations, the development of democracy—in the measure that it finds a favorable soil—brings the participation of all strata of the people in political life and, consequently, some sort of “people’s state.” But this takes the form of bourgeois parliamentarism, in which class antagonisms and class domination are not suppressed but are rather developed and openly displayed. Because capitalist development moves in

these contradictions, in order to extract the kernel of socialist society from its capitalist shell it is necessary, for this reason too, that the proletariat conquer political power and completely suppress the capitalist system.

Of course, Bernstein draws other conclusions. If the development of democracy leads to the aggravation and not to the lessening of capitalist contradictions, "Social Democracy," he answers us, "in order not to render its task more difficult, must try by all means to thwart social reforms and the extension of democratic institutions" (p. 71).⁴⁰ Indeed, that would be the right thing to do if Social Democracy, in the petty-bourgeois manner, found to its taste the futile task of picking out all the good sides of history and rejecting the bad ones. However, in that case, it is logical that it should also "try to thwart" capitalism in general, for *it* is unquestionably the chief criminal placing all these obstacles in the way of socialism. But in fact, besides the *obstacles*, capitalism also furnishes the only *possibilities* of realizing the socialist program. However, the same is also true of democracy.

If democracy has become partially superfluous and partially troublesome to the bourgeoisie, it is necessary and indispensable to the working class. It is necessary, first of all, because it creates the political forms (self-government, electoral rights, etc.) which will serve the proletariat as springboards and fulcrums in its transformation of bourgeois society. Second, however, it is indispensable because only in it, in the struggle for democracy and the use of its rights, can the proletariat become conscious of its class interests and its historical tasks.

In a word, democracy is indispensable not because it renders *superfluous* the conquest of political power by the proletariat but, on the contrary, because it renders this conquest of

⁴⁰ The idea that Social Democracy should not try to push reforms too fast and hard was common in the Party, and was later systematized by Kautsky in his "strategy of attrition." This idea was based on the common belief that the objective evolution of capitalism would naturally and by itself lead to socialism, from which it was concluded that Social Democracy should do all that it could not to rock the boat.

power both *necessary* as well as *possible*. When Engels, in his Preface to *Class Struggles in France*, revised the tactics of the modern labor movement and opposed the legal struggle to the barricades, he did not have in mind—*this comes out in every line of the Preface*—the question of the final conquest of political power, but the modern daily struggle; not the attitude of the proletariat *opposed to* the capitalist state at the moment of the seizure of state power, but its attitude within the *bounds* of the capitalist state. In a word, Engels gave directions to the *oppressed* proletariat, not to the victorious proletariat.⁴¹

On the other hand, Marx's well-known declaration concerning the agrarian question in England, on which Bernstein leans heavily—"We would probably succeed more easily by buying out the landlords"—does not refer to the attitude of the proletariat *before* but *after* its victory. For, obviously, it can only be a question of buying out the old dominant class when the working class is in power. The possibility envisaged by Marx is that of the *peaceful exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat* and not the replacement of the dictatorship by capitalist social reforms.

The necessity of the proletariat's seizing power was always unquestionable for Marx and Engels. It is left to Bernstein to consider the henhouse of bourgeois parliamentarism as the correct organ by means of which the most formidable social transformation in history, the passage of society from the *capitalist* to the *socialist* form, is to be completed.

Bernstein, however, introduces his theory with fear and warnings against the danger of the proletariat's acquiring power too *early*! That is, according to Bernstein, the proletariat ought to leave bourgeois society in its present conditions and itself suffer a frightful defeat. What follows clearly from this

⁴¹ The role played by Engels' Preface in determining the politics of Social Democracy was immense, and Rosa Luxemburg had continually to return to it and explain what she thought it meant. Cf. especially her comments in "Our Program and the Political Situation," and the footnote in which the circumstances of Engels' writing the Preface are explained, below, p. 383.

fear is that if circumstances led the proletariat to power, it could draw from Bernstein's theory the following "practical" conclusion: to go to sleep.⁴² In this way, the theory judges itself; it is a conception which, at the most decisive moments of the struggle, condemns the proletariat to inactivity, and thus to a passive betrayal of its own cause.

In effect, our program would be a miserable scrap of paper if it could not serve us in *all* eventualities, at *all* moments of the struggle, and serve precisely by its *application* and not by its nonapplication. If our program is the formulation of the historical development of society from capitalism to socialism, obviously it must also formulate, in all their fundamental lines, all the transitory phases of this development, and consequently at *every* moment it should be able to indicate to the proletariat what ought to be its correct behavior in order to move toward socialism. It follows generally that there can be *no time* when the proletariat will be obliged to abandon its program, or be abandoned by it.

This is manifested practically in the fact that there can be no time when the proletariat, brought to power by the force of circumstances, is not in the condition, or is not morally obliged, to take certain measures for the realization of its program, transitory measures in the direction of socialism. Behind the belief that the socialist program could break down at any moment during the political domination of the proletariat, and give no directions for its realization, lies, unconsciously, the other belief, that *the socialist program is, generally and at all times, unrealizable*.

And what if the transitory measures are premature? The question hides a whole slew of misunderstandings concerning the real course of social transformations.

Above all, the seizure of state power by the proletariat, i.e.,

⁴² This expression comes from a debate between Rosa Luxemburg and Georg von Vollmar, a leading revisionist. In the course of the debate, Vollmar argued that the ruinous effects of the Paris Commune were such that the workers would have been better off going to sleep.

by a large popular class, is not produced artificially. It presupposes (with the exception of cases like the Paris Commune, when power was not attained after a conscious struggle for its goal, but, exceptionally, fell into the proletariat's hands like an object abandoned by everybody else) a definite degree of maturity of economic and political relations. Here we have the essential difference between Blanquist coups d'état by a "resolute minority," bursting out at any moment like a pistol shot, and for this very reason, always inopportunistly, and the conquest of political power by a large and class-conscious popular mass. Such a mass itself can only be the product of the beginning of the collapse of bourgeois society, and therefore bears in itself the economic and political legitimation of its opportune appearance.

If, therefore, from the standpoint of the social *presuppositions*, the conquest of political power by the working class cannot occur "too early," then from the standpoint of political effect—of *conservation* of power—it is necessarily "too early." The premature revolution, the thought of which keeps Bernstein awake, menaces us like a sword of Damocles. Against it neither prayers nor supplication, scares nor anguish, are of avail. And this, for two very simple reasons.

In the first place, it is impossible to imagine that a transformation as formidable as the passage from capitalist society to socialist society can be realized in one act, by a victorious blow of the proletariat. To consider that as possible is again to lend credence to pure Blanquist conceptions. The socialist transformation presupposes a long and stubborn struggle in the course of which, quite probably, the proletariat will be repulsed more than once, so that, from the viewpoint of the final outcome of the struggle, it will have necessarily come to power "too early" the first time.

In the second place, however, it will also be impossible to avoid the "premature" seizure of state power precisely because these "premature" attacks of the proletariat constitute a factor, and indeed a very important factor, creating the *political*

conditions of the final victory. In the course of the political crisis accompanying its seizure of power, in the fire of long and stubborn struggles, the proletariat will acquire the degree of political maturity permitting it to obtain the definitive victory of the revolution. Thus these “premature” attacks of the proletariat on the state power are in themselves important historical moments helping to provoke and determine the *point* of the final victory. Considered from *this* point of view, the idea of a “premature” conquest of political power by the laboring class appears to be a political absurdity, derived from a mechanical conception of social development, and positing for the victory of the class struggle a *time fixed outside and independent of* the class struggle.

Since the proletariat is not in the position to seize political power in any other way than “prematurely”; since the proletariat is absolutely obliged to seize power “too early” once or several times before it can enduringly maintain itself in power, the objection to the “premature” seizure of power is nothing other than a *general opposition to the aspiration of the proletariat to take state power*.

Just as all roads lead to Rome, so, too, we logically arrive at the conclusion that the revisionist proposal to abandon the ultimate goal of socialism is really a recommendation to renounce the socialist *movement* itself [, that its advice to Social Democracy, “to go to sleep” in the case of the conquest of power, is identical with the advice: *to go to sleep now and forever*, i.e., to give up the class struggle].

4. The Breakdown

Bernstein began his revision of Social Democracy by abandoning the theory of capitalist breakdown. The latter, however, is the cornerstone of scientific socialism, and with the removal of this cornerstone, Bernstein must also reject the whole socialist doctrine. In the course of his discussion, he abandons, one after another, the positions of socialism in order to be able to maintain his first affirmation.

Without the breakdown of capitalism, the expropriation of the capitalist class is impossible. Bernstein therefore renounces expropriation and chooses a progressive realization of the "co-operative principle" as the goal of the labor movement.

But cooperation cannot be realized within capitalist production. Bernstein therefore renounces the socialization of production and proposes to reform commerce and to develop consumers' cooperatives.

But the transformation of society through consumers' cooperatives, even together with the trade unions, is incompatible with the real material development of capitalist society. Bernstein therefore abandons the materialist conception of history.

But his conception of the course of economic development is incompatible with the Marxist theory of surplus value. Bernstein therefore abandons the theory of value and of surplus value and, in this way, the whole economic theory of Karl Marx.

But the class struggle of the proletariat cannot be carried on without a definite final aim and without an economic base in the existing society. Bernstein therefore abandons the class struggle and proclaims the reconciliation with bourgeois liberalism.

But in a class society, the class struggle is a fully natural and unavoidable phenomenon. Bernstein therefore contests even the existence of classes in society: for him, the working class is a mass of individuals, divided not only politically and intellectually, but also economically. And, according to him, the bourgeoisie does not group itself politically in accordance with its inner economic interest, but only because of external pressure, from above and below.

But if there is no economic base for the class struggle and if, too, there actually are no classes, then not only the future, but even the past struggles of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie appear impossible, and Social Democracy and its successes seem absolutely incomprehensible. On the other hand, from this point of view, the latter can be understood only as the re-

sults of political pressure by the government—that is, not as the natural consequences of historical development but as the fortuitous consequences of the policy of the Hohenzollern; not as the legitimate offspring of capitalist society, but as the bastard children of reaction. Thus, with rigorous logic, Bernstein passes from the materialist conception of history to the outlook of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Vossische Zeitung*.⁴³

After rejecting the whole socialist criticism of capitalist society, the only thing that remains is to find that, on the whole, the present state of affairs is satisfactory. Here too, Bernstein does not hesitate. He finds that at present the reaction is not very strong in Germany, that “we do not see much of political reaction in the countries of Western Europe,” and that in nearly all the countries of the West “the attitude of the bourgeois classes toward the socialist movement is at most an attitude of defense but not one of oppression” (*Vorwärts*, March 26, 1899). Far from becoming worse, the situation of the workers is getting better; the bourgeoisie is politically progressive and even morally healthy; we see little of either reaction or oppression—and it is all for the best in the best of all possible worlds . . .

Bernstein thus travels in a logical sequence from A to Z. He began by abandoning the *final aim* in favor of the movement. But as there can be no socialist movement without the socialist aim, he necessarily ends by renouncing the *movement* itself.

Thus Bernstein’s conception of socialism collapses entirely. With him, the proud and admirable symmetric construction of the Marxist system becomes a pile of rubbish in which the debris of all systems, the pieces of thought of various great and small minds, find a common grave. Marx and Proudhon, Leon

⁴³ The *Vossische Zeitung* was a liberal bourgeois journal which dreamed of peaceful social reform and state socialism. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* was also a liberal journal, close to the views of Pfarrer Naumann. (See Glossary.) When, in 1899, Rosa Luxemburg was named editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, both papers felt close enough to the SPD to suggest that her appointment be revoked. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* spoke of “the bloody Rosa.”

von Buch and Franz Oppenheimer, Friedrich Albert Lange and Kant, Herr Prokopovich and Dr. Ritter von Neupauer, Herkner and Schulze-Gaevenitz, Lassalle and Professor Julius Wolf: all contribute their bit to Bernstein's system, and he takes a little from each. This is not astonishing. When he abandoned the class standpoint, he lost the political compass; when he abandoned scientific socialism, he lost the axis of intellectual crystallization around which isolated facts group themselves in the organic whole of a coherent conception of the world.

On first consideration, his doctrine, composed of bits of all possible systems, seems to be completely free from prejudices. Bernstein does not like to talk of "party science," or to be more exact, of class science, any more than he likes to talk of class liberalism or class morality. He thinks he succeeds in representing a universal human abstract science, abstract liberalism, abstract morality. But since the actual society is made up of classes which have diametrically opposed interests, aspirations, and conceptions, a universal human science in social questions, an abstract liberalism, an abstract morality, are at present illusions, a self-deception. What Bernstein considers his universal human science, democracy, and morality, is merely the dominant science, dominant democracy, and dominant morality—that is, bourgeois science, bourgeois democracy, bourgeois morality.

In effect, when Bernstein denies the Marxist economic system in order to swear by the teachings of Brentano, Böhm-Jevons, Say, and Julius Wolf, what does he do but exchange the scientific base of the emancipation of the working class for the apologetics of the bourgeoisie? When he speaks of the universal human character of liberalism, and transforms socialism into a variety of liberalism, what does he do but deprive the socialist movement of its class character and, consequently, of its historical content and, consequently, of all content in general, while conversely making the historical bearer of liberalism, the

bourgeoisie, the champion of the universal interests of humanity?

And when he condemns the “raising of the material factors to the rank of an all-powerful force of development”; when he protests against the “contempt for the ideal” in Social Democracy; when he presumes to talk for idealism, for morals, but at the same time inveighs against the only source of the moral rebirth of the proletariat, the revolutionary class struggle—what does he actually do but preach to the working class the quintessence of the morality of the bourgeoisie, that is, the reconciliation with the existing order and the transfer of hope to the beyond of an ethical ideal-world.

When he directs his keenest arrows against the dialectic, what does he do but attack the specific mode of thought of the rising class-conscious proletariat. Isn't the dialectic the sword that has helped the proletariat pierce the darkness of its historical future, the intellectual weapon with which the proletariat, though materially still in the yoke, triumphs over the bourgeoisie, proving to the bourgeoisie its transitory character, showing it the inevitability of the proletarian victory? Hasn't the dialectic already realized a revolution in the domain of thought? In that Bernstein takes leave of the dialectic and resorts instead to the intellectual seesaw of the “on the one hand—on the other hand,” “yes—but,” “although—however,” “more—less,” he quite logically lapses into the historically conditioned mode of thought of the declining bourgeoisie, a mode of thought which is the faithful intellectual reflection of its social existence and political activity. The political “on the one hand—on the other hand,” “yes—but” of the bourgeoisie of today exactly resembles Bernstein's manner of thinking. This is the sharpest and surest symptom of his bourgeois conception of the world.

But for Bernstein, the word “bourgeois” itself is not a class expression but a universal social notion. Logical to the last dot on the last i, he has also exchanged the historical language of the proletariat, together with its science, politics, morals, and

mode of thought, for that of the bourgeoisie. When he uses, without distinction, the term "citizen" in reference to the bourgeois as well as to the proletarian, thus intending to refer to man in general, he in fact identifies man in general with the bourgeois, and human society with bourgeois society.

[If, at the beginning of the discussion with Bernstein, one still hoped to convince him, to be able to give him back to the movement, by means of arguments from the scientific arsenal of Social Democracy, that hope must now be fully abandoned. Now the same words no longer express the same concepts, and the concepts no longer express the same social facts for both sides. The discussion with Bernstein has become an argument of two world views, of two classes, of two social forms. Today, Bernstein and Social Democracy stand on wholly different terrain.]

5. Opportunism in Theory and Practice

Bernstein's book is of great historical importance to the German and the international labor movement. This was the first attempt to give a theoretical base to the opportunist currents in Social Democracy.

If we take into consideration sporadic manifestations, such as the question of subsidies for steamships,⁴⁴ the opportunist currents in our movement have existed for a long time. But it is only since the beginning of the 1890's, with the suppression of the antisocialist laws and the reconquest of the terrain of legality, that we have had an explicit, unitary opportunist current. Vollmar's "state socialism," the vote on the Bavarian budget, the "agrarian socialism" of South Germany, Heine's policy of compensation, Schippel's stand on tariffs and militarism, are the high points in the development of the opportunist practice.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ In 1884 and 1885, Bismarck proposed that the government award a subvention to steamship companies, especially those tying German colonies to the motherland. The Social Democratic representatives to the Reichstag were divided over the question.

⁴⁵ "Vollmar's 'state socialism'" refers to Georg von Vollmar's belief that interven-

What, above all, is the external characteristic of these practices? Hostility to "theory." This is quite understandable, for our "theory," i.e., the principles of scientific socialism, imposes clearly marked limitations to practical activity—concerning the *aims* of this activity, the *means* of struggle applied, and the *method* of struggle. It is thus natural for those who only run after practical results to want to free their hands, i.e., to split our practice from "theory," to make it independent of theory.

But at every practical effort, this theory hits them on the head. State socialism, agrarian socialism, the policy of compensation, the militia question, all constitute defeats of opportunism. It is clear that if this current is to affirm itself against our principles it must, logically, come to the point of attacking the theory itself, the principles, and rather than ignore them, it must try to shake them and to construct its own theory. Bernstein's book is precisely an effort in that direction. That is why, at the Stuttgart Party Congress [in 1898—D.H.], the opportunist elements in our Party immediately grouped themselves about Bernstein's banner. If, on the one hand, opportunist currents in practical activity are an entirely natural phenomenon which can be explained in the light of the conditions of our activity and its growth, Bernstein's theory, on the other hand, is a no less natural attempt to group these currents into a general theoretical expression, to discover their proper theoretical pre-

tion from above, by the state, was necessary for the gradual introduction of socialism through a series of practical reform measures. "The vote on the Bavarian budget" refers to the practice of the Bavarian socialists, led by Vollmar, of voting for the budget proposed by the government of the Land (province) of Bavaria. This action, begun in 1891, and opposed by the majority of the Party, was justified by the "special conditions" which were said to exist in Bavaria, making it necessary for Social Democracy to appear as a "legitimate" political movement. The "'agrarian socialism' of South Germany" was also justified on the grounds of "special conditions" existing in the primarily agricultural and Catholic South. In 1894, Vollmar opposed the prevailing doctrine of Social Democracy, that the peasant was becoming an "agricultural proletarian." His proposal for a new agricultural policy was defeated, but his Bavarian organization continued its independent course. On "Heine's policy of compensation," cf. p. 87, n. 22. On "Schippel's stand on tariffs and militarism," cf. "Militia and Militarism," below.

suppositions, and to break with scientific socialism. Bernstein's theory is thus the theoretical ordeal by fire for opportunism, its first scientific legitimation.

How did this test turn out? We have seen the result. Opportunism is not capable of constructing a positive theory capable of withstanding criticism. All it can do is to attack various isolated theses of the Marxist doctrine and, because Marxist doctrine constitutes one solidly constructed edifice, to destroy the entire system from the top to its foundations. This shows that, in its essence, its bases, opportunist practice is irreconcilable with Marxism.

But it is thus further shown that opportunism is incompatible with socialism in general, that its internal tendency is to push the labor movement into bourgeois paths, i.e., to completely paralyze the proletarian class struggle. Considered historically, the proletarian class struggle is obviously not identical with the Marxist system. Before Marx and independent of him, there also existed a labor movement and various socialist systems, each of which, corresponding to the conditions of the time, was in its way the theoretical expression of the working-class struggle for emancipation. The basing of socialism on the moral notion of justice, on a struggle against the mode of distribution instead of against the mode of production; the conception of class antagonism as an antagonism between the poor and the rich; the effort to graft the "cooperative principle" on capitalist economy—all of what we find in Bernstein's system—already existed before him. And, *in their time*, these theories, in spite of their insufficiency, were actual theories of the proletarian class struggle; they were the children's seven-league boots, thanks to which the proletariat learned to walk upon the scene of history.

But *after* the development of the class struggle itself and its social conditions had led to the abandonment of these theories and to the formulation of the principles of scientific socialism, at least in Germany, there can be no socialism outside of Marxist socialism, and no socialist class struggle outside of So-

cial Democracy. From then on, socialism and Marxism, the proletarian struggle for emancipation and Social Democracy, are identical. Therefore, the return to pre-Marxist socialist theories today does not in the least signify a return to the seven-league boots of the childhood of the proletariat. No, it is a return to the puny, worn-out slippers of the bourgeoisie.

Bernstein's theory was the *first*, but also, at the same time, the *last* attempt to give a theoretical base to opportunism. We say "the last," because in Bernstein's system, opportunism has gone so far—both negatively, through its renunciation of scientific socialism, and positively, through its jumbling together of every bit of theoretical confusion available—that nothing remains to be done. Through Bernstein's book, opportunism has completed its theoretical development [just as it completed its practical development in the position taken by Schippel on the question of militarism], and has drawn its ultimate conclusion.

Not only can Marxist doctrine refute opportunism theoretically; it alone is able to *explain* opportunism as an historical phenomenon in the development of the Party. The world-historical forward march of the proletariat to its final victory is, indeed, not "so simple a thing." The original character of this movement consists in the fact that here, for the first time in history, the popular masses themselves, *in opposition* to all ruling classes, impose their will. But they must posit this will outside of and beyond the present society. The masses can only form this *will* in a constant struggle against the existing order, only within its framework. The unification of the broad popular masses with an aim reaching beyond the whole existing social order, of the daily struggle with the great world transformation—that is the task of the Social Democratic movement, which must successfully work forward on its road to development between two reefs: abandonment of the mass character or abandonment of the final aim; the fall back to sectarianism or the fall into bourgeois reformism; anarchism or opportunism.

Of course, more than a half a century ago the theoretical arsenal of Marxist doctrine already furnished arms that are effective against both of these extremes. But precisely because our movement is a mass movement and the dangers menacing it are not born in the human brain but in social conditions, Marxist doctrine could not assure us, in advance and once and for all, against the anarchist and opportunist deviations. Once they have taken on flesh in practice, they can be overcome only by the movement itself, though of course only with the help of the arms furnished us by Marx. Social Democracy has already overcome the lesser danger, the anarchist streak of childishness, with the “movement of the independents.”⁴⁶ It is presently in the process of overcoming the greater danger—opportunist dropsy.

With the enormous expansion of the movement in the last years, and the complexity of the conditions in which, and the objectives for which, the struggle must take place, it was inevitable that the moment come in which skepticism concerning the reaching of the great final goal, and hesitations concerning the theoretical aspect of the movement, made themselves felt. Thus, and only thus, can and must the great proletarian movement progress; the instants of vacillation and hesitation are far from a surprise for the Marxist doctrine: Marx predicted them long ago:

“Bourgeois revolutions,” wrote Marx a half-century ago in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, “like those of the eighteenth century, rush onward rapidly from success to success; their dramatic effects surpass one another; men and things seem to be set in flaming diamonds; ecstasy is the prevailing spirit. But they are shortlived; they reach their climax quickly, and then society relapses into a long hangover before it soberly learns how to appropriate the fruits of its period of storm and stress. Proletarian revolutions, on the contrary, such as those of

⁴⁶ The “movement of the independents” was associated with the group of the *Junge*. See Glossary.

the nineteenth century, criticize themselves continually; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back to what seems to have been accomplished in order to start anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and wretchedness of their first attempts; seem to throw down their adversary only to enable him to draw fresh strength from the earth and again to rise up against them, still more gigantically; continually recoil in fear before the undefined enormity of their own goals—until the situation is created which renders all retreat impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: ‘*Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*’ Here is the rose. Dance here!”⁴⁷

This has remained true even after the elaboration of the doctrine of scientific socialism. The proletarian movement has not as yet, all at once, become Social Democratic—even in Germany. But it is *becoming* more Social Democratic daily because and inasmuch as it continuously surmounts the extreme deviations of anarchism and opportunism, both of which are only moments of the movement of Social Democracy considered as a *process*.

For these reasons, the surprising thing is not the appearance of the opportunist current but rather its weakness. As long as it showed itself in isolated single cases concerning the practical activity of the Party, one could still suppose that it had behind it some serious theoretical base. But now that it has come to full expression in Bernstein’s book, one cannot help exclaiming with astonishment: What? Is that all you have to say? Not a shadow of an original thought! Not a single idea that was not refuted, crushed, ridiculed, and reduced to dust by Marxism decades ago!

It was sufficient for opportunism to speak in order to prove that it had nothing to say. That is the only significance of Bernstein’s book in the history of the Party.

And thus, while saying goodbye to the mode of thought of

⁴⁷ The translation of the Latin is Marx’s. He had in mind Hegel’s use of this phrase in the Preface to *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel is arguing that the truth of this world lies in the present, not in some far-off future.

the revolutionary proletariat, to the dialectic, and to the materialist conception of history, Bernstein can thank them for the attenuating circumstances that they provide for his conversion. For only the dialectic and the materialist conception of history, magnanimous as they are, could make Bernstein appear as a predestined but unconscious instrument by means of which the rising working class expresses its momentary weakness in order, contemptuously and with pride, to throw it aside when it sees it in the light.

[We said that the movement *becomes* Social Democratic because and inasmuch as it overcomes the anarchistic and opportunistic deviations which arise necessarily with its growth. But overcome does not mean to let everything pass peacefully as it pleases God. *To overcome the present opportunist current means to reject it.*

Bernstein concludes his book by advising the Party that it should dare to appear as what it is: a democratic socialist reform party. In our opinion, the Party—that is, its highest organ, the Party congress—must follow this advice by proposing to Bernstein that he too appear formally as what he is: a petty-bourgeois democratic progressive.]

Translated by Dick Howard

Militia and Militarism

I

This is not the first and hopefully will not be the last time that critical voices are raised from the ranks of the Party to question some of our program's demands or some of our tactics. In itself, criticism cannot be sufficiently welcomed. But it is all a question of how the critique is made, and by *how*, we don't mean the "tone" in which it has unfortunately become stylish to make objections at every turn, but something much more important—the general basis of the critique, the specific world-view which is expressed in the critique.

In fact, there is a wholly consistent socio-political world-view behind the Isegrim-Schippel¹ crusade against the demand for a militia and in favor of the current military system.

The most general point from which Schippel starts in his defense of the military is the conviction of the necessity of this military system. He demonstrates the utter necessity of a standing army with any and all conceivable arguments: the technology of war, and social and economic arguments. And from a certain point of view he is of course correct. The stand-

Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 34–59. Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, February 20–26, 1899.

¹ In November 1898, Max Schippel published an article in the *Sozialistische Monatsheften*, "Did Friedrich Engels Believe in the Militia?" The article was signed "Isegrim," though the identity of its author was an open secret. In the *Neue Zeit* (Nos. 12 and 13, 1898–99), Schippel published another article, "Friedrich Engels and the Militia System," which he signed with his own name. It is against these two articles that Rosa Luxemburg directs her discussion here.

ing army, militarism, are in fact indispensable—but for whom? For today's ruling classes and for the present government. And what else follows, except that from the specific class point of view of the government and the dominant classes, the elimination of the standing army and the introduction of a militia, that is to say, arming the population, appears to be absurd, something completely impossible? When Schippel too says that the militia is an impossible and absurd thing, he only demonstrates that he himself sees the question from a bourgeois point of view, that he sees it with the eyes of the capitalist government or the bourgeois classes. Every one of his individual arguments clearly proves the same thing. He maintains that it would be impossible to arm all citizens—which is a cornerstone of the militia system—because there is no money available: “cultural demands suffer enough already.” He thus bases his statements simply on the *current* Prussian-German finance system: some other economic structure—for example, forcing the capitalist class to pay larger and larger taxes—is inconceivable for him, even in terms of a militia system.

Schippel thinks that the military education of youth—another cornerstone of the militia system—is undesirable, since according to him, the sergeants who conduct military education would have an extremely bad influence on young people. Naturally he starts from the *present* Prussian barracks sergeants and simply transfers them into the projected militia system as those who would educate the youth. This way of thinking reminds us very much of Professor Julius Wolf, who sees an important objection to a socialist society in the fact that in that society, according to his calculations, there would be a general increase in the interest rate.

Schippel thinks that current militarism is economically indispensable because it “relieves” society from economic pressures. Kautsky takes the greatest possible pains to try to guess how Schippel, a Social Democrat, could conceivably imagine this “relief” coming through militarism, and accompanies

every possible interpretation with the appropriate objections.² But Schippel obviously does not think of it as a Social Democrat, not from the point of view of working people. When he speaks of "relief," he is plainly thinking of *capital*. And to that extent he is correct: for capital, militarism is one of the most important forms of investment; from the point of view of capital, militarism is certainly a *relief*. And the fact that Schippel speaks here as a true representative of the interests of capital is shown by the fact that he has found a trusty supporting witness.

"I assert, gentlemen," it was said in the Reichstag on January 12, 1899, "that it is completely false to say that the two billion Reichsmarks in government obligations fulfill only unproductive functions, that there are no productive returns to counterbalance them. *I say that there is no more productive investment than expenses for the Army.*" The stenographic report does state "amusement on the left." . . . The speaker was *Freiherr von Stumm*.

It is characteristic of all Schippel's statements that they are not so much *false*, but that they are made from the viewpoint of bourgeois society. When one looks at Schippel's statements from a Social Democratic point of view, everything seems upside down: a standing army is indispensable, militarism is economically beneficial, the militia is impractical, and so on.

It is striking that Schippel's views on the question of militarism agree in every major point with his views on the other most important question of the political battle—that of tariff policies.

More than anything else, in both cases we see a determined refusal to connect any position on the question with democracy or reaction. In his speech at the Stuttgart Party Congress

² Schippel's articles were the cause of a number of articles among the antiopportunists of the party. Kautsky wrote three articles in 1899 against Schippel: "Friedrich Engels und das Milizsystem" (*Neue Zeit*, 1898-99, pp. 335-42); "Schippel und der Militarismus," (*ibid.*, pp. 618-26; 644-54; 686-91); "Siegfried der Harmlose" (*ibid.*, pp. 787-91).

Finally, in the third place, and this is the basis of the two previous points, in both cases we find an evaluation of the question exclusively from the point of view of its *previous* bourgeois development, that is to say from its historically conditioned *progressive* side, and a complete neglect of its further, future development, and in this respect, with the *reactionary* side of its development. Protective tariffs are still for Schippel what they were in the time of the late Friedrich List more than half a century ago: a great step forward over the medieval-feudal economic divisions of Germany. Schippel simply ignores the fact that generalized free trade is already the same necessary step forward beyond the internal economic divisions of the now unified world economy, and that therefore national tariff barriers are reactionary today.

The same goes for the question of militarism. He still looks at it from the viewpoint of the great advance which a standing army based on universal military service represented over the previous mercenary feudal army. But for Schippel any development is frozen: for him history goes no further than the standing army with the further realization of universal military service.

What do these characteristic positions which Schippel takes on the questions of tariffs and the military mean? They mean, first, adopting a policy of *one thing at a time*, instead of a policy based on a principled position. Second, in connection with this, they mean fighting merely the outgrowths of the tariff or the military system instead of fighting *the system* itself. And what is such a policy—if not our good friend from recent Party history: *opportunism*?

Once again “practical politics” triumphs in Isegrim-Schippel’s open renunciation of the militia plank, one of the fundamental points of our entire political program. From the Party’s political viewpoint, that is the real importance of Schippel’s stance. Only in connection with this entire tendency, and from an historical consideration of the general basis and consequence of opportunism, can the latest Social Democratic an-

nouncement in favor of militarism correctly be judged and criticized.

II

The essential characteristic of opportunistic politics is that step by step it always leads to sacrificing the final goal of the movement, the interests of working-class liberation, to its more immediate, and in fact imagined, interests. It can easily be shown in one of Schippel's essential propositions on the question of militarism that this postulate fits Schippel's politics exactly. The most important economic reason that, according to Schippel, compels us to cling to the military system, is the economic "relief" of society through this system. We exclude from consideration that this curious assertion ignores the simplest economic facts. On the contrary, in order to describe this way of seeing things, we will assume for a moment that this mistaken assertion is correct, that in fact "society" is "relieved" of its excess productive capacity through militarism.

What form does this fact take for the working class? Obviously it can only be that the standing army absorbs a part of the reserve army of labor which depresses wages, and therefore improves working conditions. What does that mean? Only this: that in order to decrease the demand for employment, to limit competition, the worker first gives up a part of his pay in the form of indirect taxes so as to maintain his potential competitors as soldiers; second, he creates out of this competitor a tool with which the capitalist state can repress every one of his demands for improvements in his condition (strikes, unions, etc.), and if necessary drown them in blood—that is to say, render impossible that very improvement in the worker's condition for the sake of which militarism was, according to Schippel, necessary. Third, the worker makes this competitor into the most trustworthy pillar of political reaction in the state, into his own social enslavement.

In other words, through militarism the worker prevents a direct reduction in his wage, in return for which he, to a large

degree, loses the possibility of struggling *over a long period of time* for an increase in his wages and for the amelioration of his condition. He gains as a seller of labor-power, but at the same time loses his political freedom of movement as a citizen, so that ultimately he also loses as a seller of labor. He sidetracks a competitor from the labor market, only to see him arise transfigured as a defender of his own enslavement to wages. He avoids a reduction in wages only to reduce both the prospect of a lasting improvement of his situation and also the prospects of his ultimate economic, political, and social liberation. In hard facts, that is the meaning of militarism's economic "relief" for the working class. Here, as in every speculation of opportunistic politics, we see the noble goal of socialist class liberation sacrificed to petty practical interests of the moment: interests which on closer inspection can in addition be seen to be essentially fictitious.

But one may ask: how could Schippel come up with such an absurd-sounding idea as calling militarism an economic "relief," from the point of view of the working class as well? We remember how the same question appears from the point of view of *capital*. We have shown how militarism creates for capital the most profitable and indispensable type of investments. Now it is indeed clear that if the same money, which the government gets its hands on through taxes and uses to maintain the military, were to remain in the hands of the people, it would stimulate an increased demand for foodstuffs, or if a greater proportion were used by the state for cultural ends, it would at the same time create a corresponding demand for socially productive labor. It is of course clear that because of this fact, militarism is in no way a "relief" for society as a whole. The question appears differently only from the point of view of capitalist profits, from the entrepreneur's point of view. For the capitalist it is not immaterial whether a specific demand for products comes from fragmented private buyers or from the state. The state's demand is characterized by security, massiveness, and the favorable, usually monopolistic, setting of prices,

which makes the state the most privileged customer and makes contracts with it the most desirable for capital.

But particularly the most important advantage of military contracts over state expenditures for cultural purposes (schools, roads, etc.), is the endless technical innovations and the ceaseless growth of expenditures, so that militarism provides an inexhaustible, indeed ever increasing source of capitalist profit and erects capital as social power which the worker comes up against, for example, in the factories of Krupp and Stumm. Militarism, which for society as a whole is a completely absurd squandering of huge productive forces, which for the working class signifies a reduction of its economic standard of living in return for its social enslavement, creates for the *capitalist classes* an irreplaceable, and economically the most advantageous kind of investment, and the best social and political support for its class domination. So when Schippel summarily explains this same militarism as a necessary economic "relief," he obviously is confusing the viewpoint of society's interests with that of the interests of capital, and thus, as we said at the beginning, takes the bourgeois point of view. In addition, insofar as he supposes that every economic advantage for investors is necessarily an advantage for the working class, he also takes as his starting point the basic position of the *harmony of interests between capital and labor*.

Once again, this is the same point of view that we have already seen in Schippel before—on the question of tariffs. There also, he stood in principle for a protective tariff because he wanted to protect the worker *as a producer* from the injurious competition of foreign industry. As in the question of the military, he sees only the worker's direct economic interest and overlooks his broader social interests, which are connected with a general social advance to free trade or toward the dissolution of standing armies. And in both cases, he assumes without any question that what is in the interest of capital is also in the worker's immediate economic interest, since he believes that what is good for the entrepreneurs is good for the workers.

The sacrifice of the movement's ultimate goals to practical successes of the moment and the evaluation of practical interests from the standpoint of the harmony of interests between capital and labor—these two basic propositions also harmonize with each other and constitute the essential characteristics of all opportunistic politics.

It might at first glance seem surprising that a representative of *these* politics finds it possible to take the creator of the Social Democratic program as his authority and in all seriousness—even though his informant on the military question is Freiherr von Stumm—to think that his authority on the same question is—Friedrich Engels. What Schippel imagines that he has in common with Engels is an insight into the historical necessity and the historical development of militarism. But this only proves again that just as the badly digested Hegelian dialectic once did, now the badly digested Marxist concept of history leads to incurable mental vertigo. It also shows once again that both the dialectical mode of thought in general, and the materialistic philosophy of history in particular, however revolutionary they may be when properly conceived, produce dangerous reactionary consequences whenever they are incorrectly grasped. If one reads Schippel's quotations from Engels, particularly from the *Anti-Dühring*, on the development of the military system toward its own ultimate dissolution and toward a people's army, it is unclear at first glance what the real difference is between Schippel's notion and the position the Party usually takes on the question. We see the form and function of militarism as the natural and inevitable outgrowth of society's development—so does Schippel. We say that as it further develops, militarism leads to a people's army—so does Schippel. Then where is the difference that could have led Schippel to his reactionary opposition to the demand for a militia? It is quite simple: whereas we, with Engels, see in the specific inherent development of militarism toward a militia *merely the preconditions* for its own dissolution, Schippel claims that the people's army of the future will *by itself* grow, "from

the inside out,” from the current military system. Whereas we, based on the material constraints and conditions which objective social development has offered us—the extension of universal military service and the shortening of the period of service—want to push through the realization of the militia system *by means of political struggle*, Schippel relies on the inherent development of militarism and what appears as a result of it, and labels as fantasy and beer-hall politics the claim that any conscious influence can be exercised over the successful introduction of the militia.

Thus what we get is not *Engels'* concept of history, but *Bernstein's*. As in Bernstein, where the capitalist economy is step by step “peacefully transformed” by itself, without any gaps, into a socialist economy, in Schippel the militia will by itself “grow out of” the current military system. In relation to the military system Schippel doesn't understand, just as Bernstein doesn't understand in relation to capitalism as a whole, that society's objective development merely gives us *the preconditions* of a higher level of development, but that without our *conscious interference*, without the *political struggle* of the working class for a socialist transformation or for a militia, neither the one nor the other will ever come about. And just as the comfortable notion of “peaceful transition” is merely a chimera, an opportunistic escape to avoid a revolutionary struggle firmly fixed on its goal, even on *this* path the attainable social and political transformation is reduced to a miserable bourgeois patchwork. In Bernstein's theory of “gradual socialization,” everything that we understand by socialism finally disappears from the concept of socialism itself and socialism becomes “social control,” that is to say, harmless bourgeois social reforms. In Schippel, the concept of the “people's army” is transformed from our goal of a free armed populace which makes its own decisions about war and peace into an army run according to the present system of the standing army, but with a short period of service which applies to all fit citizens. When applied to the goals of our political struggle, Schippel's conception leads

straight down the path toward the renunciation of the entire Social Democratic program.

Schippel's defense of militarism is an obvious elaboration of the entire revisionistic tendency in our Party, and at the same time an important step in its development. Earlier we heard from a Social Democratic representative to the Reichstag, Heine, that under certain conditions one could vote for the military demands of the capitalist regime. But that was meant merely as a concession in view of the higher purpose of democracy. With Heine, at least, the cannon were supposed to be traded for people's rights. Now Schippel says that the cannon are necessary for their own sake. Even if the *result* is the same in both cases, namely the support of militarism, at least Heine still based himself on a false conception of the Social Democratic *means of struggle*, whereas Schippel's position stems simply from the displacement of the *goal of the struggle*. In one case *bourgeois tactics* were merely suggested in place of Social Democratic tactics, now the *bourgeois program* boldly takes the place of the Social Democratic program.

With Schippel's "skepticism concerning the militia," "practical politics" has reached its logical conclusion. It can go no further in the direction of reaction; now it only has to swallow up other points of the program in order to cast off the remnants of the Social Democratic mantle with whose shreds it still covers itself and to appear in its classical nudity as—Pfar-
rer Naumann.⁶

III

If the Social Democratic Party were a debating society for social-political questions, we could regard the Schippel affair as finished after a theoretical argument with him. But since it is a fighting political party, the question is not resolved by a theoretical proof of the errors of Schippel's viewpoint, but rather posed for the first time. Schippel's statements on the mi-

⁶ That is, as a liberal reform party. On Naumann, cf. Glossary.

litia are not only an expression of certain thoughts, they are also a political action. Therefore the Party must answer them not only by a refutation of those views, but also by political actions. And the action must be appropriately related to the significance of Schippel's statements.

In the course of the past years, the unquestioned validity of all the assumptions which previously seemed to be cornerstones of Social Democracy has been shaken by attacks from our own ranks. Eduard Bernstein declared that the *final goal* of the proletarian movement meant nothing to him. By his suggestions about a policy of compensation, Wolfgang Heine showed that in fact the Social Democratic *tactics* which have been developed were nothing to him. Now Schippel proves that he has placed himself above the *political program*. Almost no single basic point of the proletarian struggle was spared from dissolution into nothing by individual members of the Party. In itself, this offers a general picture which is not at all pleasant. And yet, from the point of view of the Party's interests, one must distinguish even among these quite significant pronouncements. Bernstein's critique of our *theoretical* validity is doubtless a highly ominous manifestation. But *practical* opportunism is incomparably more dangerous for the movement. Skepticism concerning our final goals can always be fought off by the movement itself, as long as the movement is healthy and strong in its practical struggles. But as soon as the *immediate* goals, that is, the practical struggle itself, are called into question, then the entire Party and movement, including its final goals, become—not only in the subjective perception of this or that Party philosopher, but also in objective reality—*"nothing."*⁷

Schippel's attack only aims at one point of our political program. But in view of the fundamental significance of militarism for the contemporary state, in practical terms this single

⁷ The reference is to Bernstein's statement that to him the final goal is "nothing" but the movement is everything. Cf. above, p. 53.

point already implies the renunciation of the *entire* political struggle of Social Democracy.

The power and domination of both the capitalist state and the bourgeois class are crystallized in militarism, and since the Social Democratic Party is the only party which fights against it *on principle*, the inverse is also true: the principled struggle against militarism belongs to the *essence* of Social Democracy. To abandon the struggle against the military system leads *in practice* to the complete renunciation of any struggle against the current social system. At the end of the previous section, we said that the only thing left for opportunism to do in order to renounce Social Democracy completely was to extend Schippel's position on the question of a militia to other points of the program. At that point we were thinking only of the *subjective*, conscious development of proponents of this policy. Objectively, this development is already completed in essence in Schippel's statement.

Another element of recent opportunistic pronouncements, particularly in the case of Schippel, is worth notice, if only because of its symptomatic value. This is the playful ease, the unshakable calm, even, as in the most recent case, the cheerful grace, with which the fundamental principles of Social Democracy are shaken, even though Party members who are concerned with Party matters must have gone over each of them personally in detail. Such a shaking of the foundations should have at least provoked a serious crisis of conscience in every honest Social Democrat. These are the unmistakable signs of the lowering of our revolutionary level, the stunting of revolutionary instincts. Aside from any other, these are signs which in themselves might be vague and inessential, but which are without any doubt essential for a party which, like the Social Democratic Party, is for the most part provisionally directed not at practical, but at ideal success and thus must necessarily make big demands on the level of its individual members. A harmonious complement to the bourgeois *mode of thought* of opportunism is its bourgeois *mode of perception*.

The breadth of Schippel's pronouncements on all subjects necessitates a corresponding counterpronouncement by the Party. Of what can and must this counteraction consist? First of all, the entire *Party press* should take a clear and unambiguous position on the question, and there should be a similar discussion of issues in Party meetings. If the Party as a whole does not have Schippel's attitude, according to which meetings are merely occasions on which the masses are thrown the meatless bones of slogans so that they can elect political "masterminds" to the Reichstag at the given time, then it cannot view the discussion and elaboration of the most important basic political propositions of the Party only as a gourmet meal destined only for the select and not for the great masses of comrades. On the contrary, only by carrying the discussion to the broadest circles of the Party can the successful spread of Schippel's views eventually be prevented.

Secondly, and even more important, is the position taken by the Social Democratic *delegation* to parliament. They are the ones who were duty-bound to make an authoritative statement in the Schippel affair, on the one hand because Schippel is a member of the Reichstag and a member of the delegation, and on the other hand because the question on which he spoke is one of the most important areas of the parliamentary struggle. We don't know whether the delegation did or did not do anything about the matter. Since it was an open secret shortly after the appearance of Isegrim's article who was hidden behind the pseudonym, it would seem that the delegation did not stand by with their arms folded while one of their members made a mockery of their own activity.

And even if they hadn't already done anything, they could still have made up for it after Kautsky had flushed Schippel out of his wolf's lair. It makes little difference whether the delegation took a stand on the Schippel affair or not; the result is about the same as long as it was not brought to the attention of the Party. Forced to maneuver on the slippery floor of the bourgeois parliament which is so foreign to its own essence, ap-

parently Social Democracy has perhaps unconsciously and involuntarily taken on many of the mores of a parliamentarianism which cannot be brought into full accord with the democratic character of the Party. In our opinion, one of those mores, for example, is that the delegation appears as a closed body not only in relation to the bourgeois parliament, which is completely necessary, but also in relation to the Party itself, which can become counterproductive. The delegations of the bourgeois parties, whose parliamentary battles are most often fought out in the uninspiring form of horse-trades and log-rolling, have every reason to shun the light of publicity. The Social Democratic delegation, on the contrary, has neither the necessity nor the occasion to view the results of its negotiations as a private matter as soon as they concern Party principles or more important tactical questions. It would suffice to deal with such questions only in secret meetings of the delegation if, as is the case with bourgeois parties, we were concerned merely with finally reaching a particular *vote* of the delegation in the Reichstag. But for Social Democracy, the parliamentary struggle of its delegation is much more important from a purely agitational point of view than from a practical one. What is important is not the formal vote of a majority of the delegation on any particular issue, but rather the discussion itself, the clarification of the situation. It is at least as important for the Party to discover how its representatives think about parliamentary questions as how they vote on them as a block in the Reichstag. In a fundamentally democratic party, the relationship of the representatives to the electorate can under no circumstances be considered fulfilled merely through the act of voting and the mainly superficial and formal summary reports to Party congresses. Rather, the delegation must remain in the most continuous communication and empathy possible with the Party masses. This would serve especially as a simple way of preventing the self-perpetuation of the opportunistic tendencies which have come to light precisely among the Party's members of parliament. A public position of the delegation on

Schippel's statements was and still is necessary because the Party masses simply do not have the physical possibility of stepping into the question *as a whole*, however much they might wish to do so. The delegation is the elected political representation of the Party as a whole, and through its open proceedings should have indirectly helped the Party come to the necessary position.

Third and lastly, the Party as such also has its piece to say directly in the Schippel affair, in the only form which is available to it—*at the next Party congress*.

At the Stuttgart discussion on Bernstein's articles, it was decided that the Party congress could not vote on theoretical questions. Now, in the Schippel affair, we have a purely practical question. It was said that Heine's suggestions for concessions and deals were merely counting unhatched chickens, and that the Party did not have to deal with them. Now, with Schippel, the chickens have hatched. And in Schippel's position on the question of a militia, opportunistic policies have, as we have said, been developed to their final consequences and have become ripe for discussion. The vitally important duty of the Party now seems to us to be to draw the correct conclusions from this development by taking a clear and unambiguous position.

It has every reason to do so. In this case it is a question of a trusted comrade, a political representative of the Party, whose duty it should be to serve the Party as a sword in the struggle, whose actions should serve as a dam against the attacks of the bourgeois state. But if at any moment the dam is transformed into a thing made of porridge, and if the blade breaks in battle like one made of paper, then shouldn't the Party call out to *such* a policy:

Away with the porridge
I don't need it
I forge no sword from papier maché.⁸

⁸ These words were cited by Rosa Luxemburg in her speech to the 1899 Hanover Party Congress (not printed here) as being Schippel's.

IV

On February 24, 1899, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* received the following letter from Schippel, written after reading the first two articles [Sections I and II here], with a request that it be published.

Dear Friend Schönlanck,

I always read the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*'s Rosa Luxemburg articles with great interest, not because I can always agree with them at every point, but because I value highly their vital militant attitude, their honest conviction, and their stimulating dialectic.

And this time also, I followed, not without astonishment, the increasingly extreme and more radically formulated conclusions, all of which stem from a *single presupposition*:

"The economic reason which, according to Schippel, *compels us* to cling to the military system, is the economic relief of society through this system. . . . Schippel calls militarism a relief, from the point of view of the working class as well . . . in that he starts from the basic proposition of the *harmony* of interests between capital and labor."

The conclusions follow, but the presupposition is absolutely false and arbitrary! In the *Neue Zeit*, I merely explained that the enormous unproductive expenditures—whether those of the private sector for crazy luxuries and sheer foolishness, or those of the state for the military, sinecures, and all kinds of junk—cool the fever of the crisis by which a society which "overproduces" would continually be shaken if the unproductive wastes did not occupy an ever broader space alongside accumulation for productive purposes. Obviously I did not therefore in the least approve of wasteful and unproductive expenditures, and even less did I *demand them in the interests of the working class*. I only tried to point to *objective* consequences of those expenditures "*for modern society*" which are *different* from those consequences which are generally emphasized.

At first I never doubted that anyone would take me for an advocate "of modern society." But because I have behind me a certain amount of experience about the demands of Social Democracy, to prevent any misinterpretation I later inserted, still in the passage on overproduction, the one little sentence: "*Of course, that does not make militarism any more agreeable to me, but even more disagreeable.*"

And that does clearly mean: all the more to be overthrown. But even this excessive caution on my part does not seem to help any: "it is still the case . . ." ⁹—just as if one were talking with bourgeois ladies.

After this indication, I am confident that the openmindedness of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung's* collaborator Rosa Luxemburg will allow her to see that she has made a false start on the question, and that the race between the two of us for the laurels of the most proletarian-revolutionary attitudes must begin again from the beginning.

Yours,
Max Schippel

V

When Comrade Schippel follows with astonishment the "increasingly extreme and more radically formulated conclusions" which proceed from the basis of *one* of his statements, that only proves once again that statements have their own logic, even when men don't.

First of all, Schippel's present reply constitutes a noteworthy extension of the thoughts he formulated in the *Neue Zeit* on the economic "relief" of capitalist society through militarism: in addition to militarism, now "sinecures and all kinds of junk" as well as "the crazy luxuries and sheer foolishness of private citizens" appear to be an economic relief and a means of preventing crises. A particular view on the economic function of

⁹ The reference is to Rosa Luxemburg's manner of arguing, which often will concede the opponent's point only to continue "it is still the case. . . ."

militarism is thereby developed into a general theory according to which waste is a corrective to the capitalist economy, and proves that we were unjust to Freiherr von Stumm's position as national economist when we named him in our first article as Schippel's expert witness. When he called expenditures for the army extremely productive, Stumm at least thought about the meaning of militarism in the struggle for markets and in the defense of "national industry." But it now appears that Schippel completely neglects the specific function of militarism in capitalist society. He sees it merely as a clever way of wasting a given amount of social labor every year; economically militarism is the same to him as, for example, the sixteen little dogs of the Countess d'Uzès in Paris, which "relieve" capitalist society by a whole apartment, several servants, and a whole dog's wardrobe.

It is too bad that in the course of the kaleidoscopic changes in his political and economic sympathies, Comrade Schippel always breaks so completely with his former sympathies that he doesn't have the faintest memory of them. Otherwise he would have had to remember, as someone who has been a follower of Rodbertus, the classic pages of the "Fourth Social Letter to Von Kirchmann" (pp. 34 ff.), in which his former teacher [Rodbertus] disproves his current crisis theory on luxuries. But this theory is much older than Rodbertus.

If notions of economic relief through militarism in particular can claim the attraction of novelty—at least in the ranks of Social Democracy—the general theory on the saving function of economic waste for capitalist society is as old as bourgeois vulgar economics itself.

Vulgar economics may have brought into being several crisis theories on the erroneous path of its development, but the one which our Schippel now adopts as his own is among the most trivial of them. As far as insight into the inner mechanisms of the capitalist economy is concerned, it stands even lower than the theory of the most disgusting clown of vulgar

economics, J. B. Say, according to whom overproduction is really underproduction.¹⁰

What is the most general presupposition for Schippel's theory? Crises come about because of the fact that in relation to the mass of goods produced, too few goods are consumed, so that crises can be stopped by increased consumption within society. Here the occurrence of capitalist crises is not deduced from the inherent tendency of production to exceed the limits of the market or from runaway production, but from the absolute lack of relation between production and consumption. The masses of goods of capitalist society are seen, so to speak, as a rice mountain of a certain size through which society must eat its way. The more that is consumed, the less remains as an undigested weight on the economic conscience of society and the greater the "relief." That is an *absolute* crisis theory which is related to Marx's relative crisis theory in the same way that the Malthus theory of population is related to the Marxian law of relative overpopulation.¹¹

But according to this clever theory, it is not a matter of indifference to society *who* consumes. If production only serves to set production in motion again, then the mountain of rice starts to grow again, and "society" has gained nothing; the crisis fever acts up and shakes it as it did before. Only when goods are absorbed once and for all, when they are consumed by people who don't produce anything, only then does society heave a sigh of relief, only then is the crisis hemmed in.

¹⁰ Say's theory explains crises as a result of the disproportionality of production in the different branches of the economy. Hence, what appears to be a crisis of overproduction would be, for Say, merely the result of underproduction in one sector, which makes the smooth exchange process go awry. Therefore, for Say, "overproduction is really underproduction."

¹¹ That is, Schippel ignores the fundamental nature of capitalist production just as Malthus did in formulating his famous population theory which, briefly, argues that population will soon outstrip the available supply of food because population increases exponentially. Marx's relative overpopulation theory begins from the relations of production and shows how with the growth of productivity which is necessary for the capitalists in order to increase the production of relative surplus value, a number of jobs will be *temporarily* eliminated until new branches of production open up or the old ones increase their output.

Entrepreneur Smith doesn't know what he should do with the goods he (that is, his workers) has produced. By a stroke of good luck, entrepreneur Jones is obsessed with crazy luxuries and buys the wares that are weighing heavy on his hard-pressed class comrade. But he himself, Jones, also has an excess of produced goods which "weigh him down": fortunately the aforementioned Smith also spends a lot for "luxuries and foolishness" and presents himself to the troubled Jones as the much-wanted purchaser. Now, after the exchange has been concluded happily, our two entrepreneurs look at each other in bewilderment and feel like crying out: "Is it you that's crazy or me?" In fact, they both are. For what have they gained by this operation which Schippel has suggested to them? It is true that they have both honorably and tirelessly helped each other to destroy a certain amount of goods. But oh! it is not the destruction of material goods that is the purpose of the entrepreneur, but the realization of surplus value in pure and shiny gold. And in this latter context, the clever trade amounts to the same thing as if each of the two entrepreneurs had thrown away or consumed his own excess surplus value. That is Schippel's means for attenuating crises. Do the Westphalian coal barons suffer from an overproduction of coal? The blockheads! They should just heat their palaces hotter and the coal market will be "relieved." Do the owners of the marble quarries in Carrara complain about overstocking in their shops? Then let them build marble stalls for their horses and the "crisis fever" in the marble business will soon cool off. And if the threatening cloud of a general business crisis approaches, Schippel calls out to the capitalist: "More oysters, more champagne, more liveried servants, more ballet dancers, and you will be saved!" We are only afraid that the old boys, with all their experience, will answer him, "Sir, you take us for dumber than we are!"

But this clever economic theory does lead to interesting social and political conclusions. Namely, if only unproductive consumption, that is, the consumption by the state and the bourgeois classes, constitutes economic relief and a remedy for

alleviating crises, then it seems to be in the interest of society and the peaceful continuation of the cycle of production to increase unproductive consumption as much as possible and to limit productive consumption as much as possible; to make that part of social wealth destined for capitalists and the state as large as possible and what remains left over for working people as small as possible; to make profits and taxes as high as possible, wages as low as possible. The worker becomes an economic "burden" for society and the cute little dogs of the Countess d'Uzès an economic life preserver—those are the consequences of Schippel's "relief" theory.

We have said that even among vulgar economic theories it is the most trivial. What is the measuring stick of vulgar economic triviality? The essence of vulgar economics consists in the fact that it observes the processes of the capitalist economy not in their deep-seated relationships and not in their essential structure, but in the superficial division through laws of competition; not through the telescope of science, but through the glasses of individual interests in bourgeois society. But the image of society shifts according to the viewpoint of these interests and it can be projected in a more or less distorted fashion onto the skull of the economist. The closer he stands to the actual process of production, the closer his conception is to the truth. And the closer the scholar is to the marketplace, to the area of the complete hegemony of competition, the more the image of society he sees from there is reversed.

Schippel's theory of crises is, as we have shown, absolutely untenable from the standpoint of capitalists *as a class*. It leads to the advice: the capitalist class ought to consume its overproduction itself. Even an individual capitalist industrialist would greet it with a shrug of the shoulders. A Krupp or a von Heyl is much too smart to abandon himself to the fantasy that he himself and his class comrades could in any way help do away with crises. This conception can only occur to a capitalist merchant, or more correctly to a *capitalist shopkeeper*, for whom his immediate customer, the member of "high society" with all his

luxuries, appears as the pillar of the entire economy. Schippel's theory is not even derivative of the conception of the capitalist *entrepreneur*; it is the direct theoretical expression of the point of view of the capitalist *shopkeeper*.

Schippel's thoughts on the "relief" of society through militarism further demonstrate, just as in his time the writings of Eduard Bernstein did, that revisionism, which leads to the bourgeois political standpoint, also is linked to bourgeois vulgar economics through its economic foundations.

Yet Schippel objects to the political conclusions we draw from his "relief" theory. He was only speaking of the relief of *society*, not of the working class; he even explicitly, so as to avoid any misunderstanding, stuck in the reassurance that this "made militarism not more agreeable, but rather more disagreeable" for him. One might think that Schippel thought militarism was economically detrimental from the viewpoint of the *working class*.

But then why did he point to economic relief? What conclusions does he draw from it for the relationship of the working class to militarism? Let us listen to him: "Of course, that (economic relief) does not make militarism more agreeable *to me*, but even more disagreeable. *But even from this point of view I cannot chime in with the liberal petty-bourgeois outcries about economic ruin because of unproductive military expenditures.*"¹² So Schippel views the position on the economically ruinous effect of militarism as *petty bourgeois*, as false. For him militarism is not ruinous; the "chiming in with the liberal petty-bourgeois outcries" against militarism, that is to say, the struggle against it, is for him mistaken. Yes, his whole article is set up to prove to the working class that militarism is indispensable. In view of that fact, what is the meaning of his protestation that makes militarism not more agreeable but more disagreeable? It is merely psychological reassurance that Schippel does not defend militarism with pleasure, but against his will, that he himself takes no pleasure

¹² *Neue Zeit*, 1898-99, No. 20, p. 617. (R.L.)

from his opportunistic politics, that his heart is better than his head.

In view of this fact alone, I cannot take up Schippel's invitation to a race for the best "proletarian-revolutionary attitudes." Loyalty forbids me to compete in a race with someone who walks up to the racetrack in the most unfavorable possible position, that is to say, with his back to the starting pole.

Translated by John Heckman

Tactics

Tactics

Rosa Luxemburg is often thought of as the high priestess of “spontaneism,” that doctrine whose sin is placing the independent action of the masses above that of the vanguard party. Like most labels, this one contains a grain of truth. Yet, as she herself notes in another context, “with this dissection, as with any other, [one] will not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether.” The position of a thinker so concerned with totality as Rosa Luxemburg cannot be reduced to catchwords and slogans. In *Social Reform or Revolution*, she noted that Social Democracy has continually to steer a course between two reefs: “abandonment of the mass character or abandonment of the final aim; the fall back to sectarianism or the fall into bourgeois reformism; anarchism or opportunism.” The essays presented in this section, written on different subjects, at different times, and for different purposes, give a view of the dialectical approach to concrete tactical problems. All of Rosa Luxemburg’s writings are concerned with tactics, and it is of course artificial to present these four selections as her “tactical position.” The reflections on tactics overlap with the attack on revisionism-opportunism, and mesh with the materials which follow.

This section begins with an attack on Blanquist anarchism, stressing the importance of political action, and ends with an article which is often seen as a prototype of a new anarchism. This is not a paradox in Rosa Luxemburg’s thought, but a paradox of the dialectic. Further, it is partially the result of the fact that the first article here was written for a Polish audience, while the last was written for a German one.

As were many of Rosa Luxemburg’s Polish articles, “In

Memory of the Proletariat Party” was written in defense of the politics of the “Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania” (SDKPiL), of which Rosa Luxemburg was a founder and leading figure. The major plank in the platform of the SDKPiL was the rejection of the demand for Polish national independence, and the insistence that the socialists in each of the divided sections of Poland work with the socialist organizations in their zone for the establishment of a multinational socialism. This view was directly opposed to the sacrosanct declarations of Marx and Engels on the subject of Polish independence, and had to be continually defended against the other Polish socialist party, the PPS (whose nationalism, after the left had split from the party, led to Pilsudski’s national-socialist dictatorship). The difference between the Marx-Engels view and that of the SDKPiL stemmed largely from their different temporal vantage points. In the eyes of Marx and Engels, czarism was the bastion of European reaction, and any act which helped to destroy it was progressive. Marx and Engels did not support national independence as an abstract concept, as is seen, for example, by their rejection of the national claims of the Czechs, which they saw as tied to the reactionary Pan-Slav movement. Their position on the Polish question was purely tactical. To those who preached the doctrine of Marx and Engels after their deaths, the SDKPiL replied that times had changed, that czarism was no longer the support of reaction throughout the world, and that it itself was in fact receiving support from other capitalist nations. They argued further—as Rosa Luxemburg had shown in her doctoral dissertation, *The Industrial Development of Poland*—that the Polish and Russian bourgeoisies were tied together economically, and that the former had no reason to demand national independence. Since the proletariat had no reason to want to shed its blood for that abstract concept “Poland,” it could therefore only be the reactionary nobility, déclassé intellectuals, and lumpen elements which demanded independence. The SDKPiL clung tenaciously to this view which, for

example, led it to split from Lenin's Russian party because of the latter's refusal to support its internationalist position. Even in the midst of the 1905 Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg undertook a long pamphlet defending the SDKPiL position on the national question.

Though the national question is not directly treated in the "Proletariat" essay, it provides the background for the analysis. Only in this light is it understandable why, for example, Rosa Luxemburg argues that the internationalist posture of the *Równość* made that group "Social Democratic." Though the analysis is important as an example of the Marxist approach to the understanding of history, and its importance for the growing movement, it is also an important contribution to the tactical discussion.

The anarchist-Blanquist temptation is continually present in revolutionary movements; in a certain sense it is a healthy sign of an unflagging revolutionary will. Yet, in thinking about its significance within the revolutionary totality, it becomes clear that it is a temptation to be avoided. What is significant in Rosa Luxemburg's essay is not so much the attack on the Blanquist subordination of the masses to the leadership of the conspiratorial group acting in their name; that is quite orthodox. More surprising may be the non-*enragé* position taken by Rosa Luxemburg. She does not believe that the capitalist order can be overthrown in a single blow, nor that the masses have a "yen" for revolution which will show itself once the terrorist group proves that it is "the enemy of their enemy." The capitalist order must be overthrown with the aid of the very weapons which it itself provides—parliamentary democracy and bourgeois political freedoms. When it doesn't provide them, these weapons must be created, for without them, the development of a class-conscious proletariat, the condition *sine qua non* of revolution, is impossible. The stress on the role of a transitional program, the gradualism, the ridicule of revolutionary romanticism and of its disdain for bourgeois liberalism—these all point away from the "spontaneist" view

of revolution and toward the accentuation of proletarian politics, the development of class consciousness and organization.

In its almost humdrum orthodoxy, the short article on the demand for the eight-hour day is a complement to the "Proletariat" essay. Following the Erfurt line, the minimal and maximal program are stressed, just as they were in the argument against Schippel at Hanover: it is the maximal program which gives sense to the minimal demands. The opportunist moves of the parliamentary delegation are criticized as a deviation from orthodoxy. What is important, it is argued, is not the enactment of some minor regulation here and there; what is important is educating the masses, building class consciousness. Because it doesn't understand the role of the final goal, the totality of Social Democratic politics, the opportunist tactic doesn't understand the scale of priorities, underestimating the role of the masses and misunderstanding its relation to them.

The speech on woman's suffrage is interesting in this context, as well as giving an insight into Rosa Luxemburg's own character. Rosa Luxemburg never liked to write for the Social Democratic woman's paper, *Die Gleichheit*, edited by her best friend, Clara Zetkin. She was neither proud nor ashamed of being a woman, and refused to let her sex help or hinder her activities. Too often one finds references to her life or politics couched in terms of her person—something which could not have been more repugnant to her. One example of her attitude makes this clear. When her friend Konrad Haenisch, editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, tried to defend her position on the mass strike by hinting, among other things, at the extenuating circumstance of her long service to the Party and her female disposition, she replied:

You simply got the idea of *defending* me, but through your incorrect strategy succeeded in attacking me from behind. You wanted to defend my "morality," and to do that you conceded my *political* position. . . . You must have noticed that since I have been in the German party, since 1898, I have been continually and most vulgarly abused *personally*, especially in the

South, and still have *never* answered . . . from the *political* view that all of these personal insults are simply maneuvers to avoid the political issue. . . . You may not even be aware of the impression that your article made: a tearful and noble plea for extenuating circumstances for someone condemned to death.¹

On the other hand, her letters show that she continually tried to persuade her woman friends to take an independent role in politics, and to free themselves from the domination of their husbands. This was especially true with Luise Kautsky.

Though the woman's suffrage speech is one of Rosa Luxemburg's relatively few statements on the subject, its significance is not merely anecdotal. This is a speech from 1912, during the period when she was in full and open rebellion against the "practical" leaders of the SPD, whose electoral coalition with the bourgeois Progressive Party was the final sign of their fall into opportunism. Seeing that there was no way to convince the leaders of the Party that the tactics centered around the mass strike were correct, she took her campaign to the people, speaking up and down Germany. The speech on woman's suffrage, part of this barnstorming tour, is interesting for its blending of a reasoned, cold analysis of the role of woman in society with the conviction that resolute action is needed to achieve even bourgeois aims. Rosa Luxemburg knew full well that voting rights for women would not materially change things within an authoritarian German state in which the Bundesrat—the upper house, not elected by universal suffrage—had a complete veto right, and in which the government was not responsible to the people's representatives but only to the Kaiser. Yet the struggle for voting rights was a necessary stage in the process of educating the proletariat and leading it from struggle to struggle. The demand for woman's suffrage is not to be couched in terms of "justice," but in terms of a progressive struggle against the totality of the capitalist system.

¹ Letter to Konrad Haenisch, December 2, 1911. In *Briefe an Freunde* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1950), pp. 28 ff.

The “Mass Strike” essay, with which this section closes, is perhaps Rosa Luxemburg’s most important statement on the tactical question. In it, she once again uses Marx against Marx, showing that Marxism is a method, not a dogma, and that it must always submit its doctrines to the court of historical change. The historical context in which the “Mass Strike” essay was written casts some light on it. The news of the beginnings of the Russian Revolution of 1905 seemed to bring new life into the German labor movement. A series of strikes broke out. Interest in the Russian events was high. Rosa Luxemburg was the only German qualified to interpret the Revolution to the German party, and she did it with a flair, writing daily articles on all aspects of the Revolution, trying to stoke the fires of the German workers’ enthusiasm. Though the 1905 Jena Party Congress passed a rather vague resolution concerning the employment of the mass strike under certain (defensive) circumstances, shortly thereafter the congress of the trade unionists, meeting in Cologne, passed what amounted to a veto on discussion of the general strike, speaking of it as “general nonsense.” During this time, Rosa Luxemburg had gone to Warsaw to participate in the Revolution, and had been arrested in March 1906. When she was released, she spent a few months in Finland with Lenin and the Bolsheviks. It was then that she was asked by the Hamburg branch of the SPD to write a pamphlet on the mass strike in order to bring the discussion back into the Party before the Mannheim Congress in 1906. The pamphlet was to appeal to the masses of workers who were still interested in the idea of the general strike, and to move them to action, in spite of their leaders if necessary.

Despite her criticism of the anarchist notion of the general strike, Rosa Luxemburg was accused of defending an anarchist position in this pamphlet. Statements like “the element of spontaneity plays such a prominent role in the mass strikes in Russia not because the Russian proletariat is ‘unschooled’ but because revolutions allow no one to play schoolmaster to them,” as well as the limited and secondary role given to party

leadership give credence to this view. Interestingly, the former notion is almost identical to that which Marx himself defended against Arnold Ruge in his article, "The King of Prussia and Social Reform," written in 1844 about the Silesian weavers' rebellion.

The reader will see for himself that the position defended in the "Mass Strike" pamphlet is totally consistent with both the Marxian dialectic and Rosa Luxemburg's general position. The stress on the development of class consciousness and on the role played by bourgeois democracy in educating the working class, the interplay of the economic and political aspects of the action of the proletariat, and the important notion that "the socialist transformation presupposes a long and stubborn struggle in the course of which, quite probably, the proletariat will be repulsed more than once," are not new. It is not contradictory for Rosa Luxemburg to have written this pamphlet, to have traveled throughout Germany pushing the notion of the mass strike, and still to insist that the mass strike cannot be "propagated." For "in reality, the mass strike does not produce the revolution, but the revolution produces the mass strike." The mass strike is "the totality concept of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps decades." Rosa Luxemburg's description of it is guided by this totality notion which enables her to depict the dialectical interaction of its different phases. Further, one has to see the difference between the subjective and objective factors which compose the mass strike. Because one of the "objective factors"—the proletariat—is also subjective, it is possible to "propagate" the mass strike in the sense of building a mood, a climate in which the conscious element can come to the fore. This was what Rosa Luxemburg tried to do.

In Memory of the Proletariat Party

I

For many years now on the anniversary of the heroic deaths of Kunicki, Bardowski, Ossowski, and Pietrusiński,¹ social-patriotic skirmishes which only harm the memory of the founders of the first socialist party in Poland have taken place at the graves of those who fell for the cause of international socialism. We are speaking of those yearly festivities which—especially in foreign lands—are organized by the “Polish Socialist Party” [PPS], whose goal is to usurp the past of the Polish labor movement for the use of today’s nationalism in the guise of socialism. We mean the obtrusive homages of that political movement for whose program and political ethic the lives and actions of the fallen were only damnable.

Men who stood on such a high intellectual plane as those four, who met death for an idea with heads held high, and who in dying encouraged and inflamed the living, are doubtless not the exclusive property of any particular party, group, or sect. They belong in the pantheon of all mankind, and anyone to whom the idea of freedom, no matter what its content

Text from *Politische Schriften*, III (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1968), pp. 23–82. The German translation was by Tadeusz Kachlak, with the help of Bernherd Blanke and Victoria Vierhelles. Polish version originally published in *Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny*, January–February 1903.

¹ These four militants were leaders of the Proletariat Party who were hanged on January 28, 1886, as part of the government’s reprisals for a series of assassination attempts in Poland. Kunicki was second-in-command of the Party; it was he who signed the tactical agreement to work with the Narodnaya Volya, of which Rosa Luxemburg speaks below.

or form, is truly precious should embrace them as kindred spirits and honor their memory. Especially whenever the academic youth of Poland take part in great numbers in the festivities in memory of the Proletariat Party, we view it with real joy as a symptom of idealism and promising revolutionary leanings among our intelligentsia.

We want neither to monopolize the memory of the heroes of the Proletariat nor to fight for it in the narrow interest of the Party, as for the body of Patroclus. But when the honoring of the memory of the executed becomes a noisy and mindless sport, when it is lowered to the level of common advertising, to the signboard of a political group, and when the ideas and deeds of the Proletarians—for which they died—are misused and misinterpreted before the people for this base purpose, then it is simply the duty of those who, because of the spirit of their principles, are the heirs of the revolutionary tradition of the Proletariat, to protest loudly. We are no friends of those regular annual festivals in honor of revolutionary traditions which become both commonplace, because of their mechanical regularity, and—like everything that is “traditional”—rather banal.² We are nevertheless of the opinion that, for the present, those who fell on January 28 can best be honored by showing that their graves are not the proper spot for social-patriotic capers or for tin soldiers exercising for the “national uprising.”

It is also unfortunate that the traditions of the socialist movement in our land are so little known to the contemporary generation of Polish revolutionaries. In our opinion, it is time to revive the memories of our past struggle, a struggle which today can be a rich source of moral reinforcement and politi-

² Rosa Luxemburg was, despite this passage, a great believer in the importance of the traditions of the working class and its revolutionary development. The importance of tradition, the importance of history and of historical consciousness runs like a red thread throughout her life and work. Cf., for example, the great stress which she placed on the May Day celebration, and the stress on the history of the labor movement in the debate concerning the Party School (below, p. 279), as well as the next paragraphs here.

cal instruction. Above all, it is time that the intellectual character of the first influential and organizationally strong socialist party in Poland, the Proletariat, be studied and that it be described by its own words and deeds in the light of historical truth.

He who would correctly evaluate and understand the political ideas of the Proletariat Party, must start from the assumption that this party was not united in its program, that its program and direction were influenced by two distinct elements: by the West and by Russia, by the Marxist theory and by the practice of the *Narodnaya Volya*.

The social conditions of Congress Poland in the 1880's were a suitable base for a "labor movement" in the European sense of the term. The land reform and the development of industry after the collapse of the last uprising completed the final triumph of capitalism in the cities and, partially, in the country.³ The positivistic theory of "organic work" swept away the last vestiges of the feudal-national ideology from society and laid the foundation for the social and intellectual rule of the bourgeoisie in a more naked form than in any other country.⁴ Modern class antagonism, the economic situation, and the social importance of the industrial proletariat became clear. Thus the objective conditions which form the foundation of the Marxist teaching were almost totally fulfilled in Congress Poland, and the socialist struggle of the Proletariat could be logically based on Marxist principles.

This view is clearly articulated in the second chapter of the

³ In 1863 the Polish nobility rebelled against its czarist master, attempting to win the oppressed serfs to its side with arguments showing that the Czar was responsible for their misery. The rebellion was defeated. To prevent the nobility from future demagogic appeals to the serfs, the Czar abolished the institution of serfdom in Poland. This signified the end of the feudal-natural economy, and led to the development of Polish capitalism. This was especially the case in Congress Poland, the Russian-controlled sector of what had been the nation Poland, where Rosa Luxemburg was born.

⁴ The theory of "organic work" developed in Poland among a segment of the rising bourgeoisie after the failure of the 1863 rebellion. Through "organic work" it was hoped that Polish economic development would be furthered.

proclamation of the workers' committee of the social-revolutionary Proletariat Party in 1882: "Our land is not an exception to the general development of European society: its past and present constitution, based on exploitation and oppression, offers our worker nothing but misery and degradation. Our society today shows all of the characteristics of a bourgeois-capitalist constitution, and even though the lack of political freedom gives it a distorted and sickly appearance, this does not alter the essence of its character."⁵

Here too socialism has a modern foundation appropriate to the class structure of society: "The interests of the exploited cannot be brought into harmony with the interests of the exploiters. These cannot progress together in the name of some fictional national unity. If one also assumes that the interests of the worker in the city and the laborer in the country are the same, one must affirm that the Polish proletariat differs basically from the privileged classes and that it takes up the struggle with them as an independent class which has completely different economic, political, and moral tendencies."⁶

The proclamation marks the character of the socialist class struggle from the very beginning as purely international and stresses that "economic conditions are the basis of social relations; all other phenomena are subordinate to these conditions."⁷ Thus the proclamation formally recognizes historical materialism as the foundation for its *Weltanschauung*. In all decisive points the views of the Proletariat simply transplanted the ideas of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* to Polish soil.

This general criticism of capitalism, however, does not fix the form of direct action of the Party, nor does it determine its political program or tactics. There is a huge gap between 1) the recognition of the general principles of scientific socialism and their consequences for the activity and duties of the Party,

⁵ *Z Pola Walki* (Geneva: Verlag "Walka klas," 1886), p. 27. (R.L.)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29. (R.L.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32. (R.L.)

and 2) the theory of the *Manifesto* and the direct program and practice of Social Democracy. The political views of the Proletariat Party were to be influenced to a great extent by the Russian Narodnaya Volya.

The entire form of this [latter] organization was stamped by completely different social conditions from those influencing the Polish group. It grew in the soil of a weakly developed capitalistic society in which social existence was still largely controlled by agriculture and the remnants of the ancient Russian system of communal property. The socialist theory of the Narodnaya Volya did not rely on the city proletariat but rather on the owner—the peasant community. It did not strive for the realization and overcoming of capitalism; it sought only to hinder capitalist development. It did not search for success in the class struggle but rather in the efforts of a courageous minority to seize control of the state. If we consider subjective idealism⁸ to be the basis of the historical views of the Narodnaya Volya, we see that its theory differs in all essential characteristics from the principles of the Proletariat Party.

To be sure, the Narodnaya Volya was not a perfectly unitary structure: Western influences and the beginnings of Marxist theory can be noted in several areas. Yet the political program of this party is not easily fixed. Only after serious thought and a thorough analysis of the periodic publications of this party can one arrive at a clear answer to the question of how the political action of the Narodnaya Volya may really be understood. Did it aim at the overthrow of personal rule and the calling-in of the Zemsky Sobor in order immediately to enact transitional measures of a socialist nature so as to

⁸ The reference is to a common tendency among radical movements to divide "truth" from "reality" in an undialectical manner and to use the former as a measuring rod to criticize the latter. The origin of the term is in Kant's "critical" philosophy; methodologically, however, it characterizes the utopian current of socialist thought which was particularly strong in Russia at the time. In *Social Reform or Revolution*, Bernstein's rejection of Marxism is shown to lead to an idealism of the will. Marxism is not an "idealism" in this sense because it shows dialectically how the seeds of the socialist future are contained already in the capitalist present.

strengthen the system of communal property which would serve as a future basis for the socialist society? Or did it want first to establish the usual constitutional rights? In its own time, as we shall see, there were those who interpreted the goals of the Narodnaya Volya in the latter manner. However, if one is willing to take a fitting label from the history of Western European socialism, then the term "Blanquist" would undoubtedly be the best description of the political strategy of the Narodnaya Volya. Blanquism is a strategy which is determined, on the one hand, to win the trust of the mass of the people, and on the other hand, to seize power by means of a conspiratorial party which then institutes only those parts of the socialist program "which are possible." This judgment of the Narodnaya Volya is precisely that of the Russian Social Democrats,⁹ whose programmatic publications contain a wide and exhaustive critique of the historical *Weltanschauung* and the economic theories of that party as well as of its political methods.

Considering their contrasting perspectives, the influence of the Narodnaya Volya on the Proletariat at first seems incomprehensible, and the uniting of such different elements appears as a near insoluble problem. While in its basic views the Proletariat Party was founded on common European-international bases, the Narodnaya Volya was a purely "homemade" Russian structure. The correct understanding of how and why these two completely different ideas nevertheless united is very important because of the decisive role played by this union in the history and final demise of the Proletariat Party.

II

There were three phases in the intellectual development of the founders of the Proletariat Party. The second of these, which had the most influence on the program of the Party, is closely tied to the activities of the brightest mind and most in-

⁹ That is, the party of Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky, Martov, etc.

fluent leader of Polish socialism at the time, Ludwik Waryński.

The first phase lasted until about 1880. It was a time of theoretical fermentation, especially among the socialist émigrés in Switzerland. Its literary organ was the *Równość* [Equality] of Geneva. The theory of scientific socialism—its economics as well as its general critique of the bourgeois social order—is, at least to an extent, recognized in this periodical. However, concerning the application of this theory, the program of direct political action, the standpoint of the *Równość* is not at all clear. Its views are enunciated in the so-called “Brussels Program” of 1878. After setting forth the economic and social foundations of socialist society in its first four points, this program declares that the realization of these principles should be the task of a “general and international revolution.” On this basis the program goes on, somewhat vaguely, to call for a “federal alliance with the socialists of all countries.” Concerning practical activity, the program contains only a fairly obscure declaration that “the foundation of our activity is the moral concurrence of the means with the end.” In a very general manner it names as the “means which contribute to the development of our party”: organization of the energy of the people, oral and written propaganda about the principles of socialism, and agitation, “that is, protests, demonstrations, and any sort of active struggle which is directed against the contemporary social order and which is in accord with our principles.” Finally, there is the allusion that, in view of the lack of success of legal means of struggle, this program can be fulfilled only “through a socialist revolution.”¹⁰ Political demands, or any sort of call for direct action, are not to be found in this program.

Thus, the *Równość* group does not differentiate between the three divisions of Poland. It applies its principles and actions in exactly the same manner in Galicia as in the Posen area or

¹⁰ All citations are from *Równość*, Year I, No. 1 (October 1879). (R.L.)

in Congress Poland. If, in fact, the socialists set up no special program designed to fit the conditions of a particular region but prefer to try to achieve the international socialist revolution through some "organization" of workers, then the various national-political conditions of the three divisions of Poland are of no significance and require no special procedures. Not only that—the program of the *Równość* could be applied just as well or poorly in England, France, or Germany as in the individual divided sections of Poland. The socialist political standpoint at that time becomes clear in only one aspect—in its rejection of nationalism, in its rigorous internationalist attitude. In the lead article of *Równość*, "Patriotism and Socialism," we read: "Of the patriotic parties there are still some small groups left which hold to the belief that they will once again raise the flag for the 'freedom of the fatherland,' that they will plunge one last time into battle with the enemy, and that they will then see the dear fatherland once more! Let us respect every genuine feeling of these men, who yesterday were ready to offer everything, just as they are today. But we Polish socialists have nothing in common with them! Patriotism and socialism are two ideas which cannot be brought into accord."¹¹

At an assembly in Geneva in November 1880, Ludwik Waryński stressed:

What differentiates our present meeting from so many previous ones is the way in which we relate to one another—we Polish socialists and you, our Russian comrades. We do not appear before you as champions of the future Polish state, as the oppressed subjects of the Russian state, but rather as representatives and defenders of the Polish proletariat in relation with you, the representatives of the Russian proletariat. . . . The ideals of Slavic confederation, of which Bakunin dreamed, are entirely foreign to us. We are completely indifferent to these or those borders of the Polish state, which so excite our patriots. Our fatherland is the entire world. We are not the conspirators of the "thirties," who seek out one another in order to increase our own numbers. We are not the fighters of

¹¹ *Równość*, Year I, No. 2 (November 1879). (R.L.)

1863, who were bound together only by a mutual hatred of the Czar, and who lost their lives on the field of the nationalist struggle. We have no national enemies. We are countrymen, members of one great nation which is even more unfortunate than Poland, the nation of the proletariat.¹²

In even stronger language, the *Równość* announced in its lead article: "We have broken once and for all with patriotic programs; we want neither a feudal nor a democratic Poland; and not only do we not want it, we are firmly convinced that the struggle for the restoration of Poland by the people is today an absurd idea."¹³

Excepting this strongly international attitude, which had, to be sure, a much more positive political significance in our land than in other countries, Polish socialism of the time, in ignoring the political struggle, showed an unconscious kinship with anarchism. We have no possibility today of determining to what extent individual members of the *Równość* group actually held anarchist views. But considering the quick transition to a more mature political position, one can assume that the initial anarchistic waverings were, more than anything else, a symptom of the multiplicity of opinions within the group.

In any case, it is characteristic of the views presented in the *Równość* that the national-political conditions in any country could only present an obstacle to the international tendencies of socialism. The founding of separate socialist parties, as well as the political battles which are the results of particular national conditions, were recognized as only a necessary evil: "Our ideal remains an international union, and if the given political conditions of a wide international organization did not create obstacles, if they did not absorb a part of the socialist forces into the battle with the government, then the foundation of a common socialist organization would already be present in the economic conditions."¹⁴ What can be inferred from

¹² *Report of the International Assembly Called on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the November Rebellion* (Geneva, 1881), pp. 77 and 83. (R.L.)

¹³ *Równość*, Year II, No. 1 (November 1880). (R.L.)

¹⁴ *Równość*, Year II, No. 3-4 (January-February 1881). (R.L.)

this is, at best, the fact that the organic connection of the economic relations with the governmental institutions was then, at least for several leaders of the *Równość* group, a complete mystery. The basic teaching that every class struggle is by its very nature a political struggle also appears to have made no impression on the group's leaders. This is logical in light of the fact that although the *Równość* strove for the "ideal" of an international union, it did not understand that the collapse of such a union and the birth of individual labor parties in each state are necessary and progressive phenomena at a certain stage of the socialist struggle.

But, as we have already said, a decisive change took place in the program of the Polish socialists. In the summer of 1881, we can already see the transition to the second phase of development of the group's program under the influence of Waryński. The program of the workers of Galicia in the first year of the magazine *Przedświt* [Dawn] shows us the ideas of the founders of the Proletariat already in full maturity, while the political character of the program also becomes completely clear. On the one hand, the international and antinational standpoint is just as obvious as in the previous phase. Yet as Waryński's group moved into the realm of practical political activity instead of continuing to spread hazy socialist propaganda, even its antinationalism assumed concrete and palpable forms and attained to a position of some importance in the overall political views of the group.

If, for example, in Waryński's speech, the solidarity with the Russian revolutionaries and the negative evaluation of Polish nationalism seem only to stem from the international character of socialism's final goal—and this had been the view of the *Równość*—then this same idea is developed by *Przedświt* explicitly as the basis of a minimal program, or more exactly, as a political strategy for socialists. Waryński's critique of the social-political union *Lud Polski* [The Polish People], which became prominent in August 1881 with a proclamation an-

nouncing its program, is especially representative of the political position of *Przedświt*.

Other socialists of the Geneva group, Brzeziński, Jabłoński, Padlewski, spoke against the abovementioned proclamation because, among other things, "we see the goals of socialism not as far-off, ultimate goals (as does the proclamation of the *Lud Polski*) but rather as the only goals." Thus, while other socialists of the group were still completely unaware of the relationships between the final goals and the direct political program, Waryński writes with amazing clarity:

In the program of the *Lud Polski*, that which I have just discussed is not accidental; it is not simply an inaccuracy but an essential part of this program. In contrast to all other socialist party programs and in opposition to the theories of modern socialism, it places the problem of political-national liberation on a level with the common human task of socioeconomic liberation. Such a coexistence of general with specific problems as is contained in this proclamation is only possible in a single program when the specific problem is treated as a minimal, short-term demand. Otherwise, it is completely unintelligible how such individual problems as alleviating political oppression in the various regions of Poland can be equated with social and economic liberation. In other words, a poor understanding is shown for the fact that liberation from socioeconomic servitude also signifies a simultaneous emancipation of the individual and the group from material and moral oppression. Therefore, I view the removal of political-national oppression in the program of the *Lud Polski* as a poorly formulated "minimal program" and I must discuss it as such.

After Waryński has demolished the equation of a program of national liberation with the final goals of socialism in a few words, he analyzes the same postulate as an immediate task of the proletariat:

Without asking why the *Lud Polski* union formulates this minimal program so vaguely, without asking why it does not clearly set this as an immediate goal of its efforts, I feel that the establishment of such a program for all three divisions of Poland, or for each separately, has only a negative effect on the work which the socialists must keep in mind as their practical duty.

The minimal program set up by the socialists assumes a day-to-day struggle with capital. Their goal is not a "national rebirth" but the widening of the political rights of the proletariat in order to enhance the possibility of building mass organizations for the struggle with the bourgeoisie as a political and social class.

The "Program of the Labor Party of Galicia" was composed of similar stuff, although it was written not only for the Polish people but also for the various proletarian groups of those nations which had united themselves into one party in Galicia. This fact should serve as an answer to those who want to talk of the special conditions of development in our society. We also advise our socialist champions to think a bit more about this fact.

It is easy to see that in Posen the socialist movement will go the same way as in Galicia. There, too, the Polish and German workers will unite to form a strong organization which is not only conditioned by external relations, but in its content and its essence is founded on the principles of international solidarity. . . . We do not doubt that in Congress Poland, too, men who well understand the obligations of socialism and who are truly devoted to the cause of socialism will contribute to the development of the socialist movement in the same direction there.

We have tarried at this quotation because, as the reader with a thorough knowledge of modern socialist thought will recognize, it is a prime example of the Social Democratic creed. That which separates the Social Democratic position from those of other socialist movements is, above all, its conception of the transformation of the modern society into a socialist society. In other words, its conception of the relationship between the immediate tasks of socialism and its final goals.

From the standpoint of Social Democracy, which bases its views on the theory of scientific socialism, the transition to a socialist society can only be the result of a phase of development, of greater or lesser duration. This development, to be sure, does not preclude the necessity for the final conversion of society by means of a violent political overthrow, that is, by what is usually called revolution. However, this revolution is impossible if the bourgeois society has not previously passed

through the necessary phases of development. This development must take place in the objective factor of the socialist overthrow, the capitalist society itself, as well as in the subjective factor, the working class.

Beginning with the principle of scientific socialism that the “liberation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself,” Social Democracy recognizes that only the working class as such can carry out the overthrow, that is, the revolution for the realization of the socialist transformation. By working class, it means the truly broad mass of the workers, above all the industrial proletariat. Thus a prerequisite for the conversion to socialism must be the conquest of political power by the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a necessary step for the institution of transitional measures.

But in order to be able to fulfill this task, the working masses must be fully aware of their goal and become a class-organized mass. On the other hand, the bourgeois society must have already reached a state of economic as well as political development which allows the introduction of socialist institutions. These prerequisites are dependent on one another and influence each other reciprocally. The working class cannot attain to any organization or consciousness without specific political conditions which allow an open class struggle, that is, without democratic institutions within the framework of the state. And conversely, the attaining of democratic institutions in the state and their spread into the working class is—at a certain historical moment, in a certain phase in the development of class antagonism—impossible without the active struggle of a conscious and organized proletariat.

The solution to this apparent paradox lies in the dialectical process of the class struggle of the proletariat fighting for democratic conditions in the state and at the same time organizing itself and gaining class consciousness. Because it gains this class consciousness and organizes itself in the course of the struggle, it achieves a democratization of the bourgeois state

and, in the measure that it itself ripens, makes the bourgeois state ripe for a socialist revolution.

Elementary principles for the practical activity of Social Democracy depend on the above conception: the socialist struggle must be a mass struggle of the proletariat. It must be a daily struggle for the democratization of the institutions of the state, for the raising of the intellectual and material level of the working class, and at the same time, for the organization of the working masses into a particular political party which consciously sets itself against the entire bourgeois society in its struggle for a socialist revolution.

The appropriation of these principles to the Polish socialist movement and their application in this movement were extremely important and difficult tasks. In contrast to the nations of Western Europe, the situation of the socialists in Poland is complicated by, on the one hand, the three sorts of political conditions under which the Polish proletariat must live [in the three divisions of Poland]—this is especially true for the specific political conditions of the most important division of Poland, the Russian zone—and on the other hand, by the national question.

These important and difficult tasks were accomplished for the first time in the history of the Polish labor movement by Ludwik Waryński (as the above quotation has shown), who formulated the Social Democratic principles so clearly and precisely. Neither before nor during his time do we hear equally cogent statements from other Polish socialists.

Concerning the national question, Waryński rejects the rebuilding of Poland with the same decisiveness shown by the *Równość* group; however, he places the solution of the problem on a completely different level. The *Równość* group explained its negative position on nationalist tendencies as resulting from the contradiction of these tendencies with the international goals of socialism as well as with the group's own indifference to political work in general.¹⁵ Waryński, on the other hand, re-

¹⁵ In this regard, the following part of an article by K. Dtuski, "Patriotism and So-

jects the nationalist program not because of the ultimate goals of socialism but because of the priority of immediate problems. He opposes the politics of the workers to the politics of the nationalists.

Since the goal of the day-to-day effort of the Proletariat Party is the organization and enlightenment of the working class, Waryński deduces that its political program can be neither that of the overthrow nor that of the establishment of states. Rather, its program must be the winning and widening of the political rights which are absolutely necessary for the organization of the masses within the bourgeois states in which they are active.

Waryński defines two principles of the Social Democratic political program for the Polish proletariat: 1) as the starting point for political action, the recognition of the existing historical and governmental situation as a given condition; 2) as the goal of this political action, the democratization of the given political conditions.

Thus if the negative conclusion deduced from these principles was the rejection of the program for the re-establishment of the Polish state, then the result would have to be the formulation of a Social Democratic program—or better, three separate programs—for the Polish proletariat. If the political conditions of each of the three divisions of Poland are viewed as decisive in determining the action to be taken by the proletariat, then it must be realized that a single program for all of the workers of the three parts of Poland is impossible, that the program and action must be different in each division, and yet that within each of these three zones, the program must be completely equally applied to all national groups.

cialism," is characteristic: "The idea of socialism is greater and more inclusive than the idea of patriotism. It begins in the domain of political relations in which patriotism lies and, basing itself on economic grounds, demands the transformation of social relations. In this, it regards economic conditions only as the background on which all other relations and interests are grouped, which are bound up with the lives of whole societies as well as individual men." *Równość*, Year I, No. 2 (November 1879). (R.L.)

Waryński expresses this in the aforementioned article in relation to the Posen area and to Galicia. This concept was first related to the Russian zone in a somewhat later document, which is the product of the most mature thinking of Waryński and his group during that middle phase of Polish socialism directly before the formal organization of the Proletariat Party. This document, an appeal (dated November 8, 1881) to the Russian socialists by a group of former members of the *Równość* group and the editorial staff of the socialist magazine *Przedświt*, was printed in the December 1, 1881, issue of *Przedświt*. The goal of this appeal was to convince the Russian socialists that they should work with their Polish comrades in formulating a common program. It was the boldest political consequence of Waryński's principles. Not only the conclusion but also the way in which it is substantiated by Waryński's characteristically clear and emphatic thinking are of such note that we do not hesitate to reproduce the entire final section of this document here.

After an interpretation of the significance of the political struggle in Russia and the historical decline in importance of the question of Poland, the appeal closes with the words:

We now summarize:

- a) Socialism is here, as it is everywhere, an economic problem which has nothing in common with the national problem and which, in practice, takes on the form of the class struggle.
- b) Guarantees for the progress of this struggle and the future victory of the proletariat in the social revolution are 1) the maximum development of the socialist consciousness of the working masses and 2) their organization as a class on the basis of their class interests.
- c) Political freedom is necessary to the realization of these goals. The lack of this freedom places a mass organization of the workers of Russia before an enormous obstacle.

Further, in agreement with the conclusions reached in a discussion between the *Równość* group and the Russian comrades during the previous year:

- a) The character of the social-revolutionary organization is influenced solely by general economic interests and the political situation.

b) The organization of the socialist party can be accomplished, on the one hand, on the basis of economic conditions, and on the other hand, on the basis of the existing governmental-political conditions. In the latter case, the boundaries of nationality cannot serve as a foundation for the organization of the party.

c) It follows, therefore, that the socialist party of Poland cannot exist as a homogeneous unity. There can only be Polish socialist groups in Austria, Germany, and Russia, which form unions with the socialist organizations of other nationalities within the particular state. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of connections with one another and with still other socialist organizations.

Finally, the following should serve as a guideline:

a) The success of the terrorist struggle for political freedom in Russia is dependent on the collaboration of the organized working masses of different nationalities within the Russian state.

b) Emphasis on the Polish national-political problem can only harm the struggle for political freedom in Russia; nationalism can only operate to the disadvantage of the working class.

If we view everything said up to this point, we come to the following results:

I. The organizing of a common socialist party containing the socialist organizations of the various nationalities in the Russian state is an absolute necessity.

II. The welding together of groups previously fighting separately on the political and economic fronts is also absolutely essential to the intensification of united struggle.

III. The formulation of a political program which is common to all socialists active in Russia and which fulfills all of the above conditions is indispensable.

A glance is sufficient to assure us that we have here a document of extraordinary significance for the socialist movement in Poland. It is clear that the "Appeal of December 1881" formulates a political program which is, to a great degree, Social Democratic and completely identical with the ideas of the contemporary "Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania."¹⁶

¹⁶ That is, the party of which Rosa Luxemburg was one of the founders and leaders, and in whose paper this article appeared.

This is true not only for the general principles: the impossibility of a common program and common organization for the Polish socialists from all three divisions of Poland, and the indispensability of a common program and a common organization for the socialists under each divisional power. It is also true for the decisive rejection of a program of independence for Poland. But most important, the appeal of the *Przedświt* and the old *Równość* formulates for the first time a positive program of Social Democracy for the Russian zone: the winning of political freedom, i.e., constitutional forms within Russia.

But that is not all. The attentive reader will notice that in the appeal itself, Waryński and his comrades presuppose that the Russian socialists set themselves the same goal. In the "Appeal," they clearly mention the activity of the Narodnaya Volya. They speak, without a second thought, of the "terrorist struggle for political freedom in Russia" and view this terrorism on the part of the Russian party simply as a tactic in the struggle for the overthrow of the Czar and the establishment of democratic freedoms in the European sense. In addition, they attempt to found this view, as far as is possible, in Social Democratic theory when they declare that the terrorism of the Narodnaya Volya will only have political significance when it is supported by the conscious action of the organized working class throughout the state.

Doubtless, terrorism would not be viewed today by Social Democracy, Polish or Russian, as an appropriate and useful form of struggle. The Social Democrats, enriched by the experiences of the Proletariat Party and the Narodnaya Volya, understand that terror cannot be combined with the mass struggle of the working class; instead, it only makes that struggle more difficult and dangerous. But Waryński and his comrades in the year 1881 could not have had this knowledge. They had to believe in the indispensability and usefulness of terrorism in Russia, for in that moment in which they appeared with their "Appeal," the terrorist party of Russia stood at the apex of its

power and actually appeared to shake the very foundations of czarism.¹⁷ We can also note precisely the same viewpoint in the basic publications of the Russian Social Democrats, who examined the entire theoretical and practical foundation of the *Narodnaya Volya* four years after Waryński had articulated his position.

Thus, the most striking fact here is not the recognition given terror itself but rather the fact that the appeal of the Polish socialists attempts to give terrorism both Social Democratic goals and a broad foundation in the class struggle.

To what extent this conception of the Russian socialism of the time corresponds to reality will be seen presently. There is, however, another side of the subject which is important. Waryński's group, in developing their own program, arrived at a purely Social Democratic standpoint, and from this standpoint, they sought unity of program and action with the Russian socialists.

This moment is the high point in the development of the founders of the Proletariat, and also a turning point in their history. As soon as the last political consequences were drawn, Waryński and his comrades applied their program in practice to the formal organization of the Proletariat Party in Poland. This is the beginning of the third and last period of development for the Party.

III

The appeal to the Russian comrades shows that the Polish socialists at the end of 1881 had attained a Social Democratic position in the following two points: 1) the general principle that the political program of the Polish proletariat should be the same and common with the program of the proletariat of the occupying powers, and 2) the recognition of the fact that in the Russian zone, this program had to contain both the

¹⁷ On March 13, 1881, the series of terrorist actions of the *Narodnaya Volya* culminated in the slaying of the Czar, Alexander II. Cf. Engels' opinion of the power of the *Narodnaya Volya*, below, pp. 188-89.

overthrow of personal rule and the struggle for political freedom and a parliamentary-democratic form of government.

Although these two conclusions belong together and modify each other logically, they nevertheless came into contradiction as soon as the Polish socialists attempted to apply them in practice. The general Social Democratic principle led them to seek unity of program and action with the Russian socialists. But Russian socialism of the time was in no way Social Democratic. Waryński's group named the struggle for a constitution as an area suitable for common action; but this had absolutely no relevance to the program of the *Narodnaya Volya*. The Polish socialists knew that the struggle against czarism could only be led by the organized masses of workers; but the Russian socialists carried out no mass agitation, and neither in theory nor in practice did they base themselves on the working class. In reality, the *Narodnaya Volya* did not fight for "the widening of the political rights of the proletariat" or for the purpose of "creating mass organizations for the struggle with the bourgeoisie"—as Waryński, in the spirit of Social Democracy, had formulated the contents of a political program. The *Narodnaya Volya* fought simply for the "seizure of power." Its goal was the immediate establishment of some of the transitional forms of the socialist revolution. Yet in this seizure of power, the *Narodnaya Volya* did not depend on the actions of the class-conscious masses, on the organization and struggle of the industrial proletariat, but rather on the conspiratorial machinations of a "courageous minority." Thus Waryński's decisive principles had to lead to a conflict when they were applied in practice.

If the socialist movement in Russia at that time had stood firmly on a Social Democratic base as is today the case, with the exception of only a few organizations, then the principles of the founders of the Proletariat Party would have led, on the one hand, to a completely harmonious collaboration between Russian and Polish socialists and, on the other hand, to the

flowering of a labor movement with a conscious Social Democratic character at the beginning of the eighties.

Since there was no Social Democratic movement in Russia at the time that the Proletariat Party was organized but only a conspiratorial party of Blanquist stamp, the Polish socialists found themselves in a dilemma. They could either forego unity of program and action with the Russian socialists in order to preserve their own Social Democratic program and take up the struggle for the overthrow of czarism in Poland by means of mass agitation and organization of the Polish workers; or they could reject their Social Democratic program with its idea of mass struggle and subordinate themselves to the methods of the *Narodnaya Volya* in order to follow their principle of unity of action with Russian socialism.

The resolution of this dilemma was decisive for the fate of Polish socialism for almost a decade; indeed, it was fatal. We do not hesitate, however, to recognize that the selection of the second alternative was all too natural and understandable under the prevailing conditions. In view of the fact that Russia itself had to be the decisive terrain of the Polish struggle against the ruling system of Russia; that Congress Poland came into question only secondarily; that the *Narodnaya Volya* far surpassed the Polish socialist party in both membership and political significance; and that while the Proletariat Party had scarcely been formed, the *Narodnaya Volya* had already gained a very important moral and political victory in the assassination attempt on the thirteenth of March, which seemed to affirm the program and strategy of the *Narodnaya Volya* before the eyes of the entire world—under all these circumstances, it is understandable that the Polish socialist organization had to try to join the Russian movement.

To what extent the *Narodnaya Volya* ruled the imagination of the time and what great hopes for a political overthrow in the near future it awoke, is witnessed by the words of F. Engels in 1894. Concerning this epoch in Russia, Engels says: "At that time there were two governments in Russia, the govern-

ment of the Czar and the government of the secret executive committee of the terrorist conspirators. The power of this secret 'associate' government grew from day to day. The overthrow of czarism seemed to be imminent. A revolution in Russia had to rob the European counter-revolution of its strongest support, its greatest reserve army; and in the process it would give the political movement of the West a new and powerful momentum—and infinitely better operating conditions.”¹⁸

If sober researchers of social history such as Engels and Marx—for the above words also characterize the views and feelings of Marx at the time [i.e., in 1881]—rich in their own experiences from the revolutionary history of Europe, gave such clear directions for the evaluation of historical processes of development, if such researchers could so overestimate the results of the activities of the Narodnaya Volya, then it is no surprise that the Polish socialists, who stood in the middle of the arena of struggle from the first moment of their political activity, had to fall under the unbelievably strong influence of this party.

Thus, after Polish socialism, from its development in the spirit of West European Social Democracy, had drawn the political conclusion of the necessity of a union for common action with Russian socialism, the given concrete conditions had to lead it gradually into Blanquist paths. Its history is, from the moment of the formal organization of the party until its downfall at the end of the 1880's, a continual turning toward Blanquism and away from the position which had been articulated in the "Appeal" of December 1881.

Naturally, it would be false to assume that the Polish socialists found themselves in a position in which they could actually make the conscious choice as discussed above. We have formulated these alternatives in order to provide an analysis of the

¹⁸ Friedrich Engels, *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat, Soziales aus Russland* (Berlin, 1894), p. 69. (R.L.)

real situation. Waryński's group was, however, not so categorically aware of this real situation because the true nature of the Narodnaya Volya, and its contradiction with the position of Waryński and his comrades, was nowhere near so clear and could not be so easily defined in 1882 as was later possible with the help of facts and documents. In the "Appeal" of the Waryński group, we saw that there were many Social Democratic illusions about the activity of the Narodnaya Volya.¹⁹ Besides this, among Polish socialists, as a careful reading of socialist literature of the time shows (*Równość*, *Przedświt*, and pamphlets), there was none other than Waryński who could have been such an observant and capable Social Democrat as the "Appeal" would lead one to expect.

Thus, the spiritual union of the Proletariat with the Narodnaya Volya was accomplished not as the result of an earnest discussion of the socialist idea in Poland but rather as a natural outgrowth of the general situation. Further, since the history and physiognomy of a fairly small group, as the leading socialist organization in Poland has been until now, in a period of only a few years is determined not only by great key ideas in a process of logical development but also by numerous accidental personal elements, the Proletariat, because of the unequal theoretical maturity of its individual founders, had to come under Russian influence all the sooner. Although the publications and activity of the Proletariat did not distinguish themselves by their unity, the removal of Waryński from the field of struggle following his arrest in the fall of 1883 was enough to send the movement hurtling into the morass of hopeless political conspiracy.

If we want to underline the difference between the *Welt-*

¹⁹ This can be seen in the following statements of the *Równość* concerning the attack of March 13, 1881, on Alexander II. The *Równość* analyzed the program of the Narodnaya Volya, and attributed to it "a moderate demand for a constitutional monarchy." According to the *Równość*, the authors of the March 13 attack wanted no more than concessions. "We want changes in the political form of the present regime—that is what the Narodnaya Volya [also] wants." *Równość*, Year II, No. 5-6 (March-April 1881). (R.L.)

anschauung of Social Democracy and so-called Blanquism, we must above all show that Blanquism did not possess its own theory in the same sense that Social Democracy does, that is, a theory of the development of society toward socialism. In any case, that is not a specific characteristic of just this splinter party of socialism, since the theory of Marx and Engels is the first and, we might add, until now the only successful attempt to found socialist tendencies on the scientific concept of the laws of historical development in general and of capitalist society in particular. The previous utopian theories of socialism, if one can indeed speak of theories, limit themselves essentially to justifying socialist efforts through an analysis of the failings of the existing society in comparison to the perfection and moral superiority of the socialist order.

Because Blanquism, like all of these socialist schools, supported its views by negative criticism of the bourgeois society and of private property, it represented only a sort of strategy for practical activity. In this respect it betrayed its lineage from the radical revolutionaries of the great French Revolution and represented an application of Jacobin tactics to socialist goals, the first attempt at which was the conspiracy of Babeuf. The basic idea of this strategy is the limitless belief in the ability of political rule to carry out, at any time, any economic or social change in the social organism considered good and useful.

To be sure, the theory of scientific socialism also sees in political rule a lever for socialist overthrow. Yet, in the conception of Marx and Engels, the role of political power in revolutionary times is that of an "agent" which simply puts into practice the results of the inner development of society and finds its political expression in the class struggle. According to the well-known Marxian analogy, in revolutionary times political power plays the role of a "midwife" who accelerates and eases the birth of the new society which was already alive within the old. It follows that essential social changes by means of political power are only to be achieved at a specific

stage of social development. Political power as an instrument of overthrow can only function in the hands of a social class which is, in the particular historical moment, the agent of the revolution. The aptitude of this class for the long-term control of political power is the only legitimization for the correctness of the revolution.

Inasmuch as Blanquism does not recognize this theory, or rather does not even know this theory, it treats political power as a tool of social overthrow completely outside the context of social development and the class struggle in general. This tool stands ready to serve anyone who happens to control it at any time. From this standpoint, the only conditions for revolution are the will of a resolute group and a conspiracy, whose goal is the seizure of power at the most propitious moment.

“Blanqui,” says Engels in his well-known article in the *Volksstaat* in the year 1874, “is essentially a political revolutionary—socialist only in feeling—sympathizing with the sufferings of the people. He has neither a socialist theory nor specific practical suggestions for social aid. In his political activity, he was basically a ‘man of action,’ of the belief that a small, well-organized minority attempting a revolutionary coup at the proper moment can, by virtue of a few initial successes, sweep the mass of the people with it and thus make a victorious revolution. . . . Since Blanqui conceived every revolution as a blow struck by a small revolutionary minority, the necessity of a dictatorship after the success of the venture follows directly—the dictatorship, of course, not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, but rather of the small number of those who had ‘struck the revolutionary blow’ and who had been organized previously under the dictatorship of one or several others.”²⁰

We see that the strategy of the Blanquists is aimed directly at the carrying out of a social revolution without taking into account any sort of transitional period or developmental

²⁰ *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat*, pp. 41–42. (R.L.)

phase. Blanquism is a recipe for the making of revolution under any conditions and at any time; it ignores all concrete historical-social conditions. Blanquism appeared as a universal strategy which could be applied to all countries with the same degree of success. But nowhere could the application of this method of action exercise so decisive an influence on the fate of socialism as under the conditions peculiar to czarism. The strategy of a sudden "leap" directly into social revolution had to influence fatally the political physiognomy of a party which worked within the framework of a state with an absolute-despotic form of government. Therefore, one can best follow the influence of Blanquism on the Polish socialists step by step in the gradual changing of their political views.

In September 1882, the official published program of the Proletariat Party had already distanced itself significantly both from the standpoint of the article by Waryński in *Przedświt*, No. 3-4, and from the views of the "Appeal" to the Russian comrades. As we have already implied, this document sees the socialist future of Poland finding a foothold on the ground of scientific socialism and in the principles of the class struggle and historical materialism. The character of the actual program is, however, not so easily determined. Here there are three parallel sections, namely demands of the party "in the economic area," "in the political area," and "in the area of moral life."²¹

If we ignore the last part as practically insignificant, then most noticeable in the first part is, on the one hand, the parallel formulation of the demands which form the content of the socialist revolution: "1) that the land and the means of production cease to be the property of the individual and become the common property of the workers, that is, the property of the socialist state, 2) that wage labor be converted into communal work, etc."; on the other hand, the formulation of the political demands which, at first glance, have the content of

²¹ *Z Pola Walki*, pp. 30-31. Also, *Przedświt*, Year II, No. 4 (October 1882). (R.L.)

parliamentary-democratic institutions designed for the bourgeois state: “1) complete autonomy of political groups, 2) the participation of all citizens in the making of laws, 3) direct election of all public officials, 4) complete freedom of speech, press, assembly, organization, etc., etc., 5) completely equal rights for women, 6) completely equal rights for all religions and nationalities, 7) international solidarity as a guarantee of the common peace.”

It is almost impossible to say to what category this program actually belongs. Upon close examination, two different interpretations are possible. The political demands listed here, with the exception of the first, which is not entirely clear, remind one of the usual minimal program of Social Democratic parties. But just this placing of these demands as coordinates of the demands for a socialist revolution awakens the suspicion that they were not related to the actual bourgeois social order. At the same time, it is doubtful whether they were supposed to deal with the socialist society, since they take so strongly into account the actual social order based on inequality of classes, sexes, and nationalities. Perhaps we have here not a minimal program but a program which is aimed at the transitional period after the seizure of power by the proletariat, and which has as its goal the kindling of the socialist transformation.

The pattern of a similar program, which also puts political-democratic demands and socialist reforms on the same level and which aims directly for the transitional phase after the revolution, is found, for example, in the demands of the “Communist Party of Germany” formulated by the central committee of the Communist League in Paris in 1848, and carrying, among others, the signatures of Marx and Engels.²²

²² The most important demands are: 1) All Germany shall be united into an indivisible Republic, 4) General arming of the people, 11) All means of transportation: trains, canals, steamboats, highways, the post office, etc., shall be taken over by the state. They shall become the property of the state, and shall be put (gratis) at the disposal of the poorer class, 12) Creation of state workshops. The state guarantees the subsistence of all workers, and cares for those incapable of working, 17) Universal, free education. (R.L.)

One must nevertheless emphasize that the above program by the creators of the *Communist Manifesto* contains no trace of Blanquist strategy as is claimed, for example, by Eduard Bernstein among others. In order to undertic; setting of prices, need only be aware that Marx and Engels formulated it under the fresh influence of the February Revolution in France and the outbreak of the March Revolution in Germany. It is well known that both overestimated the revolutionary momentum of the bourgeoisie and calculated that the European bourgeoisie, once they were swept into the whirl of the revolutionary movement, would—over either a short or a long period—run through the entire cycle of their power, that they would remake the political relations of the capitalist countries “in their own image,” following which the surge of revolution would itself carry the petty bourgeoisie into their place and then finally the proletariat. In this way, the proletariat could follow directly on the heels of the bourgeois revolution in order to carry out its revolutionary task of the emancipation of all classes.

Today, rich in historical experience, we are in a position to recognize the utter optimism of this view. We know that the European bourgeoisie began their retreat immediately after the first revolutionary storm; and after they had suppressed their own revolution, they brought society onto its “normal” course, and once again under their control. We know also that the economic conditions in the Europe of 1848 were very distant from that degree of maturity which is necessary for a socialist revolution. Capitalism was not preparing itself for death but, on the contrary, for the true beginning of its rule. The phase which seemed to separate the communists of 1848 by only a few years from the dictatorship of the proletariat has broadened to an epoch that has lasted half a century and, even today, has not arrived at its conclusion.

The reason, however, which led Marx and Engels to set forth such a program of action based on the workers’ revolution was not the desire or hope of skipping the phase of bour-

geois control but only an inaccurate estimation of the actual rate of social development under the influence of the revolution. Under the conditions of activity of the Proletariat Party, it is difficult to find analogous circumstances which could explain the program of the Polish party. If we want to attribute to its demands the character of a program appropriate to the transitional stage, then the only assumption which we can still make is that the Proletariat had already assumed a Blanquist position, at least to some degree.

It must, however, be noted that, outside of this confusion of final goals with immediate goals, the program of the Proletariat as a whole is saturated with the spirit of the Social Democratic philosophy. This is proved by the influence of the idea that the socialist revolution can only be completed by the working class, that only the mass struggle, the organization of the proletariat and its enlightenment can bring about the conditions necessary for the future society. The idea of agitation and of the organization of the masses is the leitmotif of the entire program and makes clear that the Party was then preparing itself for a long period of work on the basis of the daily interests of the proletariat.

A few sections of the program in which the Proletariat views political freedom as the prerequisite for organization and mass struggle also point in this direction. This evokes the formulations of Waryński in the *Przedświt* of the previous year. "We disapprove strongly," we read in the program, "of the lack of freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, of assembly, of organization, and of the press—because all of this impedes the development of the workers' consciousness. It awakens a religious-national hatred and fanaticism. It renders impossible the propaganda and mass organization which alone can lay the cornerstone for the future organization of the socialist society." And somewhat further: "We will fight on against oppression both defensively and offensively. Defensively, insofar as we will allow no changes for the worse; offensively, insofar as we de-

mand an improvement of the living conditions of the proletariat in the Russian state.”

If, in spite of this, we do not find a clear and categorical articulation of the struggle against czarism and for democratic freedoms in the program—a certain indecisiveness and wavering of political values predominates—still this program and the bases of its positive views show absolutely no Blanquism. The only fact which can be determined on the basis of this document is that the position of the Polish socialists had already lost much of that crystalline clarity which so characterized it in the documents of the Geneva group which we analyzed. Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that the program of 1882 is the work of the Warsaw group working in the homeland and that Waryński, after he had moved his activity into the Russian zone, probably had to depend much more on the comrades there, who stood under the influence of the Russians much more directly than did the Polish emigrants in Switzerland. But if the character of the official program of the Proletariat Party is most distinctive in its unclarity, still the further forms of its activity allow no more doubt about the growing influence of Blanquism. If we now look over the entire development of the Proletariat, we shall have to characterize the program of 1882 as a transitional phenomenon which, through its very lack of clarity, reflects the turning point between the Social Democratic and the Blanquist phases in the development of Polish socialism.

IV

In the preceding section we investigated deductively the transition of the party founded by Waryński and his comrades from a Social Democratic to a Blanquist standpoint. This transition was viewed as the logical result of the application of the Party's guiding principle—namely, common action with Russian socialism—under the given conditions.

This conclusion is palpably confirmed by an analysis of the documents from the activity of the Proletariat. These show

If the end of the last sentence—which is aimed at the activity of the *Narodnaya Volya*—betrays the conspiratorial position with regard to political struggle, then the following paragraph is still more characteristic.

Political agitation may be regarded as sensible only when political oppression goes hand in hand with economic oppression. If, for example, the government placed itself on the side of the propertied class, then the struggle with the latter would be at the same time a struggle with the government. If, on the other hand, the government depends on no social class and yet through its pressure hinders the work of the social-revolutionary party, then it should—and this is quite possible—be overthrown by a conspiracy. In addition, the close cooperation of the masses of the people on the basis of the antagonism between their interests and the interests of the propertied classes is an indispensable condition for the further progress of the revolution.²³

Anyone who is familiar with the theories of Russian socialism will immediately recognize here an echo of the views of the *Narodnaya Volya*, which, for its part, had inherited them from the Bakuninists.

As early as 1874 the editor of *Nabat*, Tkachev, who was one of the first Russian Blanquists, formulated the theory that the czarist government was “based on no particular social class” and that it therefore “could and should” be overthrown. Tkachev announced that “this state appears to be a power only from a distance. . . . It has no roots in the economic life of the people, it does not personify the interests of any particular class. . . . [In Germany and the West—R.L.] the state is not a fictitious power. It stands with both feet on the foundation of capital and personifies certain economic interests. . . . [In Russia—R.L.] the situation is exactly the opposite; the exist-

²³ *Przedświt*, II, No. 17 (May 14, 1883). The editorial staff of *Przedświt* adds the proviso to the above “resolutions” that it is not in complete agreement with all the views expressed in these resolutions. For us, however, the views of the activists working in Poland at the time are of primary importance. Besides, the editorial staff does not list the points on which its views differ from those expressed in the resolutions so that a basis for any sort of conclusion about its standpoint is nonexistent. (R.L.)

ence of our social system is due to the state [. . .] which itself has nothing in common with the present social order. It has its roots not in the present, but in the past.”²⁴

This theory of a Russian state which “floated on air” formed only a part of the larger theory of Russia’s “independent” development, which dominated the conceptions of the Russian socialists during the seventies and eighties. Economically, this theory was represented by the conclusion that capitalism in Russia was an “artificial flower” which had been “transplanted” into Russian soil by the Russian government, and by the conviction that the system of rural communal property was the proper form for the Russian political economy.

Naturally the connection between the economic relations of a society and its political system had become completely confused. The economic relations, insofar as these were considered in their capitalist form, were viewed by this theory as the arbitrary product of political power. On the other hand, according to the theory of the *Narodnaya Volya*, czarism stood in marked opposition to rural communal property, this natural form of political economy. The only logical answer to the question “On what does the Russian state base its existence?” was that the Russian state “floats on air” or, as it is more precisely formulated in the program of the executive committee of the *Narodnaya Volya*: “This governmental-bourgeois tumor maintains itself solely by means of naked force.”²⁵

After the entire extant political system of Russia had been, in this way, traced back to pure political power, it was a logical deduction that the removal of this system could only be a question of power. Thus it was decided that the almighty government “can and should be easily overthrown by conspiracy.”

Already in 1874, Friedrich Engels had refuted this train of thought, as he immediately and with extreme profundity

²⁴ Cited in *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat, Soziales aus Russland*, p. 50. From “An Open Letter to Friedrich Engels,” which appeared in German in Zurich. (R.L.)

²⁵ “*Kalendar Narodnoj Woli*,” p. 5. (R.L.)

pointed out the weak aspects of the theory of the Russian Narodniki. He demonstrated that the Russian state did not “float on air” at all, but rather that it leaned very heavily on the class of noble landholders while also depending on the developing bourgeoisie. He showed that it was those Russian socialists who did not recognize the material bases of the czarist government who were actually “floating on air.” Engels also pointed out that the Russian *Obshchina* [peasant commune—D.H.], which the “independent” Russian socialists saw as a basis for socialism in Russia’s near future, was a suitable basis, not for a socialist order, but for the Oriental despotism of Russian czarism. He also noted the signs of decay within the *Obshchina* and prophesied its further dissolution, if left on its own, under the influence of the steadily growing bourgeoisie.

In a word, although Engels did not point out the positive tasks of the Russian socialists and did not take into consideration the future actions of the industrial proletariat in Russia, he did destroy the fantastic concept of the “floating on air,” “independent” path to socialism in Russia. At the same time, he explained that people like Tkachev and other socialist Narodniki who think that Russia is closer to socialism than the western countries because “since Russia has no proletariat, she also has no bourgeoisie,” still “have to learn the ABC’s of socialism.”²⁶

In effect, the ABC’s of socialism, namely Marxian socialism, teach that the socialist order is not some sort of poetic ideal society, thought out in advance, which may be reached by various paths in various more or less imaginative ways. Rather, socialism is simply the historical tendency of the class struggle of the proletariat in the capitalist society against the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Outside of this struggle between two completely discrete social classes, socialism cannot be realized—neither through the propaganda of the most ingenious creator of a socialist utopia nor through peasant wars or revolutionary

²⁶ *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat, Soziales aus Russland*, p. 50. (R.L.)

conspiracies. The Polish socialists, as we saw, based their formal program on these basic principles and wanted to center their activity on the class struggle of the proletariat. Essentially, however, they failed the ABC's of socialism in the above-cited document as badly as the Russian Narodniki.

As soon as our revolutionaries took over the view of the Russian Narodniki that the Russian state was not tied to any social class, was "floating on air," and that this state could therefore easily be overthrown by a conspiracy, they artificially separated their political struggle from the rest of their socialist activities. They separated the struggle with the government, which they viewed as the particular task of the conspirators' party, from socialist agitation and the class struggle, which they saw as the task of the working class in Poland. This conception conforms to the categorical division of the tasks of the party into 1) "propaganda and social-revolutionary agitation" and 2) "struggle with the government at its center," as stated in the cited resolutions.

We mentioned previously that it is a characteristic of Blanquism that it views political power as the means for a social transformation, independent of both social development and the class struggle. Although the Polish socialists did not accept this theory in its common form—indeed, as we have already seen, they worked consciously and with great conviction from the standpoint that "the liberation of the working class can only be accomplished by the working class itself"—they did, in fact, assume a Blanquist stance when they unconsciously but factually accepted the views of the Narodniki about the Russian state. The hope for the possibility of carrying out a socialist overthrow directly, without going through the bourgeois-parliamentary phase, had to be the logical result of their position.

Actually the Party publications show this development in their perspective very early. In the Polish magazine *Proletariat*—five numbers of which were published on a secret printing press between September 1883 and May 1884—a characteris-

tically (for conspiratorial socialism and anarchism) ironic sarcasm toward the "bourgeois freedom" of liberalism is apparent. While the second number of *Proletariat* contains the satirical poem "A Liberal Hymn to the Year 1880 in Expectation of a Constitution," we find in the lead article of the same edition the following original viewpoint concerning the advantages of the "new slogan" which had just been adopted by the Party:

The struggle, which has already begun, has still a third advantage: it throws the bourgeoisie into the arms of the government with the hope that the government's almighty support can save them from the enemy who is trying to destroy their privileges. The struggle welds these two elements even tighter and makes them a single enemy of the working class no longer hidden behind a mask of empty phrases.

At first glance it is puzzling how, in the earliest stages of the socialist movement where even the most elementary democratic freedoms are nonexistent, the growing reaction of the bourgeoisie can be viewed as a favorable development. When the bourgeoisie throws itself into the arms of the government, it prolongs the existence of czarism and at the same time fortifies all of those things which, in the words of the program of the Proletariat, "impede the development of the workers' consciousness, which make impossible the propaganda and mass organization necessary for laying a foundation for the future construction of a socialist order."

But the standpoint of the program of 1882 was, as we have seen, no longer that of the Party in 1883, and the position from which the Party evaluated political phenomena was now completely different:

It [the reaction of the bourgeoisie—R.L.] does of course make the struggle more difficult at first in that it alienates large circles of neutrals and even many of those who are actually dissatisfied with the government. It does, however, create firmer foundations for the struggle. It gives the struggle a direction and thereby prevents that seduction of the masses by the ruling

classes which was either possible or actually practiced until the outbreak of the struggle. At the same time it guards against an adulteration of the revolutionary movement.

The standard for the evaluation of political conditions is here no longer the indispensability of gradual organization of the masses, i.e., the requirements of the daily struggle, but rather the regard for the moment of "outbreak," the immediate preparation of the social revolution.

This view of the situation of socialism in Poland coincides harmoniously with the *Proletariat's* view of the situation in Russia and of the activity of the Narodnaya Volya. As a result of the terrorist attacks of the latter, "a high opinion of the strength of the revolutionaries is formed by the people, so that they must finally begin to ask themselves whether it might not be better to align themselves with the revolutionaries, whether these would not return the lands, forests, and pastures to the people. It is up to the revolutionaries to say 'yes' to the people, and the fate of the revolution is decided."²⁷

"Indeed," one must remark with Engels, "an easier and more pleasant revolution could not be imagined." No longer is there discussion about the preparatory work of enlightenment and organization of the working class. On the contrary, one postulates that the mass of the people have an inherent inclination toward change in the social order. From this viewpoint, all the partial changes within the existing system of government, such as democratization of the state, naturally appear to be insignificant trivialities and a waste of time. In the third number of October 20, 1883, we see the following declaration in the article "We and the Bourgeoisie":

The masses [of working people—R.L.] recognize their inability to carry out a coup—they are looking for men whom they can trust, to whom they can entrust their leadership. Until then, they remain silent. Who if not us could and should win this trust! However, in order to win it, we must show by our deeds that we are the enemies of their tyrants, that we do not shrink

²⁷ *Proletariat*, No. 2 (October 1, 1883). From Russia. (R.L.)

from the battle which we are today carrying on in their behalf, that we are trying to give to the masses that which belongs to them, and that only therefore do we reject that game of the bourgeois parliaments in which an unenlightened majority gives the decision about the overthrow into the hands of its enemies. Thus, it seems to us that an energetic provisional government—made up solely of socialists—is the best guarantee of as complete a transfer of property to the working class as is possible.

That is a classic statement of belief in the Blanquist spirit—the contrasting of a “provisional government of socialists” with the “game of the bourgeois parliaments”—in which the political program in its actual significance is fully ignored.

In the same vein, the manifesto of the French Blanquists, published in 1874 in London, announces, “We are communists because we want to arrive at our goals without having to stop at intermediate stages, at compromises, which only delay victory and prolong slavery. . . .”²⁸

In his critique of this manifesto (which bore the signatures of thirty-three Blanquists), Friedrich Engels stated,

The German communists are communists because they see and strive toward their final goal through all of those intermediate stages and compromises which are created not by themselves, but by historical development. That final goal is the abolition of classes and the construction of a society in which private ownership of land and the means of production no longer exist. These thirty-three are communists because they imagine that if they only have the good will to skip over all the intermediate stages and compromises, they can. And if, as is of course certain, things “break loose” tomorrow and they come to power, why then by the day after tomorrow “communism will have been established.” If that is not immediately possible, then they are not communists. Such childish naiveté, citing impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!

The fourth number of *Proletariat* shows certain variations with respect to a return to Social Democratic views. In the article “We and the Government,” we read:

²⁸ *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat. Zwei Fluchtlingskundgebungen*, p. 45. (R.L.)

However, until the final phase of struggle our movement will have to pass through various stages. One of the main tasks of our preparatory work is the struggle against the attacks of governments which, representing the interests of the bourgeoisie, persecute us, i.e., we must defend political freedom from this base conspiracy against the desires of the people. Yet political freedom has not protected the people from oppression; we value it for another reason: In order to be successful, our activity needs daylight in which it can develop wide and free. Only when forced to does it become a secret conspiracy. Under conditions of political freedom, an effect on the masses is achieved more easily, their consciousness is more quickly awakened, they gather more quickly around the banner of the social idea, and their organization becomes possible to a very high degree. The struggle with the political difficulties set before us by governments must be especially tenacious where political oppression rules in its primal and most shameless form, where complete arbitrariness governs, where the most primitive human rights are totally ignored. Here, the overthrow of the government must be one of the main points of the socialist program of action.

On the basis of the above quotation, it could appear that the Proletariat Party did understand the necessity of winning political freedoms before the "outbreak" in order to make agitation and organization possible in greater measure. But here too the strongly onesided and flat, formalistic evaluation of political freedoms merely as technical aids for the activities of the socialists is obvious. The objective, historical side of the parliamentary-bourgeois forms of government as an indispensable stage in the development of the capitalist society is totally ignored. Since parliamentary democracy is viewed only as an external means of facilitating preparations for the "outbreak," the logical conclusion that the struggle for the realization of democratic forms is a necessary and primary task of the working class is not needed. On the contrary, the view remains that the winning of these freedoms is, to be sure, a pleasant development which cannot be rejected, but which, if necessary, can be foregone.

These are essentially the conclusions which the *Proletariat*

draws in the second part of the article "We and the Government," which appeared in the fifth and last number of its Warsaw magazine:

Should the government—having been frightened by the progress of our revolutionary work—approach our more or less patriotic bourgeoisie and make a few political-national concessions to it in order to bring it into a common struggle against us—well, please do. We will certainly not protest against such concessions. But we will make an effort to use all of that which was done for the bourgeoisie against it and the government.

An even clearer representation of this pure Blanquist conception of political freedoms appears in the closing section of the same article, where conclusions are drawn from the two fundamental articles: "We conclude: The present state has a single basic significance for us. Since the state ties its existence closely to the maintenance of the existing economic system, it defends the privileged classes and oppresses and persecutes the parties which strive for social liberation. Destroying the governmental apparatus simply means toppling the barrier which stands between us and our goal."

The discussion here is no longer about despotic government but about the "present state." Thus, the peculiarly Russian form of government is identified with the institution of the class state as such. Therefore, the task of the socialist party is not primarily the progressive reform of governmental institutions but rather the "destruction of the governmental apparatus," i.e., the direct overthrow of the government which, since it is based on class rule, is a fortress of the bourgeois system of domination.

Finally, in 1884, after Ludwik Waryński had been arrested and had disappeared from the field of battle, the development in political thought criticized here appears in full regalia in the most important document of the Party's history, the formal agreement with the *Narodnaya Volya*. This contract which, as usual, officially recognizes the connections between the Polish and Russian socialist movements only long after they had ac-

tually been established, is an excellent counterpart to the earlier "Appeal to the Russian Comrades." It shows the long path of political change which Polish socialism covered in the short period between the end of 1881 and the beginning of 1884.

In the report of the central committee of the Proletariat to the executive committee of the Narodnaya Volya, we find the declaration that the

fighting units [of the Proletariat Party—R.L.] which have been trained and organized for battle should be deployed at the proper moment as reinforcements to aid in the overthrow of the existing government and the seizure of power by the central committee. The central committee itself will be based upon the masses, since it will be the only true representative of their interests, and will institute a series of economic and political reforms through which the existing concepts of property will be forever discredited. The central committee will carry out that part of the socialist program whose realization at the moment of overthrow is possible.²⁹

Here the overthrow of the "existing government" (*pravitelstvo*), i.e., czarism, is obviously conceived as the direct prelude to social revolution. The struggle against despotism completely loses its character as a daily struggle on the soil of bourgeois social order. The distance between the minimal demands and the final goal, between the political program and the program of socialist overthrow, disappears and the daily activity becomes mere speculation about the impending "outbreak" which will immediately usher in the social transformation.

In accord with this, the central committee discusses the details of the "outbreak," promises not to begin the "overthrow of the state" (*gosudarstvjennyi perevorod*) until the signal from the executive committee of the Narodnaya Volya, reserves for itself independence "in its creative work" after the overthrow, etc.

Enough. We have here, despite the views on class struggle, mass action, etc., which are stressed in other parts of the docu-

²⁹ *Wjestnik Narodnoj Woli*, No. 4, 1885, p. 242. (R.L.)

ment, a typical Blanquist program. Thus, this document, which crowns the practical realization of that idea which was expressed in the "Appeal to the Russian Comrades," is also the end point of a series of gradual changes within Polish socialism.

Summary of Parts V-VII

*The change in the program of the Proletariat Party naturally implied a change in the forms of its activity. Since the conspiracy must be conspiratorial, a decrease in mass actions, mass meetings, and propaganda follows logically. This implies a "revolutionary division of roles [which] corresponds to that of ancient Greek tragedy: individuals act and the masses form the chorus, the passive echo of their acts."*³⁰ Such a relation is entirely foreign to Marx's dictum that the liberation of the workers must be their own act; but it follows from the conspiratorial logic. Rosa Luxemburg attacks its consequences, examining the role of the Proletariat in two large strikes in which it was involved, and showing how it was unable to use the spontaneous energy of the masses to build an ongoing movement:

In order to do that, the Party would have had to understand that it had to give to the enraged mass of workers some immediately clear task, an action which they could directly understand. This would have happened if one had pointed out to the wronged woman workers and the fired man [in the two strike actions] that the greatest obstacle to the bettering of their material and social condition is their lack of political rights; if one had explained to them the necessity of organization for the daily struggle—the struggle both against the exploitation by individual capitalists and the struggle against the czarist regime for political freedom. In a word, the Party could have begun a durable mass agitation if, from the beginning, it had had a program for the daily struggle—the economic and the political—a program that was adequate for a mass action.

The conspiratorial action which the Proletariat had adopted was, however, essentially inimical to such political action.

Correlative to the underestimation of the role of the masses is the under-

³⁰ The same Greek tragedy metaphor comes up again in Part VIII of the "Mass Strike" essay.

estimation of the day-to-day political aspect of the revolution.³¹ Along with every Marxist before 1917, Rosa Luxemburg believed that Russia would have to undergo a bourgeois revolution before a socialist one would be possible. This bourgeois revolution would be made by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, with the latter as leading force, preventing the bourgeoisie from backsliding, as had the German bourgeoisie in 1848. In order to play this role, the proletariat had to learn to understand and utilize the devices of bourgeois parliamentarism and civil liberties. Thus it is absurd to attack the ideas of liberalism and bourgeois democracy before they have become a reality. It is absurd to believe that the revolution can be made "without stopping at by-stations, without compromises." Such ideas are utopian. What is needed is a program which will educate the masses, a program like that of Social Democracy, with its minimal and maximal demands, in which the minimal program serves as a stepping stone and a mediation on the way to the socialist revolution.

The Proletariat, however, still believed itself to be Marxist, even though its program was more and more Blanquist. This coupling of Marxism and Blanquism is not unusual, notes Rosa Luxemburg. Blanquist tactics, because they are based on no theory, can be just as well coupled with Marxism as with the populism of the *Narodnaya Volya*. What is decisive in the case of the Proletariat is that though it accepted the Marxist notion of stages of economic development leading toward socialism—and thus accepted the need for a bourgeois economic development—it did not accept the need for bourgeois political conditions. This neglect of the political aspect is just another side of the Proletariat's Blanquist misunderstanding of the role of the masses. "In a word, it conceived of the organization of the working class as an artificial product of the class struggle, to which socialist agitation adds only consciousness."

The decline of the Proletariat follows from the weaknesses discussed. By 1885, the Proletariat was seriously discussing whether one kills the

³¹ Rosa Luxemburg often uses the term "political" in two senses. In this case, "political" refers to the development of what might be called "bourgeois political institutions," as well as the class and political consciousness which the proletariat acquires in discovering the utilization and limitation of these institutions. A second sense of "political," that of the Blanquist, is the "political revolution" in which the conspirators capture the political center of power and try to institute socialist measures. The limitations of such "politics" had already been discussed by Rosa Luxemburg.

ruling class after the revolution has begun, or whether their deaths mark the beginning of the revolution. This, says Rosa Luxemburg, is "vulgar revolutionism," "childishness." The revolution will of course demand violence; but violence is not the essence of revolution. The stress on violence in the Blanquist theory is due to its theoretical inadequacies. These same theoretical inadequacies are responsible for another sign of the impending demise of the Proletariat: its tendency to speculate about the future society which will be created after the revolution—as if somehow the revolution would make a tabula rasa from which one's imagination could create what it wished.

For Rosa Luxemburg, the declining Proletariat and its actions are not really part of the history of Polish socialism. The first phase of that history ended in 1884 with the Proletariat's becoming Blanquist, and with Waryński's speech before his judges in which he insisted that terror was only a means, and a means only applicable in certain conditions. Though Waryński made errors in his leadership of the Proletariat, these errors were based on a false appreciation of the situation, and stand on the same level as those of Marx and Engels in their appreciation of the revolutions of 1848. Within the limits of his analysis, Waryński acted consistently and in accord with Social Democracy. What is needed today, concludes Rosa Luxemburg, is a party which is consistently Social Democratic, and which correctly understands the nature and limitations of its position in Congress Poland, and, secondly, a Russian socialism which is also Social Democratic. These conditions, she thinks, are realized with the development of the Social Democracy of the Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) of which she was a leader.

Translated by Tom Herbst
Summary of Parts V–VII by Dick Howard

The Eight-Hour Day at the Party Congress

An extensive debate concerning the eight-hour day followed the report on parliamentary activity at our Party Congress last Wednesday and Thursday. It is true, it ended with the usual referral of demands to our parliamentary delegation. But I hope our representatives have nevertheless gathered from this debate that their procedure concerning the eight-hour day has caused a certain dissatisfaction in large segments of the Party. This debate, started by Comrade Eichhorn and many delegates from Berlin, was therefore quite useful. But it perhaps missed a few important points.

It would indeed grotesquely minimize the issue of our parliamentary tactics concerning the eight-hour day if we turned it into a mere question of the Reichstag's order of business, as some of our representatives did at the Congress. Even admitting that the ordinary mortal comrade may lack the correct understanding of this mysterious and complicated matter called the Reichstag order of business, nevertheless, the order of business can only decide *when* and in what *form* we present the demand for an eight-hour day to the Reichstag. In our view, however, the heart of the matter is that our representatives are not asking for the *eight-hour day* at all, but so far only for the *ten-hour day*!

Comrade Rosenov's report on parliamentary activity as well as Comrade Edmund Fischer's remarks made it clear that our delegation considers it a mere formality and narrow pedantry

Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 156-60. Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, September 19, 1902.

to distinguish between demanding an eight-hour bill or a ten-hour bill with the prospect of a later eight-hour bill. But in fact this is not a matter of form, but of essential tactics.

It is clear that you must not demand a ten-hour day if you want the eight-hour day. Do the contrary and you'll do well: if there is any possibility of getting legislation to limit working time to *ten* hours, it is only by constantly pressing for an eight-hour day. All our experiences point this up. Only by demanding from bourgeois society *all* that it is capable of granting have we succeeded here and there in obtaining a small part. It is a very new principle of so-called "practical politics" in our party to hope, on the contrary, to get great effects through modest and moderate demands.

Therefore we consider Bebel's argument, cited by Edmund Fischer, as completely wrong. Bebel suggests: we will demand the ten-hour day in order to force the bourgeois parties to prove they meant their often repeated promises of this reform. No matter how popular and appealing this tactical turn may seem, it altogether misses the mark. Nobody can possibly believe that our too extreme demands made it impossible for the bourgeois parties to show their good will. On the contrary, everyone knows very well that the bourgeois majority of the Reichstag could be absolutely certain of our support if ever they wanted to put through a bill for just the ten-hour day. No, it is exactly by demanding the eight-hour bill that we can force the bourgeoisie to show its good will at least with a more modest reform. Here as in other cases, it is only our pressure, our pushing the bourgeois reforms to extremes, which squeezes a quarter ounce of "good will" out of the bourgeoisie. It is obviously bad logic to count on bringing its so-called good will out by taking the pressure off.

It is true that our faction has by no means formally given up its demand for the eight-hour day, but it also has kept it only *formally*. The Social Democratic Party has been the only party consistently to stick to the unamended eight-hour bill. If even our Party now postpones this bill in favor of a different, more

easily achievable bill, we thereby admit its present impossibility. In that case, it is evident that bourgeois society will no longer consider this reform at all. Put off until some time in the future, put after the more easily realized demand for the ten-hour bill, the eight-hour day will in fact be removed from practical politics for us. We must not deceive ourselves about this.

However, the legal eight-hour day is one of the demands on our minimal program, i.e., it is the very least minimum of social reform which we, as representatives of the workers' interests, must demand and expect from the present state. The fragmentation of even these minimal demands into still smaller morsels goes against all our tactics. We must make our minimum demands in unamended form. Even if we are ready to accept *any* installment, we must leave it to the bourgeois parties themselves to whittle down our demands to fit their interests.

If, on the other hand, we choose the way our delegation has taken concerning the eight-hour day, we stop being the party of the most advanced social progress. Indeed, how do we look even now with our ten-hour bill, compared to the petition of the Christian Miners' Association of Upper Silesia for the eight-hour day? And above all, in how awkward a position do we put our unions! They are already fighting for the nine-hour or eight-hour day and have even pushed it through here and there.

But let us leave aside all practical considerations. The changing of our minimal demands into the yet smaller coin of *bourgeois* demands, as we see in the question at hand, is also distressing because it shows a dangerous tendency. The remarks of our delegates Rosenov, Edmund Fischer, and others showed beyond any doubt that they have simply been hypnotized into believing that there is *no prospect* of the Reichstag passing the eight-hour bill. But if we *ourselves* start believing that our demands are excessive and practically impossible, then we are making the saddest moral concession to bourgeois society.

We do not have much hope that the proposals referred to our representatives will immediately influence their procedure in the Reichstag. There is all the more reason to heed the excellent arguments of Comrade Zetkin that the heart of our fight for the eight-hour day must be outside: in the country, in agitation, not in the Reichstag. In this issue too, our parliamentary actions must be prompted and given the necessary impetus by the great mass of workers. And the latter know no diplomatic tricks: they stand fast by the cause of the eight-hour day, a cause that international Social Democracy has pleaded for decades, a cause for which twelve May Days have been celebrated with heavy sacrifices.

Translated by Rosmarie Waldrop

Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle

“Why are there no organizations for working women in Germany? Why do we hear so little about the working women’s movement?” With these questions, Emma Ihrer, one of the founders of the proletarian women’s movement of Germany, introduced her 1898 essay, “Working Women in the Class Struggle.” Hardly fourteen years have passed since, but they have seen a great expansion of the proletarian women’s movement. More than a hundred fifty thousand women are organized in unions and are among the most active troops in the economic struggle of the proletariat. Many thousands of politically organized women have rallied to the banner of Social Democracy: the Social Democratic women’s paper [*Die Gleichheit*, edited by Clara Zetkin] has more than one hundred thousand subscribers; women’s suffrage is one of the vital issues on the platform of Social Democracy.

Exactly these facts might lead you to underrate the importance of the fight for women’s suffrage. You might think: even without equal political rights for women we have made enormous progress in educating and organizing women. Hence, women’s suffrage is not urgently necessary. If you think so, you are deceived. The political and syndical awakening of the masses of the female proletariat during the last fifteen years has been magnificent. But it has been possible only because working women took a lively interest in the political and parliamentary struggles of their class in spite of being deprived of

Speech at the Second Social Democratic Women’s Rally, Stuttgart, May 12, 1912.
Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 433–41.

their rights. So far, proletarian women are sustained by male suffrage, which they indeed take part in, though only indirectly. Large masses of both men and women of the working class already consider the election campaigns a cause they share in common. In all Social Democratic electoral meetings, women make up a large segment, sometimes the majority. They are always interested and passionately involved. In all districts where there is a firm Social Democratic organization, women help with the campaign. And it is women who have done invaluable work distributing leaflets and getting subscribers to the Social Democratic press, this most important weapon in the campaign.

The capitalist state has not been able to keep women from taking on all these duties and efforts of political life. Step by step, the state has indeed been forced to grant and guarantee them this possibility by allowing them union and assembly rights. Only the last political right is denied women: the right to vote, to decide directly on the people's representatives in legislature and administration, to be an elected member of these bodies. But here, as in all other areas of society, the motto is: "Don't let things get started!" But things have been started. The present state gave in to the women of the proletariat when it admitted them to public assemblies, to political associations. And the state did not grant this voluntarily, but out of necessity, under the irresistible pressure of the rising working class. It was not least the passionate pushing ahead of the proletarian women themselves which forced the Prusso-German police state to give up the famous "women's section"¹ in gatherings of political associations and to open wide the doors of political organizations to women. This really set the ball rolling. The irresistible progress of the proletarian class struggle has swept working women right into the whirlpool of political life. Using their right of union and assembly, prole-

¹ The "women's section" had been instituted in 1902 by the Prussian Minister von Hammerstein. According to this disposition, a special section of the room was reserved for women at political meetings.

tarian women have taken a most active part in parliamentary life and in election campaigns. It is only the inevitable consequence, only the logical result of the movement that today millions of proletarian women call defiantly and with self-confidence: *Let us have suffrage!*

Once upon a time, in the beautiful era of pre-1848 absolutism, the whole working class was said not to be “mature enough” to exercise political rights. This cannot be said about proletarian women today, because they have demonstrated their political maturity. Everybody knows that without them, without the enthusiastic help of proletarian women, the Social Democratic Party would not have won the glorious victory of January 12, [1912], would not have obtained four and a quarter million votes. At any rate, the working class has always had to prove its maturity for political freedom by a successful revolutionary uprising of the masses. Only when Divine Right on the throne and the best and noblest men of the nation actually felt the calloused fist of the proletariat on their eyes and its knee on their chests, only then did they feel confidence in the political “maturity” of the people, and felt it with the speed of lightning. Today, it is the proletarian woman’s turn to make the capitalist state conscious of her maturity. This is done through a constant, powerful mass movement which has to use all the means of proletarian struggle and pressure.

Women’s suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but is a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat. Germany’s present lack of rights for women is only one link in the chain of the reaction that shackles the people’s lives. And it is closely connected with the other pillar of the reaction: the monarchy. In advanced capitalist, highly industrialized, twentieth-century Germany, in the age of electricity and airplanes, the absence of women’s political rights is as much a reactionary remnant of the dead past as the reign by Divine Right on the throne. Both phenomena—the instrument of heaven as the leading political power, and woman, demure by the fire-

side, unconcerned with the storms of public life, with politics and class struggle—both phenomena have their roots in the rotten circumstances of the past, in the times of serfdom in the country and guilds in the towns. In those times, they were justifiable and necessary. But both monarchy and women's lack of rights have been uprooted by the development of modern capitalism, have become ridiculous caricatures. They continue to exist in our modern society, not just because people forgot to abolish them, not just because of the persistence and inertia of circumstances. No, they still exist because both—monarchy as well as women without rights—have become powerful tools of interests inimical to the people. The worst and most brutal advocates of the exploitation and enslavement of the proletariat are entrenched behind throne and altar as well as behind the political enslavement of women. Monarchy and women's lack of rights have become the most important tools of the ruling capitalist class.

In truth, our state is interested in keeping the vote from working women and from them alone. It rightly fears they will threaten the traditional institutions of class rule, for instance militarism (of which no thinking proletarian woman can help being a deadly enemy), monarchy, the systematic robbery of duties and taxes on groceries, etc. Women's suffrage is a horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stand millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within, i.e., revolutionary Social Democracy. If it were a matter of bourgeois ladies voting, the capitalist state could expect nothing but effective support for the reaction. Most of those bourgeois women who act like lionesses in the struggle against "male prerogatives" would trot like docile lambs in the camp of conservative and clerical reaction if they had suffrage. Indeed, they would certainly be a good deal more reactionary than the male part of their class. Aside from the few who have jobs or professions, the women of the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but co-consumers of the surplus value their men extort from the proletariat.

They are parasites of the parasites of the social body. And co-consumers are usually even more rabid and cruel in defending their "right" to a parasite's life than the direct agents of class rule and exploitation. The history of all great revolutionary struggles confirms this in a horrible way. Take the great French Revolution. After the fall of the Jacobins, when Robespierre was driven in chains to the place of execution the naked whores of the victory-drunk bourgeoisie danced in the streets, danced a shameless dance of joy around the fallen hero of the Revolution. And in 1871, in Paris, when the heroic workers' Commune was defeated by machine guns, the raving bourgeois females surpassed even their bestial men in their bloody revenge against the suppressed proletariat. The women of the property-owning classes will always fanatically defend the exploitation and enslavement of the working people by which they indirectly receive the means for their socially useless existence.

Economically and socially, the women of the exploiting classes are not an independent segment of the population. Their only social function is to be tools of the natural propagation of the ruling classes. By contrast, the women of the proletariat are economically independent. They are productive for society like the men. By this I do not mean their bringing up children or their housework which helps men support their families on scanty wages. This kind of work is not productive in the sense of the present capitalist economy no matter how enormous an achievement the sacrifices and energy spent, the thousand little efforts add up to. This is but the private affair of the worker, his happiness and blessing, and for this reason nonexistent for our present society. As long as capitalism and the wage system rule, only that kind of work is considered productive which produces surplus value, which creates capitalist profit. From this point of view, the music-hall dancer whose legs sweep profit into her employer's pocket is a productive worker, whereas all the toil of the proletarian women and mothers in the four walls of their homes is considered

unproductive. This sounds brutal and insane, but corresponds exactly to the brutality and insanity of our present capitalist economy. And seeing this brutal reality clearly and sharply is the proletarian woman's first task.

For, exactly from this point of view, the proletarian women's claim to equal political rights is anchored in firm economic ground. Today, millions of proletarian women create capitalist profit like men—in factories, workshops, on farms, in home industry, offices, stores. They *are* therefore productive in the strictest scientific sense of our present society. Every day enlarges the hosts of women exploited by capitalism. Every new progress in industry or technology creates new places for women in the machinery of capitalist profiteering. And thus, every day and every step of industrial progress adds a new stone to the firm foundation of women's equal political rights. Female education and intelligence have become necessary for the economic mechanism itself. The narrow, secluded woman of the patriarchal "family circle" answers the needs of industry and commerce as little as those of politics. It is true, the capitalist state has neglected its duty even in this respect. So far, it is the unions and the Social Democratic organizations that have done most to awaken the minds and moral sense of women. Even decades ago, the Social Democrats were known as the most capable and intelligent German workers. Likewise, unions and Social Democracy have today lifted the women of the proletariat out of their stuffy, narrow existence, out of the miserable and petty mindlessness of household managing. The proletarian class struggle has widened their horizons, made their minds flexible, developed their thinking, shown them great goals for their efforts. Socialism has brought about the mental rebirth of the mass of proletarian women—and thereby has no doubt also made them capable productive workers for capital.

Considering all this, the proletarian woman's lack of political rights is a vile injustice, and the more so for being by now at least half a lie. After all, masses of women take an active

part in political life. However, Social Democracy does not use the argument of “injustice.” This is the basic difference between us and the earlier sentimental, utopian socialism. We do not depend on the justice of the ruling classes, but solely on the revolutionary power of the working masses and on the course of social development which prepares the ground for this power. Thus, injustice by itself is certainly not an argument with which to overthrow reactionary institutions. If, however, there is a feeling of injustice in large segments of society—says Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of scientific socialism—it is always a sure sign that the economic bases of the society have shifted considerably, that the present conditions contradict the march of development. The present forceful movement of millions of proletarian women who consider their lack of political rights a crying wrong is such an infallible sign, a sign that the social bases of the reigning system are rotten and that its days are numbered.

A hundred years ago, the Frenchman Charles Fourier, one of the first great prophets of socialist ideals, wrote these memorable words: In any society, the degree of female emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation.² This is completely true for our present society. The current mass struggle for women’s political rights is only an expression and a part of the proletariat’s general struggle for liberation. In this lies its strength and its future. Because of the female proletariat, general, equal, direct suffrage for women would immensely advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle. This is why bourgeois society abhors and fears women’s suffrage. And this is why we want and will achieve it. Fighting for women’s suffrage, we will also hasten the coming of the hour when the present society falls in ruins under the hammer strokes of the revolutionary proletariat.

Translated by Rosmarie Waldrop

² Though Rosa Luxemburg could not have known it, Karl Marx cites these same words in the third of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* when he discusses the nature of communist society.

Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions

I

Almost all previous writings and pronouncements of international socialism on the subject of the mass strike date from the time before the Russian Revolution [of 1905—D.H.], the first historical experiment with this means of struggle on a very large scale. This explains why they are, for the most part, out of date. Their standpoint is essentially that of Friedrich Engels' 1873 criticism of the revolutionism of the Bakuninists in Spain:

In the Bakuninists' program, the general strike is the lever which will be used to introduce the social revolution. One fine morning all the workers in every industry in a country, or perhaps in every country, will cease work and thereby, in at most four weeks, will compel the propertied classes either to submit or to launch an attack on the workers so that the latter then will have the right to defend themselves and may use the opportunity to overthrow the entire old society. The proposal is far from being new: French and then Belgian socialists have paraded it continually since 1848, though it is of English origin. During the rapid and powerful development of Chartism among the English workers that followed the crisis of 1837, the "holy month"—a suspension of work on a national scale—was preached as early as 1839, and was received with such favor that in July 1842 the factory workers of the north of England attempted to carry it out.¹ And at the Congress of the Alliancists at Geneva on Sep-

Text from *Politische Schriften*, I (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 135–228. The text here is that of the first edition. Passages eliminated from the second edition are set in brackets; additions to the second edition are in footnotes. Rosa Luxemburg's own footnotes are marked "R.L."

¹ Cf. Engels, *Lage der arbeitenden Klasse*, 2nd ed., p. 234. (R.L.)

tember 1, 1873, the general strike played a great part. But it was admitted on all sides that to carry it out it was necessary to have a perfect organization of the working class and a full strike fund. And therein lies the crux of the question. On the one hand, the governments, especially if they are encouraged by the workers' abstention from political action, will never allow the organization nor the funds of the workers to become large enough, and on the other hand, political events and the encroachments of the ruling classes will bring about the liberation of the workers long before the proletariat get to the point of forming this ideal organization and this colossal reserve fund. But if they had these, they would not need to use the roundabout way of the general strike in order to attain their goal. (Friedrich Engels, *Internationales aus dem Volksstaat, Die Bakunisten an der Arbeit*, p. 20.)

Here we have the argumentation that determined the attitude of international Social Democracy toward the mass strike in the following decades. It answers the anarchist theory of the general strike—that is, the theory of the general strike as a means of inaugurating the social revolution, in contradistinction to the daily political struggle of the working class—and it exhausts itself in the following simple dilemma: either the proletariat as a whole is not yet in possession of the powerful organization and financial resources required, in which case it cannot carry through the general strike; or it is already powerfully enough organized, in which case it does not need the general strike. This reasoning is so simple and at first glance so irrefutable that, for a quarter of a century, it has rendered excellent service to the modern labor movement as a logical weapon against anarchist pipe dreams and as a means of carrying the idea of political struggle to the widest circles of workers. The enormous strides taken by the labor movement in all modern countries during the last twenty-five years are the most convincing evidence of the value of the tactics of political struggle on which Marx and Engels insisted in opposition to Bakuninism. And the present power of German Social Democracy, in its position of vanguard of the entire interna-

tional labor movement, is in large part the direct product of the consistent and energetic applications of this tactic.

The Russian Revolution [of 1905—D.H.] has now submitted the above argumentation to a fundamental revision. For the first time in the history of the class struggle it has achieved a grandiose realization of the idea of the mass strike and—as we shall discuss in detail below—has brought the idea of the mass strike to maturity, and therewith opened a new epoch in the development of the labor movement. Of course, it does not follow from this that the tactics of political struggle recommended by Marx and Engels were false, or that their criticism of anarchism was incorrect. On the contrary, it is the same train of thought, the same method—that of the Marx-Engelsian tactics—which lay at the foundations of the previous practice of German Social Democracy, and which now in the Russian Revolution is producing new moments and new conditions of the class struggle.

The Russian Revolution, which is the first historical experiment on the model of the mass strike, does not in the least imply a vindication of anarchism but actually means the *historical liquidation of anarchism*. The sorry existence to which this intellectual tendency was condemned in recent decades by the powerful development of Social Democracy in Germany may, to a certain extent, be explained by the exclusive dominion and long duration of the parliamentary period. A tendency patterned entirely upon the “first blow” and on “direct action,” a tendency “revolutionary” in the most naked pitchfork sense, may only temporarily languish in the calm of the parliamentary commonplace in order to come to life again and to unfold its inner strength in a return to the period of direct, open struggle, in a period of street revolution.

Russia appeared particularly apt to become the experimental field for the heroic deeds of anarchism. A country in which the proletariat had absolutely no political rights and an extremely weak organization, a many-colored complex of various population-strata with very different, chaotically interre-

lated interests, a low standard of education among the masses of the people, extreme bestiality in the use of violence on the part of the dominant regime—all this seemed explicitly created to raise anarchism to a sudden if perhaps short-lived power. And finally, Russia was the historical birthplace of anarchism.

But the fatherland of Bakunin was to become the graveyard of his teachings. Not only did and do the anarchists not stand at the head of the mass strike movement; not only does the whole political leadership of the revolutionary action and also of the mass strike lie in the hands of the Social Democratic organizations—who are bitterly opposed as “bourgeois parties” by the Russian anarchists—or partly in the hands of such socialist organizations as are more or less influenced by Social Democracy and more or less approximate to it (such as the terrorist party of the “Socialist Revolutionaries”), but the anarchists simply do not exist as a serious political tendency in the Russian Revolution. Only in a small Lithuanian town, Bi-
alystok, with particularly difficult conditions—a confused medley of different nationalities among the workers, an extremely scattered small-scale industry, a very oppressed proletariat—is there, among the seven or eight different revolutionary groups, a handful of half-grown “anarchists” who promote confusion and disarray among the workers to the best of their ability. And, lastly, in Moscow, and perhaps two or three other towns, a handful of people of this sort make themselves noticeable.

But apart from these few “revolutionary” groups, what is the actual role of anarchism in the Russian Revolution? It has become the banner for common thieves and plunderers. A large part of those innumerable thefts and acts of plunder of private persons which rise up in every period of depression and in every period of temporary defensiveness like a gloomy wave against the revolution, are carried out under the name of “anarcho-communism.” In the Russian Revolution, anarchism has not become the theory of the fighting proletariat,

but the ideological placard of the counter-revolutionary lumpenproletariat which, like a school of sharks, swims under the battleship of the revolution. And thus the historical career of anarchism is well nigh ended.

On the other hand, the mass strike in Russia has been realized not as a means of evading the political struggle of the working class, and especially parliamentarism, not as a means of jumping suddenly into the social revolution by means of a theatrical coup, but as a means of creating for the first time for the proletariat the conditions of daily political struggle, and especially of parliamentarism. The revolutionary struggle in Russia, in which the mass strikes came to be used as the most important weapon, is conducted by the working people, and especially by the proletariat, in order to achieve those political rights and conditions whose necessity and significance in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class Marx and Engels first pointed out, and for which they fought against anarchism in the International with all their might. Thus historical dialectics, the rock on which the whole teaching of Marxian socialism rests, has brought it about that today anarchism, with which the idea of the mass strike was indissolubly associated, has itself come to be opposed in practice to the mass strike. And, on the contrary, the mass strike, which was combated as the opposite of the political activity of the proletariat, appears today as the most powerful weapon in the struggle for political rights. If, therefore, the Russian Revolution makes imperative a fundamental revision in the old position of Marxism on the question of the mass strike, it is once again only Marxism whose general methods and viewpoints have thereby, in a new form, won the victory. The Moor's beloved can die only at the hand of the Moor.²

² These are Marx's own words, referring to the fact that only those who were capable of defending a theory were capable of overcoming that theory. Eduard Bernstein cites this statement, arguing that "it is finally none but Marx who is correct against Marx."

II

The first revision of the question of the mass strike which results from the Russian experience relates to the general *conception* of the problem. In Germany until now, the zealous advocates of an "attempt with the mass strike" of the stamp of Bernstein, Eisner, etc., as well as the strict opponents of such an attempt, as represented in the trade-union camp by, for example, Bömelburg, stand fundamentally on the same conception—the anarchist conception. Not only do the apparent polar opposites not mutually exclude each other, but, as always, condition and complete each other. Direct speculation on the "great *Kladderadatsch*"³ and on the social revolution is merely an external and inessential characteristic for the anarchist mode of thought. What is essential here is the totally abstract, unhistorical view of the mass strike, as of all the conditions of the proletarian struggle generally. For the anarchist only two things exist as material presuppositions of his "revolutionary" speculations: first, thin air, and second, the good will and courage to rescue humanity from the present capitalist vale of tears. Already sixty years ago the former led to the result that the mass strike was the shortest, most certain, and easiest means of springing into a better social future. Recently, the same mode of reasoning led to the speculation that the trade-union struggle was the only real "direct action of the masses" and thus the only revolutionary struggle—this, as is well known, is the most recent fad of the French and Italian "syndicalists." The fatal thing for anarchism has always been that the methods of struggle improvised out of thin air were not only a bill without the restaurant owner, that is, pure utopias, but that because they did not reckon with the despised, evil reality, the anarchists' revolutionary speculations unexpectedly became, in this evil reality, helpers of the reaction.

³ The German term *Kladderadatsch* literally means "a great noise." It was the term which August Bebel used habitually when referring to the beginning of the collapse of capitalism.

Those who wish to put the mass strike into effect in Germany on a given day, by the decision of an executive committee, base themselves on the same abstract, unhistorical point of view as those who, like the participants at the Cologne Trade-Union Congress,⁴ want to eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the world by prohibiting its "propaganda." Both tendencies proceed from the same, pure anarchist notion that the mass strike is merely a technical means of struggle which can be "decided" or "forbidden" at pleasure, according to one's knowledge and conscience, a kind of pocketknife which one keeps clasped in his pocket, "ready for all emergencies," or decides to unclasp and use. To be sure, the opponents of the mass strike do claim for themselves the merit of taking into consideration the historical grounds and material conditions of the present situation in Germany, as opposed to the "revolutionary romantics" who float in thin air and do not want to reckon with hard reality and its possibilities and impossibilities. "Facts and figures, figures and facts!" they cry, like Mr. Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times*. What the trade-union opponents of the mass strikes understand by "historical grounds" and "material conditions" are two kinds of things: on the one hand, the weakness of the proletariat; on the other hand, the strength of Prussian-German militarism.

The insufficiency of the workers' organizations and their strike fund, and the imposing Prussian bayonets—those are the "facts and figures" on which, in the present case, these trade-union leaders base their politics. Of course, the trade-union treasuries and the Prussian bayonets are material, and very historical phenomena. But, the conception which is based on them is no historical materialism in the sense of Marx;

⁴ The Cologne Trade-Union Congress of May 1905 took up the question of the mass strike after the Social Democratic Party Congress at Jena in January 1905 had passed a weak resolution favorable to the mass strike under certain conditions. The trade unionists were strongly opposed to the mass strike, which they feared would destroy their carefully built organization. At Cologne, they passed a resolution, 200 to 17, which amounted practically to prohibition of discussion of the mass strike.

rather, it is a policeman's materialism in the sense of Puttkamer. The representatives of the capitalist police-state reckon much, even exclusively, on the present factual power of the organized proletariat, as well as with the material power of the bayonets. And, from the comparative example of these two rows of figures the comforting conclusion will always be drawn: The revolutionary workers' movement is produced by individual demagogues and agitators; *ergo*, our jails and bayonets are a sufficient means of subduing the unpleasant "passing phenomenon."

The class-conscious German working class has at last grasped the humor of the policeman's theory which claims that the whole modern labor movement is an artificial, arbitrary product of a handful of unscrupulous "demagogues and agitators."

But it is exactly the same conception which expresses itself when a few worthy comrades unite to form a voluntary night-watchman society in order to warn the German working class against the dangerous agitation of some "revolutionary romantics" and their "mass strike propaganda"; or, on the other hand, when a noisy campaign of indignation is mounted by those who think that by means of some sort of "confidential" agreements of the executive committee of the Party with the General Commission of the trade unions the outbreak of the mass strike in Germany has been prevented. If it were a question of the inflammatory "propaganda" of the revolutionary romantics, or of confidential or open decisions of the party leaderships, then we would not yet have seen one single serious mass strike in Russia. As I already stressed in March 1905, in the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*,⁵ in no country had one so little thought of "propagating" or even "discussing" the mass strike as in Russia. And the isolated examples of decisions and agreements whereby the executive committee of the Russian party really sought to proclaim the mass strike of their own accord—

⁵ In the article "Eine Probe aufs Exempel," March 3, 1905.

such as the last attempt, in August of this year [1906—D.H.] after the dissolution of the Duma—were nearly complete failures. Therefore, if the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it is above all that the mass strike is not artificially “made,” not “decided” out of the blue, not “propagated,” but rather that it is an historical phenomenon which at a certain moment follows with historical necessity from the social relations.

The problem therefore cannot be understood and discussed by means of abstract speculations on the possibility or impossibility, the utility or the harmfulness of the mass strike. The specific moments and the specific social relations from which the mass strike grows in the present phase of the class struggle must be investigated. In other words, the problem can only be understood and discussed by means of *objective investigation* of the sources of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically necessary, and not through the *subjective criticism* of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable.

The absolute impossibility and the certain defeat, as well as the complete possibility and the indubitable victory of the mass strike, can be proved with just the same force in the thin air of abstract logical analysis. Therefore, the value of the proofs on both sides is the same—namely, none. It follows too that especially the fear of the “propagandizing” of the mass strike, which has even led to formal anathemas against those supposed guilty of this crime, is the product of a droll *quid pro quo*. It is just as impossible to “propagate” the mass strike as an abstract means of struggle as it is impossible to propagate the “revolution.” “Revolution” and “mass strike” are concepts which signify only an external form of the class struggle, and which have a sense and a content only in connection with determined political situations.

If anyone were to undertake to make the mass strike in general, as one form of proletarian action, the object of methodical agitation, and to go house to house peddling this “idea” in order gradually to win the working class to it, it would be as idle, as profitless, and as crazy an occupation as it would be to

seek to make the idea of the revolution or of the barricade struggle into the object of a particular agitation. The mass strike has now come to be a center of lively interest for the German and the international working class because it is a new form of struggle and as such is the certain symptom of a deep inner change in the class relations and the conditions of the class struggle. It is a sign of the healthy revolutionary instinct and the lively intelligence of the mass of the German proletariat that, despite the stubborn opposition of their trade-union leaders, they turn to the new problem with such warm interest. But this interest, the fine intellectual thirst and desire for revolutionary deeds on the part of the workers, cannot be satisfied through abstract mental gymnastics about the possibility or impossibility of the mass strike. Rather, one must make clear the development of the Russian Revolution, its international signification, the sharpening of the class oppositions in West Europe, the further political perspectives of the class struggle in Germany, the role and the tasks of the masses in the coming struggles. Only in this form will the discussion of the mass strike lead to the enlarging of the spiritual horizon of the proletariat, the sharpening of its class consciousness, the deepening of its mode of thought and the steeling of its energy.

From this point of view, the criminal proceedings, initiated by the opponents of "revolutionary romanticism"—because in treating this problem one does not adhere strictly to the text of the Jena resolution—appear in their entire ludicrousness.⁶ The "practical politicians" agree to this resolution if need be because they couple the mass strike with the fate of universal

⁶ At the Jena Party Congress in 1905 an ambiguous resolution submitted by Bebel was adopted, recognizing the mass strike as a possible weapon of the proletariat but limiting its application to purely defensive acts such as an eventual response to government action limiting suffrage rights or trade-union rights. This resolution was voted under the immediate impression of the January 1905 Revolution in Russia. Rosa Luxemburg was very active in defense of the resolution, even though she thought that it didn't go far enough. Still, she considered its adoption a victory for the left wing, and insisted on giving the most radical interpretation possible to the resolution, as is seen here. Her radical speeches at Jena led to a court case which resulted, in 1907, in her being sentenced to two months' imprisonment.

suffrage, and think that they can deduce from this 1) that the mass strike is of a purely defensive character; 2) that the mass strike itself is subordinate to parliamentarism, that [through the Jena resolution—D.H.] it is changed to a mere appendage of parliamentarism. The true essence of the Jena resolution in this context is, however, that in the present situation of Germany an assault by the prevailing reaction on suffrage rights would more than likely be the introductory moment to, and the signal of, that period of stormy political struggles in which the mass strike as a means of struggle would come into action for the first time in Germany.

But to seek to narrow and to artificially limit the social significance and the historical scope of the mass strike as a phenomenon and as a problem of the class struggle by the wording of a party resolution is an undertaking whose shortsightedness is the equal of the abovementioned veto of discussion at the Cologne Trade-Union Congress. In the resolution of the Jena Party Congress, German Social Democracy has officially taken notice of the fundamental change in the international conditions of the proletarian class struggle which are the result of the Russian Revolution, and has announced its capacity for revolutionary development, and its power of adaptation to the new demands of the coming phase of the class struggle. This is the significance of the Jena resolution.

Concerning the practical application of the mass strike in Germany, history will decide, just as it decided in Russia. In this history, Social Democracy and its decisions is, of course, an important factor—but only *one* factor among many.

Summary of Part III

Part III is largely a historical sketch of the development of the mass strike before and during the Russian Revolution. Rosa Luxemburg begins by emphasizing that the mass strike is not one single phenomenon, not the "political" mass strike of German schematism. In order to understand the Russian mass strikes, it is necessary to look at their historical origins, be-

ginning with the Petersburg mass strike of 1896. The Petersburg strike was a purely economic struggle, beginning almost accidentally, without organized leadership. The repressive measures of the government served to change the economic strike into a political one. Though the strike of 1896 failed, it led to a new strike in 1897 which won the eleven-hour day throughout Russia. The interrelation of the political and the economic, of defeat and victory, is typical of the mass strike development.

During the years leading up to the 1905 Revolution, the mass strike movement continued to grow, breaking out for seemingly accidental reasons, now economic, now political. Rosa Luxemburg presents a detailed history of the strike wave as it ebbed and flowed through Russia until 1904. Then, during 1904, with the czarist defeats in the Russo-Japanese war, the liberal bourgeoisie got into the act, circulating manifestos, giving democratic banquets and speeches. The movement of the liberals was soon repressed by the Czar and, "as free speech was forbidden, action took its place": the proletariat entered the scene once more. The Russian Social Democrats had grown strong during the ten years of strike action leading to 1905; yet they were still not in control of the movement. Rosa Luxemburg mocks those who think that this lack of control by Social Democracy means that the strikes did not take place "as they should have." The important point is that the masses were gaining experience, becoming conscious of their own interests. The leaders too were learning.

The formal beginning of the 1905 Revolution was political—the mass demonstration on January 22, before the palace of the Czar. But, with the growth of class consciousness, political action turned to economic struggle: the chains borne so peacefully for years suddenly became unbearable. The economic struggles had different objects—hours, working conditions, wages, etc.—and their form corresponded to the character of capital: they were divided into many small struggles. This did not mean that the political mass strike of January was a failure. What could that political strike have produced? Only an anarchist would believe that czarism could be brought to its knees in one action. To overthrow czarism, the proletariat needs political experience, education, and class consciousness. These are learned in struggle. Further, absolutism will not give way immediately to socialism; the bourgeois stage is needed. In order to overthrow absolutism, not only the proletariat but the other social classes as well must learn to

know their own class interests. "Thus, the problem which appears so simple and straightforward, which appears to be a purely mechanical problem—the overthrow of absolutism—demands a whole long social process, a total undermining of the social base: the lowest must turn upward and the highest downward, the seeming 'order' into a chaos, and out of the seeming 'anarchic' chaos a new order must be created."

The economic aspect of the Russian mass strikes which took place during the spring and summer of 1905 is thus seen to play an important role. The proletariat consolidates itself, becomes clear as to its goals. Further, the standard of living of the proletariat is improved by the economic struggles, for the majority of them were successful. Not only does the proletarian have a higher wage, but his shorter working hours give him time to develop his political education, to consolidate the lessons learned in struggle. And when the capitalists try to take back some of the concessions, this only provides an incitement to new struggles and to a further consciousness of the nature of the system.

The economic gains of the Russian proletariat at the beginning of the mass strike movement forced Russian capitalism to pass beyond the stage of primitive accumulation to a "modern, civilized stage." The ten-hour day exists now in Russia (though in Germany one still fights for it); a constitution has been won (though the German workers still demand one); the unions are recognized *de facto*, and their organizational work goes on (as opposed to the German notion that organization must precede action, not flow from it). These are positive signs.

Finally, the economic strikes again moved back to the political sphere, first with the demand for a legal eight-hour day. Demonstrations led to bloodshed, more demonstrations . . . and finally to barricade struggles. But this time the proletariat did not emerge victorious. The elections for the Duma were called in 1906, and the proletariat correctly boycotted them. Now a new period of 1904 liberalism—with its speeches and banquets—is on the agenda; the mass strike has temporarily receded, and the time for barricades and street revolution has not yet come. The stage is bare, awaiting a new movement.

IV

In the preceding section, we have attempted to sketch the history of the mass strike in Russia. Even a fleeting glance at

this history shows a picture of the mass strike which in no way resembles that which is usually found in discussions in Germany. Instead of the fixed and hollow schema of a sober political "action" executed with a prudent plan decided by the highest committees, we see a vibrant part of life in flesh and blood which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution. The mass strike is bound by a thousand veins to all parts of the revolution.

As the Russian Revolution shows it to us, the mass strike is such a changeable phenomenon that it reflects in itself all phases of the political and economic struggle, all stages and moments of the revolution. Its applicability, its effectiveness, and the moments of its origin change continually. It suddenly opens new, broad perspectives of revolution just where it seems to have come to a narrow pass; and it disappoints where one thought that he could reckon on it with full certitude. Now it flows like a broad billow over the whole land, now it divides itself into a gigantic net of thin streams; now it bubbles forth from under the ground like a fresh spring, now it trickles flat along the ground. Political and economic strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, demonstrative strikes and fighting strikes, general strikes in single branches and general strikes of individual cities, peaceful wage struggles and street massacres, barricade fighting—all these run through one another, next to each other, cross one another, flow in and over one another; it is an eternal moving, changing sea of appearances. And the law of movement of these phenomena is clear. It does not lie in the mass strike itself, not in its technical particularities, but in the political and social relation of the forces of the revolution. The mass strike is merely the form of the revolutionary struggle. Every fluctuation in the relations of the contending powers, in the development of the parties and the division of classes, in the position of the counter-revolution, influences the strike action immediately in a thousand invisible and scarcely controllable ways. But the strike action itself hardly ceases for a moment. It merely changes its forms, its dimension, and its

effect. It is the living pulse-beat of the revolution, and at the same time its most powerful driving wheel. In a word, the mass strike, as the Russian Revolution shows it to us, is not a crafty means discovered by subtle reasoning in order to make the proletarian struggle more effective, but it is *the mode of movement of the proletarian mass, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution.*

From the above, some general aspects may now be deduced in order to form a correct judgment of the problem of the mass strike.

1. It is completely absurd to think of the mass strike as an act, an isolated action. The mass strike is rather the sign, the totality-concept of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps decades. The innumerable and very different mass strikes which have taken place in Russia during the past four years show that the schema of the mass strike as a purely political, short, and isolated act, decided and called according to plan and with a given goal in mind, is simply one kind, and a subordinate one at that: the pure demonstrative strike. In the entire course of the five-year period in Russia we see only a few demonstrative strikes which, *nota bene*, are limited to single cities. Thus we see: the annual May Day general strike in Warsaw and Łódź (in Russia itself the first of May is not yet celebrated to any noteworthy extent by abstention from work), the mass strike in Warsaw on September 11, 1905, as a memorial to the executed Marcin Kasprzak, that of November 1905 in Petersburg as a protest against the declaration of the state of siege in Poland and Livonia, those on January 22, 1906, in Warsaw, Łódź, Cześćochowa, and in the Dombrowa coal basin, as well as, in part, those in a few Russian cities as anniversary celebrations of the Petersburg blood bath; in addition, in July 1906, a general strike in Tiflis as a demonstration of sympathy with soldiers sentenced by court-martial because of the military revolt, and finally, for the same reason, in September 1906, during the deliberations of the court-martial in Revel. All other large and partial mass strikes and gen-

eral strikes were not demonstrative strikes but fighting strikes. As such, they originated for the most part spontaneously, in every case from specific local and accidental causes, without plans or goals, and grew with elemental power into large movements. They did not, afterward, begin an "orderly retreat" but changed, now into economic struggles, now into street fighting, now collapsed by themselves.

In this general picture the purely political demonstrative strikes play a fully subordinate role—single, small points in a mighty expanse. From the above experiences, the following temporal course can be perceived. The demonstrative strikes which, as opposed to the fighting strikes, show the most party discipline, conscious direction, and political thought, and which therefore, according to the [German—D.H.] schema, must appear as the highest and most mature form of the mass strike, in fact play the most important role in the *beginnings* of the movement. Thus, for example, the absolute work stoppage on May 1, 1905, in Warsaw, as the first case of a decision of Social Democracy carried through so astoundingly, was an event of great significance for the proletarian movement in Poland. In the same way, the sympathy strike in November of the same year in Petersburg made a great impression as the first attempt of a conscious systematic mass action in Russia. Similarly, the "trial mass strike" of the Hamburg comrades on January 17, 1906,⁷ will play a prominent part in the history of the future German mass strikes as the first vigorous attempt with the much disputed weapon, and also a very successful and convincing test of the fighting temper and lust for battle of the Hamburg working class. And just as surely, the period of the mass strikes in Germany, once it has begun in earnest, will

⁷ The Social Democratic organization in Hamburg was one of the most radical in Germany. The imagination of the Hamburg workers had been captured by the idea of the mass strike, and on January 17, 1906, they called a "trial mass strike," in relation to elections, which was moderately successful. It was at the request of the Hamburg Social Democratic organization that Rosa Luxemburg wrote the "Mass Strike" pamphlet.

lead naturally to a truly universal work stoppage on the first of May. The May Day celebration should naturally be raised to a position of honor as the first great demonstration under the aegis of the mass struggles. In this sense, the May Day celebration, the "lame horse" as it was called at the Cologne Trade-Union Congress, still has before it a great future and an important role in the proletarian class struggle.⁸

But the significance of such demonstrations diminishes rapidly with the development of serious revolutionary struggles. The same elements which objectively make possible the realization of the demonstrative strike according to a preconceived plan and at the command of the Party—the growth of the political consciousness and the education of the proletariat—make this kind of mass strike impossible. Today, the proletariat in Russia, and especially the most capable vanguard of the masses, want nothing to do with demonstrative strikes. The workers are no longer in the mood for jesting, and only want to think about a serious struggle, with all its consequences. And if, in the first great mass strike in January 1905,⁹ the demonstrative element still played an important role, though not in an intentional but more in an instinctive, spontaneous form; on the other hand, the attempt of the central committee of Russian Social Democracy to call for a mass strike as a protest against the dissolution of the Duma [in 1906—D.H.] fell flat. Among the reasons for this failure was the decisive rejection by the educated proletariat of such weak halfway actions and mere demonstrations.

⁸ May Day had a special and unique place in Rosa Luxemburg's political calendar. This was partly due to the role played by May Day in Poland. In Germany, the idea of May Day as a weapon in the struggle of the international proletariat never really caught on. Cf. my introduction to Part IV, as well as Rosa Luxemburg's articles on May Day included in that section.

⁹ On January 22, 1905, the Russian Revolution "formally" began with the great demonstration in St. Petersburg before the palace of the Czar to whom the workers, led by the police agent Father Gapon, had come to present their grievances. The demonstrators were fired upon by czarist troops; this was the massacre of "Bloody Sunday."

2. If, however, instead of the subordinate demonstrative strike, we look at the fighting strike as it presents itself today in Russia as the true bearer of proletarian action, it becomes clear that in this form of strike the economic and the political moments cannot be separated from each other. Here too, reality deviates radically from the theoretical schema. The pedantic notion according to which the pure political mass strike, as the most mature and highest stage, is the logical result of the trade-unionist general strike, but at the same time kept clearly distinct from it, is fundamentally contradicted by the experience of the Russian Revolution. This is expressed not merely in the historical fact that the mass strikes, beginning with that first great wage struggle of the Petersburg textile workers in 1896–1897, to the last great mass strike in December 1905, passed imperceptibly from the economic to the political, so that it is nearly impossible to draw a dividing line between them. Also, every individual instance of great mass strikes repeats, so to speak, in miniature the general history of the Russian mass strikes, beginning with a purely or at least partially trade-union conflict and passing through all the stages to the political demonstration. The great thunderstorm of mass strikes in the south of Russia in 1902 and 1903 originated, as we have seen [in Part III—D.H.], in Baku, from a conflict arising from the disciplining of the unemployed; in Rostov, from wage differentials in the railway workshops; in Tiflis, from a struggle of the commercial employees to obtain a reduction of working hours; in Odessa, from the internal conflict in the Putilov works. The October strike arose from the struggle of the railway workers for a pension fund; the December strike, finally, resulted from the struggle of the postal and telegraph employees for the right to form a union. The progress of the movement on the whole is not expressed in the fact that the initial economic stage is left out, but rather in the rapidity with which all the stages to the political demonstration are run through, and in the extremity of the point to which the strike moves forward.

But the movement on the whole does not proceed merely from the economic to the political struggle, but also vice-versa. Each of the great political mass actions, after it has attained its political zenith, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. And this applies not only to each one of the great mass strikes, but also to the revolution generally. With the extension, clarification, and intensification of the potency of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but rather it extends, organizes itself, and intensifies its potency in an equal measure. Between the two there is a complete reciprocal action.

Each new rising and new victory of the political struggle simultaneously changes itself into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle by expanding the external possibilities of the latter, increasing the inner drive of the workers to better their situation, and increasing their desire to struggle. After every foaming wave of political action a fructifying deposit remains behind from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth. And vice-versa. The ceaseless state of economic war of the worker with capital keeps the fighting energy alive at every political pause. It forms, so to speak, the ever fresh reservoir of the strength of the proletarian class, out of which the political struggle continually renews its strength. And at the same time, it always leads the untiring economic boring action of the proletariat, now here, now there, to individual sharp conflicts out of which, unexpectedly, political conflicts on a large scale explode.

In a word: The economic struggle is that which leads the political struggle from one nodal point to another; the political struggle is that which periodically fertilizes the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually change places. Thus, far from being completely separated or even mutually exclusive, as the pedantic schema sees it, the economic and political moments in the mass strike period form only two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle in Russia. And *their unity* is precisely the mass strike. If the contemplative

theory proposes an artificial logical dissection of the mass strike in order to get at the "pure political mass strike," then by this dissection, as with any other, it will not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether.

3. Finally, the events in Russia show us that the mass strike is inseparable from the revolution. The history of the Russian mass strike is the history of the Russian Revolution. True, when the representatives of our German opportunism hear of "revolution," they immediately think of bloodshed, street fighting, or powder and shot. The logical conclusion that follows from this view is: The mass strike unavoidably leads to revolution; *ergo*, we dare not make it. In fact, we see in Russia that, in the long run, nearly every mass strike leads to an encounter with the armed defenders of the czarist order. In this, the so-called political strikes are exactly the same as the great economic struggles. But the revolution is something other and something more than bloodshed. As opposed to the policeman's conception which sees the revolution exclusively from the standpoint of disturbances and brawling in the streets, that is, from the standpoint of "disorder," the conception of scientific socialism sees in the revolution above all a profound internal upheaval in the social class relations. And from this standpoint there is an altogether different connection between revolution and mass strike in Russia than is contained in the trivial observation that the mass strike usually ends in bloodshed.

We have seen above the internal mechanism of the Russian mass strikes which depend on the ceaseless reciprocal action of the political and economic struggles. But this very reciprocal action is conditioned by the revolutionary period. Only in the sultry air of the revolutionary period can any small, partial conflict between labor and capital grow to a general explosion. In Germany, the most violent and most brutal collisions between workers and proprietor take place every year and every day without the struggle going beyond the limits of the single branch, the single city, or even of the single factory. Punish-

ment of organized workers, as in Petersburg; unemployment, as in Baku; wage conflicts, as in Odessa; struggles for union rights, as in Moscow—are in the order of the day in Germany. However, [in Germany—D.H.] not a single one of these cases changes into a common class action. And when they do grow into individual mass strikes, which without question have a political coloring, they still do not give birth to the universal thunderstorm. A striking proof of this is the general strike of the Dutch railwaymen, which died away amidst the complete passivity of the proletariat of the country despite the warmest sympathies.

And conversely, only in the period of the revolution, when the social foundations and the walls of the class society are shaken and subjected to a constant process of dislocation, can any political class action of the proletariat in a few hours arouse whole, hitherto unmoved strata of the working class from their passivity. Naturally, this immediately expresses itself in a stormy economic struggle. The worker, suddenly aroused by the electric shock of a political action, grasps immediately and above all at that which is most directly present to him: the resistance to his economic slavery. The stormy gesture of the political struggle causes him suddenly to feel the weight and the pressure of his economic chains with unexpected intensity. And though, for example, the heaviest political struggle in Germany—the electoral struggle or the parliamentary struggle against the tariff law—had scarcely any perceptible influence on the course and intensity of the wage struggles being conducted in Germany at the same time, every political action of the proletariat in Russia expresses itself in the extension and deepening of the ground of the economic struggle.

Thus the revolution first creates the social conditions which make possible this immediate transformation of the economic struggle into the political and of the political struggle into the economic which finds its expression in the mass strike. And if the vulgar schema sees the connection between mass strike and

revolution only in the bloody street encounters with which the mass strikes conclude, a somewhat deeper look at the Russian events shows a totally *opposite* connection: In reality, the mass strike does not produce the revolution, but the revolution produces the mass strike.

4. In order to obtain an explanation of the conscious direction and initiative in the mass strike, it is sufficient to sum up the foregoing. If the mass strike does not signify a single act but a whole period of class struggles, and if this period is identical with a period of revolution, then it is clear that the mass strike cannot be called at will, even if the decision to call it comes from the highest committee of the strongest Social Democratic party. As long as Social Democracy is not capable of staging and countermanding revolutions according to its own estimation of the situation, then even the greatest enthusiasm and impatience of the Social Democratic troops will not suffice to call into being a true period of mass strikes as a living, powerful movement of the people. On the basis of a decision of the party leadership, and of the party discipline of the Social Democratic working class, a single short demonstration may well be arranged, such as the Swedish mass strike, or the most recent Austrian strike, or even the mass strike on January 17 [1906—D.H.] in Hamburg. These demonstrations, however, are different from a true period of revolutionary mass strikes in the same way as the well-known demonstrations by the fleet in foreign ports during a time of strained diplomatic relations differs from a naval war. A mass strike born of pure discipline and enthusiasm will, at best, play a role as an episode, symptom of the fighting mood of the working class. But, afterwards, relations fall back into peaceful everydayness.

Of course, even during the revolution the mass strikes do not fall down from heaven. In one way or another they must be made by the workers. The resolution and determination of the workers also play a role, and indeed the initiative as well as the further direction naturally fall to the most organized and most enlightened Social Democratic kernel of the proletariat.

However, this initiative and direction are, for the most part, applied only in individual acts, individual strikes, when the revolutionary period has already begun, and indeed mostly within the confines of a single city. Thus, for example, as we have seen, the Social Democrats successfully gave the signal for the mass strike several times: in Baku, in Warsaw, in Łódź, and in Petersburg. But this succeeds much less frequently when applied to the general movement of the whole proletariat. Further, there are quite definite limits to initiative and conscious direction. During the revolution itself it is extremely difficult for any leading organ of the proletarian movement to foresee and to calculate which occasions and moments can lead to explosions and which cannot. Here also the initiative and leadership do not consist in issuing commands according to one's mood, but in the most adroit adaptability to the given situation, and in the closest possible contact with the mood of the masses.

As we have seen, the element of spontaneity plays a great role in all the Russian mass strikes, without exception, either as driving force or restraining influence. This is not because Russian Social Democracy is still young or weak, but rather because in each individual act of the struggle so many important economic, political, and social, general and local, material and psychological moments are brought into play that no single act can be arranged and resolved like a mathematical problem. Even when the proletariat, with Social Democracy at its head, plays the leading role, the revolution is not a maneuver executed by the proletariat in the open field; rather, it is a struggle in the midst of the unceasing crashing, crumbling, and displacing of all the social foundations. In short, the element of spontaneity plays such a prominent role in the mass strikes in Russia not because the Russian proletariat is "unschooled" but because revolutions allow no one to play schoolmaster to them.

On the other hand, in Russia we see that the same revolution which made it so difficult for the Social Democrats to take

command over the mass strike, which comically pressed the conductor's baton into their hand or pulled it out—this same revolution also directly solved all the difficulties of the mass strike which, in the theoretical schema of the German discussion, are regarded as the chief concerns of the “leadership”: the questions of “provisioning,” of the “paying the costs,” and of the “sacrifice.” True, it does not resolve them in the sense that they would be resolved in a quiet confidential conference between the higher directing committees of the labor movement, pencil in hand. The “resolution” of all these questions consists in the fact that the revolution brings such an enormous mass of people upon the stage that any computation and resolution of the costs of their movement in a pre-established inventory in the manner of a civil lawsuit appears as a totally hopeless enterprise. The leading organizations in Russia of course attempt to support the direct victims of the struggle as best they can. Thus, for example, the courageous victims of the gigantic lock-out in Petersburg after the campaign for the eight-hour day were supported for weeks. But, in the enormous balance sheet of the revolution, these measures are a drop in the ocean. At the moment that a real, earnest period of mass strikes begins all these “calculations of costs” change into the project of draining the ocean with a water glass. And it is an ocean of frightful privations and sufferings which the proletarian masses buy with every revolution. The solution which a revolutionary period gives to these seemingly invincible difficulties is that along with them such an immense amount of mass idealism is let loose that the masses are insensitive to the sharpest sufferings. Neither revolution nor mass strikes can be made with the psychology of a trade unionist who will not cease work on May Day unless he is assured in advance of a determined support in the case of measures being taken against him. But in the storm of the revolutionary period, the proletarian is transformed from a provident family man demanding support into a “revolutionary romantic” for whom even the highest good, namely life—not to speak of material

well-being—has little value in comparison with the ideals of the struggle.

If, however, the direction of the mass strike (in the sense of commanding its origins and in the sense of calculating and covering its costs) is taken over by the revolutionary period itself, then the direction of the mass strike belongs to Social Democracy and its leading organs in a very different sense. Instead of puzzling its head with the technical side, with the mechanism of the mass strike, Social Democracy is called to take over the *political* leadership, even in the midst of the revolutionary period.

To give the slogans, the direction of the struggle; to organize the *tactics* of the political struggle in such a way that in every phase and in every moment of the struggle the whole sum of the available and already released active power of the proletariat will be realized and find expression in the battle stance of the party; to see that the resoluteness and acuteness of the tactics of Social Democracy never fall *below* the level of the actual relation of forces but rather rise above it—that is the most important task of the “leadership” in the period of the mass strike. And this leadership changes itself, in a certain manner, into a technical leadership. A consistent, resolute, and progressive tactic on the part of Social Democracy produces in the masses the feeling of security, self-confidence, and the desire for struggle; a vacillating, weak tactic based on the underestimation of the proletariat has a crippling (in the sense of) on the masses. In the first case, mass strikes break out “of their own accord” and always “opportunistly”; in the second case they remain ineffective even amidst direct summons by the leadership to mass strikes. And the Russian Revolution gives striking examples of both.

Summary of Parts V–VII

In Parts V to VII, Rosa Luxemburg turns her attention to the relation between the Russian mass strikes and the development of the struggle in

Germany. The typical German response to what has been described would be that Russia is very different from Germany, politically, economically, and in the degree of organization of the working class. The tight inter-relation between the economic and political moments of the mass strike seems to result from the fact that any simple strike in an absolutist state where all workers' action and organization are forbidden is already political. Further, the intensity of the strikes, the courage of the workers, seems to be the result of Russia's backward conditions; the spontaneity of the strikes seems to be a result of the inexperience of the Russian working class. Russia is just coming out of the Middle Ages, it would be said, and has no lessons to offer to the German working class with its history of thirty years of struggle and its three-million-strong party.

To begin with, Rosa Luxemburg shows that the Russian working class is not that impoverished, ignorant mass that the schematic view portrays. In the big cities, Russian workers earn as much (or as little) as German workers, and work as short (or long) a working day as they. Further, no revolution like the one described here could be made by ignorant paupers. In fact, the "schooling" of Social Democracy and parliamentarism of which the Germans are so proud seems less important than the lessons which the Russians have learned from capitalist development and Social Democratic agitation. To clinch her point, Rosa Luxemburg shows that there are many areas which German Social Democracy has not touched in which conditions are as bad or worse than those which one imagines exist in Russia. She mentions, for example, miners, textile workers, home workers, confectioners, electric workers, railroad workers and postal workers, agricultural workers. These elements, she argues, will not be brought into action or organized through the schematic mass strike of the disciplined, unionized Social Democratic workers. They can be organized only by a period of mass action. True struggle would not destroy the Social Democratic organizations, as its leaders think, but would rather build them to new heights.

In this light, Part VI begins, the question of organization takes on a different visage. The union leaders' argument that the unions are not yet strong enough is nothing but a vicious circle. In thirty years, the unions have grown from 50,000 to 2,000,000 members. Yet this is still said to be too small. The unionist's scheme is a progressus ad infinitum—they

seem to want every man and woman and child to be organized before attempting the mass strike: but then the strike would be superfluous, as Engels showed in arguing against the Bakuninists. The problem is that in "normal" capitalist conditions the most important and most oppressed sectors cannot be organized. Organization and struggle must be seen dialectically: struggle leads to organization, as shown by the Russian events—as well as the German experience under the antisocialist laws. One must fight, organize, reorganize after the defeat, fight again.

The overestimation of the role of organization implies the underestimation of the unorganized proletariat and its political maturity. In Russia, each separate economic action by the proletariat led to a further action, and finally to political action. But, one might answer, that was because "the revolution" existed in Russia. What does that mean? It means that the class instinct, the class feelings of the proletariat were awakened, and that therefore each partial action was understood as part of the whole, the totality of the capitalist system. The role of class consciousness is critical for the mass strike. "The class consciousness which is implanted in the enlightened German worker by Social Democracy is a theoretical, latent one," which cannot express itself during the period of parliamentary action and isolated economic struggle. "In the revolution, where the masses themselves appear on the political stage, class consciousness becomes practical, active." In one year of revolution, notes Rosa, the Russian proletariat acquired more "schooling" than had the German proletariat in thirty years of Social Democratic parliamentarism and trade-union organizing. True, during the return to the parliamentary period in Russia this class consciousness will once again become latent. But, in the same way, during a period of action in Germany the latent consciousness of the Social Democratic workers and of those unaffected by Social Democratic organizing would blossom forth. Six months of revolution, she says, equal ten years of parliamentary struggle.

Though the organization of Social Democracy cannot "make" the mass strike, it cannot wait for it to fall from heaven. This does not mean "calling" a mass strike. It means that Social Democracy has to start a discussion among the masses, to explain to the masses what the mass strike is, its social causes and its political consequences. And further, Social De-

mocracy must itself learn to understand the political goals and tactics of the mass strike.

The Russian experience, argues Rosa Luxemburg in Part VII, relates to the German workers as a part of "their own social and political history." The Russian Revolution is a bourgeois revolution whose goal is the overthrow of absolutism. However, as opposed to the revolutions of 1789 and 1848, the proletariat plays the leading role in Russia. The reason for this primacy of the proletariat is simple: capitalism has developed since 1789 or 1848, and with its development has created an increasingly powerful and conscious proletariat. This is true in Russia as in Germany. The straightforward barricade struggles of previous bourgeois revolutions are not the adequate tactic for the Russian needs; the mass strike, with its interconnection of the political (antiabsolutist) and the economic (anti-capitalist), is the form of struggle adequate to the social development. Russian absolutism will be overthrown by means of the mass strike. More significantly, however, the mass strike will give the Russian working class the consciousness and the political experience which will enable it to push rapidly beyond the bourgeois forms which will follow the demise of absolutism. In this sense the mass strike is truly "civilizing, educative," raising the cultural level of the whole working class.

Because the level of capitalist development is similar in Russia and Germany, the mass strike is the correct weapon for Germany as well. The German workers should not see the Russian example as merely the heroic deeds of oppressed masses the support of whom is an internationalist duty. Because of the similarity of conditions, argues Rosa Luxemburg, the strength of the German proletariat today is not the numbers of unionized workers but—the Russian Revolution.

The mass strike is not a defensive weapon, as the trade-union leaders think. Even if suffrage rights were attacked by the German government, it would not be up to Social Democracy to decide the correct response. The response always depends on the historical conditions, the mood of the period, the consciousness and combativity of the masses. Once the stone starts rolling, no party can stop it. And, if it does start in Germany, it will not lead first to a bourgeois revolution as in Russia, for Germany has had her bourgeois period. The goal of a period of mass strikes in Germany can only be the dictatorship of the proletariat. To say this, on the one hand,

and to have said above that the mass strike will bring into action those groups of the proletariat which have thus far remained immune to Social Democratic propaganda and organizing is no contradiction. Or rather, it is not a contradiction of my reasoning, says Rosa Luxemburg, but rather a result of the zig-zag course of capitalist development in which the most advanced forms of struggle always set the trend. Social Democracy must recognize the needs of the time, must advance with the development of the class struggle, and apply the new tactic.

VIII

Next to complete resoluteness and consistency of tactics, the most important requirement in the period of great struggles which will come sooner or later, anN(in the sense of working class anxiously awaits, is the greatest possible capacity for action and therefore the greatest possible unity of the leading Social Democratic part of the proletarian masses. Meanwhile, the first weak attempts at the preparation of a great mass action have already shown a serious drawback in this context: the complete separation and independence of the two organizations of the labor movement, Social Democracy and the trade unions.

From the close analysis of the mass strikes in Russia, as well as from the conditions in Germany itself, it is clear that any great mass action which is not limited to a one-time demonstration but is intended to be a real fighting action cannot possibly be thought of as a so-called political mass strike. In such an action in Germany the unions would be a partner with Social Democracy. This would not be, as the union leaders imagine, because the much smaller organization of Social Democracy would be dependent on the help of the one and a quarter million union members without whom it could do nothing. Rather, the reasons are more profound: because every direct mass action or period of open class struggles would be at the same time both political and economic. If, in Germany, for whatever reason and at whatever time, a period of great political struggles and mass strikes comes, it will at the same time

open an era of powerful union struggles; and the events would not in the least pose the question whether the trade-union leaders had agreed to the movement or not. Whether they stand on the sidelines, or even attempt to stop the movement, the result of this action will only be that the trade-union leaders¹⁰ will simply be pushed to the side by the events, and the economic as well as the political struggles of the masses will be fought without them.

As a matter of fact, the division between the political and the economic struggle, and the independence of each, is nothing but an artificial, though also an historically conditioned product of the parliamentary period. On the one hand, in the peaceful “normal” course of bourgeois society, the economic struggle is divided, dissolved into a manifold of individual struggles in each enterprise and in each branch of production. On the other hand, the political struggle is not directed by the masses themselves through direct action but, corresponding to the form of the bourgeois state, takes place in a representative manner through pressure on the legislative agency.

As soon as the period of revolutionary struggles begins—that is, as soon as the masses appear on the field of battle—both the division of the economic struggle and the indirect parliamentary form of the political struggle cease. In a revolutionary mass action the political and economic struggles are one, and the artificial barriers between the unions and Social Democracy which make them two separate, totally independent forms of the labor movement will simply be washed away. But what finds concrete expression in the revolutionary mass movement is also the case for the parliamentary period. There are not two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a social one. Rather, there is only *one* class struggle which is directed at the same time at the limitation of capitalistic exploitation within the bourgeois society and at the abolition of exploitation together with bourgeois society.

¹⁰ In the second edition, the following phrase is added: “just as the party leaders in an analogous case.”

If, for technical reasons, these two sides of the class struggle are separated from one another in the parliamentary period, they still do not represent two actions running parallel to one another, but merely two phases, two grades of the struggle for emancipation of the working class. The trade-union struggle embraces the present interests, the Social Democratic struggle of the proletariat the future interests, of the labor movement. As opposed to the various group interests, national or local, the communists—says the *Communist Manifesto*—represent the common interests of the proletariat as a whole, and in the various stages of the development of the class struggle, they represent the interests of the whole movement, that is, the ultimate goal—the liberation of the proletariat. The trade unions represent the group interests and one stage of the development of the labor movement. Social Democracy represents the working class and the cause of its liberation as a whole. Therefore, the relation of the trade unions to Social Democracy is that of a part to the whole. And, if the theory of the “equal authority”¹¹ of the trade unions and Social Democracy finds so much resonance among the trade-union leaders, this rests on a fundamental misconception of the essence of the trade unions and their role in the general struggle for liberation of the working class.

This theory of the parallel action of Social Democracy and the trade unions, and of their “equal authority,” is not, however, a product of pure imagination. It has its historical roots. It rests, namely, on an illusion created by the peaceful “normal” period of bourgeois society in which the political struggle of Social Democracy seems to disappear in the *parliamentary* struggle. The parliamentary struggle, however, the counterpart of the trade-union struggle, is like the latter a struggle exclusively on the basis of the bourgeois society. By its nature, it

¹¹ The notion of the “equal authority” of the trade unions and the Party, as well as that of the “limits of competence” which Rosa Luxemburg invokes below, is but another way in which the opportunist practices of Social Democracy and the trade unions were covered over so as to give free play to “practical politics.”

racy should accept the theory of the "equal authority" of the trade unions, it would thereby, in an indirect and tacit manner, accept that transformation for which the representatives of the opportunist tendency have long striven.

In Germany, however, such a displacement of the relations within the labor movement is more impossible than in any other country. The theoretical conception according to which the trade unions are only a part of Social Democracy finds in Germany its classic illustration in the facts, in the living practice. Indeed, this expresses itself in three directions. First, the German trade unions are a direct product of Social Democracy. It was Social Democracy which created the first beginnings of the trade-union movement in Germany; it was Social Democracy which reared it and which to this day supplies it with its leaders and the most active supporters of its organization. Second, the German trade unions are also a product of Social Democracy in the sense that the Social Democratic doctrine is the soul of trade-union practice. The trade unions owe their superiority over all bourgeois and confessional trade unions to the idea of the class struggle.¹³ Their practical success, their power, is a result of the circumstance that their practice

that the *possibility of participation of the dispossessed masses of the people in the legislation*, in the Empire and in the individual states, shall not be lessened but increased to *complete equality*. For this reason, the meeting considers it an incontestable right of the working class to withhold their labor for a shorter or longer period when all other means of defense of their legal rights as well as of the conquest of further rights fail.

"Inasmuch as the political mass strike can only be carried through victoriously when kept within *strict legal limits*, and when the strikers give no reasonable excuse for the authorities to intervene with armed force, the meeting considers the single, necessary, and effective preparation for the use of this means of struggle to be the further building of the political, trade-union, and cooperative organizations. For only in this way can the presuppositions be created among the wide masses of the people which guarantee the successful outcome of a mass strike: conscious discipline and adequate economic support." (R.L.)

¹³ Besides the Social Democratic or "Free" trade unions, as they were called, there existed in Germany a Catholic union, an Evangelical union and, at various times, several bourgeois (so-called "radical" unions) and company unions. These latter kinds of unions shared a refusal of the socialist goals and a rejection of the class struggle. Cf. note 16 below.

is illuminated by the theory of scientific socialism and thereby raised above the level of a narrow-minded empiricism. The strength of the “practical policy” of the German trade unions lies in their insight into the deep social and economic connections of the capitalist order. They owe this insight to none other than the theory of scientific socialism on which their practice is based. In this sense, the attempt to emancipate the trade unions from Social Democratic theory, the search for another “trade-union theory” in opposition to Social Democracy, is, from the standpoint of the trade unions themselves, nothing but an attempt to commit suicide. For the German trade unions, the separation of their practice from the theory of scientific socialism would mean an immediate loss of their whole superiority over all bourgeois kinds of unions, a fall from their present heights to the level of a ceaseless groping and a pure, dull empiricism.

Third and last, though their leaders have gradually forgotten it, the trade unions are a product of the Social Democratic movement and of Social Democratic agitation even as regards their *numerical* strength.¹⁴ Many trade-union leaders are in the habit of looking down triumphantly [and with malicious pleasure] from the proud heights of their one and a quarter million members on the poor organized members of Social Democracy, not yet half a million strong, and of remembering the time, ten or twelve years ago, when those in the ranks of Social Democracy were pessimistic as to the prospect of trade-union development. They do not even notice that between these two facts—the high number of trade-union members and the low number of organized Social Democrats—there *exists*, to a degree, a *direct causal connection*. Thousands upon thousands of

¹⁴ In the second edition, the following sentences are added:

“Certainly, in many areas trade-union agitation came and comes before Social Democratic agitation, and generally the trade-union work also smooths the way for Party work. From the standpoint of their *effect*, the Party and the trade unions work fully together. But, when one looks at the picture of the class struggle in Germany as a whole and in its deeper-lying connections, the relations are considerably altered.”

workers do not join the Party organization just *because* they join the trade unions. According to the theory of the trade-union leaders, all workers must be doubly organized—go to two meetings, pay two sets of dues, read two workers' papers, etc. However, in order to do this, one must have a high degree of intelligence and that idealism which, out of a pure feeling of duty toward the labor movement, does not avoid daily sacrifices of time and money, and finally that passionate interest for the actual life of the Party which can only be satisfied by membership in the Party organization. All this is true of the most enlightened and most intelligent minority of the Social Democratic working class in the large cities where the Party life is rich in content and attractive, and where the standard of living of the workers is high. But in the broad strata of the working masses in the large cities, as well as in the provinces, in the smaller and the smallest towns where the local political life is not independent but a mere reflex of the course of events in the capital, where, therefore, the Party life is poor and monotonous and, finally, where the economic standard of living of the workers is usually very poor—there it is very difficult to realize the double form of organization.

For the Social-Democratically-minded worker from the masses, the question will be easily solved by his joining his trade union. The immediate interests of his economic struggle, which are conditioned by the nature of this struggle itself, cannot be advanced except by membership in a trade organization. The dues which he pays, often with significant sacrifices of his standard of living, bring him immediate, visible advantages. He can manifest his Social Democratic sentiments without belonging to a special Party organization—by voting in the parliamentary elections, by attending Social Democratic public meetings, by following the reports of Social Democratic speeches at representative bodies, by reading the Party press. (One should compare, in this context, the number of Social Democratic voters, for example, or the number of subscribers to the *Vorwärts*, with the number of organized Party members

in Berlin!) And, what is most decisive: the Social-Democratically-minded worker from the masses who, as a simple man, can have no understanding of the complicated and refined two-souls theory¹⁵ [of the trade-union leaders], feels himself *Social-Democratically-organized*, even in the trade union. Although the central committee of the trade unions carries no official Party label, still the workman from the masses in every city and in every town sees at the head of his trade union, as the most active leaders, those colleagues whom he also knows as comrades, as Social Democrats in public life: now as Reichstag, Landtag, or local representatives, now as trusted men of Social Democracy, members of election committees, Party editors and secretaries, or simply as speakers and agitators. Further, in the agitation in his trade union he hears mostly the same ideas about capitalist exploitation and class relations which are pleasant and understandable to him, and which he also knows from Social Democratic agitation. Indeed, the most and best loved speakers in the trade-union meetings [, those who alone “bring the place to life” and who are a drawing-card for the otherwise poorly attended and somnolent trade-union meetings] are these same Social Democrats.

Thus, everything works toward giving the average class-conscious worker the feeling that inasmuch as he is unionized he also belongs to his workers' party, is Social-Democratically-organized. *And precisely therein lies the particular recruiting strength of the German trade unions.* Not because of the appearance of neutrality, but because of the Social Democratic actuality of their nature has it been possible for the central unions to reach their present strength. [Today, in fact, no one in Germany would be misled by such an appearance.] This is simply based on the same coexistence of different unions founded by bourgeois parties (the Catholic, the Hirsch-Duncker, etc.)¹⁶ through

¹⁵ The reference is to a line in Goethe's *Faust*, in which Faust declares: “Two souls, alas! dwell within my breast. . . .”

¹⁶ The Catholic trade unions were founded on the basis of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891), in which the misery of the working class was condemned at

must themselves first recruit their troops from a wholly unenlightened, bourgeois-minded mass.

The best example of such a country was, throughout the whole of the last century, and is to a large extent today—*England*. In Germany, however, party relations are totally different. In a country in which Social Democracy is the most powerful political party, in which its recruiting power is represented by an army of over three million proletarians, it is ridiculous to speak of the negative effect of Social Democracy and of the necessity for a fighting organization of the workers to protect its political neutrality. The mere comparison of the numbers of Social Democratic voters with the numbers of the trade-union organizations in Germany is sufficient to prove to a child that the trade unions in Germany do not, as in England, win their troops from the unenlightened, bourgeois-minded masses, but from the masses of proletarians already aroused by Social Democracy and won to the idea of the class struggle—from the mass of Social Democratic voters. Many trade-union leaders indignantly reject, as they must in order to maintain the “theory of neutrality,” the idea that the trade unions are a recruiting school for Social Democracy. In fact, in Germany this seemingly insulting, but in reality highly flattering presumption is reduced to mere fantasy by the simple circumstance that the relations are usually the opposite: it is Social Democracy which, in Germany, forms the recruiting school for the trade unions. If, then, the organizational work of the trade unions is for the most part very difficult and toilsome [so that it gives birth to and nourishes in the trade-union leaders the illusion that it is they who plow the first furrows and sow the first seed in the new proletarian world], in fact¹⁹ not only is the soil already prepared by the Social Democratic plow, but the trade-union seed itself must be “red,” Social Democratic, before the harvest can prosper. But when, in this

¹⁹ In the second edition “in fact” is replaced by “with the exception of a few areas and instances, on the whole.”

manner, we compare the figures of trade-union strength not with those of Social Democratic organizations but—what is the only correct way—with those of the mass of Social Democratic voters, we come to the conclusion which is significantly different [from that of the triumphant, victory-consciousness of the trade-union leaders] ²⁰: namely, the result is that the “Free Trade Unions” today actually represent but a minority of the class-conscious working class of Germany, that even with their one and a quarter million organized members, they have not yet been able to recruit even a half of the masses aroused by Social Democracy.

The most important conclusion from the above facts is that the complete *unity* of the trade-union and Social Democratic labor movements, which is absolutely necessary for the coming mass struggles in Germany, *is actually existent*. Indeed, it is incorporated in the wide masses which form at once the basis of Social Democracy and of the trade unions, and in whose consciousness both sides of the movement are fused in a spiritual unity. The supposed antagonism between Social Democracy and the trade unions thus shrinks to an antagonism between Social Democracy and [the upper stratum] ²¹ of the trade unions. This, however, is at the same time an antagonism between this part of the trade-union leaders and the proletarian masses organized in the trade unions.

The strong growth of the trade-union movement in Germany in the course of the last fifteen years, especially in the period of great economic prosperity from 1895 to 1900, has naturally brought with it a great independence of the trade unions, a specialization of their methods of struggle and of their direction, and finally the rise of a regular trade-union officialdom. All these phenomena are a completely understandable and natural historical product of the fifteen-year growth of the trade unions, a product of the economic prosper-

²⁰ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by “from the current view of the matter.”

²¹ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by “a certain part.”

ity and the political calm in Germany. [Especially concerning the trade-union officialdom, they are an historically necessary evil.] ²² But the dialectic of the development implies that, at a certain stage of organization and at a certain degree of maturity, precisely these necessary means of promoting the growth of the trade unions become obstacles to further growth.

The specialization of their professional activity as trade-union leaders, as well as the naturally limited horizon which is bound up with the disconnected economic struggles in a peaceful period, lead the trade-union officials only too easily to bureaucratism [and to limited conceptions.] ²³ Both, however, express themselves in a whole series of tendencies which in a great measure may be fateful for the future of the trade-union movement. Especially important here is the overestimation of the organization, which is changed from a means to an end, gradually to an end in itself, to a most precious thing to which the interests of the struggle should be subordinated. In this way it is possible to understand that openly admitted need for calm which shrinks before a great risk, before presumed dangers to the stability of the trade unions, and before the uncertainty of large mass actions, as well as the overestimation of the trade-union method of struggle itself, its prospects and its successes. Continually absorbed by the economic guerrilla war, having the task of making plausible to the working masses the great value of every small economic conquest, every increase in wages or decrease in the working day, the trade-union leaders gradually lose the power of seeing the larger connections and taking survey of the whole situation. Only in this way can it be explained why [the German] ²⁴ trade-union leaders refer with such great satisfaction, for example, to the conquests of the last fifteen years, to the million-mark pay

²² In the second edition, the bracketed sentence is replaced by "Though inseparable from certain inconveniences, they are no doubt an historically necessary evil."

²³ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by "and to certain confined conceptions."

²⁴ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by "many."

raises, instead of, on the contrary, emphasizing the other side of the coin: the simultaneous and immense reduction of the proletarian standard of living by speculation in foodstuffs, by the whole tax and customs policy, and by land profiteering, which has raised rents in such an exorbitant manner—in a word, all the objective tendencies of bourgeois policy which have largely made illusory those conquests of the fifteen years of trade-union struggles. From the *whole* Social Democratic truth which, next to the stress on trade-union work and its absolute necessity, places the emphasis on the *critique* and the limits of this work, the *half-truth* of the trade unions which stresses only the positive elements of the daily struggle is defended. And finally, from the concealment of the objective limits of the trade-union struggle erected by bourgeois society grows a hostility to every theoretical critique which points to these limits in connection with the ultimate goals of the labor movement. Unlimited praise and boundless optimism are made the duty of every “friend of the trade-union movement.” But, as the Social Democratic standpoint consists precisely in fighting against uncritical trade-union optimism, in fighting uncritical parliamentary optimism, a front against Social Democratic theory is finally created: [the trade unions grope for a “new theory” which would correspond to *their* needs and *their* conception],²⁵ that is, for a theory which, in opposition to the Social Democratic doctrine, would open wholly unlimited perspectives of economic progress within the capitalist order. Such a theory, indeed, has existed for some time: this is the theory of [the ex-Marxist reformer—D.H.] Professor *Sombart*, which was promulgated with the express intent of driving a wedge between the trade unions and Social Democracy in Germany, and of enticing the trade unions over to the bourgeois position.

[In the closest connection with this theoretical change on the part of some of the trade-union leaders, there is a change

²⁵ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by “one gropes for a new trade-union theory.”

—wholly in the sense of Sombart's theory—in the relation of the leaders to the masses: in place of the collegial, unpaid, purely idealistically motivated trade-union agitation by local commissions of the comrades themselves comes the business-like, bureaucratically regulated direction of trade-union officials who, for the most part, are sent from outside.²⁶ Through the concentration of the strings of the movement in its hands, the capacity of judging in trade-union affairs becomes its professional specialty. The mass of comrades are degraded to a mass incapable of judging, whose essential virtue becomes “discipline,” that is, passive obedience to duty. In opposition to Social Democracy—where in fact, despite the tendentious tales of “Bebel's Dictatorship,”²⁷ because of the representative and collegial leadership there reigns the greatest democracy, where the Party's executive committee is in fact only an administrative organ—in the trade unions the relation of ruling body to lowly mass exists to a much greater degree.]²⁸

²⁶ In 1900 there were 269 trade-union functionaries; in 1914 there were 2,867. In other words, where in 1900 there were four bureaucrats for every 10,000 members, in 1914 there were eleven per 10,000. Between 1890 and 1914 the number of union members grew from 300,000 to over 2.5 million. During the same period wealth of the trade unions grew from 425,845 marks to over 88 million marks.

²⁷ This accusation against Bebel occurred frequently. In another article, “Deceived Hopes” (*Neue Zeit*, 1903–04, No. 2), Rosa Luxemburg notes: “The ‘dictatorship’ of a Bebel, that is, his immense prestige and his influence, are uniquely based on the immense effort which he has made to make the masses politically mature. And Bebel harvests the fruits of that long effort today in that the mass follows him enthusiastically in the measure that he expresses the will and the thought of that mass.”

²⁸ In the second edition, this paragraph is replaced by:

“In close connection with this theoretical tendency is a change in the relation of the leaders to the masses. In place of the collegial direction by local commissions, with its undoubted shortcomings, steps the businesslike direction of the trade-union officials. Thus, initiative and capacity for judgment become, so to speak, professional specialties, while the more passive virtue of discipline is incumbent on the masses. This dark side of officialdom assuredly conceals in itself significant dangers for the Party as well, such as could easily result from the most recent innovation, the institution of local party secretaries, if the Social Democratic mass is not careful that these so-called secretaries remain pure organs of execution and are not in any way seen as the appointed bearers of the initiative and the direction of local Party life. In Social Democracy, however, by the nature of things, by the character of the political struggle itself,

One consequence of this conception is the argumentation with which every theoretical critique of the prospects and possibilities of the practice of the trade unions is tabooed because it presumably represents a danger to the pious trade-union sentiment of the masses. In this argumentation, one begins from the view that the working masses can only be won and held for the organization by blind, childlike belief in the efficacy of the trade-union struggle. Social Democracy bases its influence on the insight of the masses into the contradictions of the established order and into the very complicated nature of its development, and on the critical attitude of the masses toward all moments and stages of their own class struggle. In opposition to this, according to the perverse theory being considered, the influence and power of the trade unions are based on the incapacity of the masses for criticism and judgment. "The faith of the people must be maintained"—this is the fundamental principle by which many trade-union officials brand all criticism of the objective shortcomings of the trade-union movement as an attack on this movement itself.

And finally, a result of this specialization and this bureaucratism among the trade-union officials is also the strong independence and the "neutrality" of the trade unions in relation to Social Democracy. The external independence of the trade-union organization came as a natural condition of its growth, as a condition which grew on the basis of the technical division of labor between the political and the trade-union forms of struggle. The "neutrality" of the German trade unions, for its part, arose as a product of the reactionary trade-union legislation of the Prussian-German police state. With time, both have changed their nature. From the condition of political "neutrality" of the trade unions, imposed by the police, was

sharper limits on the bureaucracy are drawn than in the trade unions. In the trade unions, the technical specialization of the wage struggles—for example, the conclusion of complicated wage agreements and the like—brings with it the situation in which the mass of organized workers is often denied the 'overview of the whole life of the industry,' and thus their incapacity to make judgments is established."

evolved an additional theory of their voluntary neutrality as a necessity founded in the alleged nature of the trade-union struggle itself. And the technical independence of the trade unions, which should rest on the practical division of labor within the unitary Social Democratic class struggle, has been changed into the [independence]²⁹ of the trade unions from Social Democracy, from its views and its leadership, into the so-called "equal authority" with Social Democracy.

This appearance of [independence]³⁰ and of equality of the trade unions with Social Democracy is, however, for the most part incorporated in the trade-union officials, nourished by the administrative apparatus of the trade unions. Through the coexistence of a whole staff of trade-union officials, of a wholly independent central committee, of a numerous professional press, and finally of trade-union congresses is created the external appearance of a full parallelism with the administrative apparatus of Social Democracy, the central committee of the Party, the Party press, and the Party congresses. Among other things, this illusion of equality between Social Democracy and the trade unions has led to the monstrous spectacle that the Social Democratic Party congresses and the trade-union congresses treat, in part, totally analogous agendas, and that on the same questions different, even diametrically opposed decisions are taken. From the [division of labor]³¹ between the Party congress (which represents the general interests and tasks of the labor movement) and the trade-union conferences (which deal with the much more narrow sphere of special questions and interests of the professional daily struggle) the artificial division between an alleged trade-union and a Social Democratic *Weltanschauung* in regard to *the same* general questions and interests of the labor movement has been constituted. [However, once this abnormal condition is created, it has the

²⁹ In the second edition, "independence" is replaced by "separation."

³⁰ Replaced by "separation" in the second edition.

³¹ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by "natural divisions of labor."

natural tendency to grow and to become sharper. At present, since the bad habit of parallel agendas at the trade-union and Party congresses has developed, the very existence of the trade-union congresses is a natural incitement to more and more strong delimitation and departure from Social Democracy. In order to prove their own "independence" to themselves and to others, in order not to prove their own near superfluity by simply repeating the position of the Party congress, the trade-union congresses—which, as is of course well known, are mainly congresses of officials—must instinctively attempt to stress that which is different, the "specifically trade-union" element. In the same way, the very existence of a parallel, independent, central direction of the trade unions, at present, leads psychologically, step by step, to a stressing of one's own independence in relation to the direction of Social Democracy, to considering every contact with the Party above all from the standpoint of the "limits of competence."]

Thus, the peculiar condition has been created that the same trade-union movement which below, in the broad proletarian mass, is completely one with Social Democracy, parts abruptly with it above, in the administrative superstructure, and sets itself up over against Social Democracy as a second great independent power. The German labor movement thus assumes the peculiar form of a double pyramid whose base and body consist in one solid mass, but whose summits are wide apart.

It is clear from this presentation in what way alone, in a natural and successful manner, that compact unity of the German labor movement which is unconditionally necessary in view of the coming political class struggles, and in view of the proper interest of the further development of the trade unions, can be created. Nothing could be more absurd or hopeless than to wish to produce that desired unity by means of sporadic or periodic negotiations concerning individual questions between the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and the trade-union central committees. It is precisely the highest circles of both forms of the labor movement which, as we have seen, incorporate in themselves their separation and independ-

ence, [which are at once—and this concerns especially the direction of the trade unions—bearers and supporters]³² of the illusion of the “equal authority” and the parallel existence of Social Democracy and the trade unions. To wish to produce the unity of both by the union of the Party executive and the General Commission [of the trade unions—D.H.] is to wish to build a bridge precisely at the point at which the distance is the greatest and the crossing the most difficult. [If this kind of negotiation between great powers becomes a system, it would be nothing other than the consecration of that federal relation between the whole of the proletarian class movement and a partial phenomenon of this movement—a relation which should be set aside as an anomaly. The diplomatic-federal relation between the highest authorities of Social Democracy and the trade unions can only lead to an even greater alienation and cooling of relations, becoming the source of ever new frictions. And this lies in the very nature of the thing. Namely, the very form of this relation implies that the great question of the harmonious unification of the economic and political sides of the proletarian struggle for liberation is changed into the petty question of a “friendly, neighborly” relation between the “authorities” in the Lindenstrasse and those in the Engel-Ufer,³³ and that the larger viewpoint of the labor movement is hidden by petty considerations of rank and sensibilities. The first attempt with the method of diplomatic relations between the authorities—the negotiations of the Party executive with the General Commission on the question of the mass strike—has already given proof of the hopelessness of this procedure. And when the General Commission recently explained that consultations between it and the Party executive have already been sought in individual cases by one or the other side, and also that they have taken place, this assurance may be very

³² In the second edition, this phrase is replaced by: “which are, therefore, themselves bearers.”

³³ The headquarters of the Social Democratic Party were in the Lindenstrasse in Berlin. The headquarters of the trade unions were in the Engel-Ufer, also in Berlin.

reassuring and impressive from the standpoint of etiquette. However, in view of the serious times which are coming, the German labor movement must comprehend all of the problems of its struggle at a somewhat deeper level. It has all the reasons in the world to push aside this Chinese mandarin and to seek the solution of its problems there where it is directly given by the conditions themselves.] The guarantee of the true unity of the labor movement does not lie above, among the highest authorities of the leadership of the organization and their federative alliance, but below, in the organized proletarian masses. In the consciousness of the million members of the trade unions, Party and trade union are in fact *one*; both are nothing but different forms of the *Social Democratic* struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. And too, from this follows naturally the necessity of removing any frictions which have arisen between Social Democracy and the³⁴ trade unions, and of adapting their mutual relations to the consciousness of the proletarian masses—that is, of *rejoining the trade unions to Social Democracy*. This is only the expression of the synthesis of the real development which led from the original incorporation of the trade unions to their separation from Social Democracy. Afterward, through the period of the great growth of both the trade unions and Social Democracy, the coming period of great proletarian mass struggles will be prepared, and the reunification of Social Democracy, in the interest of both, will be made a necessity.

It is not, of course, a question of merging the whole trade-union structure into the Party, but of the production of that natural relation between the directions of Social Democracy and the trade unions, between the Party congresses and the trade-union congresses, which corresponds to the actual relation between the labor movement as a whole and its partial expression in the trade unions. Such a change, of course, will call forth a strong opposition from a part of the trade-union

³⁴ In the second edition, "the" is replaced by "a part of the."

leaders. But it is high time that the mass of Social Democratic workers learn to express their capacity for judgment and action, and therewith to demonstrate their ripeness for that time of great struggles and tasks in which they, the masses, will be the active chorus, and the leaders only the "speaking parts," the interpreters of the will of the masses.

The trade-union movement is not that which is reflected in the wholly understandable but erroneous illusions [of a few dozen]³⁵ trade-union leaders. It is that which lives in the consciousness of the masses of proletarians who have been won for the class struggle. In this consciousness, the trade-union movement is a part of Social Democracy. "And what it is, it should dare to appear."³⁶

Petersburg, September 15, 1906

Translated by Dick Howard

³⁵ In the second edition, the bracketed phrase is replaced by "a minority of."

³⁶ The lines are from Schiller's *Maria Stuart*. In his book, *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, Bernstein uses these lines as the motto for the chapter which deals with "The Immediate Tasks of Social Democracy." Since Rosa Luxemburg knew Schiller's work well, it is difficult to tell whether she is alluding to Bernstein's work here or not.

III

The Role of the Party

Nothing could be more misleading than to present Rosa Luxemburg's position on the revolutionary party as a "democratic" alternative to the "dictatorial" Leninist centralism—as, for example, a previous translation of "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" suggests by its title: "Leninism or Marxism?"¹ The role of the party is determined by the dialectical development of proletarian politics; under different political systems, and at different stages in the development of the class consciousness and organization of the proletariat, the party has a different role to play. The problem of the party arises frequently in Rosa Luxemburg's political writings, and it is not possible to isolate her views and bring them together systematically. For example, the last section of the "Mass Strike" essay deals with the problem in some detail, as do Rosa Luxemburg's post-1914 writings. Therefore, the two articles presented here must not be thought of as Rosa Luxemburg's "doctrine" of the party. On the other hand, this problem is so important today that it demands a separate rubric—if only to call attention to the possibility of a dialectical approach, and to debunk the simplistic "alternative" of Leninism *or* Luxemburgism.

Though she referred to Social Democratic Party congresses as a "gathering of Buddhists and Bonzes," Rosa Luxemburg

¹ Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1961. The editor of this volume, Bertram D. Wolfe, notes in his introduction that this title was taken from a translation by the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (Glasgow, 1935), though Wolfe himself publishes the Integer version (1934), whose title is "Revolutionary Socialist Organizations," under the Glasgow heading. I have revised the translation.

held a peculiarly legalistic view of their function. Party resolutions were "law" in the Social Democratic world, she assumed; and she often showed herself a master when it came to justifying her positions in terms of Party common law. Examples of this attitude have already been seen. Rosa Luxemburg wanted to have the revisionists thrown out of the SPD, and renounced this project only when it became clear that her views were in the minority—as some of the deletions in the second edition of *Social Reform or Revolution* show. In the Schippel affair, she demanded that the Party congress take a position, thereby resolving the affair once and for all in her eyes. Her discussion of the demand for the eight-hour day was clothed in semi-legalist terms. And, in the discussion of the mass strike, she took pains to explain that the "true essence of the Jena resolution in this context . . ." supported her position. Though she argued against Lenin's attempt to eliminate opportunism from the party through a rigid centralism, noting that "it is not the text of the statute but the sense and spirit which is brought into that text by the active fighters which decides the value of an organizational form," Rosa Luxemburg maintained her legalistic view of the role of party decisions throughout her life and, as will be seen in Part IV, she extended it to the role of the International after the debacle of the outbreak of the World War. On the other hand, she also maintained throughout her life that "far more important . . . than what is written in a program is the way in which that program is interpreted in action."

As its size and organizational needs grew, the SPD decided to found a Party School to train future cadre and editors. The school had thirty students each year, chosen by local Party and trade-union organizations. At the beginning of its second year (1907), the Prussian government informed the school's directors that its professors of economic history and political economy—Hilferding and Pannekoek—would be expelled from the country (both were foreigners) if they continued to teach at the school. Under these circumstances, Rosa Lux-

emburg was called to the school. During the next six years, she taught fifty hours per month for six months each year. According to all reports, Rosa Luxemburg was an exciting and provocative teacher, putting forth her ideas in a clear and precise manner, as can be seen from her manuscript, the *Introduction to Political Economy*, which was based on her courses and published after her murder by Paul Levi. It was during the time that she taught at the Party School that Rosa Luxemburg wrote her most famous economic work, *The Accumulation of Capital*.

The Party School came under attack from the revisionist-opportunists during the Nürnberg Congress of 1908. These "practical" men were afraid that the Party School was too far left, and that it would turn out a band of fiery radicals who would undermine their influence. Hypocritically, however, they couched their attacks against the school as a criticism of its "elite" nature. Rosa Luxemburg's reply is an interesting contribution to the discussion of the role of the Party. She begins by criticizing the school for not putting enough stress on the history of socialism, a subject matter on whose importance she always insisted. She then turns to a defense of the role of theory, picking up from the argument of *Social Reform or Revolution* that "the external characteristic of these [opportunistic] practices [is] hostility to 'theory.'" A "Child's Guide to Marx" is not sufficient; theory is not the private property of a few "intellectuals." Finally, she admits that she is quite happy with the Party School as a training school for a *party elite*—although she is vague about the role which this elite is to play after it leaves the school.

The "elite" being trained at the Party School was certainly not intended to be the elite which forms the Leninist vanguard party. Lenin's organizational theory was developed in the years preceding the 1903 Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party, and led to the split into the "Bolshevik" and "Menshevik" factions. It is not possible to discuss here the historical context in which Lenin's theory was formulated.

The major determinants of the Leninist view were: 1) the absolutist Russian state within which he was working; 2) his acceptance of the general Marxist belief in the impossibility of skipping a stage of development, and that the imminent proletarian revolution in Russia would result in a bourgeois democracy; 3) his theory of the formation of class consciousness. It is the latter factor which determines the form of Lenin's party, and it is to this notion—and not the abstract question of “democracy”—that Rosa Luxemburg directs her arguments.

Rosa Luxemburg's reply to Lenin was solicited by the *Iskra*, then in Menshevik hands. The SDKPiL had been a participant in the 1903 Russian Party Congress, consistent with its internationalist perspective, but had—on Rosa Luxemburg's orders—left the Congress before the split due to a quarrel with Lenin on the national question. Thus, Rosa Luxemburg already had a bone to pick with Lenin. Her reply to Lenin, however, was written in German (though her Russian was fluent) and was actually published in the *Neue Zeit* before it appeared in the *Iskra*. The article, therefore, must be seen within the context of German party affairs more than Russian ones—though Lenin doesn't seem to have realized this in his (posthumously published) reply to her article.

Though her reply to Lenin was published before the “Mass Strike” essay, it has much in common with the latter. Not only are the basic dialectical arguments about the relation between leaders and masses similar; not only does the reply predict the future development of the mass strike in Russia which culminated in the 1905 Revolution—the similarity of both analyses of *Russian* conditions can also be seen in their analyses of the implications for *Germany*.

Rosa Luxemburg argues that Lenin's attempt to fight opportunism by means of a highly centralized party is not correct for a revolutionary organization which is in its childhood, which has no mass base, and which has to operate in absolutist conditions. However, she continues, in a large, mass-based party like the SPD, with its developing bureaucratic and par-

liamentary strata which are more and more subject to opportunist temptations, there is a different situation. Her reasoning here seems to be that the “radicals”—or those who at the time seemed to be radicals: Bebel, Kautsky, Singer, etc.—were able to dominate the Party congresses and could, in a centralized party, enforce more strictly the decisions of the highest party authority, the Party congress, which, hitherto, had been effectively ignored by the “practical politicians.” There was, in other words, no concern for any sort of formalistic democracy; Rosa Luxemburg was interested in the most effective way to build a class-conscious fighting revolutionary party. On the other hand, her view of the party leader, typified by Bebel, who empathized with and was able to interpret the will of the people must be taken into account before attributing mere Machiavellian motives to her. Her position is vague, but on the basis of the context, it seems probable that her centralism was intended to be, as she put it, “a ‘self-centralism’ of the leading stratum of the proletariat; . . . the rule of the majority within its own party organization.” This view is borne out by her description of the role of the leadership during the mass strike as having “the most adroit adaptability to the given situation and . . . the closest possible contact with the mood of the masses.” It is further demonstrated by her attack on the bureaucratic apparatus of the party and unions which reduces the “mass of comrades . . . to a mass incapable of judging, whose essential virtue becomes ‘discipline,’ that is, passive obedience to duty.”

The notion of class consciousness is the key to the critique of Lenin’s views. Lenin believed that in the “normal” course of capitalist development—with heavy exploitation of workers during the Russian stage of primitive accumulation, with disconnected series of strike actions and rudimentary trade-union organizations, etc.—it was not possible for the proletariat to acquire a socialist consciousness. The totality view of social development, which is the main element of socialist consciousness, had to be brought to the working class by the party, from

the outside. That which changes the proletariat from a class "in itself" to a class "for itself" is the conscious action and intervention of the party. On the other hand, the work conditions of the proletarian prepare him for participation in a rigidly centralized group; he is used to taking orders, to doing partial tasks whose connection to the totality is not clear to him, whereas the intellectual who refuses this obedience reveals his petty-bourgeois nature. This aspect of Lenin's views on the nature of class consciousness showed itself after 1917 in his belief that industrial development of backward Russia under the direction of the workers' *party* would lead to socialism, and that capitalist methods of increasing productivity (Taylorism, hierarchical control of production, etc.) were not only the most efficient but the only possible ones.

Rosa Luxemburg's view of class consciousness should be clear to the reader by now. Her critique of Lenin takes up the arguments first used against Bernstein and Schippel, and later used against the Blanquist views of the Narodnaya Volya. The most complete development of her views, however, comes in the articles written in the last years of her life, and particularly in her speech to the Founding Congress of the German Communist Party, and in her programmatic statement "What Does the Spartacus League Want?" We can conclude this introductory section with a citation from the latter document:

The Spartacus League is not a party that wants to rise to power over the mass of workers or through them. The Spartacus League is only the most conscious, purposeful part of the proletariat, which points the entire broad mass of the working class toward its historical tasks at every step, which represents in each particular stage of the revolution the ultimate socialist goal, and in all national questions the interests of the proletarian world revolution.

The reader will recognize this as the view of the *Communist Manifesto*.

Speech to the Nürnberg Congress (1908)

If I take the floor, it is not to protest against the criticisms of the Party School, but on the contrary, to complain about the lack of a serious objective critique. The Party School is a new and very important institution, which must be seriously criticized and evaluated from all points of view. I myself must admit that, at the beginning, I greeted the foundation of the Party School with great distrust, on the one hand out of congenital conservatism [*Amusement*], on the other hand because in the quiet of my heart I said to myself that a party such as the Social Democratic Party should direct its agitation primarily toward a direct effect on the masses. For the most part, my work at the Party School has dispelled this doubt. Through continuous contact with the Party students in the school itself, I have come to value the new institute, and I can say with complete conviction: I have the feeling that we have created something new whose effect we cannot yet fully evaluate, but we have created something valuable which will be useful and bring victories to the Party.

Yet there are still many things which can be criticized, and it would be astonishing if this were not the case. If I reject the demand for a change in the process of selection of students—for as teachers we have had the experience that the results have been excellent up to now and I could not wish for a better elite corps—I do have some criticisms of the curriculum. The primary element of the curriculum must be the history of

This is the text of a speech made to the Nürnberg Congress of the German Social Democratic Party on September 14, 1908, in the debate on the Party School. The text is from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 311–14.

international socialism. [*"Quite right!"*] Even the visiting teachers from the Education Committee should emphasize this question more, instead of limiting themselves to topics in political economy. The history of socialism is much easier to present in abbreviated form without suffering from such a presentation than is political economy. For us, as a fighting party, the history of socialism is the school of life. We always derive new stimulation from it. [*"Quite right!"*]

In addition, the school suffers from the fact that the relation of the Party organizations to their students is not correct; it must be transformed from the ground up. At present, it sometimes happens that Party organizations send students to the school like scapegoats into the wilderness, without worrying what may become of them [*"Quite right!"*], without allowing them sufficiently extensive responsibilities. But on the other hand, there is also the danger that when Party students have a post, Party comrades make far too many demands on them. [*"Quite right!"*] Comrades will say: "You went to the Party School, now show us hour by hour and on every occasion what you learned!" Party students will not be able to fulfill such hopes. From beginning to end, we have tried hard to make it clear to them that they possess no finished knowledge, that they still must learn more, that they must study and learn for the rest of their lives. Thus, even if Party students must later have the opportunity to use what they have learned, on the other hand we must also take this latter fact into account.

So there are enough serious points of view from which to criticize the question of the Party School from all sides. But criticism such as that of Eisner is not appropriate. Eisner has such a great respect for scientific knowledge that it scares me. I am afraid that in relation to scientific knowledge in general and to scientific socialism in particular, the same thing will happen to Eisner as happened to poor old Klopstock, of whom Lessing wrote the eternal words:

Who would not praise a Klopstock?
But would anyone read him?—No.

We would rather be less high-minded
And more frequently read.

[*Amusement*] A further proof of the frivolity of Eisner's criticism is the example of "A Child's Guide to Marx," transported here for us in the form of Comrade Maurenbrecher, which he holds up to us as a shining counterpart to the Party School. [*Amusement*] In Nürnberg, Maurenbrecher is supposed to transmit a general education to the proletariat all by himself. He has set down his profession of faith in what Eisner thinks is an excellent article in the *Fränkischen Tagespost*, where it is said: "We're too preoccupied with theory! Do the masses have to know the theory of value? [*"Hear, hear!"*] Do the masses have to know what the materialistic theory of history is? I'll take the dare and say: No! The teacher has to know that—to keep it safely in his pocket." [*Eisner: "No, that isn't there, you stuck it in."*] Of course I stuck it in. "But for the education of the masses all that has no direct value, and can even be harmful." I didn't stick *that* in, Maurenbrecher did say that. [*"Hear, hear!"*] And further, he says: "It hasn't often been noted, but theory frequently has the actual effect of killing the power to come to conclusions and to take action." The materialist concept of history, which is responsible for forty years of magnificent development of the class struggle in Germany and the world; the theory of Marx and Engels, which lit the path of the Russian proletariat in its great deeds at the beginning of the century, in the Russian Revolution [of 1905], is supposed to kill the power to come to conclusions and to take action! [*"Hear, hear!"*] But Eisner, Maurenbrecher, and others judge everything by their own experience. They think that the materialist concept of history, as they understand it, has on them the effect of crippling their ability to act and they therefore think that theory should not be taught at the Party School, but hard facts, the hard facts of life. They haven't the faintest idea that the proletariat knows the hard facts from its everyday life, the proletariat knows the "hard facts" better than Eisner. [*Enthusiastic*

agreement] What the masses lack is general enlightenment, the theory which gives us the possibility of systematizing the hard facts and forging them into a deadly weapon to use against our opponents. [*Enthusiastic agreement*] If anything has convinced me of the necessity of the Party School, of spreading an understanding of socialist theory in our ranks, it is Eisner's criticisms. [*Enthusiastic applause*]

Translated by John Heckman

in revolutionary Marxism; it is not for nothing that the opportunist mode of thought rings continually in national seclusion. The following article, written at its request for the *Iskra*, the party organ of Russian Social Democracy, should also be of particular interest to the German public.

I

A unique and unprecedented task in the history of socialism has fallen to the lot of Russian Social Democracy. It must create a Social Democratic tactic based on proletarian class struggle in an absolutist state. The usual comparison of the present conditions in Russia with those of Germany at the time of the antisocialist laws is weak insofar as it considers the Russian conditions not from the political standpoint but from that of the police. The obstacles placed in the way of the mass movement by the absence of democratic liberties are of relatively secondary importance. The mass movement in Russia has succeeded in overcoming the barriers of the absolutist "constitution," and has created its own, though somewhat precarious, "constitution" in street disorders. Continuing in this course, the movement will in time gain its complete victory over absolutism.

The principal difficulty of the Social Democratic struggle in Russia is the veiling of bourgeois class rule by absolutism's rule of force. This necessarily gives the doctrine of socialist class struggle an abstract, propagandistic character, while immediate political agitation largely takes on a democratic-revolutionary guise. The antisocialist laws [in Germany] merely put the working class outside of the constitution. But they did this in a highly developed bourgeois society with fully exposed class contradictions developed in parliamentary action. The whole absurdity of Bismarck's enterprise lay precisely in this. The opposite experiment is on the agenda in Russia: a Social Democratic party will be created without the direct rule of the bourgeoisie.

Not only the question of transplanting the socialist doctrine

to Russian soil, not only the question of agitation, but also the question of organization has taken a peculiar form due to this circumstance. As opposed to earlier, utopian socialisms, in the Social Democratic movement the question of organization too is not an artificial product of propaganda but an historical product of the class struggle, to which Social Democracy adds only political consciousness. Under normal conditions—that is, where the developed political class rule of the bourgeoisie precedes the Social Democratic movement—the first political welding together of the workers is largely produced by the bourgeoisie. “At this stage,” declares the *Communist Manifesto*, “the large-scale cohesion of the workers is not the result of their own unification but of that of the bourgeoisie.”¹

The task of Social Democracy in Russia is to replace a part of the historical process by conscious intervention, and to lead the proletariat from its political atomization, which forms the foundation of the absolutist regime, to the highest form of organization, that of a fighting class, conscious of its goal. Thus the organizational question is particularly difficult for Russian Social Democracy, not only because it must work without all the formal aids of bourgeois democracy, but above all because in a certain way it must, like the Lord God, create “out of nothing,” in thin air, without the political raw material which otherwise would be prepared by bourgeois society.

The problem on which Russian Social Democracy has labored for several years is how to effect a transition from the type of divided, totally independent circles and local clubs—which corresponds to the preparatory, mostly propagandistic phase of *the movement*—to an organization such as is necessary for a unified political action of the masses in the entire state. Division and total autonomy, the self-rule of the local organizations, were the dominant characteristics of the old type of organization. Inasmuch as the old organizational model has

¹ This passage of the *Manifesto* continues: “. . . which, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the proletariat in motion. . . .”

become unbearable and politically out of date, it is natural that the motto of the new phase of the great organizational work should be: centralism.

The accentuation of the idea of centralism was the theme of the three-year campaign of the *Iskra* in preparation for the last Party Congress,² which was, in fact, the constituent assembly of the Party. The same idea is dominant among the entire young guard of Social Democracy in Russia. However, at the Party Congress, and even more so after it, it became evident that centralism is a slogan which does not completely exhaust the historical content and the particularity of the Social Democratic organization. Once again, it becomes clear that the Marxist conception of socialism cannot be fixed in rigid formulas in any area, including that of the question of organization.

The book which we are reviewing³ is written by Comrade Lenin, one of the outstanding leaders and fighters of the *Iskra* in its campaign in preparation for the Party Congress. The book is the systematic presentation of the ultra-centralist viewpoint in the Russian party. The conception expressed here in a rigorous and exhaustive manner is that of a relentless centralism. The life-principle of this centralism is, on the one hand, the sharp accentuation of the distinction of the organized troops of explicit and active revolutionaries from the unorganized, though revolutionary, milieu which surrounds them; on the other hand, it is the strict discipline and the direct, decisive, and determining intervention of the central committee in all activities of the local organizations of the party. It is sufficient to remark that, for example, according to this conception the central committee has the power to organize all partial committees of the party. Therefore, it can also determine the composition of the personnel of each individual Russian local organization from Geneva and Liège to Tomsk

² That is, the Party Congress of August 1903, at which the Bolshevik-Menshevik split took place.

³ *What Is to Be Done?*

and Irkutsk; it can give them its ready-made rules of local organization; it can dissolve and reconstitute these local groups by decree; and finally, in this way it can indirectly influence the composition of the highest party authority, that of the party congress. Thus, the central committee appears as the only active element of the party, and all the other organizations simply as the tools which implement its decisions.

Lenin thinks that precisely the unification of such a strict centralism with the Social Democratic mass movement is a specific revolutionary-Marxist principle. He brings a series of facts to bear in support of his conception. Yet we must look more closely at this.

There is no doubt that, in general, a strong tendency toward centralism is inherent in Social Democracy. Social Democracy grows in the economic soil of capitalism, which itself tends toward centralism. Its struggle occurs within the political framework of the large, centralized bourgeois state. Further, Social Democracy is fundamentally an outspoken opponent of every particularism and national federalism. It is called upon to represent, within the framework of a given state, the totality of the interests of the proletariat as a class, as opposed to all partial and group interests. Therefore, it follows that Social Democracy has the natural aspiration of welding together all national, religious, and professional groups of the working class into a unified party. It is only in exceptional, abnormal cases, such as in Austria, that it is forced to make an exception in favor of the federative principle.⁴

In this context, there neither was nor is any question of Russian Social Democracy organizing itself into a federated conglomerate of an immense number of particular national and provincial organizations. Rather, it must become a unitary, compact labor party for the entire empire. The question, however, concerning the greater or lesser degree of centralization

⁴ The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a multinational state. Under the leadership of Victor Adler, the Austrian Social Democrats developed a federal relation with the national groups which operated within the Empire.

and its particular character within a unified and single Russian Social Democracy is a very different one.

From the standpoint of the formal tasks of Social Democracy as a fighting party, centralism appears, at first, as a condition on which directly depend the capacity for struggle and the power of the party. But the specific historical conditions of the proletarian struggle are more important than the point of view of the formal necessities of any fighting organization.

The Social Democratic movement is the first in the history of class societies which, in all its moments, in its entire course, reckons on the organization and the independent direct action of the masses. Because of this, Social Democracy creates a wholly different organizational type than the earlier socialist movements, for example, those of the Jacobin or the Blanquist type.

Lenin appears to underestimate this fact when, in his book, (page 140 of the original edition), he asserts that the revolutionary Social Democrat is nothing but "a Jacobin indissolubly connected with the organization of the class-conscious proletariat." Lenin sees the whole of the difference between Social Democracy and Blanquism in the organization and the class consciousness of the proletariat as opposed to the conspiracy of a small minority. He forgets that this difference implies a complete revision of the concept of organization, a whole new content for the concept of centralism, and a whole new conception of the reciprocal relation of the organization and the struggle.

Blanquism was not based on the immediate class consciousness of the working masses. Therefore, it did not need a mass organization. On the contrary. The great mass of the people were to appear in the arena only in the moment of revolution. The preparatory action for the revolutionary coup was the work of a small minority. Consequently, in order to succeed, the sharp separation of those persons executing this mission from the masses of the people was directly necessary. This was possible and practicable because there was absolutely no inner

connection between the conspiratorial activity of a Blanquist organization and the daily life of the masses.

Because they had no connection with the soil of the elementary class struggle, the tactics and the concrete tasks of the Blanquists were worked out in the smallest detail—on the basis of free improvisation—and were fixed and prescribed in advance. Thus, the active members of the organization naturally were transformed into pure implements of a predetermined will lying outside their own field of activity—into tools of a central committee. This presents the second moment of a conspiratorial centralism: the absolute, blind subordination of the individual organs of the party to its central committee, and the extension of the decision-making power of this latter to the furthest peripheries of the party organization.

The conditions of Social Democratic action are radically different. This action grows historically out of the elementary class struggle. It thus moves in the dialectical contradiction that here the proletarian army is first recruited in the struggle itself, and too, only in the struggle does it become aware of the objectives of the struggle. Here, organization, enlightenment, and struggle are not separate mechanically, and also temporally, different moments, as is the case with a Blanquist movement. Here, they are only different sides of the same process. On the one hand, apart from the general principle of the struggle, there is no ready-made, pre-established, detailed set of tactics which a central committee can teach its Social Democratic membership as if they were army recruits. On the other hand, the process of the struggle, which creates the organization, leads to a continual fluctuation of the sphere of influence of Social Democracy.

It follows that the Social Democratic centralization cannot be based on blind obedience, nor on the mechanical subordination of the party militants to a central power. On the other hand, it follows that an absolute dividing wall cannot be erected between the class-conscious kernel of the proletariat,

already organized as party cadre, and the immediate popular environment which is gripped by the class struggle and finds itself in the process of class enlightenment.

For this reason, the construction of centralism in Social Democracy, as Lenin desires, on the basis of these two principles—1) on the blind subordination of all party organizations in the smallest detail of their activity to a central power which, alone, thinks, plans, and decides for all; and 2) the sharp separation of the organized kernel of the party from the surrounding revolutionary milieu—seems to us to be a mechanistic transfer of the organizational principles of the Blanquistic movement of conspiratorial groups to the Social Democratic movement of the working masses. And Lenin identified this perhaps more rigorously than any of his opponents could when he defined his “revolutionary Social Democrat” as the “Jacobin indissolubly connected with the organization of the class-conscious proletariat.”

The fact is, however, that Social Democracy is not bound up with the organization of the working classes; rather, it is the very movement of the working class. Social Democratic centralism must, therefore, be of essentially other coin than the Blanquist. It can be nothing but the imperative summation of the will of the enlightened and fighting vanguard of the working class as opposed to its individual groups and members. This is, so to speak, a “self-centralism” of the leading stratum of the proletariat; it is the rule of the majority within its own party organization.

The investigation of the particular content of Social Democratic centralism already shows that the necessary conditions for such a centralism could not be completely given in modern Russia. These conditions are, namely: 1) the existence of a noteworthy stratum of proletarians already schooled in the political struggle, and 2) the possibility for these workers to express their influence at public party congresses, in the party press, etc. The latter condition can, obviously, only be created with the advent of political freedom in Russia. The first—the

building of a class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat capable of self-direction—is only now emerging, and must be seen as the principal goal of the next agitational and organizational work.

The opposite conviction on the part of Lenin, according to whom all the preconditions for the formation of a large and extremely centralized labor party in Russia are already present, is in this context all the more surprising. He shows a far too mechanical conception of the Social Democratic organization when he proclaims that today “not the proletariat, but many intellectuals in the Russian Social Democracy are in need of self-education in the sense of organization and discipline” (page 145 in the original edition), and when he glorifies the educational influence of the factory on the proletariat, which makes it immediately ripe for “organization and discipline.” The “discipline” which Lenin has in mind is implanted in the proletariat not only by the factory but also by the barracks, by modern bureaucratism—in short, by the whole mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state. It is nothing but an incorrect use of the word when at one time one designates as “discipline” two so opposed concepts as the absence of thought and will in a mass of flesh with many arms and legs moving mechanically, and the voluntary coordination of conscious political acts by a social stratum. There is nothing common to the corpselike obedience of a dominated class and the organized rebellion of a class struggling for its liberation. It is not by linking up with the discipline implanted in him by the capitalist state, by the mere transfer of authority from the hand of the bourgeoisie to that of the Social Democratic central committee, but by breaking, uprooting this slavish spirit of discipline that the proletarian can be educated for the new discipline, for the voluntary self-discipline of Social Democracy.

This same train of thought shows further that centralism in the Social Democratic sense is not at all an absolute concept which can be applied in the same way to every phase of the labor movement. Rather, it must be conceived of as a tend-

ency whose realization progresses with the progress in the enlightenment and political education of the working masses in the course of their struggle.

No doubt, the insufficient presence today of the most important presuppositions for the complete realization of centralism in the Russian movement can have a formidable negative effect. Still, in our opinion, it is a mistake to believe that it is possible to substitute "provisionally" the "transferred absolute power" of the central committee of the party for the yet unrealizable majority rule of the enlightened working class within its own organization; and it is a mistake to believe that the lack of open control by the working masses over the action and conduct of the party organs could be replaced by the opposite: control by the central committee over the activity of the revolutionary working class.

The actual history of the Russian movement gives many reasons for the doubtful value of centralism in this latter sense. The omnipotent central power with its unlimited right of intervention and control, such as Lenin suggests, would be an absurdity if it had to limit its authority only to mere technical aspects of Social Democratic activity—to control of the external means and resources of agitation, such as the supply of Party literature, and the correct division of agitational and financial resources. Lenin's centralism would only have a clear political goal if it used its power for the creation of a unitary tactic in the struggle, for the unleashing of a vast political action in Russia. But what do we see in the previous developments of the Russian movement? Its most important and most fruitful tactical developments during the last decade have not been "invented" by several leaders of the movement, and even less by any directional organizations. In each case, they were the spontaneous product of the movement in action.

This was the case in the first stage of the veritable proletarian movement in Russia, which began with the rudimentary outbreak of the giant strike in Petersburg in 1896, an event which inaugurated the economic mass action of the Russian

proletariat. The same is true of the second phase, that of political street demonstrations, which began in a wholly spontaneous manner with the student agitation in Petersburg in March 1901. The next significant tactical turn was the mass strike in Rostov-on-Don, which opened new horizons. "By itself," with its street agitation, great outdoor meetings, and public speeches—all improvised *ad hoc*—this strike was such that the boldest Social Democratic daredevil would not have dared to imagine it only a few years before.

In all these cases, in the beginning was "the act."⁵ The initiative and conscious direction of the Social Democratic organizations played an extremely limited role. This was not, however, the fault of the insufficient preparation of these specific organizations for their roles (though this may, to a certain degree, have entered into the picture), and it was certainly not that of the absence of an all-powerful central committee, as Lenin's plan presents it. On the contrary, such a central committee would more than likely have only had the effect of increasing the indecisiveness of the individual committees of the party, and have brought forth a division between the turbulent masses and the temporizing Social Democracy.

The same phenomenon—the limited role of the conscious initiative of the party direction in the formation of tactics—can be seen in Germany and in all other countries. In general, the tactical policy of Social Democracy, in its main lines, is not "invented"; it is the product of a progressive series of great creative acts in the often rudimentary experiments of the class struggle. Here too, the unconscious comes before the conscious, the logic of the objective historical process before the subjective logic of its bearers. The role of the Social Democratic leadership is, therefore, of an essentially conservative character. On the basis of these new experiences, it attempts to develop the newly won terrain of struggle to its most extreme conse-

⁵ The reference is to Faust's monologue. This passage is often cited by Rosa Luxemburg.

quences. But this attempt reverses itself and becomes a bulwark against further great innovations on a wider scale.

The present tactics of German Social Democracy, for example, are universally admired for their remarkable multiformity, suppleness, and reliability. But this only signifies that in its daily struggle our party has adapted itself wonderfully, in the smallest detail, to the parliamentary system, that it knows how to exploit the entire field of struggle offered by parliamentarism, and to do this in accord with its principles. At the same time, however, this specific tactical form so thoroughly covers the further horizons that, to a great degree, the inclination to eternalize, to consider the parliamentary tactic as purely and simply *the* tactic of Social Democracy makes itself felt. This tendency is seen, for example, in the fruitlessness of Parvus' attempt during the past years to kindle the debate in the Party press concerning an eventual tactical change if suffrage rights are abolished, an eventuality which is not considered impossible by the leaders of the Party. This inertia, however, can largely be explained by the fact that it is very difficult to present the contours and conceptual forms of a not yet existing—hence imaginary—political situation in the thin air of abstract speculation. What is always important for Social Democracy is not to prophesy and to preconstruct a ready-made recipe for the future tasks. Rather, it is important that the correct historical evaluation of the forms of struggle corresponding to the given situation be continually maintained in the party, and that it understand the relativity of the given phase of the struggle, and the necessary advance of the revolutionary stages toward the ultimate goal of the proletarian class struggle.

However, to grant to the party leadership such absolute powers of a negative character as Lenin does is to artificially strengthen to a dangerous extent the conservatism inherent in the essence of that institution. If the Social Democratic tactics are not created by a central committee but by the whole party—or, better still, by the whole movement—then it is obviously necessary that the individual party organizations have

the elbow-room which alone makes possible the utilization of the means presented by the given situation to strengthen the struggle, as well as to develop the revolutionary initiative. The ultra-centralism which Lenin demands seems to us, however, not at all positive and creative, but essentially sterile and domineering. Lenin's concern is essentially the control of the activity of the party and not its fruition, the narrowing and not the development, the harassment and not the unification of the movement.

Such an experiment seems doubly risky for Russian Social Democracy at the present moment. Russian Social Democracy stands on the eve of great revolutionary struggles for the overthrow of absolutism. It stands before, or rather, has already entered a period of intensive creative activity in the tactical realm and—as is usual in a revolutionary period—of feverish and vivid extensions and shifts of its spheres of influence. To wish to put chains on the initiative of the party spirit at such times, to wish to hem in its capacity for expansion with a barbed-wire fence, is, from the outset, to render it largely incapable of accomplishing the great tasks of the moment.

From the above consideration of the particular content of Social Democratic centralism, it is, of course, not yet possible to deduce the concrete formulation of the paragraphs of the organizational statute of the Russian party. This formulation naturally depends, in the last analysis, on the concrete situation in which the activity of the given period takes place. Since in Russia, however, it is a question of the first attempt at building a large proletarian organization, this formulation can hardly claim infallibility. It must first prove itself under fire.

What can, however, be deduced from the general conception of the Social Democratic organization are the fundamental principles and the spirit of the organization. These imply, especially at the beginnings of the mass movement, that Social Democratic centralism has most of all a coordinating, synthetic character and not a regulative and exclusive one. If this spirit of political freedom of movement, along with a penetrat-

ing vision of the unity of the movement and its adhesion to its principles, has anchored itself in the party ranks, then the defects of any organizational statute, even the most unfortunately conceived, will very quickly undergo an effective correction in practice. It is not the text of the statute but the sense and spirit which are brought into that text by the active fighters which decide the value of an organizational form.

II

So far we have looked at the question of centralism from the standpoint of the general principles of Social Democracy, and to some extent from that of the conditions of modern Russia. But the domineering spirit of the ultra-centralism advocated by Lenin and his friends is not, for them, an accidental result of mistaken ideas. Rather, this project is related to Lenin's campaign against opportunism, which is carried through into the smallest detail of the organizational question. "It is a question," says Lenin (page 52 in the original edition), "of forging, by means of the paragraphs of the organizational statutes, a more or less sharp weapon against opportunism. The deeper the sources of opportunism, the sharper this weapon must be."

Lenin sees the absolute power of the central committee and the strict statutory limitation of the party as the powerful dam against the opportunist current. He designates as specific signs of this current the inborn predilection of intellectuals for autonomy and disorganization, and their aversion to strict party discipline and to every "bureaucratism" in the party. Lenin's notion implies that only the socialist "literati," because of their inborn scatterbrainedness and individualism, can be against such absolute authority of the central committee. An authentic proletarian, on the other hand, as a result of his revolutionary class instinct must feel a certain ecstasy at the strictness, rigidity, and energy of the highest party committees, and must submit himself to all the rough operations of "party discipline" with happily closed eyes. "The opposition of bureaucracy to democracy," says Lenin, "is the same as that of the organiza-

tional principle of revolutionary Social Democracy to the organizational principle of the opportunists" (page 151 in the original edition). Lenin stresses that the same opposition of the centralist and the autonomist conceptions is present in Social Democracy in all countries where the revolutionary and the reformist or revisionist tendencies oppose one another. He points particularly to the recent events in the German party and the discussions which arose concerning the autonomy of each voting district.⁶ For this reason, an examination of Lenin's parallels should not be without interest or utility.

Above all, it should be noted that the glorification of the inherent capacities of the proletariat for Social Democratic organization, and the distrust of the "intellectual" elements of the Social Democratic movement is not in itself a sign of "revolutionary Marxism." The affinity of this with the opportunist view can just as easily be shown. The antagonism between the purely proletarian element and the nonproletarian socialist intelligentsia is in fact the common ideological cover under which gather such groups as the half-anarchist French "Trade-Union-Only" elements with their slogan: *Méfiez-vous des politiciens!* [Beware of politicians]; the English trade unionists who mistrust the socialist "visionaries"; and, if our information is correct, the former Petersburg *Rabochaya Mysl* (the journal *Labor Thought*), with its pure "economism" and its transfer of the limitations of trade unionism to absolutist Russia.

In the previous practice of West European Social Democracy there can undoubtedly be seen an undeniable connection between opportunism and the intellectual element, and, on the other hand, between opportunism and decentralist tenden-

⁶ One of the main revisionist strategies was to argue that "special conditions" demanded such opportunist responses as, for example, the voting for the local budget, an electoral coalition, or a different agricultural policy. The revisionist-opportunist wing within German Social Democracy campaigned for years against "Berlin centralism." As was seen in the "Mass Strike" essay, the trade unions succeeded in winning their actual autonomy from the party.

cies in the organization question. However, to separate these phenomena, which arose on a concrete historical base, from their context, making them into abstract models having universal and absolute value, is the greatest of sins against the “Holy Ghost” of Marxism—namely, against its historical-dialectical mode of thought.

In the abstract, we can only say that the “intellectual,” coming out of the bourgeoisie and therefore alien to the proletariat, can come to socialism not in terms of his own class feelings but only by overcoming these by means of ideological development. For this reason, the intellectual is more predisposed to opportunist escapades than the proletarian. The latter, insofar as he has not lost the living contact with his social base, with the proletarian masses, has a sure revolutionary support in his immediate class instincts. However, the concrete form in which the inclination of the intellectual toward opportunism, and especially the form in which this tendency expresses itself in organizational questions, in every case depends on the concrete social situation which is dealt with.

The phenomenon to which Lenin points in the cases of German, French, and Italian Social Democracy grew from a wholly determinate social base—namely, from bourgeois parliamentarism. Inasmuch as bourgeois parliamentarism is, generally, the specific breeding place of the present opportunist current in the West European socialist movement, the particular tendencies of opportunism toward disorganization also grow from it.

Parliamentarism supports not only all the well-known illusions of modern opportunism, as we have come to know it in France, Italy, and Germany—the overestimation of reform work; the collaboration of classes and parties; peaceful development, etc. It also is the soil on which these illusions can practically manifest themselves, in that it separates the intellectuals who are parliamentarians from the proletarian mass and raises them above the mass, both inside Social Democracy and outside it. Finally, with the growth of the labor move-

ment, this same parliamentarism forms a springboard to political success for these intellectuals, easily becoming a shelter for ambitious but shipwrecked bourgeois lives.

For all of these reasons, there exists a definite inclination of the opportunistic intellectuals of West European Social Democracy toward disorganization and toward a lack of discipline. The second specific presupposition of the present opportunistic current is the existence of an already highly developed stage of the Social Democratic movement, and therefore also of an influential Social Democratic party organization. This latter appears as a bulwark, protecting the revolutionary class movement against the bourgeois-parliamentary tendencies which want to make it crumble into pieces, to split it in such a way that the active kernel of the proletariat is once again dissolved in the amorphous mass of voters. It is in this way that the "autonomist" and decentralist tendencies of modern opportunism arise. They are not a result of an inherent disorderliness and weakness of character, as Lenin thinks. They have historically justified and determined political goals to which they are well adapted, arising from the needs of the bourgeois parliamentary politician. They are not to be explained by the psychology of the intellectual but by the politics of the opportunists.

All of these conditions are significantly different in absolutist Russia. Opportunism in the Russian labor movement is, generally speaking, not a product of the growth of Social Democracy or the decomposition of bourgeois society, as in the West. On the contrary, it is a product of the backward political situation in Russia.

The Russian intelligentsia, from which the socialist intellectuals are recruited, clearly has a much less determinate class character, is much more *déclassé* (in the strict sense of the term) than the West European intelligentsia. From this and the immaturity of the proletarian movement in Russia, it follows generally that a much wider space for theoretical wandering and opportunistic vagaries is present. Thus, at one mo-

ment one sees a total negation of the political side of the labor movement; at another, the opposite belief in the all-powerfulness of terrorist means; and finally the morass of political liberalism or “philosophical” Kantian idealism appears.

But not only bourgeois parliamentarism, which would be the positive support for the active tendency of the Russian Social Democratic intellectuals toward disorganization, but also the corresponding psychological milieu does not exist in Russia. The West European literati, dedicating themselves to the cult of their alleged “ego” and to the “morality of the superior man,” spread even into the world of socialist thought and struggle. This literati are not typical of the bourgeois intelligentsia in general but only of a determinate phase of its existence—namely, they are a product of a decadent, putrescent bourgeoisie caught up in the vicious circle of its class domination. For understandable reasons, the utopian and opportunistic fads of the Russian socialist intellectuals tend to take on the opposite theoretical form—that of self-estrangement and self-flagellation. If the previous “going to the people”—i. e., the intellectual’s compulsory masquerade as a farmer, living among the old “simple folk”—was a doubtful invention of the intellectuals, the same is true of the recent crude cult of the “caloused fist” established by the supporters of pure “economism.”⁷

If, instead of attempting to solve the organizational question by a mechanical transfer of fixed models from Western Europe to Russia, one were to study the actual concrete conditions in Russia, one would come to a very different result. To attribute to opportunism, as does Lenin, the tendency to prefer some specific form of organization—say, decentralization—is to totally mistake its inner nature. Being opportunistic, opportunism, in the question of organization as well as in others, has

⁷ In her introduction to her German translation of Korolenko’s *Die Geschichte meines Zeitgenossen*, done while she was in prison during the war, Rosa Luxemburg paints a sympathetic and lively picture of the intellectual milieu of pre-1871 Russia, stressing the role of literature and culture in leading a backward nation to revolution.

only one principle: the absence of principle. It always chooses its means according to circumstances, provided these means suit its own ends. If, with Lenin, we say that opportunism is the attempt to cripple the independent revolutionary class movement of the proletariat in order to make it useful to the power-hungry bourgeois intelligentsia, then in the beginning stages of the labor movement this goal can most easily be reached not through decentralization but precisely through rigid centralism. It is by extreme centralization that the still unclear proletarian movement can be delivered up to a handful of intellectuals. It is characteristic that in Germany, too, at the beginning of the movement, before a strong kernel of enlightened proletarians and a tested Social Democratic tactic had been developed, both tendencies were represented in the organization—namely, the partisans of an extreme centralism, represented by Lassalle's "General Association of German Workers," and the partisans of "autonomism," represented by the Eisenach group. Despite their confused principles, the tactics of the "Eisenachers" created a significantly greater active participation of the proletarian elements in the intellectual life of the Party, a greater spirit of initiative in the working class itself (as was demonstrated by the rapid growth of a remarkable number of workers' papers among this fraction), and generally a strong and healthy expansion of the movement. The Lassalleans, on the other hand, with their "dictators," naturally had only sad misadventures.

In general, it can easily be shown that the preferred organizational tendency of opportunist intellectuals in conditions where the revolutionary part of the working masses is still disorganized and the movement itself is groping—in a word: where conditions are like those of modern Russia—is precisely rigid, despotic centralism. This follows for the same reasons that at a later stage—in the parliamentary situation, with the existence of a strong, united labor party—decentralization becomes the tendency of the opportunist intellectuals.

Thus, from the very standpoint of Lenin's fears of the dan-

gerous influences of the intelligentsia on the proletarian movement, his own organizational conception is the greatest danger for Russian Social Democracy. Nothing will deliver a still young labor movement to the intellectual's thirst for power more easily than confining it in the straitjacket of a bureaucratic centralism which degrades the worker to a pliant tool of a "committee." And, on the other hand, nothing so surely protects the labor movement from an ambitious intelligentsia as the independent revolutionary action of the working class, as the increasing of their feeling of political responsibility.

Indeed, that phantom which is haunting Lenin today can very easily become a concrete reality tomorrow.

We must not forget that the revolution which will soon break out in Russia is not a proletarian but a bourgeois revolution, which will greatly change the conditions of the Social Democratic struggle. At that time, the Russian intelligentsia will rapidly become imbued with bourgeois class ideas. Though today Social Democracy is the only leader of the working masses of Russia, the day after the revolution will see the bourgeoisie—and in the front ranks, the intelligentsia—naturally wanting to use the masses as a stepping stone to their parliamentary domination. If the independent action, the free initiative and the political sense of the most advanced stratum of the working class are not let loose, if they are politically hindered and drilled by a Social Democratic central committee, then the game of the bourgeois demagogues in a renovated Russia will be made easier, and the harvest of the present efforts of Social Democracy will tomorrow be found in the barns of the bourgeoisie.

But above all, the fundamental idea of the ultra-centralist conception, which comes to a head in the notion that opportunism in the labor movement can be prevented by a party constitution, is erroneous. Under the direct influence of the most recent events in French, Italian, and German Social Democracy, the Russian Social Democrats obviously tend to consider opportunism in general as a foreign intrusion, alien to

the proletarian movement, which is only brought into the labor movement with the representatives of bourgeois democracy. If this were the case, the constitutional limits of the organization in themselves would be powerless before this intrusion. The massive afflux of nonproletarians to Social Democracy is the result of deeply rooted social causes, such as the rapid economic collapse of the petty bourgeoisie, the even more rapid political collapse of bourgeois liberalism, and the withering away of bourgeois democracy. It is a naive illusion to imagine that one can stop this rising wave through this or that formulation of the party constitution. Constitutions regulate the existence only of small sects or private societies; historical currents have always known how to pass through the mesh of the most subtly worded statute.

Further, it is totally erroneous to think that it is in the interest of the labor movement to repel the massive afflux of recruits which are set free by the progressive dissolution of bourgeois society. The proposition that Social Democracy is the representative of the class interests of the proletariat but that it is at the same time the representative of all the progressive interests of society and of all oppressed victims of bourgeois society is not to be understood as saying that in the program of Social Democracy all these interests are ideally synthesized. This proposition becomes true through the process of historical development by means of which Social Democracy, as a political party, gradually becomes the haven of the different dissatisfied elements of society, becoming a party of the people opposed to a tiny minority of capitalist rulers.

But, Social Democracy must always know how to subordinate the present pains of this colorful herd of recruits to the ultimate goals of the working class; it must know how to integrate the nonproletarian spirit of opposition into revolutionary proletarian action; in a word, it must know how to assimilate, to digest these elements which come to it. This, however, is only possible where, as has been the case in Germany, there exists a kernel of already strong, educated proletarian troops

in Social Democracy who are conscious enough to pull along with them the *déclassé* and petty-bourgeois recruits. In this case, a more rigorous application of the idea of centralism in the constitution and a stricter application of party discipline can no doubt be a useful safeguard against the opportunist current. Under these circumstances the party constitution can, no doubt, be an effective weapon in the struggle against opportunism, as in fact it has been for the revolutionary French Social Democracy in fighting off the assault of the Jaurèsian confusion. Such a revision of the constitution of the German party has now become a necessity. But, in this case too, the party constitution should not be seen as a kind of self-sufficient weapon against opportunism but merely as an external means through which the decisive influence of the present revolutionary-proletarian majority of the party can be exercised. When such a majority is lacking, the most rigorous written constitution cannot act in its place.

However, the influx of bourgeois elements, as we said, is far from being the only source of the opportunist current in Social Democracy. The other source lies in the essence of the Social Democratic struggle itself, in its internal contradictions. The world-historical advance of the proletariat to its victory is a process whose particularity lies in the fact that here, for the first time in history, the masses of the people themselves, against all ruling classes, are expressing their will. But this will can only be realized outside of and beyond the present society. On the other hand, this will can only develop in the daily struggle with the established order, thus, only within its framework. The unification of the great mass of the people with a goal that goes beyond the whole established order, of the daily struggle with the revolutionary overthrow—this is the dialectical contradiction of the Social Democratic movement which must develop consistently between two obstacles: the loss of its mass character and the abandonment of its goal, becoming a sect and becoming a bourgeois reformist movement.

For this reason it is a totally ahistorical illusion to think that

the revolutionary Social Democratic tactic can be predetermined once and for all, that the labor movement can be defended once and for all against opportunist escapades. Of course, the Marxist doctrine gives us devastating weapons against all the fundamental kinds of opportunist thought. But, inasmuch as the Social Democratic movement is a mass movement, and the obstacles threatening it do not arise from human heads but from social conditions, the opportunist errors cannot be warded off in advance; only after they have taken on tangible forms in practice can they be overcome through the movement itself—with the aid of the weapons of Marxist theory, of course. Looked at from this angle, opportunism appears as a product of the labor movement itself, as an unavoidable moment in its historical development. In Russia, where Social Democracy is still young and where the political conditions of the labor movement are so abnormal, opportunism seems, for the present, to arise largely from the unavoidable tactical groping and experimentation, from the necessity of bringing the present struggle in all its peculiarities into harmony with the principles of socialism.

If this is the case, then it is even more astonishing to think that, at the very beginnings of the labor movement, one could prevent the appearance of the opportunist current through this or that paragraph of the party constitution. The attempt to exorcise opportunism by means of a scrap of paper can in fact only affect Social Democracy itself, in that it paralyzes its living pulse and weakens its capacity for resistance not only in the struggle against opportunist currents but also, more importantly, against the established order. The means turns against the ends.

Moreover, in this anxious attempt of a part of Russian Social Democracy to protect the very promising and vigorously progressing Russian labor movement from error through the guardianship of an omniscient and omnipresent central committee, we see the same subjectivism which has already played more than one trick on the socialist movement in Russia. It is

indeed droll to see the mad capers which the honorable human subject of history has thought it proper to carry out. The ego, knocked out and pulverized by Russian absolutism, takes its revenge in its revolutionary dream-world by placing itself on the throne and declaring itself to be all-powerful—as a conspiratorial committee acting in the name of a nonexistent “people’s will.”⁸ The “object,” however, proves itself to be stronger; the knout soon triumphs, proving itself to be the “legitimate” expression of the given stage of the historical process. Finally, another legitimate child of the historical process appears in the picture—the Russian labor movement, which makes a beautiful beginning at creating, for the first time in Russian history, the true will of the people. But now the “ego” of the Russian revolutionary quickly turns upside down and declares itself once again as the all-powerful director of history—this time as his majesty the central committee of the Social Democratic labor movement. However, the nimble acrobat fails to see that the true subject to whom this role of director falls is the collective ego of the working class, which insists on its right to make its own mistakes and to learn the historical dialectic by itself. Finally, we must frankly admit to ourselves that errors made by a truly revolutionary labor movement are historically infinitely more fruitful and more valuable than the infallibility of the best of all possible “central committees.”

Translated by Dick Howard

⁸ This is a play on the *Narodnaya Volya*, the “People’s Will,” discussed already in “In Memory of the Proletariat Party.”

IV



The International

Rosa Luxemburg's internationalism was more than just a phrase saved for the climax of mass meetings. She took literally the saying that the proletariat has no country. She took it for granted that only the world revolution of the proletariat will put an end to capitalist oppression. The international character of the revolution is a product of the totality-perspective of the dialectic. In the discussion of the role of the party, Rosa Luxemburg argued, following the *Communist Manifesto*, that "Social Democracy is fundamentally an outspoken opponent of every particularism and national federalism. It is called upon to represent, within the framework of a given state, the totality of the interests of the proletariat as a class, as opposed to all partial and group interests." Her internationalism with respect to the Polish question has been discussed. Other examples of her attitude are presented in this section.

The role of tradition in a revolutionary movement has already been considered. For Rosa Luxemburg, the most important date in the proletarian calendar was May Day. Paul Frölich reports that her first political article was on this subject—and had to be rejected by Leo Jogiches because "unknowingly, the agitational pamphlet became a hymn in well-scanning verses." Every year, she found new words and images to glorify the workers' holiday and its revolutionary significance. This was partly due to the importance which the May Day celebration had taken on for the Polish workers. In Germany, on the other hand, the first May Day celebration had gotten off to a bad start. In 1890, the SPD was just emerging from its illegality under the antisocialist laws, and its leaders—and Engels as

well—did not want to risk another stretch of illegality for such a trifle as an international May Day. By 1906, after they had proven their strength in the question of the mass strike, the trade unions openly opposed the May Day celebration; at the same time, they argued that the International had no power over the decisions of the national sections—an interesting precedent for August 4, 1914!

As the representative of the SDKPiL to the International Bureau, Rosa Luxemburg was directly involved in the functioning of the Second International. After 1906, one of her more important activities in this body was to push it to take a resolute stand on the overlapping questions of militarism and imperialism. In regard to the decisions of the International, as well as those of the Party Congress, Rosa Luxemburg maintained her “common law” position. When the question of the socialist response to a capitalist war was discussed at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the International, and a rather mealy-mouthed resolution against the war was introduced, she and Lenin submitted the following amendment:

If the outbreak of war threatens, the working classes and their parliamentary delegations in the countries concerned, supported by the unitary action of the International Bureau, are obliged to use all means that they think most effective to prevent the outbreak of war. These means naturally differ according to the intensification of the class war and the general political situation. Should a war break out in spite of this, it is their duty to intercede for its speedy end, and to strive with all their power to use the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people and thereby to hasten the abolition of class rule.

Though everyone was of course against a war, it was clear from the attitude of certain German representatives (Noske especially) that they felt they were Germans first and internationalists second; the “defense of the Fatherland” was actually used as an argument against the Luxemburg-Lenin amendment. Though the amendment passed, when the war broke

out nonetheless in 1914, its authors, along with Karl Liebknecht, came to symbolize its spirit.

The question of imperialism had occupied Rosa Luxemburg's attention for years. In *Social Reform or Revolution* she had called attention to the colonial problem, as well as to the centrality of the problems of militarism and tariff policy. Arguing against Schippel in "Militia and Militarism," she had pointed out that his "attack only aims at one point of our political program. But in view of the fundamental significance of militarism for the contemporary state, in practical terms this single point already implies the renunciation of the *entire* political struggle of Social Democracy." During the years leading up to the outbreak of the World War, a series of more or less minor flare-ups on the international scene caused international socialism to turn its attention more and more to the eventuality of a world war; and when that war finally did break out, no one could really say that he was surprised. It was in this context that Rosa Luxemburg wrote her major economic work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trying to explain the role played by the noncapitalist world in the development of capitalism and its contradictions.

Coincident with the increasing tensions between capitalist lands, there developed after 1908 an increasing restiveness in the working class, particularly in Germany. Discussion of the mass strike began again; polemics were heftier, as can be seen in the second article on May Day presented here. Within the SPD, a left wing gradually became identifiable, though its leading figures never thought for a moment of forming an organized opposition or a new party—as modern communist historians' hindsight tells us they should have.¹ In 1913, three of the leading left-wing figures—Marchlewski, Mehring, and Luxemburg—began to publish their own small newspaper, the

¹ This judgment is by no means indisputable. As Serge Bricianer notes in *Pannekoek et les conseils ouvriers* (EDI, 1969; p. 43), the Dutch left did split from the rest of the party before the World War, with disastrous results. Rosa Luxemburg's attitude toward this question is discussed below, and in the Introduction to Part V.

Sozialdemokratische Korrespondenz. The goal of the paper was to make the left-wing views known in the Party, to appeal to the masses in spite of their leaders. In other areas of Germany, in Bremen and Hamburg, for example, oppositional groups began to grow, and the mass strike tactic moved into the center of discussion.

When the World War broke out, the Second International folded like a card house, and almost without exception its constituent parties took a social-patriotic position, "postponing" the class struggle. The effect of the fall of the International is described by Rosa Luxemburg in the first section of her illegally published *Junius Pamphlet*. The natural reaction was to blame the leaders for betraying the masses. Rosa Luxemburg was not immune to this temptation. Her goal, however, was not simply to cast anathemas at this or that leader. The fault of the leaders was not to have sold out the masses as if they were mere commodities to be used and abused by their leaders; such is the case in bourgeois revolutions. The fault of the proletarian leaders was to have persevered in their leadership roles, to have maintained the proletariat in a subordinate position, to have failed to develop the class consciousness and independent initiative of the working class. What is important now, she continued, is that the working class learn from its experience, understand what has happened and what must be done now.

The World War, wrote Rosa Luxemburg, presents the world with a choice:

Either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery. Or, the victory of socialism, that is, the conscious struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method: war. This is the dilemma of world history, an Either/Or whose scales are trembling in the balance, awaiting the decision of the class-conscious proletariat. . . . If the proletariat learns from this war to assert itself, to cast off its serfdom to the ruling classes, to become the lord of its own destiny, the shame and misery will not have been in vain.

The choice of Socialism or Barbarism is a world-historical choice which demands resolute action by the proletariat. In one of her letters during the war, Rosa Luxemburg speaks of herself as having become “as hard as polished steel.” The article “Either/Or,” published as an illegal leaflet by the Spartacus League, shows her resoluteness and refusal to compromise. But yet, before seeing this leaflet as a sign of her willingness to cause organizational scission for a principled cause, it must be noted that when the oppositional Reichstag members formed the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) at Gotha in 1917, the Spartacus League adhered to this group—a group led by the very people whose politics are attacked in “Either/Or”—just as, previously, the left wing had remained in the SPD before the war and during its early phases. When the Spartacus League did finally form the German Communist Party, it was against the wishes of Rosa Luxemburg.

In the Appendix to the *Junius Pamphlet*, Rosa Luxemburg presented a set of guidelines for the reconstruction of the International; these guidelines were adopted by the Spartacus League, and are reprinted in “Either/Or.” Here, her internationalism expressed itself in its most concrete form, as the socialist counterpart to capitalism-imperialism.

Whether in peace or in war, the proletarian class struggle must be concentrated above all against imperialism. For the international proletariat, the fight against imperialism is at the same time the fight for political power in the state, the decisive settling of accounts between socialism and capitalism. The ultimate goal of socialism will be realized by the international proletariat only when it stands up against imperialism all down the line and, with its full strength and the courage to make extreme sacrifices, makes the slogan “War on war!” the guideline of its practical politics.

The International, states Rosa Luxemburg’s program, should be given complete power to decide the actions of the national sections in questions of war. It is also to be given full say in the

manner in which May Day is to be celebrated. It is not surprising that the leaders of the USPD would not accept these guidelines, which certainly don't sound like the views of a proponent of the so-called "democratic" alternative to Leninism. Yet, Rosa Luxemburg insisted:

The world brotherhood of workers is the highest and most sacred thing on earth to me; it is my guiding star, my ideal, my fatherland. I would rather lose my life than be untrue to this ideal.

There is no denying the seriousness of this statement. It is not merely something that Rosa Luxemburg *felt* to which she was giving expression. The International nature of capitalism creates an international proletariat which, acting together, is the negation of the system which created it. "Revolution in one country" would have been a meaningless phrase to Rosa Luxemburg, as would be the notion of "the Socialist Fatherland." Her economic studies had shown her this, and—if proof were needed—the appeal "To the Proletarians of All Countries" makes it clear on the basis of the actual experience of the beginnings of the German revolution.

What Are the Origins of May Day?

The happy idea of using a proletarian holiday celebration as a means to attain the eight-hour day was first born in Australia. The workers there decided in 1856 to organize a day of complete work stoppage together with meetings and entertainment as a demonstration in favor of the eight-hour day. The day of this celebration was to be April 21. At first, the Australian workers intended this only for the year 1856. But this first celebration had such a strong effect on the proletarian masses of Australia, enlivening them and leading to new agitation, that it was decided to repeat the celebration every year.

In fact, what could give the workers greater courage and faith in their own strength than a mass work stoppage which they had decided themselves? What could give more courage to the eternal slaves of the factories and the workshops than the mustering of their own troops? Thus, the idea of a proletarian celebration was quickly accepted and, from Australia, began to spread to other countries until finally it had conquered the whole proletarian world.

The first to follow the example of the Australian workers were the Americans. In 1886 they decided that May 1 should be the day of universal work stoppage. On this day 200,000 of them left their work and demanded the eight-hour day. Later, police and legal harassment prevented the workers for many years from repeating this [size] demonstration. However in 1888 they renewed their decision and decided that the next celebration would be May 1, 1890.

Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, II* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 16–18. Originally published in Polish in *Sprawa Robotnicza* (Paris), February 1894.

In the meanwhile, the workers' movement in Europe had grown strong and animated. The most powerful expression of this movement occurred at the International Workers' Congress in 1889. At this Congress, attended by four hundred delegates, it was decided that the eight-hour day must be the first demand. Whereupon the delegate of the French unions, the worker Lavigne from Bordeaux, moved that this demand be expressed in all countries through a universal work stoppage. The delegate of the American workers called attention to the decision of his comrades to strike on May 1, 1890, and the Congress decided on this date for the universal proletarian celebration.

In this case, as thirty years before in Australia, the workers really thought only of a one-time demonstration. The Congress decided that the workers of all lands would demonstrate together for the eight-hour day on May 1, 1890. No one spoke of a repetition of the holiday for the next years. Naturally no one could predict the lightninglike way in which this idea would succeed and how quickly it would be adopted by the working classes. However, it was enough to celebrate the May Day simply one time in order that everyone understand and feel that May Day must be a yearly and continuing institution. . . .

The first of May demanded the introduction of the eight-hour day. But even after this goal was reached, May Day was not given up. As long as the struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie and the ruling class continues, as long as all demands are not met, May Day will be the yearly expression of these demands. And, when better days dawn, when the working class of the world has won its deliverance—then too humanity will probably celebrate May Day in honor of the bitter struggles and the many sufferings of the past.

Translated by Dick Howard

The Idea of May Day on the March

In the middle of the wildest orgies of imperialism, the world holiday of the proletariat is repeating itself for the twenty-fourth time. What has taken place in the quarter of a century since the epoch-making decision to celebrate May Day is an *immense part of the historical path*. When the May demonstration made its debut, the vanguard of the International, the German working class, was breaking the chains of a shameful law of exception and setting out on the path of a free, legal development.¹ The period of the long depression on the world market since the crash of the 1870's had been overcome, and the capitalist economy had just begun a phase of splendid growth which would last nearly a decade. At the same time, after twenty years of unbroken peace, the world breathed a sigh of relief, remembering the period of war in which the modern European state system had received its bloody baptism. The path seemed free for a peaceful cultural development; illusions, hopes of a reasonable, pacific discussion between labor and capital grew abundantly like green corn in the ranks of socialism. Propositions like "to hold out the open hand to the good will" marked the beginning of the 1890's; promises of an imperceptible "gradual move into socialism" marked its end.

Text from Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. IV, *Gewerkschaftskampf und Massenstreik* (Berlin: Vereinigung Internationalen Verlags-Anstalten, 1928). Originally published in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, April 30, 1913.

¹ That is, Bismarck's antisocialist laws, which were in existence from 1878 to 1890. Under these laws Social Democracy, its trade unions, and its press were made illegal, having the right only to participate in electoral campaigns.

Crises, wars, and revolution were supposed to have been things of the past, the baby shoes of modern society; parliamentarism and unions, democracy in the state and democracy in the factory were supposed to open the doors of a new, better order.

The course of events has submitted all of these illusions to a fearful test. At the end of the 1890's, in place of the promised, smooth, social-reforming cultural development, began a period of the most violent and acute sharpening of the capitalistic contradictions—a storm and stress, a crashing and colliding, a wavering and quaking in the foundations of the society. In the following decade, the ten-year period of economic prosperity was paid for by two violent world crises. After two decades of world peace, in the last decade of the past century followed six bloody wars, and in the first decade of the new century four bloody revolutions. Instead of the social reforms—conspiracy laws, penal laws, and penal praxis; instead of industrial democracy—the powerful concentration of capital in cartels and business associations, and the international practice of gigantic lock-outs. And instead of the new growth of democracy in the state—a miserable breakdown of the last remnants of bourgeois liberalism and bourgeois democracy. Specifically in the case of Germany the fate of the bourgeois parties since the 1890's has brought: the rise and immediate, hopeless dissolution of the National Socialists²; the split of the “radical” opposition and the reunification of its splinters in the morass of the reaction; and finally the transformation of the “center” from a radical peoples' party to a conservative governmental party. The shifting in the development of the parties was similar in other capitalist countries. In general, the

² The National Socialists (Nationalsoziale Verein) were founded in 1897 by the ex-clergyman Naumann. Strongly influenced by the views of Max Weber concerning the role of the national state, Naumann argued that the workers must be organized to support the state, and that the state must be a “social kingdom,” caring for the needs of the workers. He opposed Social Democracy and attempted to organize the workers for the 1903 elections. The failure of his party in those elections led to its dissolution. Naumann later joined the liberal bourgeois Freisinn Party.

revolutionary working class sees itself today standing alone, opposed to a closed, hostile reaction of the ruling classes and their malicious tricks.

The sign under which this whole development, both economic and political, has been consummated, the *formula* back to which its results point, is *imperialism*. This is no new element, no unexpected turn in the general historical path of the capitalist society. Armaments and wars, international contradictions and colonial politics accompany the history of capitalism from its cradle. It is the most extreme intensification of these elements, a drawing together, a gigantic storming of these contradictions which has produced a new epoch in the course of modern society. In a dialectical interaction, both cause and effect of the immense accumulation of capital and the heightening and sharpening of the contradictions which go with it—internally, between capital and labor; externally, between the capitalist states—imperialism has opened the final phase, the division of the world by the assault of capital. A chain of unending, exorbitant armaments on land and on sea in all capitalist countries because of rivalries; a chain of bloody wars which have spread from Africa to Europe and which at any moment could light the spark which would become a world fire; moreover, for years the uncheckable specter of inflation, of mass hunger in the whole capitalist world—all of these are the signs under which the world holiday of labor, after nearly a quarter of a century, approaches. And each of these signs is a flaming testimony of the living truth and the power of the idea of May Day.

The brilliant basic idea of May Day is the autonomous, immediate stepping forward of the proletarian masses, the political mass action of the millions of workers who otherwise are atomized by the barriers of the state in the day-to-day parliamentary affairs, who mostly can give expression to their own will only through the ballot, through the election of their representatives. The excellent proposal of the Frenchman La-

vigne at the Paris Congress of the International added to this parliamentary, indirect manifestation of the will of the proletariat a direct, international mass manifestation: the strike as a demonstration and means of struggle for the eight-hour day, world peace, and socialism.

And in effect what an upswing this idea, this new form of struggle has taken on in the last decade! The mass strike has become an internationally recognized, indispensable weapon of the political struggle. As a demonstration, as a weapon in the struggle, it returns again in innumerable forms and gradations in all countries for nearly fifteen years. As a sign of the revolutionary reanimation of the proletariat in Russia, as a tenacious means of struggle in the hands of the Belgian proletariat, it has just now proved its living power. And the next, most burning question in Germany—the Prussian voting rights—obviously, because of its previous slipshod treatment, points to a rising mass action of the Prussian proletariat up to the mass strike as the only possible solution.

No wonder! The whole development, the whole tendency of imperialism in the last decade leads the international working class to see more clearly and more tangibly that only the personal stepping forward of the broadest masses, their personal political action, mass demonstrations, and mass strikes which must sooner or later open into a period of revolutionary struggles for the power in the state, can give the correct answer of the proletariat to the immense oppression of imperialistic policy. In this moment of armament lunacy and war orgies, only the resolute will to struggle of the working masses, their capacity and readiness for powerful mass actions, can maintain world peace and push away the menacing world conflagration. And the more the idea of May Day, the idea of resolute mass actions as a manifestation of international unity, and as a means of struggle for peace and for socialism, takes root in the strongest troops of the International, the German working class, the greater is our guarantee that out of the world war

which, sooner or later, is unavoidable, will come forth a definite and victorious struggle between the world of labor and that of capital.

Translated by Dick Howard

The Crisis in German Social Democracy (*The Junius Pamphlet: Part One*)

The scene has fundamentally changed. The six weeks' march to Paris has become world drama.¹ Mass murder has become a boring monotonous daily business, and yet the final solution is not one step nearer. Bourgeois rule is caught in its own trap, and cannot ban the spirits that it has invoked.

Gone is the ecstasy. Gone are the patriotic street demonstrations, the chase after suspicious-looking automobiles, the false telegrams, the cholera-poisoned wells. Gone the mad stories of Russian students who hurl bombs from every bridge of Berlin, or of Frenchmen flying over Nürnberg²; gone the excesses of a spy-hunting populace, the singing throngs, the coffee shops with their deafening patriotic songs; gone the violent mobs, ready to denounce, ready to mistreat women, ready to yell

Text from *Politische Schriften*, II (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 19-32. Rosa Luxemburg probably adopted the pseudonym "Junius" in reference to the series of letters in the *Public Advertiser* from November 21, 1768, to May 12, 1772, which were signed "Junius," and which are considered to be the "predecessors of the political lead article," and a "pathbreaker of modern journalism." (See Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, pp. 72-73.) These original "Junius Letters" attacked the established government, revealing its corruption and the significance of certain of its actions. The original author, never identified, probably took his pseudonym from Lucius Junius Brutus, a legendary Roman patriot who is said to have led a republican revolution in early Rome.

¹ According to the Schlieffen plan, drawn up in 1899 and continually revised by the Army, Germany would occupy Paris in six weeks, the time which, it was thought, Russia would need to mobilize. The plan was put into action on August 4, 1914, but stalled after a few days.

² These were among the semi-official rumors which circulated during the first days of the war whose goal was to stir the population to a patriotic frenzy.

“Hurrah” and whip themselves into a delirious frenzy over every wild rumor; gone the atmosphere of ritual murder, the Kishinev air³ that left the policeman at the corner as the only remaining representative of human dignity.

The show is over. The German sages, the vacillating spirits, have long since taken their leave. No more do trains filled with reservists pull out amid the joyous cries of enthusiastic maidens. We no longer see their laughing faces, smiling cheerily at the people from the train windows. They trot through the streets quietly, with their sacks on their shoulders. And the public, with a disturbed face, goes about its daily tasks.

In the sober atmosphere of pale daylight there rings out a different chorus: the hoarse croak of the vultures and hyenas of the battlefield. Ten thousand tents, guaranteed according to specifications; 100,000 kilos of bacon, cocoa powder, coffee substitute—for immediate delivery, cash only! Grenades, lathes, ammunition pouches, marriage bureaus for war widows, leather belts, war orders—only serious propositions considered! And the patriotic cannon fodder that was loaded into the trains in August and September rots on the battlefields of Belgium and the Vosges, while profits are springing like weeds from the fields of the dead. The harvest must be brought quickly into the barns. From across the ocean a thousand greedy hands want to take part in the plunder.

Business is flourishing upon the ruins. Cities are turned to rubble, whole countries into deserts, villages into cemeteries, whole populations into beggars, churches into stables. International law, treaties, alliances, the holiest words and the highest authorities have been torn into scraps. Every sovereign by the grace of God is called a cretin, an unfaithful wretch, by his cousin on the other side⁴; every diplomat calls his colleague in

³ A pogrom atmosphere. In April 1905 a particularly vicious pogrom took place during Passover, probably with the connivance—if not participation—of czarist officials. In her Introduction to Korolenko's *Die Geschichte meiner Zeitgenossen*, Rosa Luxemburg speaks of this pogrom and the reaction to it among the Russian intelligentsia.

⁴ Queen Victoria of England was the grandmother of George V of England, Wil-

the enemy's country a crafty scoundrel; each government looks upon the other as the evil genius of its people, worthy only of the contempt of the world. Hunger revolts in Venetia, in Lisbon, in Moscow, in Singapore; plague in Russia; misery and desperation everywhere.

Shamed, dishonored, wading in blood and dripping with filth—thus stands bourgeois society. And so it is. Not as we usually see it, pretty and chaste, playing the roles of peace and righteousness, of order, of philosophy, ethics and culture. It shows itself in its true, naked form—as a roaring beast, as an orgy of anarchy, as a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity.

And in the midst of this orgy a world-historical tragedy has occurred: the capitulation of Social Democracy.⁵ To close one's eyes to this fact, to try to hide it, would be the most foolish, the most dangerous thing that the proletariat could do. "The Democrat" (that is, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie), says Marx, "emerges from the most shameful downfall as spotlessly as he went innocently into it. With the strengthened confidence that he must win, he is more than ever certain that he and his party need no new principles, that events and conditions must finally come to meet them." The modern proletariat emerges differently from its historical experience. Its problems are as gigantic as its mistakes. No pre-established schema, no ritual that holds good at all times, shows it the path that it must travel. Historical experience is its only teacher; its *Via Dolorosa* to self-liberation is covered not only with immeasurable suffering, but with countless mistakes. The goal of its journey, its final liberation, depends upon the proletariat, on whether it understands that it must learn from its own mistakes. Self-criticism, cruel, unsparing criticism that goes to the

helm II of Germany, Czarina Alexandra of Russia, Queen Maud of Norway, Queen Eva of Spain, and Queen Marie of Rumania. Hence, the "cousin monarchies."

⁵ That is, the vote of August 4, 1914, in which the parliamentary delegation of the SPD voted for the war credits "in defense of the Fatherland."

very root of things is life and light for the proletarian movement. The catastrophe of the socialist proletariat in the present World War is an unexampled misfortune for humanity. But socialism is lost only if the international proletariat is unable to measure the depths of the catastrophe and refuses to learn from it.

The last forty-five years in the development of the labor movement are at stake. The present situation is a closing of its accounts, a summing-up of the items of half a century's work. In the grave of the Paris Commune lies buried the first phase of the European labor movement and the First International. A new phase has since begun. Instead of spontaneous revolution, revolts, and barricades, after each of which the proletariat relapsed once again into its passivity, there began the systematic daily struggle, the utilization of bourgeois parliamentarism, mass organization, the wedding of the economic with the political struggle and of socialist ideals with the stubborn defense of immediate interests. For the first time the cause of the proletariat and its emancipation were led by the guiding star of scientific knowledge. Instead of sects and schools, utopian undertakings and experiments in every country, each altogether and absolutely separate from the other, there developed a unified, international, theoretical basis that united the nations. Marxist theory gave to the working class of the whole world a compass by which to fix its tactics from hour to hour in its journey toward the one unchanging goal.

The bearer, the advocate, the protector of this new method was German Social Democracy. The war of 1870 and the downfall of the Paris Commune shifted the center of gravity of the European labor movement to Germany. Just as France was the classic site of the first phase of the proletarian class struggle, as Paris was the torn and bleeding heart of the European working class of that time, so the German working class became the vanguard of the second phase. By innumerable sacrifices in untiring small tasks, it built the strongest, the model organization, created the greatest press, developed the

most effective educational and propaganda methods. It collected under its banners the most gigantic masses of voters, and elected the largest number of representatives to Parliament.

German Social Democracy was generally acknowledged as the purest incarnation of Marxian socialism. It held and claimed a peculiar prestige as teacher and leader in the Second International. In his famous Preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*, Friedrich Engels wrote: "Whatever may occur in other countries, German Social Democracy occupies a particular place and therefore, for the present at least, has a particular duty to perform. The two million voters that it sends to the urns, and the young men and the women who stand behind them as nonvoters, are numerically the greatest, the most compact mass, the most decisive force of the proletarian international army." German Social Democracy, wrote the *Wiener Arbeiter-Zeitung* on August 5, 1914, was "the jewel of the organization of the class-conscious proletariat." In its footsteps French, Italian, and Belgian Social Democracy, the labor movements of Holland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the United States followed zealously. The Slavic nations, the Russians and the Social Democrats of the Balkans, looked up to the German movement in boundless, almost unquestioning admiration. In the Second International, German Social Democracy played the decisive role. In every congress, in the meetings of the International Socialist Bureau, everything waited upon the opinion of the Germans.

Particularly in the fight against militarism and war, the position taken by German Social Democracy has always been decisive. "We Germans cannot accept that" was usually sufficient to determine the orientation of the International. Blindly confident, it gave the leadership to the much admired, mighty German Social Democracy, the pride of every socialist, the horror of the ruling classes of all countries.

And what happened in Germany when the great historical test came? The deepest fall, the mightiest cataclysm. Nowhere

was the organization of the proletariat put so completely in the service of imperialism. Nowhere was the state of siege so uncomplainingly borne. Nowhere was the press so thoroughly gagged, public opinion so completely choked. Nowhere was the economic and political class struggle of the working class so entirely abandoned as in Germany.

But German Social Democracy was not merely the strongest vanguard; it was the thinking brain of the International as well. Therefore, the process of self-analysis and appraisal must begin in it and with its case. It is in honor bound to lead the way to the rescue of international socialism, that is, to proceed with unsparing self-criticism.

No other party, no other class in capitalist society can dare to expose its own errors, its own weaknesses, before the whole world in the clear mirror of criticism, for the mirror would reflect the historical limits which stand before it and the historical fate behind it. The working class can always look truth and the bitterest self-accusation in the face, for its weakness was but an error, and the inexorable laws of history give it strength and guarantee its final victory.

This unsparing self-criticism is not only the right guaranteed it by its existence, but the highest duty of the working class as well. We carry the highest treasures of humanity, whose ordained protector is the proletariat. While bourgeois society, shamed and dishonored, rushes through the bloody orgy to its doom, the international proletariat will re-form its ranks and gather the golden treasures that were allowed to sink to the bottom in the wild whirlpool of the World War, in the moment of confusion and weakness.

One thing is certain: the World War is a turning point for the world. It is a foolish delusion to believe that we need only live through the war as a rabbit hides under the bush to await the end of a thunderstorm, to trot merrily off at the old accustomed pace when it is all over. The World War has changed the conditions of our struggle, and has changed *us* most of all. Not that the laws of capitalist development have changed, or

that the life-and-death conflict between capital and labor has diminished or altered. Even now, in the midst of war, the masks are falling and the old, well-known gang sneers at us. But the tempo of development has received a mighty forward impetus through the eruption of the imperialist volcano. The enormity of the tasks that tower before the socialist proletariat in the immediate future make the past struggles of the labor movement seem but a delightful idyl in comparison.

Historically, the war is ordained to give to the cause of the proletariat a mighty impetus. In *Class Struggles in France*, Marx, whose prophetic eyes foresaw so many historical events as they lay in the womb of the future, wrote the following significant passage:

In France, the petty bourgeoisie does what should normally be done by the industrial bourgeoisie (i.e., fight for parliamentary rights); the worker does what should normally be done by the petty bourgeoisie (i.e., fight for the Democratic Republic); but who shall solve the problems of labor? They will not be solved in France; they will be proclaimed in France. They will nowhere be solved within national boundaries. Class war in French society will be transformed into a world war. The solution will begin only when the world war has driven the proletariat into the leadership of that nation which controls the world market, to the leadership of England. The revolution that will here find, not its end, but its organizational beginnings is no short-winded one. The present generation is like the Jews who were led by Moses through the wilderness. Not only must it conquer a new world; it must go under to make way for those who are equal to a new world.

This was written in 1850, at a time when England was the only capitalistically developed nation, when the English proletariat was the best organized and, through the industrial growth of its nation, seemed destined to take the leadership in the international working class. Read Germany instead of England, and the words of Karl Marx become a brilliant prophecy of the present World War. This war is ordained to drive the German proletariat to the leadership of the people,

and thus to create "the organizational beginnings" of the great international conflict between labor and capital for the political power of the state.

Have we ever had a different conception of the role to be played by the working class in the world war? Have we forgotten how we used to describe the coming event, only a few short years ago?

Then will come the *catastrophe*. All Europe will be called to arms, and sixteen to eighteen million men, the flower of the different nations, armed with the best instruments of murder, will make war upon each other. But I believe that behind this call to arms there looms the final crash. Not we, but they themselves will bring it. They are driving things to the extreme; they are leading us straight to a catastrophe. They will reap what they have sown. The *Götterdämmerung*⁶ of the bourgeois world is at hand. Be sure of that. It is in the wind.

Thus spoke *Bebel*, the speaker of our delegation in the Reichstag in the *Morocco debate*.⁷

The official leaflet, "Imperialism and Socialism," published by the Party and distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies only a few years ago, closes with the words:

Thus the struggle against militarism becomes daily more and more clearly the *decisive struggle between capital and labor*. The threat of war, high prices and capitalism—peace, prosperity for all, and socialism! This is the question posed. History is rushing toward great decisions. The proletariat must work unceasingly toward its world-historical task, must strengthen the power of its organization and the clarity of its understanding. Then, come what will, whether it succeed by its power in saving humanity from the horrible cruelties of the world war, *or whether capitalism shall sink back into history as it was born, in blood and violence, the historic hour will find the working class prepared, and preparedness is everything*.

⁶ Literally, "The Twilight of the Gods." The term has literary overtones due to Wagner's use of it as the title of the concluding opera of his four-part *Ring of the Niebelungen*.

⁷ See Glossary.

On page 42 of the official *Handbook for Social Democratic Voters* of 1911, the date of the last Reichstag elections, stand the following comments on the expected world war:

Do our rulers and ruling classes dare to demand this awful thing of the people? Will not a cry of horror, of scorn and indignation take hold of the people and lead them to put an end to this murder?

Will they not ask: "For whom and for what is all that? Are we insane that we should be treated in this manner, or should tolerate such treatment?"

He who considers dispassionately the possibility of a great European world war can come to no other conclusion.

The next European war will be a game of *va-banque*⁸ whose equal the world has never seen. It will be, in all probability, the last war.

With this language, our present Reichstag representatives won their 110 seats.

When, in the summer of 1911, the *Panther* made its move to Agadir, and the noisy agitation of German imperialists brought Europe to the precipice of war, an international meeting in London, on the 4th of August, adopted the following resolution:

The German, Spanish, English, Dutch, and French delegates of the labor organizations hereby *declare their readiness to oppose every declaration of war with every means in their power*. Every nationality here represented pledges itself, in accordance with the decisions of its national and the international congress, to act against all criminal machinations on the part of the ruling classes.

When in November 1912 the International Congress met in Basel, when the long train of labor representatives entered the Cathedral [where the meetings were held], a presentiment of the coming hour of fate made them shudder, and a heroic resolve took shape in every breast.

The cool, skeptical *Victor Adler* cried out:

Comrades! The most important thing is that we here at the common source of our strength, that we, each and every one of

⁸ Literally, "to go for broke," or "to risk everything."

us, take back from here the strength to do in his country what he can, through the forms and means that are at his disposal, to oppose this crime of war. If it should be accomplished, if we really should be able to prevent war, *then we must make sure that this is the cornerstone of our coming victory.*

That is the sentiment which is the soul of the whole International.

And when murder, arson and pestilence sweep over civilized Europe—we can think of it only with dread, indignation, and rebellion in our breast. *And we ask ourselves: are the men, the proletarians, of today really nothing but sheep; can they be led mutely to the slaughter?*

Troelstra spoke in the name of the “small nations,” and in the name of the Belgians as well:

With its blood and with all that it possesses, the proletariat of the small nations puts itself at the disposition of the International in everything that it may decide to prevent war. Again we repeat that we expect, when the ruling classes of the large nations call the sons of the proletariat to arms to satiate the lust for power and the greed of their rulers in the blood and on the lands of the small peoples, we expect that *then the sons of the proletariat, under the powerful influence of their proletarian parents, of the class struggle and the proletarian press, will think again before they harm us, their brothers, their friends, in the service of this anticultural project.*

After he had read the antiwar manifesto in the name of the International Bureau, Jaurès concluded his speech:

The International represents the moral forces of the world! And when the tragic hour strikes, when we must sacrifice ourselves, this knowledge will support and strengthen us. *Not lightly, but from the bottom of our hearts, we declare that we are ready for all sacrifices!*

It was like a Ruetli pledge.⁹ The whole world looked toward the Cathedral of Basel, where the bells, slowly and solemnly, rang to the approaching great fight between the army of labor and the power of capital.

⁹ In 1291, a secret meeting of Swiss patriots in the Ruetli forest pledged to oust the Austrians from Switzerland. A legend grew up about Ruetli. In 1940, Swiss officers took an oath of resistance to the Nazis there.

On the 3rd of September, 1912, the leader of the Social Democratic delegation, David, spoke in the German Reichstag:

I avow that that was one of the most beautiful hours of my life. When the chimes of the Cathedral accompanied the long train of international Social Democrats, when the red flags were planted in the nave of the church around the altar, when the emissaries of the people were greeted by the peals of the organ that resounded the message of peace, that was an impression I can never forget. . . .

You must realize what happened here. *The masses have ceased to be will-less, thoughtless herds.* That is new in history. Hitherto, the masses have always blindly let themselves be driven against one another to mass murder by those who had an interest in war. *That has stopped. The masses have ceased to be the instruments and footmen of war profiteers.*

Only a week before the war broke out, on July 26, 1914, the German Party papers wrote:

We are no marionettes. We fight with all our might against a system that makes men the powerless tools of blind circumstance, against this capitalism that is preparing to change Europe, thirsty for peace, into a smoking slaughterhouse. If destruction takes its course, if the determined will for peace of the German, of the international proletariat which will be expressed in the next few days in mighty demonstrations should not be able to prevent world war, then at least it must be the last war, it must be the *Götterdämmerung* of capitalism.

Again, on July 30, 1914, the central organ of German Social Democracy cried out:

The socialist proletariat rejects all responsibility for the events that are being precipitated by a ruling class that is blinded to the verge of madness. It knows that, *for it, new life will bloom from the ruins.* All responsibility falls on the rulers *of today.* For them it is a question of *existence!* World history is the world court of judgment! [*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht!*] ¹⁰

¹⁰ This passage, often found in Marxist literature, comes from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Paragraph 340, and is, for Hegel, the metaphorical explanation of the transition

And then came the unprecedented, the incredible 4th of August, 1914.¹¹

Did it have to come? An event of such importance is certainly not a game of chance. It must have deep, extensive, objective causes. But these causes may also be found in the errors of the leader of the proletariat, Social Democracy itself, in the failure of our readiness to fight, our courage and our convictions. Scientific socialism has taught us to understand the objective laws of historical development. Man does not make history of his own volition. But he makes it nonetheless. In its action, the proletariat is dependent upon the given degree of ripeness of social development. But social development does not take place apart from the proletariat. The proletariat is its driving force and its cause as well as its product and its effect. The action of the proletariat is itself a codetermining part of history. And though we can no more skip a period in our historical development than a man can jump over his shadow, it lies within our power to accelerate or to retard it.

Socialism is the first popular movement in world history that has set as its goal, and is ordained by history, to establish a conscious sense in the social life of man, a definite plan, and thus, free will. It is for this reason that Friedrich Engels calls the final victory of the socialist proletariat a leap of humanity from the animal kingdom into the kingdom of liberty. This "leap," too, is bound by iron laws of history, by the thousands of rungs of the ladder of the past with its tortuous, all too long development. But it will never be accomplished if the burning spark of the conscious will of the great masses of the people does not spring from the material conditions which have been built up by past development. Socialism will not fall as manna from heaven. It can only be won by a long chain of powerful struggles between the old and the new powers in which the in-

from the level of the state to that of World History. For Marxists, of course, it refers to the lessons of the historical dialectic.

¹¹ The day on which the Social Democratic delegation to the Reichstag voted as a bloc in favor of war credits.

ternational proletariat, under the leadership of Social Democracy, learns and attempts to take its fate in its own hands, to take hold of the rudder of social life, to become instead of the powerless victim of history, its conscious guide.

Friedrich Engels once said: "Capitalist society faces a dilemma: either an advance to socialism or a reversion to barbarism." What does a "reversion to barbarism" mean at the present stage of European civilization? We have all read and repeated these words thoughtlessly, without a notion of their terrible seriousness. At this moment, one glance around us will show what a reversion to barbarism in bourgeois society means. This World War—that is a reversion to barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the destruction of culture, sporadically during a modern war, and forever if the period of world wars which has just begun is allowed to take its course to its logical end.

Thus, we stand today, as Friedrich Engels prophesied more than a generation ago, before the choice: Either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery. Or, the victory of socialism, that is, the conscious struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method: war. This is the dilemma of world history, an Either/Or whose scales are trembling in the balance, awaiting the decision of the class-conscious proletariat. The future of culture and humanity depends on whether the proletariat throws the sword of revolutionary struggle with manly decisiveness upon the scales. Imperialism has been victorious in this war. Its bloody sword of mass murder has dashed the scales with overwhelming brutality into the abyss of shame and misery. If the proletariat learns from this war to assert itself, to cast off its serfdom to the ruling classes, to become the lord of its own destiny, the shame and misery will not have been in vain.

The modern working class must pay dearly for each development of its consciousness of its historic mission. The Golgo-

tha-road of its class liberation is strewn with awful sacrifices. The June combatants [of 1848], the victims of the Commune, the martyrs of the Russian Revolution [of 1905]—an endless line of bloody shadows. But they have fallen on the field of honor, as Marx wrote of the heroes of the Commune, “to be enshrined forever in the great heart of the working class.” Now millions of proletarians of all nations are falling on the field of shame, of fratricide, of self-destruction, the slave-song on their lips. And that, too, could not be spared us. We are truly like the Jews whom Moses led through the desert. But we are not lost, and we will be victorious if we have not forgotten how to learn. And if the modern leader of the proletariat, Social Democracy, does not know how to learn, it will go under “to make room for those who grow up in a new world.”

Zurich, 1916

Translation by Dick Howard

Either / Or

I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

—*Revelations*, iii, 15–16.

Comrades! You are all aware of the split that exists at the very heart of the Party opposition. In fact, many of you who are not in agreement with the current state of affairs in the official Party and with its bureaucratic politics will be extremely distressed about this split. “Splits again already!” some will shout indignantly. “Wouldn’t it then be necessary that at least everyone who stands up against the Party majority stick closely together and act in harmony? Doesn’t it weaken the opposition and provide grist for the mill of the majority’s politics if there are still arguments and disputes even among those who have the same goal—namely, bringing the Party movement back onto the path of a fundamental proletarian class politics?”

Of course, comrades! If it were merely a matter of personal squabbling, of trifles, of any petty obstinacy, oversights, or so-called “dancing out of step,” then every serious person would have to call it an outrage, even a crime, if a split in the heart of the opposition had been brought about for the sake of such insignificant things.

But that is not the case, comrades! What brought about this

Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 533–50. An illegal pamphlet of the Spartacus League, April 1916.

split are fundamental political questions, the whole conception of the ways and means to lead us out of the present hopeless plight of the Party to a more honorable situation.

Let's consider for a minute what all is at stake! On August 4, 1914, official German Social Democracy, and with it the International, collapsed miserably. Everything that we had been telling the people for fifty years, everything that we had declared to be our most holy principles and had proclaimed countless times in speeches, pamphlets, newspapers and leaflets—with one stroke all that was shown to be empty talk. The party of the international proletarian class struggle has suddenly become, as if through an evil spell, a national liberal party; our strong organizations, of which we were so proud, have turned out to be completely powerless, and we have gone from being the respected and feared enemy of bourgeois society to being the weak-minded and justifiably despised tools of our own mortal enemy, the imperialist bourgeoisie. More or less the same steep decline of socialism has taken place in other countries. The proud old call, "Workers of the world, unite!" has been changed on the battlefields to the command, "Workers of the world, cut your throats!"

Never in the history of the world has a political party gone bankrupt so wretchedly, never has a more noble ideal been so disgracefully betrayed and humiliated!

Thousands upon thousands of proletarians in shame and rage could cry bloody tears that all they had held dear and sacred has now become the object of mockery and derision for the whole world. Thousands upon thousands are burning to wipe out the stain, to cleanse the Party of the humiliation, in order to be able to bear the name of Social Democracy again with head held high and without blushing.

But every comrade has to keep one thing in mind: only a completely united, clear, relentless policy can bring salvation from such a deep decline. Halfway measures, vacillation, or a timid seesaw politics can never help us. Every one must now say to himself, "Either/Or." Either we are national liberal

sheep in a socialist lion's skin—then we will also have done with any games of opposition; Or we are fighters of the proletarian International in the full significance of that word—then a complete job must be done of opposition, then the banner of the class struggle and of internationalism must be unfurled openly at all costs.

And now, Party comrades, look at the previous so-called opposition, as it was represented by Ledebour, Haase, and their friends. After having obediently endured voting for the war credits in the Reichstag four times in a row, and thus having made themselves accomplices in the betrayal of socialism, on December 21, 1915, they finally screwed up their courage to vote against it in the full assembly. Finally! workers said to themselves. Finally a public renunciation of the politics of nationalistic fraud. Finally at least twenty representatives in Parliament who cherish socialism. The delusion was shortlived, and the only ones who could find complete satisfaction in that “courageous act” were those who looked at things quite superficially without investigating their basis with a critical eye. Geyer and his comrades in the Reichstag accompanied their refusal of the credit with an explanation that destroyed whatever good they had accomplished with their vote. For why did they vote against the credits this time? “Our national borders are protected,” reads the explanation.

What these good people were aiming at with those words, whom they thought they had to take into consideration, remains their affair. The outsider, not initiated into the grand diplomacy behind the scenes which might have led to this explanation, will understand it like this: The twenty apparently voted against the credit this time because the German borders are protected. Thus, not because we are fundamentally opposed to militarism and war, not because this war is an imperialist crime against all peoples, but because [Generals] Hindenburg, Mackensen, and Kluck have already slaughtered enough Russians, French, and Belgians and gained a foothold in their countries—that's why a German Social Democrat can

permit himself the luxury of voting against the war expenditures! But in so doing, Geyer and comrades are placing themselves, in principle, on the ground of the majority's politics. Accordingly, they were supporting the impudent fraud which from the very beginning presented this war as a defensive war for the protection of our national borders. What separates them from the majority is thus not a fundamental conception of the whole position on war, but merely a differing evaluation of the military situation. According to the Scheidemanns, Davids, and Heines, the German borders still are not protected; according to the Haases, Ledebours, and Geyers, they already are. However, every sensible person will have to admit that if you look only at the bare evaluation of the military situation, the standpoint of the Scheidemann-David-Heines is more logical than the standpoint of the Ledebour-Haases. For who wants to guarantee that the fortunes of war will remain on the side of German militarism in the future? What reasonable general would want to swear today that the tide cannot possibly turn and the Russians perhaps re-enter East Prussia? And if that happens, then what? Then the Ledebour-Geyer-Haases, in consequence of their own explanation, would have to vote in favor of the war credits. That's not fundamental tactics, but conjunctural politics, cut to fit the military situation of the moment; it's the famous politics from case to case, the old opportunistic seesaw politics in which the Party indulged so gloriously on August 4, 1914.

But the matter has another very serious side. If, according to the explanation of the Ledebour-Haases, German Social Democrats can vote against the war credits today because the German borders are safe, then what about the French, Belgian, Russian, and Serbian comrades who have the enemy in their country? It's as clear as day to the simplest worker that this explanatory proposition offers these comrades in other countries the finest pretext for justifying their nationalistic policies. In fact, French comrades from the nationalist majority have already snatched it up eagerly as the best support of their own

attitudes. And there we have again the split in the International; there we have again the politics which leads the socialists of various nations against each other just as imperialism has ordered it and not united against the war and the ruling classes. And here we come again to the ground of that politics of the majority which has ruined us and the International.

And now we ask, comrades, when you look at these things seriously and critically: was the vote of Ledebour, Haase, and comrades on December 21 a step forward? Was it the saving act that we had all been waiting for with agony in our hearts, and that the masses had been longing for? No and no again! That vote with that explanation was a step forward *and* a step backward; it was once more an agreeable illusion that something might take a turn for the better, but an illusion behind which a disillusionment all the more bitter was unavoidable.

And sure enough, the disillusionment followed close on its heels. It is clear that the vote against the war expenditures, even if it hadn't been botched essentially by that unfortunate explanation, still would not exhaust the entire politics of the opposition, but would just be the first step on a new path, a first perceptible signal to be followed all along the line by a vigorous, consistent undertaking in the spirit of the class struggle. What have we experienced instead? Since then, Ledebour, Haase, and comrades have been resting on the laurels of their refusal of the credits—they are leading a shadow existence.

Let's take just a few examples. In the splendid *Baralong* affair,¹ Noske's speech and his howling for bloody retaliatory measures against the English brought such unprecedented shame on the Social Democratic Party that even respectable bourgeois liberals, if there were still such people in Germany, would have to blush for us. After August 4, after everything that followed upon it, it seemed that our Party was as deep in the pit as it could go. But the "re-educated" social imperialists

¹ On August 19, 1915, a German submarine was sunk by the British ship *Baralong*, and the shipwrecked Germans were fired upon by the English sailors.

are continually bringing about new surprises. Their political and moral corruption doesn't seem to be measurable by the usual standards at all. In the *Baralong* affair they even surpassed and shamed the conservatives in inciting bestial war instincts. And after such an unprecedented event, what did a man of the opposition, Comrade Ledebour, do? Instead of renouncing any connection with Noske and his kind in the name of the German proletariat, instead of dressing him down, Ledebour joined in the hue and cry himself, accepted in principle the retaliatory politics of Noske and comrades, and rose only to beg for moderate application of the bestial principle.

According to the stenographic report, Ledebour's incredible words read as follows: "Gentlemen, in evaluating the *Baralong* incident in itself, that is, the outrage committed at sea by English seamen against brave German seamen, *I know I am at one with all the previous speakers*. I decline from elaborating on their statements at all."

And those "previous speakers" were: Noske of the social imperialists,² Spahn from the center, Fischbeck from the *Freisinn*, and Knutenoertel of the conservatives! Ledebour was at one with all these men in evaluating the affair. Once again, supporting in principle the majority politics of the socialist traitors and backsliding into political harmony with the middle-class parties—three weeks after pretending to raise the banner of the class struggle.

Let's take another example. In the so-called "small parliamentary questions,"³ the representatives in the Reichstag acquired an invaluable weapon, making possible in this pitiful assembly of yes-men and obedient slaves of the military dictatorship a continual resistance to the government and the bourgeois majority, a continual disturbance of the imperialist phalanx, a continual shaking up of the masses. In the hands of twenty resolute representatives these "small parliamentary

² That is, the SPD.

³ That is, the practice of having a part of the legislature's time devoted to posing questions to the representatives of the government.

questions” could become a real bullwhip, relentlessly cracking down on the backs of the imperialist pack. What do we see instead? Ledebour, Haase, and comrades haven’t thought about making use of this important weapon. Not one single time have they tried to apply it. They just leave it to Karl Liebknecht alone to fight on all sides and defend himself amidst the howling pack. But they are apparently afraid of their own courage; they simply don’t dare go against the tide and get out from under the thumb of the majority of the Social Democratic delegation.

Yes, and still more! When the imperialist Reichstag majority, along with the majority of the Social Democratic delegation, made the move to destroy this weapon of the “small parliamentary question” through arbitrary censorship by the president of the Reichstag, Ledebour, Haase, and comrades calmly let it happen. These men, who call themselves leaders of the opposition, supported this arbitrary act against an important means of shaking up the masses. They took part in this new treason of the Party majority.

And how did the matter stand on January 17, when the military questions were up for debate in the Reichstag, when a good opportunity was provided for criticizing unmercifully the entire doings of this dictatorship of the sword, the bestialities of this war, for throwing light on the whole situation and bringing out all the main problems of the world crisis? There again Ledebour, Haase, and comrades failed completely. Scarcely four weeks after their apparent announcement of war and change of front on December 21, a miserable fiasco took place. Pure petty gabbing about nothing but superficial trivialities like that which took place in the gray day-to-day parliamentary humdrum of peacetime—that’s all these leaders of the opposition rose to in the military question.

And that, comrades, is the so-called opposition as Ledebour, Haase, and their friends understand it. Not a trace of logic, of energy, of pluck, of fundamental acuteness; nothing but superficialities, frailties, and illusions. But we have really had

enough of superficialities, frailties, and illusions. We know where they have got us.

No one would question the good intentions of a Ledebour, a Haase, an Adolf Hoffmann. But the road to hell is also paved with good intentions alone. What we need now is energy, logic, and acuteness. Ah, just a little of the same energy, logic, and acuteness with which our enemies the ruling classes suppress us and force us into the yoke of an imperialism already dripping with blood. Whole men, fearless, rugged fighters, that's what we need, not seesaw politicians, not weaklings, not fainthearted accountants.

And that the so-called opposition falls short of these demands is demonstrated best by the leaflet Comrades Ledebour and Adolf Hoffmann have just put out.

In it they criticize sharply and reject the principles which a number of comrades from various places in Germany have accepted as the guide for their views and their tasks in the present historical moment. We have quoted these guidelines in full below so that every comrade can judge for himself. These principles are nothing other than the frank, honest, and plain formulation of the facts and events as the World War has brought them to light in the labor movement. Furthermore, they are the consistent and resolute application of our old Party principles to the contemporary situation and problems which arise for all of us when we finally want to put international socialism into practice.

And this is what Ledebour and Haase have turned against with their dogmatic objection. They claim it's out of place to make the socialist International the decision-making center of the whole workers' movement; that it's wrong to limit the local offices in their free decisions concerning the war; that it's improper and impractical to place the International above the official channels of the German Party and other parties. The International should remain only a loose federative organization of national workers' parties, which are to remain com-

pletely independent in their tactics in war and peace alike, as they were before the outbreak of the World War.

Comrades! This gets to the core of the whole situation; here is the vital issue of the workers' movement. On August 4, our Party failed, as the parties of other countries have failed, because the International turned out to be just empty talk, because the decisions of the congresses of the International showed up as idle, ineffectual prattle. If we want to put an end to this humiliating state of affairs, if we want to prevent a repetition of the failure of August 4, 1914, then there is only one way and one salvation for us: to change the international solidarity of the proletariat from a pretty phrase into an actual, deadly serious, and sacred maxim, to change the socialist International from hollow pomp into a real power and build it up to a solid dam against which the future waves of capitalist imperialism will break. If we want to raise ourselves from the abyss of disgrace into which we have plunged, then we must educate the Germans as well as the French and every other class-conscious proletarian in this thought. The world brotherhood of workers is the highest and most sacred thing on earth to me; it is my guiding star, my ideal, my fatherland. I would rather lose my life than be untrue to this ideal!

And now Comrades Ledebour and Hoffmann don't want to have anything to do with all that. After the war they simply want to re-establish the same old wretchedness: Every national party would have free rein the same as ever to treat the decisions of the International as so much hot air. According to them, we should go back to having splendid congresses, fine speeches, fireworks of enthusiasm, threatening manifestos, and bold resolutions every few years. But when it comes to action, the International should again stand there utterly powerless and yield to the deceitful phrases of "defense of the Fatherland," as a ghost in the night yields to the bloody reality.

So Ledebour and comrades have learned nothing from this war. But, comrades, there is no worse testimony to a politician, to a fighter, than that he is unable to learn from the hard

school of history. No one who has to make decisions in the great throng and tumult of struggle in world history is immune to mistakes. But to fail to recognize one's mistakes, to be unable to learn from them, to emerge from all the shame and still be unteachable—that borders on crime. Comrades, if this sea of blood through which we are wading, if the horrible moral decline of the International does not lead us to better insight and a sure path, then we can truly let them bury us. Then away with the international phrases, away with the same old lying stories, away with the deception of the masses of the people who will justifiably want to spit on us if we return after this war as the same old unteachable word-heroes to expound in front of them the idea of a brotherhood of peoples without ever acting in terms of it.

Here, too, comrades, it is *Either/Or*! Either we betray the International clearly and shamelessly, as Heine, David, Scheidemann have done. Or we take it seriously and make it a solid fortress, a bulwark of the worldwide socialist proletariat and of world peace. There is no room today for middle-of-the-road, halfhearted, or wishy-washy programs.

And that's why it is impossible for any real opposition to take a concerted action in common with people who share the viewpoint of Comrades Ledebour and Hoffmann.

Comrades! Don't be caught by the old phrase about the unity which would build strength. Even the Scheidemanns and Eberts of the Party's executive committee are peddling this catchword now. Indeed, union makes strength—but union of firm, inner conviction, not an external mechanical coupling of elements that oppose each other internally. Strength lies not in our numbers, but in our spirit, in the clarity and energy animating us. How we fancied ourselves strong, how we boasted of our four million supporters before the war, and yet how our strength folded at the first test, like a house of cards.⁴ Here too

⁴ In the 1912 Reichstag elections the SPD received 4,250,000 votes, representing 34.8 percent of the votes cast and giving them 110 seats in the Reichstag. Despite the fact that this made them the largest party in the Reichstag, the SPD was unable to use its mandates to good advantage.

a lesson must be drawn from our disillusionments. We cannot slump back into the old errors again! If we want to make an energetic stand against the party status quo and its parliamentary delegation, then a clear, consistent, energetic policy is necessary; then we cannot look to the right or the left, but rather rally 'round a visible banner, just as those very principles despised by Ledebour and comrades have described it. Away with all halfway and wavering measures! Eyes set firmly on the goal and the class struggle taken up ruthlessly all along the line in the spirit of the International! That is our task, that is the ground on which we are assembled. Whoever seriously and honestly desires the resurrection of socialism can't help coming to us, if not today, then tomorrow.

Comrades, assemble yourselves everywhere around these principles that point out the rest of the way for us, and turn all your strength to making your thoughts into actions. In this whole country, in all countries, the proletarian masses, enslaved and bled white, are longing for a resolute proletarian politics which alone can save them from the hell of the status quo. It is our task, our duty, to advance that hour of salvation by exerting ourselves to the very last in a relentless class struggle.

Therefore, up with the class struggle! Up with the International!

A considerable number of comrades from all parts of Germany have accepted the following principles, which represent an application of the Erfurt Program to the contemporary problems of international socialism.⁵

1. The World War has destroyed the results of forty years' labor of European socialism by destroying the moral prestige of socialism and the significance of the revolutionary working class as a factor of political power, by breaking up the proletarian International, leading its sections to mutual fratricide and chaining the wishes and hopes of the masses in the most

⁵ This program was first published as an Appendix to the *Junius Pamphlet*.

important countries of capitalist development to the ship of imperialism.

2. By voting for the war credits and proclaiming a “social peace,” the official leaders of the socialist parties in Germany, France, and England (with the exception of the Independent Labour Party) have reinforced imperialism, induced the masses of the people to patiently put up with the misery and the horror of war, and thus contributed to the unrestrained release of imperialist frenzy, to the prolongation of the carnage, and the increase in the number of its victims, so as to assume the responsibility for this war and its consequences.

3. These tactics of the official party bureaucracies of the warring nations, especially in Germany, once the leading country in the International, signify a betrayal of the most elementary principles of international socialism, of the vital interests of the working class, of all democratic interests of the peoples. Socialist politics is thereby condemned to impotence even in those countries where the party leaders have remained faithful to their duties: Russia, Serbia, Italy, and—with one exception—Bulgaria.

4. By giving up the class struggle during the war and postponing it until after the war, official Social Democracy in the leading nations has granted the ruling classes in all countries a reprieve, during which they can enormously strengthen their position economically, politically, and morally at the expense of the proletariat.

5. The World War serves neither the national defense nor the economic or political interests of any people. It is merely an offspring of imperialist rivalries between the capitalist classes of various countries over world leadership and the monopoly on exploiting and suppressing areas not yet under the heel of capital. In an era of such unrestrained imperialism there can be no more national wars.⁶ National interests serve

⁶ In his review of the *Junius Pamphlet*, Lenin attacks this argument strongly, pointing to the development of anticolonial wars. Rosa Luxemburg’s argument as presented in detail in the *Junius Pamphlet* is based on her view of the totality of the capitalist system

only as means of deceiving, making the working masses serviceable to their mortal enemy, imperialism.

6. No suppressed nation can reap freedom and independence from the politics of imperialist states or the imperialist war. Small nations, whose ruling classes are appendages and accomplices of their class comrades in the large powers, are merely pawns in the imperialist game of the major powers and are abused as tools during the war, just like the working masses, only to be sacrificed to the capitalist interests after the war.

7. Under these circumstances, every defeat as well as every victory in the current World War means a defeat for socialism and democracy. Any outcome—except revolutionary intervention by the international proletariat—leads to a strengthening of militarism, of the international oppositions, of world trade rivalries. It increases capitalist exploitation and domestic political reaction, weakens public control, and reduces parliaments to more and more obedient instruments of militarism. The current World War is thus developing at the same time all the conditions necessary for new wars.

8. World peace cannot be secured by utopian or essentially reactionary plans, such as world courts of arbitration with capitalist diplomats, diplomatic agreements on “disarmament,” “freedom of the seas,” “abolition of piracy,” “confederations of European states,” “central European tariff unions,” “national buffer states,” and the like. Imperialism, militarism, and wars cannot be eliminated or checked as long as the capitalist classes can exercise undisputed their class mastery. The only way to resist them successfully, and the only assurance of world peace, is the capacity for political action and the revolutionary will of the international proletariat to throw its power in the balance.

in its imperialist phase which must necessarily turn anticolonial and other wars into imperialist ones. Though the difference between Lenin's and Rosa Luxemburg's position cannot be resolved here, it is worth asking whether the techniques of so-called neo-imperialism in relation to ex-colonies don't in fact prove Rosa Luxemburg's point.

9. Imperialism, as the final phase of life and the highest stage in the development of world political domination of capital, is the common mortal enemy of the proletariat of all countries. But it shares with the earlier phases of capitalism the fate of strengthening the powers of its enemies in proportion to its own development. It accelerates the concentration of capital, the grinding down of the middle class, the increase of the proletariat; it wakens the growing resistance of the masses and thus leads to an intensive magnification of class oppositions. Whether in peace or in war, the proletarian class struggle must be concentrated above all against imperialism. For the international proletariat, the fight against imperialism is at the same time the fight for political power in the state, the decisive settling of accounts between socialism and capitalism. The ultimate goal of socialism will be realized by the international proletariat only when it stands up against imperialism all down the line and, with its full strength and the courage to make extreme sacrifices, makes the slogan "War on war!" the guideline of its practical politics.

10. To this end, the main task of socialism today is directed at uniting the proletariat of all countries into a living revolutionary power and at making it the decisive factor of political life, as history has demanded, through a strong international organization with a unified conception of its interests and tasks, with unified tactics and ability to act politically in peace as in war.

11. The Second International has been blown apart by the war. Its inadequacy has been proven by its inability to set up a real dam against the national disunion in the war or to carry out unified tactics and activity among the proletariat in all countries.

12. In view of the betrayal of the goals and interests of the working class by the official representatives of the socialist parties in the leading countries; in view of their turn from the ground of the proletariat International to the ground of bourgeois imperialist politics, it is a vital necessity for socialism to

create a new workers' International which in all countries would assume the role of directing and uniting the revolutionary class struggle against imperialism.

In order to solve its historical problem the new International must be based on the following principles:

1. The class struggle within the bourgeois states against the ruling classes and the international solidarity of the proletariat of all countries are two inseparable precepts of the working class in its historical struggle for liberation. There is no socialism outside the international solidarity of the proletariat and there is no socialism outside the class struggle. The socialist proletariat cannot do without class struggle and international solidarity either in peace or in war without committing suicide.

2. The class action of the proletariat of all countries must be directed at fighting imperialism and preventing wars as its main goal, in peace as in war. Parliamentary action, trade-union action, as well as the whole activity of the labor movement, must be subordinate to the purpose of opposing the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie in every country with the utmost sharpness, in order to show up the political and spiritual contrast between them at every step along the way, and simultaneously to emphasize and confirm the international unity of the proletariat of all countries.

3. The center of gravity of proletarian class organization lies in the International. In peacetime the International decides on the tactics of the national sections in matters of militarism, colonial policy, trade policy, and May Day celebrations; furthermore, it decides on all tactics to be used in war.

4. The duty of implementing the decisions of the International supersedes all other organizational duties. National sections that act contrary to its decisions place themselves outside the International.

5. In struggles against imperialism and the war, the decisive power can be put to work only by the solid masses of the proletariat of all nations. Consequently, the tactics of the national

sections are to be directed mainly at educating the broad masses to be able to act politically and take resolute initiative, at ensuring international continuity in the action of the masses, and at expanding the political and trade-union organizations so that with their mediation an immediate and energetic cooperation of all sections can be guaranteed at any time, and thus the will of the International may become the deed of the broadest masses of workal powerandbuildit

6. The immediate problem of socialism is the spiritual liberation of the proletariat from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie, which is expressed in the influence of the nationalistic ideology. The national sections must direct their agitation in parliaments and in the press toward denouncing the traditional phraseology of nationalism as a tool of bourgeois domination. The only defense of all real national freedom today is the revolutionary class struggle against imperialism. The fatherland of the proletariat, whose defense must come before all else, is the socialist International.

Translated by Peggy Fallen Wright

To the Proletarians of All Countries

Proletarians! Working men and women! Comrades!

The revolution has entered Germany. The masses of soldiers who for four years have been driven to slaughter for the sake of capitalist profit, the mass of workers who for four years have been exploited, sucked dry, and starved have risen. Prussian militarism, this most terrible tool of suppression, this scourge of mankind, lies broken on the ground. Its most visible representatives, and therefore those most visibly responsible for this war, the Kaiser and the Crown Prince, have fled the country.¹ Everywhere, workers' and soldiers' councils have been formed.

Proletarians of all countries, we do not claim that all power in Germany has actually come into the hands of the working people, that the proletarian revolution has already won full victory. In the government, there are still all those socialists who, in August 1914, surrendered our most precious good, the International, who for four years betrayed both the German workers and the International.

Text from *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), pp. 612-16. First published in *Die Rote Fahne*, November 25, 1918.

¹ In September 1918 the German war effort appeared to be defeated. At home, strikes broke out on a large scale. At the end of October, Ludendorff, Commander in Chief of the German Army, resigned and fled to Holland. In a last-ditch effort, the German fleet was ordered out in what was clearly a suicidal attempt against the English fleet. The sailors mutinied at Kiel. As the news spread, soldiers' and sailors' councils began to form. The workers' agitation continued, culminating in a mass strike on November 9. On that day, Wilhelm II fled to Holland and the Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, turned the government over to the Social Democrat, Ebert.

But, proletarians of all countries, now the German proletarian himself speaks to you. We believe we have the right to speak to you in his name. From the very first day of this war we have tried to do our international duty by opposing our criminal government with all our might and by branding it as truly responsible for the war.

Now, in this hour, we are justified before history, before the International, before the German proletariat. The masses agree enthusiastically with us. Larger and larger numbers of the proletariat realize that the hour of reckoning has come for capitalist class rule.

However, the German proletariat cannot do this great task by itself. It can only fight and win by appealing to the solidarity of the proletarians of the whole world.

Comrades of the nations at war, we are aware of your situation. We know very well that your governments, having won the war, are blinding many social strata by the external splendor of victory. We know that the success of murder makes people forget its causes and aims.

But we also know something else. We know that in your countries, too, it is the proletariat that has sacrificed the most blood and goods; that the proletariat is tired of the horrible slaughter; that the proletarian comes back home to find need and misery while billions are heaped up in the hands of a few capitalists. He has realized and will realize even more that your governments, too, fought the war for the sake of the big moneybags. And he will realize that your government's talk of "law and civilization," of "protecting the small nations" meant capitalist profit just as much as our government's talk of "defending the Fatherland." He will realize that this peace of "law" and the "League of Nations" will prove to be the same base robbery as the peace of Brest-Litovsk.² In both cases,

² In March 1918 the Bolshevik leaders felt obliged to conclude a peace treaty with Germany in order to secure the gains of the Revolution. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk cost Russia the Ukraine, large parts of the Baltic states, and Finland. The justification for signing this separate peace was that the Russian Revolution could not triumph

there is the same shameless greed, the same will to suppression, the same determination to use the brutal power of murderous weapons to the utmost advantage.

The imperialism of all nations knows no "mutual understanding." It knows only one law: capitalist profit; only one language: the sword; only one means: force. And in our country as in yours, its current talk of "League of Nations," "disarmament," "rights of small nations," "self-determination of all countries" is nothing but the usual lies and empty phrases of the rulers designed to lull the proletariat to sleep.

Proletarians of all countries! This war must be the last one! This much we owe the twelve million murdered victims; this much we owe our children; this much we owe mankind.

Europe lies in ruins from this atrocious war. Twelve million corpses cover the horrid scenes of imperialist crime. The flower of youth and the best men of the peoples have been cut down. Immeasurable productivity has been destroyed. Mankind is close to bleeding to death as a consequence of this bloodletting unequalled in history. The victorious as well as the vanquished stand on the edge of the abyss. Mankind is threatened by the most terrible famine, by a stop of the entire production mechanism, by epidemics and degeneration.

And the great criminals of this horrible anarchy, of this unleashed chaos: the ruling classes? They are incapable of controlling what they set loose. The beast capitalism conjured up the hell of world war. But it is incapable of exorcising it, incapable of re-establishing true order, incapable of guaranteeing bread and work, peace and culture, law and freedom for tortured mankind.

What the ruling classes are preparing under the name of peace and law is only another work of brute force from which the hydra of suppression, hate, and new bloody wars will rear its thousand heads.

Only socialism can achieve lasting peace, can heal the

without a world revolution in the course of which the question of lost territories would be regulated in a socialist manner.

wounds of mankind, can make blooming gardens of the waste fields of Europe, trampled by the apocalyptic horsemen of the war. Only socialism can renew tenfold the destroyed productivity, can awaken all the physical and moral energy of mankind, can replace hatred and discord by brotherly solidarity, by harmony and respect for every human being.

Once the representatives of the proletarians of all countries shake hands under the banner of socialism, peace will be established in a matter of hours. There will be no quarrel about the left bank of the Rhine, about Mesopotamia, Egypt, or colonies. There will be only one people: working men of all races and tongues. There will be only one law: equality of all men. There will be only one goal: prosperity and progress for all.

Mankind is faced with the alternative: dissolution and decline into capitalist anarchy or rebirth through social revolution. The hour of decision has struck. If you believe in socialism, now is the time to show it. If you are socialists, now is the time to act.

Proletarians of all countries, if we are calling you to join the common fight, it is not for the sake of German capitalists who, under the company name of "German Nation," are trying to escape the consequences of their own crimes. It is for our sake and for yours. Consider: The victorious capitalists of your country stand ready to suppress bloodily our revolution, which they fear as much as one in their own country. You yourselves have not become freer through the "victory," but only more enslaved. If your ruling classes succeed in throttling the proletarian revolution in Germany and Russia, they will turn against you with double force. Your capitalists hope that defeating us and revolutionary Russia will give them the power to scourge you with scorpions and to erect the millennium of exploitation on the grave of international socialism.

Therefore we call out to you: Fight! Act! The time of empty manifestos, of platonic resolutions and resounding phrases is over: the hour of action has come for the International. We

urge you: Elect workers' and soldiers' councils to take over political power and work with us toward peace.

It is not for Lloyd George and Poincaré, not for Sonnino, Wilson, Erzberger, or Scheidemann to make peace. It is under the waving banner of socialist world revolution that peace must be established.

Proletarians of all countries! We call on you to carry out the work of socialist liberation; to give back to the defiled world its human face; to make the slogan come true which used to be our greeting and parting words:

The International and mankind will be one! ³

Long live the world revolution of the proletariat!

Proletarians of all countries, unite!

IN THE NAME OF THE SPARTACUS LEAGUE:

KARL LIEBKNECHT, ROSA LUXEMBURG,

FRANZ MEHRING, CLARA ZETKIN

Translated by Rosmarie Waldrop

³ This is a line from the refrain of "The International."

V

Beginnings of the German Revolution

On August 4, 1914, the Social Democratic delegation to the Reichstag voted in favor of the war credits, accepting the argument that the war was a defense of the Fatherland against czarist reaction, and citing texts from Marx and Engels to "prove" that the fight against czarism was a fight to defend civilization, and the sacred duty of every proletarian. A "civil peace" until the war's end was declared, and the class struggle "adjourned." Though a minority of the delegation opposed these measures, the faction voted as a bloc. It was only on December 2, 1914, that Karl Liebknecht refused to vote further credits, and began his one-man campaign against the war.

Immediately after the vote of August 4, a meeting was held in Rosa Luxemburg's home, attended by Duncker, Eberlein, Marchlewski, Mehring, Meyer, and Pieck. This group decided to begin oppositional action, but refused to form an independent party, preferring to work within the SPD. A newspaper, *Die Internationale*, was to be published, one number of which appeared in April 1915. After Rosa Luxemburg was released from prison in February 1916 (where she had sat out a prewar sentence for "insulting" His Majesty), the group met again, changed its name to Spartacus, and began renewed agitational work. Agitation continued throughout the war; yet the Spartacus League was never very strong. All agitation had to be carried out in strict secrecy, and the leaders were more often than not in jail. The first attempt to mount a mass demonstration came on May Day 1916 in Berlin. At 8 A.M., Karl Liebknecht stepped into the middle of the crowd and cried "Down with the war!" He was immediately arrested, and

though there was a large demonstration in his favor, nothing much came of it. Rosa Luxemburg, Julian Marchlewski, Franz Mehring, and Ernest Meyer, as well as other Spartacus leaders, spent most of the war in "preventive detention."

By the end of September 1918 the war began to turn against Germany. Strikes broke out at home. The Army Chief of Staff, Ludendorff, resigned and fled to Holland. On November 9, a general strike took place in Berlin. The Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, handed over his powers to the representative of the SPD, Ebert, and fled with the Kaiser, who had abdicated. Hearing this, Scheidemann, another leader of the SPD "majority," proclaimed the Republic on the steps of the Reichstag in front of a small group of parliamentary delegates. Two hours later, in the center of Berlin, Karl Liebknecht proclaimed the *Socialist* Republic.

No one had expected the sudden breakdown of the state. The events of November and December 1918 took politicians of the Right and Left by surprise. The working class was in a state of ebullition as were the soldiers. Workers' and soldiers' councils were formed throughout the country—a conscious imitation of the Soviet model—and represented the only real power. But the councils were not clear about their own position and their immediate tasks. As a rule, they were quickly brought under the control of factions favorable to the SPD, whose goal was the maintenance of "order." With the temporizing of the councils, the forces of reaction were able to recover from their shock and begin to organize their self-defense.

The first Congress of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils met on December 16–21, 1918, in Berlin. The majority of the delegates were favorable to the moderate politics of the SPD leaders, typified by Ebert's "I hate social revolution like the plague." The Spartacus League had only ten delegates of the 489 present. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were not admitted to the meeting because they were "neither workers nor soldiers." The Congress decided that a National Assembly should be elected. Elections were called for January 19, 1919.

In the meanwhile, the Congress decided to limit its own powers to those of a mere interim executive.

In the streets, a revolutionary situation existed. There was no way of telling whether the elections would even take place. Many members of Spartacus began to call for the formation of an independent party and the dissolution of the Assembly if it came into being. The model of the Russian Revolution was bandied around, "justifying" now this, now that tactic. Rosa Luxemburg was opposed to the foundation of a new party, for she feared that it would be cut off from the masses by an exaggerated "purism"; her tactical choice was to remain within the USPD and to continue the work of educating the masses, counting on the objective development of the revolution to drive them forward. She was in favor of participation in the vote for the National Assembly, though she knew full well that it would be a farce, arguing that "as soon as the famous Constituent Assembly really decides to put socialism fully and completely into practice . . . the battle begins." She obviously had in mind the need for a transitional program,¹ and the fact that socialist revolution is not made by decree.

The pressure of circumstances pushed the Spartacus League forward. A national conference, called on short notice, met in Berlin from December 30 to January 1. The delegates were a mixed batch, hardly representative of the entire League; they were generally young, and very much impressed by events in Russia. Two important decisions were taken: 1) to leave the USPD and form an independent party, the Communist Party of Germany; 2) not to take part in the vote for the National Assembly. There was almost no opposition to the first decision. Karl Liebknecht explained the reasons for the separation: The USPD had no concrete program; it was a hybrid organization whose right wing was led by Bernstein, and whose left was Spartacus; it believed that one could "make" and "unmake"

¹ Cf. the discussion of the transitional program in the essay "In Memory of the Proletariat Party."

revolutions; and it had fallen victim to the fatal disease of “parliamentary cretinism.” The Spartacus League, continued Liebknecht, had joined the USPD in order to use it as a platform from which to express its views, and in order to recruit. But the USPD had joined the government of Ebert-Scheidemann, and had become so bureaucratized that there was no longer room to work in it.

The question of participation in the vote for the National Assembly was a crucial question for the future of the revolution. Speaking in the name of the central committee of Spartacus, Paul Levi defended the idea of participation on tactical grounds, knowing full well that even the conquest of a Spartacist majority in it would not “make” the revolution. The central committee felt that participation in the vote would be a step in the education of the German proletariat, and that its delegates to the Assembly would be able to use it as a platform to speak to the masses. Levi’s speech was continually interrupted by disagreements from the delegates. The Russian model was on everyone’s mind. Typical arguments against participation were those of Rühle—“The street is the greatest tribunal which we have won”—and Gelwitzki—“Ten men on the street are worth more than a thousand votes.” Rosa Luxemburg spoke in defense of participation in the vote.² She spoke of the “long revolution,” of the need to develop the class consciousness of the proletariat through a series of struggles. She criticized the gross alternative of “guns or parliament,” demanding a “more refined, dialectical choice.” Further, she pointed out, if the masses are “too ripe” for an election campaign, and are champing at the bit to make a revolution—as had been maintained by those opposed to participation—why hadn’t they done more with the power they had had since November 9? Obviously, their class consciousness needed further development. At the end of her speech, according to the steno-

² This speech is included in the Minutes of the Founding Congress recently published for the first time in *Der Grundungsparteitag der KPD*, Hermann Weber, ed. (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969).

graphic report, "weak applause" was registered. By a 66-23 vote, the Congress decided against participation.

After the foundation of the German Communist Party, events moved quickly—though there is no evidence that the Party was responsible for their acceleration. On January 4, Emil Eichhorn, the Chief of Police in Berlin and a member of the USPD, was removed from office by the provisional regime which argued that he had not put an end to the "disorder" in the streets. Eichhorn refused to submit. A demonstration was called by the USPD and supported by the Communists. On January 6, the building of the *Vorwärts* was occupied, and a revolutionary issue of the paper was published. The occupation continued until January 13, when the SPD minister of defense, Noske, called in the troops to take control of the situation. After the massacre at the *Vorwärts*, it was clear that the revolution had failed for the moment.

Berlin had been living in a witchhunt atmosphere for weeks; "Spartacus" was the label pinned on every misdeed which occurred in the dissension-torn city—a technique always used by the ruling classes, but now applied by the SPD as well. The chief "criminals" were Luxemburg and Liebknecht; letters even came to the offices of the *Rote Fahne* asking Liebknecht to "spare my old maiden aunt," etc. The Spartacus leaders refused to leave the city. On the evening of January 15, 1919, they were taken prisoner by governmental troops. After a preliminary hearing at the Eden Hotel, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were taken off, supposedly to be driven to prison. On leaving the hotel separately, both were brutally beaten and murdered by the soldiers.

It has often been speculated that if Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had lived, there never would have been the rapid "Bolshevization" of the Western communist parties which took place in the early 1920's. Perhaps. Yet when Arthur Rosenberg suggests that Rosa Luxemburg stayed in Berlin for what were, in effect, "petty-bourgeois reasons of honor," and that she should have fled to temporary safety like Marx

and Engels in 1849, or like Lenin in 1917, he shows a misunderstanding of Rosa Luxemburg's life and work. Her writings during the revolutionary months of 1918–1919 are a reconfirmation under fire of the positions developed during the preceding years. There surely are all sorts of psychological reasons for her refusal to leave Berlin; yet her own last article—and that of Liebknecht—explains the reasons for staying in a manner entirely consistent with her whole life's work and her understanding that the liberation of the working class must be its own work, the fruit of its own struggles. Liebknecht wrote:

“Spartacus beaten!”

Take it easy! We haven't fled; we are not beaten! And even if you put us in chains, we are here, and we shall stay here! And we shall win! Spartacus: that signifies fire and flames; that signifies heart and soul; that signifies the will and action of the proletarian revolution. And Spartacus: that signifies need and aspiration to happiness, the readiness to struggle of the conscious proletariat. Because Spartacus: that signifies socialism and world revolution. . . .

And whether we are alive or not when it is attained, our program will live: it will dominate the world of a liberated humanity. Despite everything!

And Rosa Luxemburg, looking back at the temporary failure of the revolution, remarked that “the rejoicing ‘victors’ do not notice that an ‘order’ which must be periodically maintained by bloody butchery is steadily approaching its historical destiny, its doom.” The choice remains: *Socialism or Barbarism!* The proletariat can learn from this “defeat” because it *must* learn:

The leadership failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the task. They fashioned this ‘defeat’ into a part of those historical defeats which constitute the pride and power of international socialism. And that is why this defeat is the seed of the future triumph.

For Rosa Luxemburg, the proletarian revolution does not depend on the action of a few "leaders"; it is the result of the masses' own development, their ability to learn from their present and their past. As she argued against Bernstein in *Social Reform or Revolution*, the revolution is always, in a sense, "premature"; this is inherent in the dialectical structure of socialist politics. What is important is that the heritage of the past, premature revolution, becomes a living part of the present struggle, adding to it the experiential depth and consciousness which make the advent of socialism the beginning of a new human history.

What Does the Spartacus League Want?

I

On the ninth of November, workers and soldiers smashed the old German regime. The Prussian saber's mania of world rule had bled to death on the battlefields of France. The gang of criminals who sparked a worldwide conflagration and drove Germany into an ocean of blood had come to the end of its rope. The people—betrayed for four years, having forgotten culture, honesty, and humanity in the service of the Moloch, available for every obscene deed—awoke from its four-year-long paralysis, only to face the abyss.

On the 9th of November, the German proletariat rose up to throw off the shameful yoke. The Hohenzollerns were driven out; workers' and soldiers' councils were elected.

But the Hohenzollerns were no more than the front men of the imperialist bourgeoisie and of the Junkers. The class rule of the bourgeoisie is the real criminal responsible for the World War, in Germany as in France, in Russia as in England, in Europe as in America. The capitalists of all nations are the real instigators of the mass murder. International capital is the insatiable god Baal, into whose bloody maw millions upon millions of steaming human sacrifices are thrown.

The World War confronts society with the choice: either continuation of capitalism, new wars, and imminent decline into chaos and anarchy, or abolition of capitalist exploitation.

With the conclusion of world war, the class rule of the bour-

Text from *Politische Schriften*, II (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 159–70. First published in *Die Rote Fahne*, December 14, 1918.

geoisie has forfeited its right to existence. It is no longer capable of leading society out of the terrible economic collapse which the imperialist orgy has left in its wake.

Means of production have been destroyed on a monstrous scale. Millions of able workers, the finest and strongest sons of the working class, slaughtered. Awaiting the survivors' return stands the leering misery of unemployment. Famine and disease threaten to sap the strength of the people at its roots. The financial bankruptcy of the state, due to the monstrous burdens of the war debt, is inevitable.

Out of all this bloody confusion, this yawning abyss, there is no help, no escape, no rescue other than socialism. Only the revolution of the world proletariat can bring order into this chaos, can bring work and bread for all, can end the reciprocal slaughter of the peoples, can restore peace, freedom, true culture to this martyred humanity. Down with the wage system! That is the slogan of the hour! Instead of wage labor and class rule there must be collective labor. The means of production must cease to be the monopoly of a single class; they must become the common property of all. No more exploiters and exploited! Planned production and distribution of the product in the common interest. Abolition not only of the contemporary mode of production, mere exploitation and robbery, but equally of contemporary commerce, mere fraud.

In place of the employers and their wage slaves, free working comrades! Labor as nobody's torture, because everybody's duty! A human and honorable life for all who do their social duty. Hunger no longer the curse of labor, but the scourge of idleness!

Only in such a society are national hatred and servitude uprooted. Only when such a society has become reality will the earth no more be stained by murder. Only then can it be said: This war was the last.

In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. The words of the *Communist Manifesto* flare like a fiery *menetekel*¹ above the crumbling bastions of capitalist society:

¹ The reference is to the famous biblical story (Daniel, v, 25-29) of the handwriting

Socialism or barbarism!

II

The establishment of the socialist order of society is the mightiest task which has ever fallen to a class and to a revolution in the history of the world. This task requires a complete transformation of the state and a complete overthrow of the economic and social foundations of society.

This transformation and this overthrow cannot be decreed by any bureau, committee, or parliament. It can be begun and carried out only by the masses of people themselves.

In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry its interests, the interests of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves.

The mass of the proletariat must do more than stake out clearly the aims and direction of the revolution. It must also personally, by its own activity, bring socialism step by step into life.

The essence of socialist society consists in the fact that the great laboring mass ceases to be a dominated mass, but rather, makes the entire political and economic life its own life and gives that life a conscious, free, and autonomous direction.

From the uppermost summit of the state down to the tiniest parish, the proletarian mass must therefore replace the inherited organs of bourgeois class rule—the assemblies, parliaments, and city councils—with its own class organs—with workers' and soldiers' councils. It must occupy all the posts, supervise all functions, measure all official needs by the standard of its own class interests and the tasks of socialism. Only through constant, vital, reciprocal contact between the masses

on the wall which read: "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting."
A mene-tekél is thus a sign of impending doom.

of the people and their organs, the workers' and soldiers' councils, can the activity of the people fill the state with a socialist spirit.

The economic overturn, likewise, can be accomplished only if the process is carried out by proletarian mass action. The naked decrees of socialization by the highest revolutionary authorities are by themselves empty phrases. Only the working class, through its own activity, can make the word flesh. The workers can achieve control over production, and ultimately real power, by means of tenacious struggle with capital, hand-to-hand, in every shop, with direct mass pressure, with strikes and with the creation of its own permanent representative organs.

From dead machines assigned their place in production by capital, the proletarian masses must learn to transform themselves into the free and independent directors of this process. They have to acquire the feeling of responsibility proper to active members of the collectivity which alone possesses ownership of all social wealth. They have to develop industriousness without the capitalist whip, the highest productivity without slavedrivers, discipline without the yoke, order without authority. The highest idealism in the interest of the collectivity, the strictest self-discipline, the truest public spirit of the masses are the moral foundations of socialist society, just as stupidity, egotism, and corruption are the moral foundations of capitalist society.

All these socialist civic virtues, together with the knowledge and skills necessary to direct socialist enterprises, can be won by the mass of workers only through their own activity, their own experience.

The socialization of society can be achieved only through tenacious, tireless struggle by the working mass along its entire front, on all points where labor and capital, people and bourgeois class rule, can see the whites of one another's eyes. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.

III

During the bourgeois revolutions, bloodshed, terror, and political murder were an indispensable weapon in the hand of the rising classes.

The proletarian revolution requires no terror for its aims; it hates and despises killing.² It does not need these weapons because it does not combat individuals but institutions, because it does not enter the arena with naive illusions whose disappointment it would seek to revenge. It is not the desperate attempt of a minority to mold the world forcibly according to its ideal, but the action of the great massive millions of the people, destined to fulfill a historic mission and to transform historical necessity into reality.

But the proletarian revolution is at the same time the death knell for all servitude and oppression. That is why all capitalists, Junkers, petty bourgeois, officers, all opportunists and parasites of exploitation and class rule rise up to a man to wage mortal combat against the proletarian revolution.

It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good-humoredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit. All ruling classes fought to the end, with tenacious energy, to preserve their privileges. The Roman patricians and the medieval feudal barons alike, the English cavaliers and the American slavedealers, the Walachian boyars and the Lyonnais silk manufacturers—they all shed streams of blood, they all marched over corpses, murder, and arson, instigated civil war and treason, in order to defend their privileges and their power.

The imperialist capitalist class, as last offspring of the caste of exploiters, outdoes all its predecessors in brutality, in open cynicism and treachery. It defends its holiest of holies, its profit

² At the Founding Congress of the German Communist Party (Spartacus League), this passage was attacked by Paul Frölich and others as being a veiled criticism of the Bolshevik Revolution.

and its privilege of exploitation, with tooth and nail, with the methods of cold evil which it demonstrated to the world in the entire history of colonial politics and in the recent World War. It will mobilize heaven and hell against the proletariat. It will mobilize the peasants against the cities, the backward strata of the working class against the socialist vanguard; it will use officers to instigate atrocities; it will try to paralyze every socialist measure with a thousand methods of passive resistance; it will force a score of Vendées on the revolution; it will invite the foreign enemy, the murderous weapons of Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Wilson into the country to rescue it—it will turn the country into a smoking heap of rubble rather than voluntarily give up wage slavery.

All this resistance must be broken step by step, with an iron fist and ruthless energy. The violence of the bourgeois counter-revolution must be confronted with the revolutionary violence of the proletariat. Against the attacks, insinuations, and rumors of the bourgeoisie must stand the inflexible clarity of purpose, vigilance, and ever ready activity of the proletarian mass. Against the threatened dangers of the counter-revolution, the arming of the people and disarming of the ruling classes. Against the parliamentary obstructionist maneuvers of the bourgeoisie, the active organization of the mass of workers and soldiers. Against the omnipresence, the thousand means of power of bourgeois society, the concentrated, compact, and fully developed power of the working class. Only a solid front of the entire German proletariat, the south German together with the north German, the urban and the rural, the workers with the soldiers, the living, spirited identification of the German Revolution with the International, the extension of the German Revolution into a world revolution of the proletariat can create the granite foundations on which the edifice of the future can be constructed.

The fight for socialism is the mightiest civil war in world history, and the proletarian revolution must procure the neces-

sary tools for this civil war; it must learn to use them—to struggle and to win.

Such arming of the solid mass of laboring people with all political power for the tasks of the revolution—that is the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore true democracy. Not where the wage slave sits next to the capitalist, the rural proletarian next to the Junker in fraudulent equality to engage in parliamentary debate over questions of life or death, but where the million-headed proletarian mass seizes the entire power of the state in its calloused fist, like the god Thor his hammer, using it to smash the head of the ruling classes—that alone is democracy, that alone is not a betrayal of the people.

In order to enable the proletariat to fulfill these tasks, the Spartacus League demands:

I. As immediate measures to protect the Revolution:

1. Disarmament of the entire police force and of all officers and nonproletarian soldiers; disarmament of all members of the ruling classes.

2. Confiscation of all weapons and munitions stocks as well as armaments factories by workers' and soldiers' councils.

3. Arming of the entire adult male proletarian population as a workers' militia. Creation of a Red Guard of proletarians as an active part of the militia for the constant protection of the Revolution against counter-revolutionary attacks and subversions.

4. Abolition of the command authority of officers and non-commissioned officers. Replacement of the military cadaver-discipline by voluntary discipline of the soldiers. Election of all officers by their units, with right of immediate recall at any time. Abolition of the system of military justice.

5. Expulsion of officers and capitulationists from all soldiers' councils.

6. Replacement of all political organs and authorities of the former regime by delegates of the workers' and soldiers' councils.

7. Establishment of a revolutionary tribunal to try the chief criminals responsible for starting and prolonging the war, the Hohenzollerns, Ludendorff, Hindenburg, Tirpitz, and their accomplices, together with all the conspirators of counter-revolution.

8. Immediate confiscation of all foodstuffs to secure the feeding of the people.

II. In the political and social realm:

1. Abolition of all principalities; establishment of a united German Socialist Republic.

2. Elimination of all parliaments and municipal councils, and takeover of their functions by workers' and soldiers' councils, and of the latter's committees and organs.

3. Election of workers' councils in all Germany by the entire adult working population of both sexes, in the city and the countryside, by enterprises, as well as of soldiers' councils by the troops (officers and capitulationists excluded). The right of workers and soldiers to recall their representatives at any time.

4. Election of delegates of the workers' and soldiers' councils in the entire country to the central council of the workers' and soldiers' councils, which is to elect the executive council as the highest organ of the legislative and executive power.

5. Meetings of the central council provisionally at least every three months—with new elections of delegates each time—in order to maintain constant control over the activity of the executive council, and to create an active identification between the masses of workers' and soldiers' councils in the nation and the highest governmental organ. Right of immediate recall by the local workers' and soldiers' councils and replacement of their representatives in the central council, should these not act in the interests of their constituents. Right of the executive council to appoint and dismiss the people's commissioners as well as the central national authorities and officials.

6. Abolition of all differences of rank, all orders and titles. Complete legal and social equality of the sexes.

7. Radical social legislation. Shortening of the labor day to control unemployment and in consideration of the physical exhaustion of the working class by world war. Maximum working day of six hours.

8. Immediate basic transformation of the food, housing, health and educational systems in the spirit and meaning of the proletarian revolution.

III. Immediate economic demands:

1. Confiscation of all dynastic wealth and income for the collectivity.

2. Repudiation of the state and other public debt together with all war loans, with the exception of sums of certain level to be determined by the central council of the workers' and soldiers' councils.

3. Expropriation of the lands and fields of all large and medium agricultural enterprises; formation of socialist agricultural collectives under unified central direction in the entire nation. Small peasant holdings remain in the possession of their occupants until the latter's voluntary association with the socialist collectives.

4. Expropriation by the council Republic of all banks, mines, smelters, together with all large enterprises of industry and commerce.

5. Confiscation of all wealth above a level to be determined by the central council.

6. Takeover of the entire public transportation system by the councils' Republic.

7. Election of enterprise councils in all enterprises, which, in coordination with the workers' councils, have the task of ordering the internal affairs of the enterprises, regulating working conditions, controlling production and finally taking over direction of the enterprise.

8. Establishment of a central strike commission which, in constant collaboration with the enterprise councils, will furnish the strike movement now beginning throughout the na-

tion with a unified leadership, socialist direction and the strongest support by the political power of the workers' and soldiers' councils.

IV. International tasks:

Immediate establishment of ties with the fraternal parties in other countries, in order to put the socialist revolution on an international footing and to shape and secure the peace by means of international brotherhood and the revolutionary uprising of the world proletariat.

V. That is what the Spartacus League wants!

And because that is what it wants, because it is the voice of warning, of urgency, because it is the socialist conscience of the Revolution, it is hated, persecuted, and defamed by all the open and secret enemies of the Revolution and the proletariat.

Crucify it! shout the capitalists, trembling for their cashboxes.

Crucify it! shout the petty bourgeois, the officers, the anti-Semites, the press lackeys of the bourgeoisie, trembling for their fleshpots under the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

Crucify it! shout the Scheidemanns, who, like Judas Iscariot, have sold the workers to the bourgeoisie and tremble for their pieces of silver.

Crucify it! repeat like an echo the deceived, betrayed, abused strata of the working class and the soldiers who do not know that, by raging against the Spartacus League, they rage against their own flesh and blood.

In their hatred and defamation of the Spartacus League, all the counter-revolutionaries, all enemies of the people, all the antisocialist, ambiguous, obscure, and unclear elements are united. That is proof that the heart of the Revolution beats within the Spartacus League, that the future belongs to it.

The Spartacus League is not a party that wants to rise to power over the mass of workers or through them.

The Spartacus League is only the most conscious, purposeful part of the proletariat, which points the entire broad mass

of the working class toward its historical tasks at every step, which represents in each particular stage of the Revolution the ultimate socialist goal, and in all national questions the interests of the proletarian world revolution.

The Spartacus League refuses to participate in governmental power with the lackeys of the bourgeoisie, with the Scheidemann-Eberts, because it sees in such collaboration a betrayal of the fundamentals of socialism, a strengthening of the counter-revolution, and a weakening of the Revolution.

The Spartacus League will also refuse to enter the government just because Scheidemann-Ebert are going bankrupt and the independents, by collaborating with them, are in a dead-end street.³

The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power except in response to the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of all of Germany, never except by the proletariat's conscious affirmation of the views, aims, and methods of struggle of the Spartacus League.

The proletarian revolution can reach full clarity and maturity only by stages, step by step, on the Golgotha-path of its own bitter experiences in struggle, through defeats and victories.

The victory of the Spartacus League comes not at the beginning, but at the end of the Revolution: it is identical with the victory of the great million-strong masses of the socialist proletariat.

Proletarian, arise! To the struggle! There is a world to win and a world to defeat. In this final class struggle in world history for the highest aims of humanity, our slogan toward the enemy is: Thumbs on the eyeballs and knee in the chest! ⁴

THE SPARTACUS LEAGUE

Translated by Martin Nicolaus

³ The independents—the USPD—had joined the Scheidemann-Ebert government in November. They withdrew from that government on December 29, 1918.

⁴ This was a well-known slogan of Lassalle.

Our Program and the Political Situation

Comrades! Our task today is to discuss and adopt a program. In undertaking this task we are not motivated solely by the formal consideration that yesterday we founded a new independent party and that a new party must formulate an official program. Great historical movements have been the determining causes of today's deliberations. The time has come when the entire Social Democratic socialist program of the proletariat has to be placed on a new foundation. Comrades! In so doing, we connect ourselves to the threads which Marx and Engels spun precisely seventy years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*. As you know, the *Communist Manifesto* dealt with socialism, with the realization of the ultimate goals of socialism as the immediate task of the proletarian revolution. This was the conception advocated by Marx and Engels in the Revolution of 1848; and it was what they conceived as the basis for international proletarian action as well. In common with all the leading spirits in the proletarian movement, both Marx and Engels then believed that the immediate task was the introduction of socialism. All that was necessary, they thought, was to bring about a political revolution, to seize the political power of the state in order to make socialism immediately enter the realm of flesh and blood. Subsequently, as you are aware, Marx and Engels undertook a thoroughgoing revi-

This is the text of a speech to the Founding Congress of the Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus League), made on December 31, 1918. The text is from *Politische Schriften*, II (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 171-201. Notations of audience response are from H. Weber, *Der Gründungsparteitag der KPD*, pp. 172-201.

sion of this standpoint. In their joint Preface to the republication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1872, they say:

No special stress is to be laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of modern industry during the last twenty-five years and of the accompanying progress of the organization of the party of the working class; in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two months, this program has in some aspects been antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, namely, that the "working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."

What is the actual wording of the passage which is said to be dated? It reads as follows:

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to gradually wrest all capital from the bourgeoisie; to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning this can only be effected by means of despotic interference into property rights and into the conditions of bourgeois production; by measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, go beyond themselves, necessitate further inroads into the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of revolutionizing the whole mode of production.

The measures will, of course, be different in different countries.

Nevertheless, in the most advanced countries, the following will be generally applicable:

- 1) Abolition of landed property and application of all land rents to public purposes.
- 2) Heavy progressive taxes.
- 3) Abolition of the right of inheritance.
- 4) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
- 5) Centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6) Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.

7) Increase in the number of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally, in accordance with a social plan.

8) Equal obligation upon all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9) Unification of agricultural and manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country.

10) Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Unification of education with industrial production, etc., etc.

As you see, with a few variations, these are the tasks that confront us today: the introduction, the realization of socialism. Between the time when the above program was formulated and the present moment, there have intervened seventy years of capitalist development, and the dialectical movement of history has brought us back to the conception which Marx and Engels had abandoned in 1872 as erroneous. At that time, there were good reasons for believing that their earlier views had been wrong. The further development of capital has, however, led to the fact that what was incorrect in 1872 has become truth today, so that our immediate task today is to fulfill what Marx and Engels thought they would have to accomplish in 1848. But between that point in the development, that beginning, and our own views and our immediate task, there lies the whole development not only of capitalism but also of the socialist labor movement, above all in Germany as the leading land of the modern proletariat. This development has taken a peculiar form.

When, after the disillusionments of the Revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels had given up the idea that the proletariat could immediately realize socialism, there came into existence in all countries Social Democratic socialist parties inspired with very different conceptions. The immediate task of these parties was declared to be detail work, the petty daily struggle

in the political and economic realms, in order, by degrees, to form the armies of the proletariat which would be ready to realize socialism when capitalist development had matured. The socialist program was thereby established upon an utterly different foundation, and in Germany the change took a very typical form. Until the collapse of August 4, 1914,¹ German Social Democracy took its stand upon the Erfurt Program, by which the so-called immediate minimal aims were placed in the forefront, while socialism was no more than a distant guiding star, the ultimate goal. Far more important, however, than what is written in a program is the way in which that program is interpreted in action. From this point of view, great importance must be attached to one of the historical documents of our labor movement, to the Preface written by Friedrich Engels to the 1895 republication of Marx's *Class Struggles in France*. It is not on mere historical grounds that I now reopen this question. The matter is one of extreme immediacy. It has become our historical duty today to replace our program upon the foundation laid by Marx and Engels in 1848. In view of the changes brought about by historical development, it is our duty to undertake a deliberate revision of the views that guided German Social Democracy until the collapse of August 4. This revision must be officially undertaken today.

Comrades! How did Engels envisage the question in that famous Preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France*, written in 1895, [twelve years] after the death of Marx? First of all, looking back upon the year 1848, he showed that the belief that the socialist revolution was imminent had become obsolete. He continued as follows:

History has shown that we, and those who thought like us, were all mistaken. It has shown that the state of economic development on the continent was then far from being ripe for the abo-

¹ The "collapse of August 4, 1914" refers to the voting of war credits by the parliamentary delegation of Social Democracy, an act which marked the end of the Second International. The selection from the *Junius Pamphlet* printed above gives an idea of how strongly Rosa Luxemburg felt about this betrayal of all socialist principles.

lition of capitalist production. It has proved this by the economic revolution which since 1848 has taken place all over the continent. Large-scale industry has been established in France, Austria-Hungary, Poland, and, recently, in Russia. Germany has become a first-rank industrial country. All these changes have taken place upon a capitalist foundation, a foundation which therefore in the year 1848 was still capable of an enormous extension.

After summing up the changes which had occurred in the intervening period, Engels turns to the immediate tasks of the party in Germany:

As Marx predicted, the war of 1870–1871 and the defeat of the Commune provisionally shifted the center of gravity of the European labor movement from France to Germany. Naturally, many years had to elapse before France could recover from the bloodletting of May 1871.² In Germany, on the other hand, in the hothouse atmosphere produced by the influx of the French billions, industry was developing by leaps and bounds.³ Even more rapid and more enduring was the growth of Social Democracy. Thanks to the agreement in virtue of which the German workers have been able to avail themselves of the universal suffrage introduced in 1866, the astounding growth of the party has been demonstrated to all the world by the testimony of figures whose significance no one can deny.⁴

Thereupon followed the famous enumeration showing the growth of the Party vote in election after election until the figures swelled to millions. From this progress, Engels drew the following conclusion:

The successful employment of the parliamentary vote, however, entailed an entirely new mode of struggle by the proletariat,

² The “bloodletting of May 1871” refers to the defeat of the Commune and the bloody revenge of the bourgeoisie.

³ The Treaty of Frankfurt, which ended the Franco-German War of 1870–1871, forced France to pay five billion francs in reparations. This sum provided the base for the beginnings of German industrial development.

⁴ In 1866, Bismarck introduced universal male suffrage for the Reichstag, the lower house, into Germany in order to take the wind out of Social Democracy’s sails. His effort failed. In 1867, Bebel, Liebknecht and four other Social Democrats were elected.

and this new method has undergone rapid development. It has been discovered that the political institutions in which the domination of the bourgeoisie is organized offer a fulcrum by means of which the proletariat can combat these very political institutions. The Social Democrats have participated in the elections to the various Diets, to municipal councils, and to industrial courts. Wherever the proletariat could secure an effective voice, the occupation of these electoral strongholds by the bourgeoisie has been contested. Consequently, the bourgeoisie and the government have become much more alarmed at the legal than at the illegal activities of the labor party, dreading the results of elections far more than they dread the results of rebellion.

Engels appends a detailed critique of the illusion that under modern capitalist conditions the proletariat could possibly expect to gain anything by street fighting, by revolution. It seems to me, however, that today, inasmuch as we are in the midst of a revolution, a revolution characterized by street fighting and all that it entails, it is time to put into question the conception which guided the official policy of German Social Democracy down to our own day, the views which share responsibility for our experience of August 4, 1914. [*"Hear! Hear!"*]

By this, I do not mean to imply that, on account of these declarations, Engels must share personal responsibility for the whole course of the development in Germany. I merely say that this is a classical documentation of the opinions prevailing in German Social Democracy—opinions which proved fatal to it. Here, comrades, Engels demonstrates, using all his knowledge as an expert in military science,⁵ that it is a pure illusion to believe that the working people could, in the existing state of military technique and of industry, and in view of the characteristics of the great cities of today, bring about and win a revolution by street fighting. Two important conclusions were drawn from this reasoning. In the first place, the parliamentary struggle was opposed to direct revolutionary action by the proletariat, and was frankly considered as the only means of

⁵ Engels was always interested in the art of war, and was known in the movement as the "General."

carrying on the class struggle. The logical conclusion of this critique was the doctrine of "parliamentarism-only." Secondly, the whole military machine, precisely the most powerful organization in the class state, the entire mass of proletarians in military uniform, was declared, in a remarkable way, on *a priori* grounds, to be immune and absolutely inaccessible to socialist influence. When the Preface declares that, owing to the modern development of gigantic armies, it is insane to suppose that proletarians could stand up against soldiers armed with machine guns and equipped with all the latest technical devices, the assertion is obviously based upon the assumption that anyone who is a soldier is thereby *a priori*, once and for all, a support of the ruling class.

It would be absolutely incomprehensible, in the light of contemporary experience, that a man who stood at the head of our movement could have committed such an error if we did not know the actual circumstances in which this historical document was composed. To the honor of our two great masters, and especially to the credit of Engels, who died twelve years later than Marx, and was always a faithful champion of his great collaborator's theories, the well-known fact that the Preface was written by Engels under the direct pressure of the parliamentary delegation must be stressed.⁶ During the early

⁶ This same point is made above in *Social Reform or Revolution* against Bernstein's use of Engels' Preface to justify his revisionist theory. Rosa Luxemburg did not, however, know the full details of the falsification of Engels' work. It was not Engels who wrote the seemingly revisionist views cited here. The Party leaders, arguing that because the Reichstag was considering passage of a new antisocialist law it would be dangerous to give them grounds to attack Social Democracy, eliminated all the passages in the Preface which seemed too radical. Engels protested, but died before any changes could be made. The original version of the manuscript, with the editorial changes of the Party leaders, was discovered after the war by D. Ryazanov, editor of Marx's and Engels' works. Thus, to give only one example here, after Engels had discussed the strategic reasons which made barricade struggles seem antiquated (new weapons, the construction of wide streets in the new workers' quarters, etc.), the following passages were omitted: "Does this mean that in the future street fighting will no longer play a role? Definitely not. It means only that since 1848 conditions have become less advantageous for the civilian fighters, more advantageous for the military. A future street fight can thus only be won when this unfavorable situation is counterbalanced by

1890's after the [anti]socialist law had been repealed, there was in Germany a strong left-radical current within the German labor movement which wanted to save the Party from a total absorption in the parliamentary struggle. In order to defeat the radical elements theoretically, and to neutralize them in practice; in order to keep their views from the attention of the masses through the authority of our great masters, Bebel and comrades (and this was typical of our situation at the time: the parliamentary delegation decided theoretically and tactically the destiny and the tasks of the Party) pressed Engels, who lived abroad and had to rely on their assurances, to write that Preface, arguing that it was absolutely essential to save the German labor movement from anarchist deviations. From that time on, the tactics expounded by Engels dominated German Social Democracy in everything that it did and in everything that it left undone, down to the appropriate end, August 4, 1914. The Preface was the proclamation of the parliamentarism-only tactic. Engels died the same year, and had therefore no chance to see the practical results of this application of his theory.

I am certain that those who know the works of Marx and Engels, those who are familiar with the living, genuine revolutionary spirit that inspired all their teachings and their writings, will be convinced that Engels would have been the first to protest against the debauch of parliamentarism-only, against the corruption and degradation of the labor movement which was characteristic of Germany before the 4th of August. The 4th of August did not come like thunder out of a clear sky; what happened on the 4th of August was the logical outcome of all that we had been doing day after day for many years. [*"Hear! Hear!"*] I am certain that Engels—and Marx, had he

other moments. Thus, street fighting will occur less in the beginning of a great revolution than in the further development of such a revolution, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces. These forces, however, will then, as in the whole French Revolution, on September 4 and October 31 in Paris, prefer open attack to the passive barricade tactics."

been alive—would have been the first to have protested with the utmost energy, and would have used all his forces to keep the vehicle from rolling into the swamp. But Engels died in the same year that he wrote the Preface. After we lost him in 1895, the theoretical leadership unfortunately passed into the hands of Kautsky. The result of this was that at every annual Party congress the energetic protests of the left wing against the policy of parliamentarism-only, its tenacious struggle against the sterility of such a policy whose dangerous results must be clear to everyone, were stigmatized as anarchism, anarcho-socialism, or at least anti-Marxism. What passed officially for Marxism became a cloak for all the hesitations, for all the turnings-away from the actual revolutionary class struggle, for every halfway measure which condemned German Social Democracy, the labor movement in general, and also the trade unions, to vegetate within the framework and on the terrain of capitalist society without any serious attempt to shake or throw that society out of gear.

But today we have reached the point, comrades, when we can say that we have rejoined Marx, that we are advancing under his flag. If today we declare in our program that the immediate task of the proletariat is none other than—in a word—to make socialism a truth and a fact, and to destroy capitalism root and branch, in saying this we take our stand upon the ground occupied by Marx and Engels in 1848, and from which in principle they never swerved. What true Marxism is has now become plain; and what *ersatz* Marxism, which has so long been the official Marxism of Social Democracy, has been is also clear. [*Applause*] You see what Marxism of that sort leads to—to the Marxism of those who are the henchmen of Ebert, David, and company.⁷ These are the representatives of the doctrine which was trumpeted for decades as true, undefiled Marxism. No, Marxism could not lead in this direction, could not lead to counter-revolutionary activities side by

⁷ That is, the “socialist” government of Ebert, David, Scheidemann, Noske, etc.

side with men such as Scheidemann. True Marxism fights also against those who seek to falsify it. Burrowing like a mole beneath the foundations of capitalist society, it has worked so well that the better part of the German proletariat is marching today under our banner, the stormy banner of revolution. Even in the opposite camp, even where the counter-revolution still seems to rule, we have adherents and future comrades-in-arms.

Comrades! As I have already noted, the course of the historical dialectic has led us back to the point at which Marx and Engels stood in 1848 when they first unfurled the banner of international socialism. We stand where they stood, but with the advantage that seventy additional years of capitalist development lie behind us. Seventy years ago, to those who reviewed the errors and illusions of 1848, it seemed as if the proletariat still had an infinitely long distance to travel before it could hope to realize socialism. Naturally no serious thinker has ever been inclined to fix a definite date for the collapse of capitalism; but the day of that collapse seemed to lie in the distant future. Such a belief too can be read in every line of the Preface which Engels wrote in 1895. We are now in a position to draw up the account. In comparison with the class struggles of the past, was it not a very short time? The progress of large-scale capitalist development during seventy years has brought us so far that today we can seriously set about destroying capitalism once and for all. No, still more; today we are not only in a position to perform this task, its performance is not only a duty toward the proletariat, but its solution offers the only means of saving human society from destruction. [*Loud applause*]

Comrades! What has the war left of bourgeois society beyond a gigantic heap of ruins? Formally, of course, all the means of production and most of the instruments of power are still in the hands of the ruling classes. We are under no illusions on this score. But what our rulers will be able to achieve with these powers over and above frantic attempts to re-establish their system of exploitation through blood and slaughter

will be nothing more than anarchy. Today matters have reached a point at which mankind is faced with the dilemma: either collapse into anarchy, or salvation through socialism. The results of the World War make it impossible for the capitalist classes to find any way out of their difficulties while still maintaining their class rule and capitalism. We are living today, in the strictest sense of the term, the absolute truth of the statement formulated for the first time by Marx and Engels as the scientific basis of socialism in the great charter of our movement, in the *Communist Manifesto*: Socialism will become an historical necessity. Socialism has become necessary not merely because the proletariat is no longer willing to live under the conditions imposed by the capitalist class but, rather, because if the proletariat fails to fulfill its class duties, if it fails to realize socialism, we shall crash down together to a common doom. [*Prolonged applause*]

Here, comrades, you have the general foundation of the program we are officially adopting today, whose outline you have all read in the pamphlet *What Does the Spartacus League Want?*⁸ Our program is deliberately opposed to the standpoint of the Erfurt Program; it is deliberately opposed to the separation of the immediate, so-called minimal demands formulated for the political and economic struggle from the socialist goal regarded as a maximal program. In this deliberate opposition [to the Erfurt Program] we liquidate the results of seventy years' evolution and above all, the immediate results of the World War, in that we say: For us there is no minimal and no maximal program; socialism is one and the same thing; this is the minimum we have to realize today. [*"Hear! Hear!"*]

I do not propose to discuss the details of our program. That would take too long, and you will form your own opinions on matters of detail. I consider my task to be merely to sketch and formulate the broad principles which distinguish our program from what has hitherto been the so-called official program of

⁸ This pamphlet is printed above, pp. 366-76.

German Social Democracy. I regard it, however, as more important and more pressing that we should come to an understanding in our estimate of the concrete circumstances, of the tactics we have to adopt, and of the practical measures which must be undertaken in view of the political situation, of the course of the revolution until now, and of the probable further lines of its development. We have to judge the political situation according to the outlook I have just tried to characterize—from the standpoint of the realization of socialism as the immediate task which guides every measure and every position that we take.

Comrades! Our Party Congress, the Congress of what I may proudly call the only revolutionary socialist party of the German proletariat, happens to coincide with a turning point in the development of the German revolution. "Happens to coincide," I say; but in truth the coincidence is not an accident. We may assert that after the events of the last few days, the curtain has gone down upon the first act of the German revolution. We are now in the opening of the second act, a further stage in the development, and it is our common duty to submit to self-criticism. We shall be guided more wisely in the future, and we shall gain additional impetus for further advance, if we examine critically all that we have done and created, and all that we have left undone. Let us, then, carefully examine the events of the now-ended first act in the revolution.

The movement began on November 9. The Revolution of November 9 was characterized by inadequacy and weakness. This is not surprising. The revolution followed four years of war, four years during which, schooled by Social Democracy and the trade unions, the German proletariat had behaved with intolerable ignominy and had repudiated its socialist obligations to an extent unparalleled in any other land. We Marxists and socialists, whose guiding principle is a recognition of historical development, could hardly expect that in the Germany which had known the terrible spectacle of August 4, and which during more than four years had reaped the har-

vest sown on that day, there should suddenly occur on November 9, 1918, a glorious revolution inspired with definite class consciousness and directed toward a conscious aim. What we experienced on November 9 was more the collapse of the existent imperialism than the victory of a new principle. [*"Hear! Hear!"*]

The moment had come for the collapse of imperialism, a colossus with feet of clay, crumbling from within. The sequel of this collapse was a more or less chaotic movement, one practically devoid of a conscious plan. The only source of union, the persistent and saving principle, was the motto: "Form Workers' and Soldiers' Councils." That was the key notion in this revolution which, in spite of the inadequacy and weakness of the opening phases, immediately gave it the stamp of a proletarian socialist revolution. We should not forget this when we are confronted by those who shower calumnies on the Russian Bolsheviks, and we must answer: "Where did you learn the ABC's of your present revolution? Was it not from the Russians that you learned to demand workers' and soldiers' councils?"⁹ [*Applause*] Those pygmies who today, as heads of what they falsely term a German socialist government, make it one of their chief tasks to join with the British imperialists in a murderous attack upon the Bolsheviks, also formally base their power on the workers' and soldiers' councils, thereby admitting that the Russian Revolution created the first mottoes for the world revolution. On the basis of the existing situation, we can predict with certainty that in whatever country, after Germany, the proletarian revolution may next break out, the first step will be the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils. [*Murmurs of assent*]

Precisely here lies the bond that unites our movement internationally. This is the slogan which completely distinguishes our revolution from all earlier bourgeois revolutions. And it is

⁹ The "socialist" government of Ebert-Scheidemann and Co. was based on the workers' and soldiers' councils, in which the old SPD forces still had a majority.

very characteristic of the dialectical contradictions in which the revolution, like all others, moves that on November 9, the first cry of the revolution, as instinctive as the cry of a newborn child, found the watchword which will lead us to socialism: workers' and soldiers' councils. This was the call which rallied everyone—and that the revolution instructively found the word, even though on the 9th of November it was so inadequate, so feeble, so devoid of initiative, so lacking in clearness as to its own aims, that on the second day of the revolution nearly half of the instruments of power which had been seized on November 9 had slipped from the grasp of the revolution. We see in this, on the one hand, that our revolution is subject to the all-powerful law of historical necessity which guarantees that, despite all difficulties and complications, and notwithstanding all our own errors, we shall nevertheless advance step by step toward our goal. On the other hand, comparing this splendid battle cry with the insufficiency of the practical results which have been achieved through it, we have to admit that these were no more than the first childish and faltering footsteps of the revolution which has many arduous tasks to perform and a long road to travel before fully realizing the promise of the first watchwords.

Comrades! This first act, between November 9 and the present, has been filled with illusions on all sides. The first illusion of the workers and soldiers who made the revolution was: the illusion of unity under the banner of so-called socialism. What could be more characteristic of the internal weakness of the Revolution of November 9 than the fact that at the head of the movement appeared persons who a few hours before the revolution broke out had regarded it as their chief duty to agitate against it [*"Hear! Hear!"*]*—to attempt to make revolution impossible: the Eberts, Scheidemanns, and Haases. The motto of the Revolution of November 9 was the idea of the unity of the various socialist trends in the general exultation—an illusion which was to be bloodily avenged. The events of the last few days have brought a bitter awakening from our dreams. But*

the self-deception was universal, affecting the Ebert and Scheidemann groups and the bourgeoisie no less than ourselves. Another illusion was that of the bourgeoisie at the end of this stage, believing that by means of the Ebert-Haase combination, by means of the so-called socialist government, they would really be able to bridle the proletarian masses and to strangle the socialist revolution. Yet another illusion was that of the Ebert-Scheidemann government, that with the aid of the soldiers returned from the front, they would be able to hold down the working masses in their socialist class struggle.

Such were the multifarious illusions which explain recent events. One and all, they have now been dissipated into nothingness. It has been shown that the union between Haase and Ebert-Scheidemann under the banner of "socialism" serves merely as a fig leaf for the veiling of a counter-revolutionary policy. We ourselves have been cured of our self-deceptions, as happens in all revolutions. There is a definite revolutionary method by which the people can be cured of illusion, but unfortunately, the cure must be paid for with the blood of the people. In Germany, events have followed a course characteristic of earlier revolutions. The blood of the victims on the Chausseestrasse on December 6, the blood of the sailors on December 24,¹⁰ brought the truth home to the broad masses of the people. They came to realize that what has been pasted together and called a socialist government is nothing but a gov-

¹⁰ The "Chausseestrasse massacre" resulted from an attempted putsch in which the Berlin executive committee of the workers' and soldiers' councils, which was controlled by the forces of Ebert-Scheidemann, was placed under arrest. This attempted putsch failed, and in the subsequent fight against government forces, a number of Spartacists and bystanders were killed. In his speech to the Founding Congress of the German Communist Party, Karl Liebknecht accused the government of having planned the putsch in order to have an excuse to attack the Spartacists.

On December 24, 1918, a division of sailors on duty in Berlin refused to obey orders and took as their hostage the SPD military chief of Berlin, Otto Wels. Ebert ordered the troops of General Lequis to attack the sailors, who were aided by the Berlin workers. In the fighting eleven sailors and fifty-six governmental soldiers were killed. This event was cited as another example of the provocation by the "socialist" regime which was only looking for excuses to attack the Spartacists.

ernment representing the bourgeois counter-revolution, and that whoever continues to tolerate such a state of affairs is working against the proletariat and against socialism. [*Applause*]

Comrades! Dissipated too are the illusions of Messrs. Ebert and Scheidemann that with the aid of the soldiers from the front they will be able to keep the workers in subjection permanently. For what has been the effect of December 6 and 24? We have all seen a profound disillusionment among the troops, and the beginning of a critical attitude toward those gentlemen who wanted to use them as cannon fodder against the socialist proletariat. This too lies in the working of the law of the necessary objective development of the socialist revolution, that the individual troops of the labor movement gradually learn through their own bitter experience to recognize the correct path of revolution. Fresh masses of soldiers have been brought to Berlin as cannon fodder for the subjection of socialist proletarians—with the result that from different barracks there comes a demand for the pamphlets and leaflets of the Spartacus League. This, comrades, marks the close of the first act. The hopes of the Ebert-Scheidemanns that they would be able to subjugate the proletariat with the aid of reactionary elements among the troops have already to a large extent been frustrated. What they have to expect within the very near future is an ever clearer revolutionary conception in the barracks as well. Thereby the army of the fighting proletariat will be augmented and the forces of the counter-revolution will be weakened. In consequence of these changes, yet another illusion will have to go, the illusion which animates the bourgeoisie, the ruling class. If you read the newspapers of the last few days, the newspapers issued since the incidents of December 24, you cannot fail to perceive plain manifestations of disillusionment and indignation: The servants who sit in the seats of the mighty have shown themselves to be inefficient. [*“Hear! Hear!”*]

It had been expected that Ebert-Scheidemann would prove

themselves strong men, successful lion tamers. But what have they achieved? They have suppressed a couple of trifling putsches, following which, however, the hydra of revolution has raised its head more resolutely than ever. Thus disillusionment is mutual on all sides! The proletariat has completely lost the illusion which had led it to believe that the Ebert-Scheidemann-Haase union would be a socialist government. Ebert-Scheidemann have lost the illusion that with the aid of proletarians in military uniform they could permanently keep down proletarians in work clothes. The bourgeoisie have lost the illusion that by means of Ebert-Scheidemann-Haase they could deceive the entire socialist revolution of Germany as to its goals. All these things leave a negative balance, nothing but the rags and tatters remain of destroyed illusions. But it is a great gain for the proletariat that nothing but these rags and tatters remain from the first phase of the revolution, for there is nothing so destructive for the revolution as illusions, whereas nothing is of greater use than clear, naked truth. I may appropriately recall the words of one of our classical writers, a man who was no proletarian revolutionary, but a spiritual revolutionary of the bourgeoisie. I refer to Lessing, who in one of his last writings, as librarian at Wolfenbüttel, wrote the following which has always aroused my sympathetic interest:

I do not know whether it be a duty to sacrifice happiness and life to truth. . . . But this much I know, that it is our duty, if we desire to teach truth, to teach it wholly or not at all, to teach it clearly and bluntly, unenigmatically, unreservedly, inspired with full confidence in its powers. . . . For the cruder the error, the shorter and more direct is the path leading to truth, whereas a highly refined error is likely to keep us eternally estranged from truth, and the more readily so in proportion as we find it difficult to realize that it is an error. . . . One who thinks of conveying to mankind truths masked and painted may well be truth's pimp, but has never been truth's lover.

Comrades! Messrs. Haase, Dittmann, etc., have wished to bring the revolution, to introduce socialism, covered with a

mask and smeared with paint. They have thus shown themselves to be the pimps of the counter-revolution. Today we are free of these ambiguities, and what was offered is disclosed in the brutal and sturdy forms of Messrs. Ebert and Scheidemann.¹¹ Today, even the stupidest among us can make no mistake: What is offered is the counter-revolution in all its repulsive nudity.

What are the further perspectives of development, now that the first act is over? It is, of course, not a question of prophecy. We can only hope to deduce the logical consequences of what we have already experienced, and to draw conclusions as to the probabilities for the future, in order that we may adapt our tactics, our means of struggle, to these probabilities. Comrades! Where does the road lead? Some indications are given by the latest declarations of the Ebert-Scheidemann government, declarations free from ambiguity. What is likely to be done by this so-called socialist government now that, as I have shown, all illusions have been dispelled? Day by day the government increasingly loses the support of the broad masses of the proletariat. In addition to the petty bourgeoisie there stand behind it no more than poor remnants of the proletariat, and it is extremely dubious whether they will long continue to stand behind Ebert and Scheidemann. More and more, the government is losing the support of the masses of soldiers, for the soldiers have entered upon the path of criticism and self-examination. True, this process may be slow at first, but it will lead irresistibly to their acquiring a complete socialist consciousness. Ebert and Scheidemann have lost credit with the bourgeoisie, for they have not shown themselves strong enough. What can they do now? They will soon make an end of the comedy of socialist policy. When you read these gentlemen's new program, you will see that they are sailing under

¹¹ Haase and Dittmann were members of the USPD who collaborated with the "socialist" government of Ebert-Scheidemann in the hope of pushing it to the left. This attempt failed, and both Haase and Dittmann resigned from the government on December 29, 1918 (i.e., two days before this speech was given). See Glossary.

full steam into the second phase, that of the declared counter-revolution, or, as I may even say, that of the restoration of the earlier prerevolutionary conditions.

What is the program of the new government? It proposes the election of a president who is to have a position intermediate between that of the King of England and that of the President of the United States. [*"Hear! Hear!"*] He is to be, as it were, King Ebert. In the second place, they propose to re-establish the federal council [Bundesrat]. You may read today the independently formulated demands of the south German governments which emphasize the federal character of the German state. The re-establishment of the good old federal council, and naturally of its appendage, the German Reichstag, will come in only a few weeks. Comrades, in this way Ebert and Scheidemann are moving toward the simple restoration of the conditions that existed prior to November 9. But they have thus entered upon a steep incline, and are likely before long to find themselves lying with shattered limbs at the bottom of the abyss. For, the re-establishment of the condition that had existed *before* the 9th of November had already become out of date on the 9th, and today Germany is miles away from such a possibility. In order to secure support from the only class whose true class interests the government really represents, from the bourgeoisie—a support which has in fact notably diminished owing to recent occurrences—Ebert and Scheidemann will find themselves compelled to pursue an increasingly counter-revolutionary policy. The demands of the south German states, as published today in the Berlin papers, give frank expression to the wish to secure "enhanced safety" for the German Reich. In plain language, they desire the declaration of a state of siege against "anarchist," "putschist," and "Bolshevist" elements, that is to say, against socialists. The circumstances will force Ebert and Scheidemann to the expedient of dictatorship, with or without the declaration of a state of siege. But this, however, as an outcome of the previous development, by the mere logic of events and through the op-

eration of the forces which control Ebert and Scheidemann, will imply that during the second act of the revolution a much more pronounced opposition of tendencies and a greatly accentuated class struggle will take place. [*"Hear! Hear!"*] This intensification of conflict will arise, not merely because the political influences I have already enumerated, dispelling all illusion, will lead to a declared hand-to-hand fight between the revolution and the counter-revolution; but rather because the flames of a new fire are spreading upward from the depths of the totality, the flames of economic struggles.

Comrades! It was characteristic of the first period of the revolution, which I have described, until December 24 we might say, that the revolution remained exclusively political. We must be fully conscious of this. This explains the uncertain character, the inadequacy, the halfheartedness, the aimlessness of this revolution. It was the first stage of a revolutionary overthrow whose main tasks lie in the economic field: to make a fundamental conversion of economic conditions. Its steps were as naive and unconscious as those of a child groping its way without knowing where it is going; for at this stage, I repeat, the revolution had a purely political character. Only in the last two or three weeks have strikes broken out quite spontaneously. Let us be clear: it is the very essence of this revolution that strikes will become more and more extensive, that they must become more and more the central focus, the key aspect of the revolution. [*Applause*] It then becomes an economic revolution, and therewith a socialist revolution. The struggle for socialism has to be fought out by the masses, by the masses alone, breast to breast against capitalism, in every factory, by every proletarian against his employer. Only then will it be a socialist revolution.

Certainly, the thoughtless had a different picture of the course of events. They imagined it would be only necessary to overthrow the old government, to set up a socialist government at the head of affairs, and then to inaugurate socialism by decree. Once again, that was an illusion. Socialism will not and

cannot be created by decrees; nor can it be established by any government, however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created.

What is the external form of struggle for socialism? It is the strike. And that is why the economic phase of development has to come to the front in the second act of the revolution. I would like to stress here that this is something on which we may pride ourselves, and no one will dispute that we of the Spartacus League, of the Communist Party of Germany, are the only ones in all Germany who are on the side of the striking and fighting workers. [“*Hear! Hear!*”] You have read and witnessed again and again the attitude of the Independent Socialists [USPD] toward strikes. There was no difference between the outlook of *Vorwärts* and that of *Freiheit*.¹² Both journals sang the same tune: Be diligent; socialism means much work. Such was their position while capitalism was still in control! Socialism cannot be established in that way, but only by an energetic struggle against capitalism. Yet we see the claims of capitalism defended, not only by the most outrageous intriguers, but also by the Independent Socialists and their organ, *Freiheit*. Our Communist Party stands alone in supporting the workers. This suffices to show that, today, all those who have not taken their stand with us upon the platform of revolutionary communism fight persistently and violently against the strikes.

The conclusion to be drawn is not only that during the second act of the revolution strikes will become increasingly frequent but, further, that strikes will become the central feature and the decisive factor of the revolution, thrusting purely political questions into the background. You understand that the inevitable consequence of this will be that the economic struggle will be enormously intensified. The revolution will thus

¹² *Vorwärts* was the paper of the SPD; *Freiheit* was that of the USPD.

come to the point at which it will be no joke to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie are quite agreeable to mystifications in the political domain, where masquerades are still possible, where such creatures as Ebert and Scheidemann can pose as socialists; but they are horror-stricken where profits are concerned. When it comes to that, they will present the alternative to the Ebert-Scheidemann government: Either put an end to the strikes, stop this strike movement which threatens to strangle us; or we have no more use for you. I believe, indeed, that the government has already damned itself pretty thoroughly by its political measures. The Ebert-Scheidemanns are distressed to find that the bourgeoisie has little confidence in them. The bourgeoisie will think twice before they decide to cloak in ermine the crude parvenu Ebert. If matters go so far, they will say: "It does not suffice for a king to have blood upon his hands; he must also have blue blood in his veins." [*"Hear! Hear!"*] Should matters reach this pass, they will say: "If we want to have a king, we will not have a parvenu who does not know how to comport himself in kingly fashion." [*Laughter*]

Thus, comrades, Ebert and Scheidemann are coming to the point at which the counter-revolutionary movement will extend itself. They will be unable to quench the rising fires of the economic class struggle, and at the same time their best efforts will still not satisfy the bourgeoisie. They will either disappear, leaving in their stead an attempt at counter-revolution collected around Groener or perhaps an unqualified militarist dictatorship under Hindenburg, or perhaps they will have to bow before other counter-revolutionary powers.

It is impossible to speak more precisely or positively as to details of what must come. But we are not concerned with matters of external form, with the question of precisely what will happen, or precisely when it will happen. It is enough that we know the broad lines of coming developments. These imply: after the first act of the revolution, the phase in which the political struggle has been the leading actor, there will succeed a phase predominantly characterized by an intensification and

strengthening of the economic struggle which will sooner or later cause the government of Ebert and Scheidemann to take its place among the shades.

It is equally difficult to say what will happen to the National Assembly during the second act of the revolution. It is possible that if the Assembly comes into existence, it may prove a new school of education for the working class. But, on the other hand, it seems just as likely that the National Assembly will never come into existence. One cannot make predictions. Let me say parenthetically, to help you understand the grounds on which we were defending our position yesterday, that our only objection was to limiting our tactics to a single alternative.¹³ I will not now reopen the whole discussion, but will merely say a word or two lest any of you should falsely imagine that I am blowing hot and cold with the same breath. Our position today is precisely that of yesterday. We do not want to base our tactics in relation to the National Assembly upon what is a possibility but not a certainty. We refuse to stake everything upon the belief that the National Assembly will never come into existence. We want to be prepared for all possibilities, including the possibility of using the National Assembly for revolutionary purposes should it ever come into being. Whether it comes into being or not is a matter of indifference, for whatever happens, the success of the revolution is assured.

What will then remain of the ruined Ebert-Scheidemann government, or of any other alleged Social Democratic government which may happen to be in charge? I have said that the masses of proletarians have already slipped away from

¹³ When Rosa Luxemburg speaks of "our" position, she is referring to the central committee of the Spartacus League, composed of Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Levi, Thalheimer, Lange, Duncker, Pieck, Eberlein, Jogiches, Meyer, and Käthe Duncker. The central committee had proposed that the newly formed Communist Party take part in the electoral campaign for the National Assembly, arguing that the workers were not yet politically mature and that the electoral experience would be an important educational process, even though the National Assembly would be a farce. This proposal was defeated by a vote of 62-23.

them, and that the soldiers too are no longer to be counted on as counter-revolutionary cannon fodder. What will the poor pygmies be able to do? How can they hope to save the situation? They still have one last chance. Those of you who read today's newspapers will have seen where the ultimate reserves are to be found that the German counter-revolution proposes to lead against us should worse come to worst. You all have read that the German troops in Riga are already marching shoulder to shoulder with the English against the Russian Bolsheviks. Comrades, I have documents in my hands which enable us to survey what is now going on in Riga. The whole thing comes from the headquarters' staff of the Eighth Army, which is collaborating with Mr. August Winnig, the German Social Democrat and trade-union leader. We have always been told that the unfortunate Ebert and Scheidemann are victims of the Entente. But for weeks, since the very beginning of the Revolution, it has been the tactic of *Vorwärts* to suggest that the suppression of the Russian Revolution is the earnest desire of the Entente—and it was only in this way that the Entente itself got the idea. We have here documentary evidence how all this was arranged to the detriment of the Russian proletariat and of the German Revolution. In a telegram dated December 26, Lieutenant Colonel Burkner, chief of the general staff of the Eighth Army, conveys information concerning the negotiations which led to this agreement at Riga. The telegram reads as follows:

On December 23 there was a conversation between the German plenipotentiary Winnig, and the representative of the British government, Mosanquet, formerly consul-general at Riga. The interview took place on board the HMS *Princess Margaret*, and the commanding officer of the German troops or his representative was invited to be present. I was appointed to represent the Army command. The purpose of the conversation was to assist in carrying out the armistice conditions. The conversation took the following course:

English: The British ships at Riga will supervise the carrying out of the armistice conditions. Upon these conditions are based the following demands:

1) The Germans are to maintain a sufficient force in this region to hold the Bolsheviks in check and to prevent them from extending the area now occupied. . . .

Further:

3) A statement of the present disposition of the troops fighting the Bolsheviks, including both the German and the Lettish soldiers, shall be sent to the British staff officer, so that the information may be available for the senior naval officer. All future dispositions of the troops carrying on the fight against the Bolsheviks must be communicated through the same officer.

4) A sufficient fighting force must be kept under arms at the following points in order to prevent their being seized by the Bolsheviks, and in order to prevent the Bolsheviks from passing beyond a line connecting the places named: Walk, Wolmar, Wenden, Friedrichstadt, Pensk, Mitau [Mitaua].

5) The railway from Riga to Libau [Liepaja] must be safeguarded against Bolshevik attack, and all British supplies and communications passing along this line shall receive preferential treatment.

A number of additional demands follows. And then comes the answer of the German plenipotentiary, Mr. Winnig:

Though it is unusual that one should wish to compel a government to retain occupation of a foreign state, in this case it would be our own wish to do so (says Mr. Winnig, German trade-union leader), since the question is one of protecting German blood (The Baltic Barons!). Moreover, we regard it as a moral duty to assist the country which we have liberated from its former state of dependence. Our efforts, however, would likely be frustrated, in the first place, by the condition of the troops, for our soldiers in this region are mostly men of considerable age and comparatively unfit for service and, owing to the armistice, desirous of returning home and having little will to fight. In the second place, owing to the attitude of the Baltic governments (the Lettish government is meant) by which the Germans are regarded as oppressors. But we will endeavor to provide volunteer troops, consisting of men with a fighting spirit. Indeed, this has already in part been done.

Here we see the counter-revolution at work. You read not long ago of the formation of the Iron Division expressly in-

tended to fight the Bolsheviks in the Baltic provinces. At that time there was some doubt as to the attitude of the Ebert-Scheidemann government. You know now that the initiative in the creation of such a force actually came from the government.

Comrades! One more word concerning Winnig. It is no chance matter that a trade-union leader should perform such political services. We can say without hesitation that the German trade-union leaders and the German Social Democrats are the most infamous and greatest scoundrels that the world has ever known. [*Vociferous applause*] Do you know where these fellows, Winnig, Ebert, and Scheidemann, ought to be by right? According to the German penal code, which they tell us is still in force, and which continues to be the basis of their own legal system, they ought to be in jail! [*Vociferous applause*] For, according to the German penal code, it is an offense punishable by imprisonment to enlist German soldiers for foreign service. Today, at the head of the "socialist" government of Germany stand men who are not merely the Judases of the socialist government and traitors to the proletarian revolution, but who are jailbirds, unfit to mix with decent society. [*Loud applause*]

In connection with this point, at the end of my report I will read a resolution which I hope you will adopt unanimously so that we will have sufficient force to punish these persons who, for the present, direct Germany's destiny.¹⁴

¹⁴ In the discussion following this speech, it was agreed that the section of the speech concerning Winnig and the German anti-Bolshevik activity be distributed as a leaflet.

Rosa Luxemburg's resolution was not printed as part of this speech, and has only recently been rediscovered. It reads: "The national conference indignantly takes note of the actions in the East by the German government. The unification of German troops with those of the Baltic barons and English imperialists signifies not only the vile betrayal of the Russian proletariat; it also signifies the confirmation of the world league of the capitalists of all lands against the fighting proletariat of the whole world. In reference to these monstrosities, the Party Congress again declares: The Ebert-Scheidemann government is the deadly enemy of the German proletariat. Down with the Ebert-Scheidemann government!"

Comrades! To resume the thread of my discourse, it is clear that all these machinations, the formation of Iron Divisions and, above all, the abovementioned agreement with British imperialism, signify nothing but the ultimate reserves with which to throttle the German socialist movement. But the cardinal question, the question of the prospects of peace, is intimately associated with this affair. What can such negotiations lead to but a fresh outbreak of the war? While these scoundrels are playing a comedy in Germany, trying to make us believe that they are working overtime in order to make peace, and declaring that we are the disturbers of the peace who are making the Entente uneasy and retarding the peace settlement, they are themselves preparing a rekindling of the war, a war in the East on which a war on German soil will follow. Once again we have a situation which cannot fail to bring on a period of fresh conflict. We will have to defend not only socialism and the interests of revolution but also the interests of world peace. This is precisely a justification of the tactics which we Spartacists have consistently and at every opportunity pursued throughout the four years of the war. Peace signifies the world revolution of the proletariat! There is no other way of really establishing and safeguarding peace than by the victory of the socialist proletariat! [*Prolonged applause*]

Comrades! What general tactical considerations must we deduce from this in order to deal with the situation with which we will be confronted in the immediate future? Your first conclusion will doubtless be a hope that the fall of the Ebert-Scheidemann government is at hand, and that it will be replaced by a declared socialist-proletarian-revolutionary government. For my part, I would ask you to direct your attention not to the leadership, not above, but to the base. We must not nourish and repeat the illusion of the first phase of the revolution, that of November 9, thinking that it is sufficient to overthrow the capitalist government and to set up another in its place in order to bring about a socialist revolution. There is only one way of achieving the victory of the proletarian revo-

lution. We must begin by undermining step by step the Ebert-Scheidemann government through a social, revolutionary mass struggle of the proletariat. Moreover, let me remind you of some of the inadequacies of the German revolution which have not been overcome with the close of the first act of the revolution and which show clearly that we are far from having reached a point when the overthrow of the government can ensure the victory of socialism. I have tried to show you that the Revolution of November 9 was, above all, a political revolution, whereas it is necessary that it become in addition and mainly an economic revolution. But further, the revolutionary movement was confined to the cities, and up to the present the rural districts remain practically untouched. It would be a folly to realize socialism while leaving the agricultural system unchanged. From the standpoint of socialist economics in general, manufacturing industry cannot be remodeled unless it is amalgamated with a socialist reorganization of agriculture. The most important idea of the socialist economic order is the abolition of the opposition and the division between city and country. This division, this conflict, this contradiction, is a purely capitalist phenomenon which must be eliminated as soon as we place ourselves upon the socialist standpoint. If socialist reconstruction is to be undertaken in real earnest, we must direct attention just as much to the open country as to the industrial centers. Here, unfortunately, we are not even at the beginning of the beginning. This is essential, not merely because we cannot bring about socialism without socializing agriculture, but also because while we may think that we have reckoned with the last reserves of the counter-revolution against us and our efforts, there remains another important reserve which has not yet been taken into account: the peasantry. Precisely because the peasants are still untouched by socialism they constitute an additional reserve for the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The first thing our enemies will do when the flames of the socialist strikes begin to scorch their heels will be to mobilize the peasants, the fanatical de-

votes of private property. There is only one way of making headway against this threatening counter-revolutionary power. We must carry the class struggle into the country districts; we must mobilize the landless proletariat and the poorer peasants against the richer peasants. [*Loud applause*]

From this consideration follows what we have to do to insure the presuppositions of the success of the revolution. I would summarize our next tasks as follows: First and foremost, we have to extend in all directions the system of workers' and soldiers' councils, especially those of the workers. What we undertook on November 9 are only weak beginnings, and not even that. During the first phase of the revolution we actually lost extensive forces that were acquired at the very outset. You are aware that the counter-revolution has been engaged in the systematic destruction of the system of workers' and soldiers' councils. In Hesse, the councils have been definitely abolished by the counter-revolutionary government; elsewhere, power has been wrenched from their hands. Therefore, we have not merely to develop the system of workers' and soldiers' councils, but we have to induce the agricultural laborers and the poorer peasants to adopt this council system. We have to seize power, and the problem of the seizure of power poses the question: what does each workers' and soldiers' council in all Germany do, what can it do, and what must it do? [*"Bravo!"*] The power is there! We must undermine the bourgeois state by putting an end everywhere to the cleavage in public powers, to the cleavage between legislative and executive powers. These powers must be united in the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils.

Comrades, that is an extensive field to till. We must prepare from the base up; we must give the workers' and soldiers' councils so much strength that the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann or any similar government will merely be the final act in the drama. Thus, the conquest of power will not be effected with one blow. It will be a progression; we shall progressively occupy all the positions of the capitalist state and

defend them tooth and nail. In my view and in that of my most intimate associates in the Party, the economic struggle, likewise, will be carried on by the workers' councils. The direction of the economic struggle and the continued expansion of the area of this struggle must be in the hands of the workers' councils. The councils must have all power in the state.

We must direct our activities in the immediate future to these ends, and it is obvious that, if we pursue this line and pursue these tasks, there cannot fail to be an enormous intensification of the struggle in the near future. It is a question of fighting step by step, hand-to-hand, in every province, in every city, in every village, in every municipality in order to take and transfer all the powers of the state bit by bit from the bourgeoisie to the workers' and soldiers' councils. But before these steps can be taken, the members of our own Party and the proletarians in general must be educated. Even where workers' and soldiers' councils already exist, there is still a lack of consciousness of the purposes for which they exist. [*"Right!"*] We must make the masses understand that the workers' and soldiers' council is in all senses the lever of the machinery of state, that it must take over all power and must unify the power in one stream—the socialist revolution. The masses of workers who are already organized in workers' and soldiers' councils are still miles away from having adopted such an outlook, and only isolated proletarian minorities are clearly conscious of their tasks. But this is not a lack, but rather the normal state of affairs. The masses must learn how to use power by using power. There is no other way to teach them. Fortunately, we have gone beyond the days when it was proposed to "educate" the proletariat socialistically. Marxists of Kautsky's school still believe in the existence of those vanished days. To educate the proletarian masses socialistically meant to deliver lectures to them, to circulate leaflets and pamphlets among them. No, the school of the socialist proletariat doesn't need all this. The workers will learn in the school of action. [*"Hear! Hear!"*]

Our motto is: In the beginning was the act.¹⁵ And the act must be that the workers' and soldiers' councils realize their mission and learn to become the sole public power of the whole nation. Only in this way can we mine the ground so that it will be ready for the revolution which will crown our work. This, comrades, is the reason, this is the clear calculation and clear consciousness which led some of us, and me in particular, to say yesterday, "Don't think that the struggle will continue to be so easy." Some comrades have interpreted me as saying that they wanted to boycott the National Assembly and simply to fold their arms. It is impossible, in the time that remains, to discuss this matter fully, but let me say that I never dreamed of anything of the kind. My meaning was that history is not going to make our revolution an easy matter like the bourgeois revolutions in which it sufficed to overthrow that official power at the center and to replace a dozen or so persons in authority. We have to work from beneath, and this corresponds to the mass character of our revolution which aims at the foundation and base of the social constitution; it corresponds to the character of the present proletarian revolution that the conquest of political power must come not from above but from below. The 9th of November was an attempt, a weak, halfhearted, half-conscious, and chaotic attempt to overthrow the existing public power and to put an end to class rule. What now must be done is that with full consciousness all the forces of the proletariat should be concentrated in an attack on the very foundations of capitalist society. There, at the base, where the individual employer confronts his wage slaves; at the base, where all the executive organs of political class rule confront the object of this rule, the masses; there, step by step, we must seize the means of power from the rulers and take them into our own hands. In the form that I depict it, the process may seem rather more tedious than one had imagined it at first. It is healthy, I think, that we should be perfectly clear as to all

¹⁵ The reference is to Faust's monologue.

the difficulties and complications of this revolution. For I hope that, as in my own case, so in yours also, the description of the difficulties of the accumulating tasks will paralyze neither your zeal nor your energy. On the contrary, the greater the task, the more will we gather all of our forces. And we must not forget that the revolution is able to do its work with extraordinary *speed*. I make no attempt to prophesy how much time will be needed for this process. Who among us cares about the time; who worries, so long only as our lives suffice to bring it to pass. It is only important that we know clearly and precisely what is to be done; and I hope that my feeble powers have shown you to some extent the broad outlines of that which is to be done. [*Tumultuous applause*]

Translated by Dick Howard

Order Reigns in Berlin

“Order reigns in Warsaw,” Minister Sebastiani informed the Paris Chamber of Deputies in 1831, when, after fearfully storming the suburb Praga, Paskiewitsch’s rabble troops had marched into the Polish capital and begun their hangman’s work on the rebels.

“Order reigns in Berlin” is the triumphant announcement of the bourgeois press, of Ebert and Noske, and of the officers of the “victorious troops,” who are being cheered by the petty-bourgeois mob in the streets, waving their handkerchiefs and shouting hurrahs. The glory and the honor of the German Army has been saved in the eyes of history. Those who were miserably routed in Flanders and the Argonne have restored their reputation by this shining victory—over the three hundred “Spartacists” in the *Vorwärts*.¹ The days of the first glorious penetration of German troops into Belgium, the days of General von Emmich, the conqueror of Liège, pale before the deeds of this Reinhardt and Company in the streets of Berlin. The massacred *mediators*, who wanted to negotiate the surrender of the *Vorwärts* and were beaten beyond recognition by rifle butts, so that their bodies could not even be identified; captives who were put up against the wall and murdered in a way

Text from *Politische Schriften*, II (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), pp. 203–209. Originally in *Die Rote Fahne*, January 14, 1919.

¹ On January 6, 1919, a mass of demonstrators occupied the building of the *Vorwärts*, the official journal of the SPD, and published a revolutionary issue of the paper. The occupation of the *Vorwärts* continued until January 13 when, in spite of efforts to negotiate, governmental troops were ordered by Noske to storm the building.

that spattered their skulls and brains all over: in the face of such glorious acts, who is still thinking of the ignominious defeats suffered at the hand of the French, the English, or the Americans? "Spartacus" is the name of the enemy; and Berlin, the place where our officers know how to win. Noske, the "worker,"² is the name of the general who knows how to organize victories where Ludendorff failed.

Who does not recall here the drunken ecstasy of that pack of "law-and-order" hounds in Paris, the bacchanal of the bourgeoisie on the bodies of the Communards—the very same bourgeoisie who had only just capitulated pitifully to the Prussians and surrendered the nation's capital to the foreign enemy, only to take to their heels themselves like the ultimate coward! But against the badly armed and starving Parisian proletarians, against their defenseless wives and children—how the manly courage of the little sons of the bourgeoisie, of the "golden youth," and of the officers flamed up again! How the courage of these sons of Mars who had broken down before the foreign enemy spent itself in bestial cruelties against the defenseless, against prisoners, and the fallen!

"Order reigns in Warsaw!"—"Order reigns in Paris!"—"Order reigns in Berlin!" And so run the reports of the guardians of "order" every half-century, from one center of the world-historical struggle to another. And the rejoicing "victors" do not notice that an "order" which must be periodically maintained by bloody butchery is steadily approaching its historical destiny, its doom.

What was this recent "Spartacus Week" in Berlin? What has it brought? What does it teach us? Still in the midst of the struggle and the victory cries of the counter-revolution, the revolutionary proletarians have to give an account of what has happened; they must measure the events and their results on the great scale of history. The revolution has no time to lose, it storms onward—past still open graves, past "victories" and

² Noske was a furniture maker by trade.

“defeats”—toward its great goals. To follow lucidly its principles and its paths is the first task of the fighters for international socialism.

Was an ultimate victory of the revolutionary proletariat to be expected in this conflict, or the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann [government] and establishment of a socialist dictatorship? Definitely not, if all the decisive factors in this issue are taken into careful consideration. The sore spot in the revolutionary cause at this moment—the political immaturity of the masses of soldiers who, even now, are still letting themselves be misused by their officers for hostile, counter-revolutionary purposes—is alone already proof that a *lasting* victory of the revolution was not possible in this encounter. On the other hand, this immaturity of the military is itself but a symptom of the general immaturity of the German revolution.

The open country, from which a large percentage of the common soldiers come, is still hardly touched by the revolution, the same as always. So far, Berlin is as good as isolated from the rest of the country. Of course, there are revolutionary centers in the provinces—in the Rhineland, on the northern seaboard, in Brunswick, Saxony, and Württemberg—that are heart and soul on the side of the Berlin proletariat. Still what is lacking first of all is the immediate coordination of the march forward, the direct community of action, which would make the thrust and the willingness to fight of the Berlin working class incomparably more effective. Furthermore—and this is but the deeper cause of that political immaturity of the revolution—the economic struggles, the actual volcanic fountain which is continually feeding the revolutionary class struggle, are only in their infancy.

From all this it follows that at this moment a conclusive and lasting victory could not be expected. Was the struggle of the last week therefore a “mistake”? Yes, if it were in fact a matter of a deliberate “attack” or a so-called “putsch”! But what was the starting point for the last week of fighting? The same as in all previous cases, the same as on December 6 and December

24: a brutal provocation by the government! Just as before, in the case of the blood bath involving defenseless demonstrators on the Chausseestrasse, or in the butchery of the sailors, likewise this time the cause of all subsequent events was the assault on the Berlin police headquarters. The revolution does not operate voluntaristically, in an open field, according to a cunning plan laid out by "strategists." Its opponents too have initiative; in fact, as a rule, they exercise it much more than the revolution itself.

Faced with the shameless provocation of the Ebert-Scheidemanns, the revolutionary working class was *forced* to take up arms. Yes, it was *a matter of honor* for the revolution to repel the attack immediately and with all due energy, lest the counter-revolution be encouraged to advance further, and lest the revolutionary ranks of the proletariat and the moral credit of the German revolution in the International be shaken.

Immediate resistance came forth spontaneously from the masses of Berlin with such an obvious energy that from the very beginning the moral victory was on the side of the "street."

Now it is an internal law of life of the revolution never to stand still in inaction, in passivity, once a step has been taken. The best parry is a forceful blow. Now more than ever this elementary rule of all struggles governs each step of the revolution. It goes without saying, and it testifies to the sound instinct and fresh internal strength of the Berlin proletariat, that it was not appeased by the reinstatement of Eichhorn, that it spontaneously proceeded to occupy other outposts of the counter-revolution's power: the bourgeois press, the semi-official news agencies, the *Vorwärts*. All these measures resulted from the people's instinctive recognition that, for its part, the counter-revolution would not rest with the defeat it had suffered, but rather would be bent on a general test of strength.

Here, too, we stand before one of the great historical laws of revolution against which are dashed to pieces all the sophistries and the pseudo-science of those little "revolutionaries" of

the USPD brand who, in every fight, look only for pretexts for retreating. As soon as the fundamental problem of the revolution has been clearly posed—and in *this* revolution it is to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann regime, the first obstacle to the triumph of socialism—then this problem will recur repeatedly as a pressing need of the moment, and each individual episode of the struggle will broach the problem in its entirety with the fatality of a natural law, however unprepared the revolution may be for its solution, however unripe the situation may still be. “Down with Ebert and Scheidemann!”—this slogan is inevitably heard in every revolutionary crisis as the single formula summing up all partial conflicts, thereby automatically, by its own internal, objective logic, propelling each episode of the struggle to the extreme, whether one wants it or not.

From this contradiction between the increasing gravity of the task and the lack of the preconditions for its solution it follows, in an initial phase of the revolutionary development, that the individual fights of the revolution formally end with a *defeat*. But revolution is the only form of “war”—this, too, is its particular life principle—in which the final victory can be prepared only by a series of “defeats”!

What does the whole history of modern revolutions and of socialism show us? The first flare-up of the class struggle in Europe—the revolt of the silk weavers of Lyons in 1831—ended with a severe defeat. The Chartist movement in England—with a defeat. The rebellion of the Parisian proletariat in the June days of 1848 ended with a crushing defeat. The Paris Commune ended with a dreadful defeat. The whole path of socialism, as far as revolutionary struggles are concerned, is paved with sheer defeats.

And yet, this same history leads step by step, irresistibly, to the ultimate victory! Where would we be today *without* those “defeats” from which we have drawn historical experience, knowledge, power, idealism! Today, where we stand directly before the final battle of the proletarian class struggle, we are standing on precisely those defeats, *not a one of which* we could

do without, and each of which is a part of our strength and clarity of purpose.

In this respect, revolutionary struggles are the direct opposite of parliamentary struggles. In the course of four decades we have had nothing but parliamentary "victories" in Germany, we have advanced directly from victory to victory. And with the great test of history on August 4, 1914, the result was: a devastating political and moral defeat, an unprecedented debacle, an unparalleled bankruptcy. Revolutions have brought us nothing but defeats till now, but these unavoidable defeats are only heaping guarantee upon guarantee of the coming final triumph.

On *one* condition, of course! The question arises, under which circumstances each respective defeat was suffered: whether it resulted from the forward-storming energy of the masses being dashed against the barrier of the lack of maturity of the historical presuppositions, or, on the other hand, whether it resulted from the revolutionary action itself being paralyzed by incompleteness, vacillation, and inner frailties.

Classic examples for both cases are, on the one hand, the French February Revolution, and the German March Revolution on the other. The courageous action of the Parisian proletariat in 1848 has become the living source of class energy for the entire international proletariat. The deplorable facts of the German March Revolution [1848] have clung to the whole development of modern Germany like a ball and chain. In the particular history of official German Social Democracy, they have produced after-effects well into the most recent incidents of the German revolution—and into the dramatic crisis we just experienced.

How does the defeat in this so-called Spartacus Week appear in light of the above historical question? Was it a defeat due to raging revolutionary energy and a situation that was insufficiently ripe, or rather due to frailties and halfway undertakings?

Both! The divided character of this crisis, the contradiction

between the vigorous, resolute, aggressive showing of the people of Berlin and the indecision, timidity, and inadequacy of the Berlin leadership is the particular characteristic of this latest episode.

The leadership failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the task. They fashioned this "defeat" into a part of those historical defeats which constitute the pride and power of international socialism. And that is why this "defeat" is the seed of the future triumph.

"Order reigns in Berlin!" You stupid lackeys! Your "order" is built on sand. The revolution will "raise itself up again clashing," and to your horror it will proclaim to the sound of trumpets:

*I was, I am, I shall be.*³

Translated by Peggy Fallen Wright

³ Always conscious of history, Rosa Luxemburg is citing lines from two poems by the nineteenth-century German revolutionary and friend of Marx, F. Freiligrath. The first, "Abschiedswort," was published in the final issue of Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on May 19, 1849; the entire issue was printed in red ink. The second line, "I was, I am, I shall be," is from Freiligrath's popular poem, "Die Revolution," written in 1851.

Glossary

Glossary

ACADEMIC SOCIALISTS. The “Academic Socialists,” or “Socialists of the Chair” (*Kathedersozialisten*) were a group of liberal reformist academics belonging to the “Association for Social Reform.” They were one of Rosa Luxemburg’s favorite targets for sarcasm, and she wrote several articles attacking their views. Cf. *Social Reform or Revolution*, p. 88, n. 23, and the articles “Die deutsche Wissenschaft hinter den Arbeitern,” and “Im Rate der Gelehrten,” both in *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, II.

ADLER, VICTOR (1852–1918). Founder and leader of Austrian Social Democracy. Member of the International Socialist Bureau. Influential in German Social Democracy because of his close friendship with Bebel. Became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the bourgeois regime which followed the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy.

ALLIANCISTS. Bakuninists. When the First International called for the founding of legal parties as the first step to revolution, they fought this measure, along with the Blanquists. They were defeated narrowly at the 1872 meeting of the International at The Hague, and founded a new International of their own. Though their influence was limited to Italy and Spain for the most part, their rejection of the First International was in large part responsible for its demise.

AUER, IGNAZ (1846–1907). Saddle maker. Joined socialist cause early, and was an active participant at the Gotha unification Congress in 1875. Reichstag member in 1877, and again from 1890 until his death. Was one of the triumvirate which led the SPD, along with Bebel and Liebknecht. His goal was the unification of the different tendencies within the Party, though his penchant for “practical politics” led him to side with the opportunist and revisionist currents.

BABEUF, FRANÇOIS NOËL (1760–1797). Leader of the “Conspiracy

des Égaux,” which in 1796 attempted to establish a revolutionary dictatorship because of the contradiction between the proclaimed political rights and the lack of social equality in the French Revolution. Hanged. Became influential through Buonarrotti’s history of the “Conspiracy des Égaux,” written in 1828, which became a bible of conspiratorial groups during the July Monarchy in France.

BAKUNIN, MIKHAIL (1814–1876). Russian. Emigrated to Germany where he took part in the movement of the Young Hegelians, along with Karl Marx. Took an active part in the 1848 Revolution. Captured during the revolt in Dresden in 1849. Sentenced to death in 1851, but sent instead to Siberia whence he fled in 1861 to London. Thrown out of the First International along with his followers, the “Alliancists,” for his refusal to recognize the role of political struggle.

BEBEL, AUGUST (1840–1913): Darwinian Marxist. Working-class origin. Learned socialism from Wilhelm Liebknecht and joined First International in 1866. Social Democratic representative to Parliament in 1867. Along with Liebknecht, founded the Eisenach group in 1869. Sentenced to two years in jail for opposing the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. Most influential leader in the SPD, and a powerful voice in the International. Popular with the masses, but not a theoretician.

BERNSTEIN, EDUARD (1850–1932). Joined Eisenach group in 1872. Editor of the *Sozialdemokrat*, illegal paper of the SPD during the antisocialist laws. Friend of Engels; later his literary executor along with Bebel. Exiled in England because of the antisocialist laws; friendly with the English Fabians. The article series “Problems of Socialism” and the book *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* began the revisionist controversy. Return to Germany in 1901; election to Parliament in 1902. Continued defense of revisionist views, though qualified support of the mass strike as a defensive measure. Voted for war credits on August 4, 1914. Quit the SPD in 1916 for pacifist reasons, joining the USPD in 1917. Returned to the SPD after the war.

BLANQUI, LOUIS AUGUSTE (1805–1881). Leader of a continual series of conspiratorial coups. Active in the 1848 Revolution and in the Commune. Spent thirty-six years of his life in jail and build it- neral attended by over 200,000 Parisian workers. Blanquism is the

doctrine that a handful of resolute revolutionaries can make a socialist revolution for the proletariat and in its name.

BÖHM-BAWERK, EUGEN (1851–1914). Austrian economist. Founder of the Austrian school of marginal utility. Criticized Marx's *Capital* for a supposed inconsistency between the theory of value and the theory of prices. Wrote *Karl Marx and the Close of His System* (1896), *Capital and Interest* (1884), and *The Positive Theory of Capital* (1889).

BÖMELBURG, THEODOR (1862–1912). President of the Construction Workers Union. Strongly opposed the mass strike at the Cologne Trade-Union Congress, speaking of the need to defend what had taken so long to build, etc.

BÖRNE, LUDWIG (1786–1837). German essayist and friend of Heine. Member of liberal-radical group whose works influenced the Young Hegelian milieu. Rosa Luxemburg admired his prose, writing to Seidel (June 23, 1898): “Do you know what is taking my time now? I am unhappy with the way articles are usually written in the Party. It's all so conventional, so wooden, so schematic. I have made up my mind that in writing I must never forget to become enthusiastic about the subject every time, and to go deeply into it. For just this reason, I read from time to time old Börne. . . .”

BRENTANO, LUJO (1844–1931). Academic Socialist. Professor at Munich. Friend of the revisionist leader Vollmar, whose politics he supported. Favored the development of a system of cooperatives along the English model.

CHARTISM. After the first wave of English organizing, ending with the Reform Bill of 1832, a new wave broke out in 1838 with the demands of the “People's Charter”: equal and secret voting rights, pay for representatives, change in voting districts, etc. Due to the economic crisis of 1839–1843, the petition circulated rapidly and was a huge success. Leadership split between the liberal “Moral Force Party” and the more radical “Physical Force Party” which called for a mass strike. The 3,300,000 signatures on the petition won the ten-hour day and the repeal of the Corn Laws, but by 1848 the movement ebbed after the failure of a mass strike and the defeat of the continental revolutions of that year. Marx considered the movement—and especially the winning of the ten-hour day—an important first step. He felt that it showed the power of the proletariat, and that the continental proletariat had drawn an important lesson from the Chartists.

CHRISTIAN UNIONS. Catholic unions whose fundamental position was determined by the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Pope Leo XIII in 1891. Though their political goals and tactics were similar to the socialist unions, they were adamant antisocialists. At its foundation in 1894, for example, the Christian Miners' Association declared that "by joining the Association, each member acknowledges himself as an opponent of the principles and efforts of Social Democracy." At their prewar peak, they had 350,930 members.

COMMUNE. After the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1871, Thiers tried to disarm the Paris National Guard. The workers took control of the government, instituting certain reforms (separation of church and state, forbidding night work, limiting rents). After a one-week siege by the counter-revolution, the Commune was drowned in blood: at least 14,000 were killed, 5,000 jailed, and 5,000 exiled. Marx glorified the Commune in his "Address to the General Council of the International on the Civil War in France." In it Marx develops the idea that the working class cannot simply take possession of the state as is and use it to their own ends. The notion of the "withering away of the state" is concretized: "The Commune was not to be a parliamentary organization, but a working tool, executive and legislative at once."

COOPERATIVES. The origins of the cooperative movement go back to Robert Owen's New Harmony, to Fourier, Budez, Blanc, etc. In Germany, the cooperative movement was begun by nonsocialists in 1903 under the leadership of Adolf von Elm. They grew continually, both in socialist and nonsocialist forms. In 1911–1912, for example, there were 1142 local cooperatives with 1,300,000 members. Many revisionists saw the cooperatives as a way of gradually undermining the capitalist order from within.

DAVID, EDOUARD (1863–1930). Revisionist. Worked with Vollmar on the agricultural question in the 1890's. Supported Voilmar's state-socialist and federalist ideas throughout his life. During the war he supported the majority and a politics of expansion. First president of the National Assembly in 1919. Minister without portfolio in 1919–1920.

DITTMANN, WILHELM (1874–1954). Cabinet maker by origin. Reichstag representative, associated with the group around Haase. Leader of the USPD. Minister in the Ebert-Scheidemann government, resigning with Haase on December 29, 1918. Vice-president of the Reichstag in 1920.

DUNCKER, HERMANN (1874–1960). Joined SPD in 1893, becoming a full-time functionary in 1903, the year that he completed his doctorate. Active as an editor and travelling teacher, he taught at the Party School after 1911. Antiwar, founding member of the Spartacus League, and member of the first central committee of the German Communist Party. Active Communist; arrested in 1933, fled to Denmark, then France and the United States, returning to Germany in 1947. Member of the SED in East Germany, and Professor at Rostock University until his death.

EBERLEIN, HUGO (1887–1944). Left-wing member of SPD and co-founder of the Spartacus League. Central committee of Spartacus, then of German Communist Party. Arrested, then freed during the January 1919 events in Berlin. Communist Party deputy from 1921–1933; active in Comintern. Arrested in Stalin's purges in 1937 and died in prison camp.

EBERT, FRIEDRICH (1871–1925). Worker and trade-union leader. Deputy in 1912. Took over chairmanship of the SPD executive after Bebel's death in 1913. Remained with the SPD majority during the war. Advised the then chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, to send Noske to put down the revolt of the sailors at Kiel. Wanted to keep a monarchy along English lines. Events led him to form a provisional government on November 9, 1918. Became first president of the Weimar Republic, 1919–1925. As president, he considered it his duty to represent "the people" and not the party.

EICHHORN, EMIL (1863–1925). One of the editors of the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung* when Rosa Luxemburg was its chief editor for a brief time in 1899. Opposed her views at that time. Later member of the USPD during the war. Was police chief in Berlin at the end of the war. Fired January 4, 1919, by the Minister of the Interior for supposedly being too tolerant of the Spartacus agitations. He refused to leave his office. Demonstrations in his favor were called, eventually leading to the outbreak of "Spartacus Week." Eichhorn later joined the German Communist Party, and represented it in the Reichstag.

EISENACH GROUP. Founded by Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in 1869, the Eisenach group represented the Marx-Engels views within the German labor movement. At the Gotha Congress in 1875, it united with the Lassallean group to form the SPD. The "Marxism" of the Eisenach group was of a rather diffuse nature,

and came in for strong criticism in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

EISNER, KURT (1867–1919). Social Democratic journalist; editor of *Vorwärts* (1898–1905). Revisionist at the time. Opposed to the war along with Bernstein for ethical reasons. Convicted of treason for his antiwar activities. Released from prison to run for the Reichstag during the campaign of 1919. One of his campaign meetings literally turned into a revolution, overthrowing the Bavarian House of Wittelsbach and proclaiming the Bavarian Republic. The revolution was shortlived, and Eisner was shot by a reactionary.

ERFURT PROGRAM. Drafted by Kautsky (the theoretical part) and Bernstein (the practical tasks) for the first legal congress of the SPD after the end of the antisocialist laws in 1891. Replaced the Gotha Program as official policy of the SPD. Model for the programs of other parties. Introduces the notion of minimal and maximal demands, but stops short of the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Cf. Engels' critique of the Erfurt Program.

FENDRICH, ANTON (1868–1949). Lassalleian; later revisionist leader. After 1910, joined the Freisinn, then the center party. Nationalist.

FISCHER, EDMUND (1864–??). Revisionist. Best known for his 1907 article in the *Sozialistische Monatsheften* proposing a politics directed toward the winning of the middle classes, without whom, it is asserted, the proletariat will always remain a minority. Along with Bernstein and Eisner, opposed the war for ethical reasons, joining the USPD.

FOURIER, FRANÇOIS MARIE CHARLES (1772–1837). Self-taught utopian. Opposed individualism, working out a cooperativist utopia in his *Théorie des Quatre Mouvements* (1808). Develops the notion of a series of "phalansteries," agricultural communities based on cooperation. Most important elaboration of his theory is *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel* (1830). Tried to get capitalist backing for his utopian ideas, but with no luck. After 1830, attracted a number of followers who started a newspaper, the most important of whom was V. Considérant. Brook Farm in America was a Fourierist community.

FREE TRADE UNIONS. The socialist trade unions were called the Free Trade Unions during the period of the antisocialist laws in order to distinguish them from the Christian unions. Their main leader

was Carl Legien (1861–1920). In their *Appeal* of 1891, the Free Trade Unions stated that their goal was to work within bourgeois society. They were highly centralized and grew rapidly: 1892—237,000 members; 1900—680,000; 1908—1,800,000; 1912—2,600,000. Between 1885 and 1910, they won a 100 percent increase of the workers' real wages. They composed one-third of the parliamentary delegation of the SPD, and were a conservative influence.

FREIHEIT. Journal of the USPD. Began publication on November 15, 1918 under the editorship of Rudolf Hilferding, who was replaced by Dittmann in 1922. After the reunion of the USPD and the SPD on September 30, 1922, the paper ceased publishing and *Vorwärts* again became the central journal.

FREISINN. Left-liberal political party favoring a state or national form of socialism. Became important after Naumann and his National Socialist followers joined it in 1903.

GEYER, FRIEDRICH AUGUST CARL (1853–?). Cigar maker. Editor of the journal of the cigar-makers' union, *Der Tabakarbeiter*. Editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* 1890–1895. Member of Reichstag, 1886 and 1890–1924. Joined USPD in 1917. Later joined the Communist Party (1920), and was expelled in the late twenties as a "hidden centrist."

GROENER, WILHELM (1867–1939). German general. Succeeded Ludendorff at the end of World War I, but resigned in protest against the Versailles Treaty. Minister of Defense in the Weimar Republic (1928–1932), and Minister of the Interior (1931–1932).

HAASE, HUGO (1863–1919). Lawyer. Member of the International Bureau. Deputy 1897–1918. Took Bebel's place as leader of the SPD Reichstag delegation. Opposed voting the war credits, but accepted the decision of the majority, even making the speech supporting the SPD vote. Founded the USPD in 1916. Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Ebert coalition. Resigned December 29, 1918. Shot on the steps of the Reichstag by a monarchist officer.

HEINE, WOLFGANG (1861–1944). Revisionist supporter of Bernstein's at the 1898 Stuttgart Congress. Wanted to stick to pure tactical discussions. An editor of the revisionist journal, the *Sozialistische Monatsheften*. Moralizer who, after 1910, often voted with Liebknecht, Mehring, and Luxemburg on military questions.

HERKNER, HEINRICH (1863–1932). Student of the Academic Socialist

Lujo Brentano. Author of *Die soziale Reform als Gebot des wirtschaftlichen Fortschrittes* (1891), and *Die Arbeiterfrage* (1894), among other works. Vice-president of the Association for Social Reform from 1911; president from 1917–1929.

HILFERDING, RUDOLF (1877–1941). Austrian medical doctor who became a socialist. Editor of the *Vorwärts* after the government refused to let him teach at the Party School. Held this post from 1907–1915. Joined the USPD and edited its newspaper, *Freiheit*, from 1918–1922, seeking a reconciliation with the SPD. When this occurred, became Minister of Finances for three months in 1923, and again 1928–1929. Died in exile. Best known for his book, *Das Finanzkapital*, often considered to have been the first Marxist attempt to go beyond Marx and analyze modern capitalist developments. Also known as a leader of the so-called “Austro-Marxist School.”

HINDENBURG, PAUL VON BENECKENDORFF UND VON (1847–1934). Fought in the war against France in 1870–1871. Became a general in 1903. Retired in 1911. Recalled during the World War. Victor at Tannenberg (1914) and the Masurian Lakes (1915) against Russia. Later field marshal. Wanted to fight the war until the bitter end. Replaced by Groener. His war memoirs created the impression that Germany had not been militarily beaten, but rather betrayed by the revolution within. Replaced Ebert as president of the Weimar Republic in 1925. Coexisted with Hitler until his death.

HIRSCH-DUNCKER UNIONS. Founded in 1868 to oppose the influence of the Lassallean socialist unions. Opposed to strikes, believing in the common interests of capital and labor. Favored self-help organizations and cultural programs. Were the only unions not banned by the antisocialist laws. Small influence: 1872—18,803 members; 1890—62,643; 1900—91,661; 1910—122,571; 1922—230,000; 1931—149,000. In 1933, with the Christian unions, declared themselves apolitical and offered to work with the Hitler regime.

HOFFMANN, ADOLF (1858–1930). Member of the SPD, then the USPD during the war. Reichstag representative 1902–1924. Minister of Public Worship and Education (*Kultusminister*) in 1918–1919, resigning in January 1919 (not with the other USPD ministers who resigned in December). Author of a moralizing book, *The*

Ten Commandments and the Propertied Class (1891; re-edited, 1922).

HOHENZOLLERN DYNASTY. Founded by Friedrich of Hohenzollern, Burgrave of Nürnberg, who became Elector of Brandenburg in 1415. In 1618, Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, the "Great Elector," became Duke of Prussia. Under Bismarck, the dynasty became the principal power in the North German Federation and, after the victory over France, the King of Prussia became Emperor of Germany. The dynasty ended with the abdication of Wilhelm II on November 9, 1918.

IHRER, EMMA (1857–1911). Organized socialist woman's organization in 1886. It was banned, and she was sent to prison. Founded the woman workers' paper, *Die Arbeiterin*, in 1889. Later founded *Die Gleichheit* which was later edited by Clara Zetkin. Member of the executive committee of the trade unions from 1890. Member of the executive committee of the young workers' organization after 1909.

INDEPENDENT SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF GERMANY (USPD). Founded at Gotha in April 1917 after eighteen members of the SPD parliamentary delegation (Haase, Ledebour, Dittmann, etc.) refused to vote the war credits and were thrown out of the SPD. The Spartacus group adhered to the USPD in order to recruit. In 1918–1919, USPD politics differed little from those of the SPD: they wanted a parliamentary democracy, though they wanted to socialize parts of heavy industry and to institute workers' control. Joined the Ebert-Scheidemann government, but resigned in December 1918. Reunited with the SPD in 1922, though their left wing joined the Communist Party.

ISKRA. Founded in 1900. First all-Russian journal of revolutionary Marxism. Published abroad; illegally distributed in Russia. Important in Lenin's campaign to build the party. Taken over by the Mensheviks after the split at the Second Party Congress in 1903.

JACOBINS. The most radical group during the French Revolution of 1789. Their power was based on the Parisian *sans-culottes*. Most famous leaders were Marat and Robespierre. Today, the term is a synonym for radical.

JAURÈS, JEAN (1859–1914). Professor of philosophy. Deputy in 1885, though not a member of any party. Discouraged with parliamentarism, returned to teaching. Socialist in 1890. Deputy in 1893. Very active during the Dreyfus affair; a popular orator. Not a

Marxist, he said that his socialism was “French,” based on Justice and Humanism. It is no doubt for this reason that Rosa Luxemburg speaks of “Jaurèsian confusion.” Founder of the newspaper *L’Humanité* in 1904. After the reunification of the French socialist parties in 1905, Jaurès was their intellectual chief. Assassinated by a nationalist on July 31, 1914, because of his antiwar sentiments.

JEVONS, WILLIAM STANLEY (1835–1882). English philosopher and economist. Made important contributions to the mathematical methods of the marginalist school of economics in his *Theory of Practical Economy* (1871).

JOGICHES, LEO (1867–1919). Revolutionary activist in Russian Poland. Emigrated to Zurich in 1890, where he began working with Rosa Luxemburg. Co-founder of the SDKPiL. Quarrels with Plekhanov, Lenin, and other Russian socialists. Active in Warsaw during the 1905 Revolution (under the pseudonym Tyszka); arrested (with Rosa Luxemburg) and sentenced to prison. Escaped. Splits occur in the SDKPiL due to his “authoritarian” leadership, especially after the “Radek case.” During the World War, leader of Spartacus, living clandestinely. Arrested in March 1918, but freed by the outbreak of the Revolution. After the deaths of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, became leader of German Communist Party. Murdered on March 10, 1919. Cf., J. P. Nettl’s *Rosa Luxemburg* on Jogiches and his relation with Rosa Luxemburg.

JUNE COMBATANTS. After the overthrow of Louis-Philippe on February 24, 1848, the new Republic wanted to compel all young workers to join either the army or labor groups. The workers gathered together on June 23, 1848, and decided to fight. They were crushed by the army.

JUNGE. A group whose members, after the fall of the antisocialist laws and the return to legality of the SPD, opposed the parliamentary road. They were led by Wilhelm Werner and Carl Wildberger, among others, and their anarchist views were attacked by Engels (in the *Sozialdemokrat*, September 13, 1890). At the Erfurt Congress of Social Democracy in 1891, this group was expelled from the Party. They were, however, at least partly responsible for what remains of a revolutionary tone in the Erfurt Program.

KASPRZAK, MARCIN. Polish worker. Member of the first Proletariat

Party. Knew Rosa Luxemburg as a youth, helping smuggle her out of Poland in 1889. Later arrested. Escaped to Germany. Accused by the nationalist Polish Socialist Party of being a police agent. Defended by Rosa Luxemburg and cleared by a committee of the International. Ran for the Reichstag in 1898, was defeated. Took part with Rosa Luxemburg in campaigning in Prussian Poland. Imprisoned and hanged during the 1905 Revolution in Warsaw.

KAUTSKY, KARL (1854–1938). Popularizer of Marxism in Germany. Founded the *Neue Zeit* in 1883. Wrote the theoretical part of the Erfurt Program. Led the “left” wing of the party until after 1905, then leader of the center—though his political position hadn’t changed. His Marxism was strongly mixed with Darwinism. Was one of the dominant theoreticians of the International: even Lenin accepted his authority until 1914.

KRUPP, ALFRED (1812–1887) and **FREDERICK ALFRED** (1854–1902). Steel tycoons. The elder Krupp practiced a kind of paternalist social action in his firm whose admitted goal was to “protect” his workers from socialism. The son was a personal friend of the Emperor. The name Krupp is synonymous with the armaments industry.

LABRIOLA, ANTONIO (1843–1904). Professor at the University of Rome. First professor to openly become an adherent of the Marxist theory and an active leader of a socialist movement. Came to Marxism through his studies of Hegel, and the realism of Herbart. Best known for his book *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*.

LANGE, FRIEDRICH ALBERT (1828–1875). Neo-Kantian philosopher. Defended a kind of utopian ethical socialism in his two important books: *The Labor Question* and *History of Materialism*. Bernstein, in his *Presuppositions of Socialism*, suggests that Social Democracy needs a critical thinker like Kant or Lange, and Lange was in fact very popular during the 1890’s.

LASSALLE, FERDINAND (1825–1864). Son of a Jewish merchant. Studied philosophy in Berlin. Knew Marx during 1848 when he was a member of the “League of Communists.” Lawyer. Philosophical works after 1854. In 1862–1864 he became a popular labor organizer, founding the General Association of German Workers (ADAV) in 1863, which was united with the Marxian Eisenach group in 1875 at Gotha. Lassalle tried to get Marx’s support for

May Day demonstration in Berlin in 1916 for crying "Down with the war!" Released from prison at the end of October 1918 and began agitating for the revolution. Took part in the foundation of the German Communist Party. Murdered by German army officers after his arrest on January 15, 1919.

LIEBKNECHT, WILHELM (1826–1900). Took part in the Revolution of 1848. Exiled in England where he was a friend of Marx and Engels. Returned to Berlin in 1862, a Marxist though still full of the liberalism of 1848. Formed a political movement with Bebel in Saxony in 1866. In 1869, he and Bebel founded the Eisenach group. Deputy; sentenced to two years in prison for refusing to vote for the war credits in 1870. Until his death, the "grand old man" of the SPD.

LIST, FRIEDRICH (1789–1846). Advocate of protective tariffs to stimulate the growth of national industry. These were liberal views at the time, and he sought exile in the United States in 1825. Returned later, writing his most important book, *The National System of Political Economy* (1841).

LUDENDORFF, ERICH (1865–1937). German general who helped build the German Army before the war. Hindenburg's chief of staff during the war. When defeat was certain, he wanted to fight on to an "honorable death." After the war, he was involved in the Kapp putsch of 1920, and in Hitler's 1923 Munich putsch.

LUD POLSKI. Founded in 1892 by Boleslav Limanowski from the remaining members of the Proletariat Party and the Polish Socialist Party. Took its name from the first vaguely socialist Polish group, founded in Portsmouth by exiles from the 1830–1831 Polish insurrection. Nationalist, and composed largely of intellectuals. Believed Lavrov's assertion of the weakness of the Narodnaya Volya and refused an alliance with it.

MAURENBRECHER, MAX. German revisionist. Taught at the Party High School in Berlin until 1903. Chauvinist and procolonialist.

MENGER, KARL (1840–1921). Austrian economist. Member of the Austrian psychological school which led to the development of marginalist economics. His theory is similar to that of Jevons, though developed independently.

MERCANTILISM. Economic theory which equates wealth and money. Therefore, nations must try to amass as much precious metal as possible by exporting much and importing little. This leads to

keeping colonies as suppliers of raw materials—a doctrine which led to England's losing her American colonies.

MEYER, ERNST (1887–1930). Editor of the *Vorwärts* before the war. Co-founder of the Spartacus League. Delegate to the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences. In “protective custody” during part of the war. In 1918, leader of the German section of the Soviet newsburo. After outbreak of German Revolution, member of central committee of Spartacus, then of the German Communist Party. Opposition to Party leadership of Ruth Fischer in 1924–1925; back on central committee in 1926, and in 1927 leader of the Party along with Ernst Thälmann. Excluded from central committee in 1929 as “reconciliationist.”

MICHEL, ROBERT (1876–1936). Former member of the SPD. Became professor of sociology in Italy, developing a conservative theory of the creative role of minorities in power, a theory which influenced the theoreticians of fascism. Well known for his analysis of the nature of political parties—an analysis based on his own experience as a member of the German SPD—published in 1911 as *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens*.

MOROCCO DEBATE. In 1905–1906, Germany attempted to keep France from colonizing Morocco. A crisis was opened by a provocative speech by Wilhelm II in Tangiers. The Kaiser saw that he was not prepared for war, and an international conference regulated the problem. Again in 1911, Morocco was a center of conflict. Wilhelm II sent the *Panther* to Agadir “to protect local German interests.” The SPD feared to take a stand on the question because of the approaching elections. As a member of the International Bureau, Rosa Luxemburg published the letter of the German representative to the Bureau, leading to a conflict of opinion within the Party and a growing awareness of the problems posed by imperialism.

NARODNAYA VOLYA. Russian terrorist organization who believed in a national regeneration through the peasantry. Their vague ideology was covered by their terrorist actions and their idealistic belief in man's goodness. Cf. “In Memory of the Proletariat Party,” above.

NATIONAL SOCIALISTS (*Nationalsozialer Verein*). Founded by Friedrich Naumann, a minister who left the Church in 1897, one year after founding the National Socialists. He was influenced by the ideas of

Max Weber on the national state, and thought that the workers must help Germany to expand, and that the “social Kaiserdom” had to care for political and social reforms in the interest of national strength. The party dissolved in 1903 after its intense electoral efforts were unsuccessful. Naumann and most of the members joined the Freisinn.

NAUMANN, FRIEDRICH (1860–1919). Founder of the National Socialist Association. Later, active member of the Freisinn and, after 1918, of the Democratic Party. Believed in a Christian and national “socialism.” During the war was in favor of German expansion. When he died, Max Weber wrote: “He came too soon and too late”: too late to oppose Bismarck (who made the workers into an enemy of the state), and too soon to be a leader of the German Republic. He is referred to in the text as “Pfarrer”—or Parson—Naumann.

NOSKE, GUSTAV (1868–1946). Ex-furniture maker. Became the SPD’s authority on national defense and military questions. At the 1907 meeting of the International at Stuttgart, he argued against the Luxemburg-Lenin resolution against war on nationalist grounds. He became Defense Minister of the Ebert-Scheidemann government, putting down the January revolution. He was known as the butcher and hangman.

OPPENHEIMER, FRANZ (1864–1943). Economist and sociologist. Liberal socialist who saw the origin of misery in the monopoly of property of land. Bernstein cites favorably Oppenheimer’s book on cooperatives in his *Presuppositions of Socialism*, noting that these ideas were never put into practice save, perhaps, by the Mormons. Bernstein also stresses Oppenheimer’s distinction between buying and selling cooperatives, with a stress on the role of the former.

PANNEKOEK, ANTON (1873–1960). Dutch professor of astronomy. Active within the German SPD before World War I as a member of the “Bremen Left.” Known during this time especially for his long polemical series of articles written with Kautsky, during which Kautsky’s “centrism” showed itself clearly for the first time. During and after World War I, a leader of the “Council Communists,” the radical left attacked by Lenin as “an infantile sickness of communism.” By the mid-1920’s had retired from active politics to teach astronomy at Leyden, though he continued to write political articles under various pseudonyms. The “Council Commu-

nists," led by Pannekoek and his friend, the Dutch poet Hermann Gorter, shared much with the political perspectives of Rosa Luxemburg. Cf., the collection of his essays, and the historical commentary by Serge Bricianer, *Pannekoek et les Conseils ouvriers* (EDI, 1969; to be published in English by the New Critics Press).

PARVUS, pseudonym of ALEXANDER HELPHAND (1867–1924). Russian, active in the SPD after 1891. Was the first in German SPD to attack the revisionism of Bernstein. Radical. Took part in the Russian Revolution of 1905, becoming president of the Petersburg Soviet after the arrest of Trotsky. Imprisoned, escaped from Siberia to Germany. Between 1910 and 1914 made a fortune in Turkey. Supported the German war effort in hopes of furthering the possibility of a revolution in Russia. Tried to help Lenin, but the latter refused for fear of the complications due to Parvus' close relations with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PEREIRE, ISAAC (1806–1880). French financier who was part of the Saint-Simonian group along with his brother Jacob (1800–1875). They saw the importance of the development of railroads, and contributed to the foundation of the Crédit Mobilier, which led them into competition with the Rothschilds.

PETTY, SIR WILLIAM (1623–1687). Father of modern political economy. Developed the notion of "political arithmetic"—that governmental affairs must be worked out with mathematical precision. Maintained a quantity theory of money. His most important book is the *Treatise on Taxes and Contributions* (1662), in which he developed a version of the labor theory of value.

PHYSIOCRATS. Literally, believers in the "rule of nature." Founded by Quesnay, the Physiocratic group was later led by Mirabeau, P. S. du Pont de Nemours, and P. P. le Mercier de la Rivière. They believed in natural law, and wanted to adjust positive law to the canons of natural law. They opposed the mercantilist economic position, favoring an agricultural society and arguing that wealth is not money but the products of the soil. Though their belief in natural law led them to oppose the monarchical system, they wanted to replace it only by an "enlightened" or "legal despotism."

PIECK, WILHELM (1876–1960). Carpenter. Party official in Bremen in 1905. Student at the Party School, 1907–1908. Co-founder of Spartacus League. "Protective custody" during 1915; then freed to

join army. Fled to Holland in January 1918, returning to Berlin in October to join central committee of Spartacus, and then that of German Communist Party. Arrested with Liebknecht and Luxemburg, but freed. Deputy. Fled to Russia after 1933, replacing Thälmann as head of German Communist Party. Returned to Berlin in 1945 as leader of the SED. From 1949 to his death, president of the German Democratic Republic.

POLISH SOCIALIST PARTY (PPS). Founded in 1893 from the remnants of the Proletariat Party. It was a trinational party which managed to wield influence in the International because of the close relations of its leader Daszyński with the Austrian socialist leader Victor Adler. Rosa Luxemburg's SDKPiL fought the PPS over the national question. The PPS split in 1906 after the Revolution of 1905 had shown that its right wing under the leadership of Pilsudski was more interested in national liberation than socialism. Pilsudski later became the national-fascist dictator of Poland, while the left wing of the group joined first the SDKPiL, and then the Polish Communist Party.

POTTER-WEBB. See under Webb, Sidney.

PUTTKAMER, ROBERT VON (1828–1900). Prussian Minister of the Interior in 1881. Used by Bismarck to conciliate the Catholic Center Party in 1888, and to employ it against Social Democracy. He was very unpopular and, though he tried to re-establish the old Prussian autocracy, he finally had to resign.

QUESNAY, FRANÇOIS (1694–1774). Physician and economist. Wrote his famous *Tableau Économique* at the request of Louis XV, showing that the farmer alone adds to the wealth of the nation. The *Tableau* is a reproduction schema of capitalist society. In it, Quesnay showed for the first time the difference between fixed and circulating capital. Among the descendants of the *Tableau*—besides Marx—are Walras' general equilibrium analysis and Leontieff's input-output analysis.

RICARDO, DAVID (1772–1823). English political economist who developed the bourgeois economic principles to their fullest. Most important work is *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817). Also wrote important works on money and banking. Applied the labor theory of value. His main notions are: 1) profits vary inversely with wages; 2) wages depend on the price of necessary food, shelter, etc.; 3) rent increases with the growth of population. His most important disciples were McCulloch and James Mill.

RODBERTUS (JOHANN CARL RODBERTUS-JAGETZOW) (1805–1875).

Economist and politician. Liberal, defending a form of state socialism. Argued that the workers get less and less of the national revenue, and proposed that to remedy this the state decide, in an authoritarian manner and once and for all, the percentage to be paid workers. His influence within German Social Democracy was important, especially as concerns his underconsumption crisis theory taken from Sismondi. Cf., Rosa Luxemburg's argument against Schippel, p. 153 ff., above.

ROSENOV, EMIL (1871–1904). Deputy and editor. Considered the most important Social Democratic poet and dramatist of his time by his contemporaries. Author of *Kater Lampe* and *Die im Schatten Leben*.

RÜHLE, OTTO (1874–1943). Teacher; fired for political reasons in 1902. Editor of Party papers. Far left wing of Party along with Liebknecht, with whom, in March 1915, he voted against the war credits in the Reichstag. Co-founder of the Spartacus League, he worked with the Left Radicals who joined with the Spartacus League to found the German Communist Party. Opposition to the Communist Party as early as 1919. Co-founder of the Communist Workers Party (KAP), a left opposition to the CP. Left Germany in 1932 for Prague, then went to Mexico in 1936, where he was an advisor in the Ministry of Education. Died in Mexico.

SAY, JEAN BAPTISTE (1767–1832). French economist, best known for his *Traité d'Économie Politique* (1803; revised ed., 1814), in which he defends what is now known as "Say's Law": that supply creates its own demand, and therefore there is always enough demand. Crises, therefore, are said to result from the disproportionality of the different branches of production, and this disproportionality will correct itself by means of the mechanism of supply and demand. Thus, Say's Law is a defense of a *laissez-faire* economy.

SCHEIDEMANN, PHILIPP (1865–1939). Right-wing Social Democrat. Deputy 1903–1918, and 1920–1933. Vice-president of the Reichstag in 1912, but ousted for refusing to pay homage to the Kaiser. Defended SPD politics during the war with the famous words: "We Social Democrats defend the Fatherland in order to conquer it." In the provisional government of Prince Max von Baden. Proclaimed the Republic on November 9, 1918, two hours before Liebknecht. Quit the cabinet on June 20, 1919, in protest against the Treaty of Versailles.

- SCHILLER, JOHANN CHRISTOPH FFRIEDRICH VON (1759–1805). Poet, dramatist, and philosopher. First drama, *Die Räuber* (1781), was a great success. In 1785 wrote the “Ode to Joy,” which was later set to music in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Developed an aesthetic theory. Then wrote a number of historical dramas, among them *Wallenstein*, *Maria Stuart*, and *Wilhelm Tell*. Very popular in the German Social Democratic Party.
- SCHIPPEL, MAX (1859–1928). Revisionist, active in the Reichstag on military questions. Later worked with the trade unions. Became a professor at the end of his life. Though she attacked his politics, out of party loyalty, Rosa Luxemburg campaigned successfully for him in Posen and Chemnitz in 1903.
- SCHMIDT, KONRAD (1865–1932). Formerly a member of the group of the Junge (anarchists), he later became an editor of *Vorwärts*, and one of the founders of the revisionist journal, the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*. Best known today for his economic work, and particularly for his correspondence with Engels about that work. Cf., especially the letter of October 8, 1888, in which Schmidt’s anticipation of the theory of the average rate of profit is discussed, and the letters of October 27, 1890, and March 12, 1895, in which the themes of ideology, the dialectic, and their relation to the economic infrastructure are discussed. In the latter letter, Schmidt is accused of being a Kantian in his interpretation of the labor theory of value as a necessary postulate of practical reason, and of not seeing the true nature of the totality, and of the concept.
- SCHMOLLER, GUSTAV VON (1838–1917). Academic Socialist. Believed in a Prussian state socialism. Influential economist, attempting to give economics an empirical foundation in line with the theory of the German historical school. Member of the Prussian Academy of Science.
- SINGER, PAUL (1844–1911). Joined the SPD in the 1870’s and was a leader of its Berlin section under the antisocialist laws. In Reichstag in 1884, and again from 1888 to his death. Leader of the SPD Reichstag faction. Along with Bebel and W. Liebknecht, leader of the SPD executive committee. Resolute opponent of opportunism.
- SMITH, ADAM (1723–1790). Professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow. Empiricist; wrote a *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759. Most famous for his *Wealth of Nations* (1776) in which economics was first put on a scientific basis. Developed the labor theory of value. Supported a *laissez-faire* liberalism.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY OF THE KINGDOM OF POLAND AND LITHUANIA (SDKPiL). Founded in 1893, led by Rosa Luxemburg, Jogiches, Marchlewski, Warski, Radek, Dzierżyński, Hanecki, Unszlicht, and Leder. Small group, but very influential due to the international activities of its leaders, many of whom were leaders in Germany and later in Soviet Russia. Antinationalist, opposing the Polish Socialist Party line on Polish independence. Rosa Luxemburg was its representative to the International Bureau for years. Later became the Communist Party of Poland.

SOMBART, WERNER (1863–1941). Economist and sociologist. Formerly a Marxist in his theoretical pursuits. Specialist on socialism and arch-opponent of Social Democracy. Most important book is *Modern Capitalism*, a historical study of the origins of capitalism. In 1934 wrote *Deutscher Sozialismus*, an apology for Nazism.

STUMM, FREIHERR VON (1836–1901). Paternalist-authoritarian factory owner. Wanted to use this technique to fight socialism, setting up pension plans, factory housing, etc. Had a strong influence on the young Kaiser Wilhelm II.

TIRPITZ, ALFRED VON (1849–1930). Chief builder of the German fleet at the turn of the century. His building of the fleet is considered militarily a feat of genius. When the fleet was not used during the war, he resigned in 1916. Later became an active rightist.

TROELSTRA, P. J. (1860–1932). Leader of the Dutch Social Democracy, following the line of the German SPD against the anarchist direction led by Domela Nieuwenhuis. After 1903 and the failure of the Dutch mass strike, the Party split. Troelstra and Vliegen founded a party, as did the radical Left, led by Henriette Roland-Holst, H. Gorter, and Anton Pannekoek. During the war, Troelstra supported a policy of “national self-defense.”

USPD. See Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany.

USPENSKI, GLEB IVANOVICH (1843–1902). Russian writer. Populist. Wrote *Rain*, *The Power of Evil*, and a collection of short stories, *The Morals of the Street of Disorder*.

VENDÉE. French province. Heavily monarchist during the French Revolution, it was used as a base for plots by priests and monarchists. An insurrection in 1793 was finally defeated with difficulty. Remained heavily royalist, fighting against Napoleon during the Hundred Days, and revolting again in 1832. Has become a synonym for counter-revolutionary action, generally led by peasants.

VOLLMAR, GEORG VON (1850–1922). Long-time socialist after having been a Catholic mercenary soldier. At first an anarchist, even declaring his solidarity with the Russian nihilists in a Reichstag speech. His experience as a deputy led to his becoming a “practical politician” and state socialist. After 1890 fought against the “Berlin dictatorship” in SPD, arguing for local autonomy within the Party. Because of his strong base in Bavaria he could not be too strongly attacked by the Party. Did not have a Marxist politics, spoke to the “people” with a very broad program. Voted in favor of the Bavarian budget in 1894, leading to a crisis in SPD. Continued his reformist politics. At one time it was thought that the Kaiser would bring him into the government as the “German Millerand.” Nationalist during the war, though too sick to be active.

VORWÄRTS. The former *Berliner Volksblatt* whose name was changed on January 1, 1891, and made the central organ of the SPD. Prohibited by the Nazis in 1933. Published in exile for some time. Still exists today as a weekly published by the modern SPD.

WARYŃSKI, LUDWIK. Founded the Proletariat Party in 1882 after his return from Switzerland. Opposed Polish independence as being a divergence from the real aim of economic liberation. Arrested in 1883 and sentenced to sixteen years’ imprisonment. Died in prison in 1889.

WEBB, SIDNEY (1859–1947), and BEATRICE POTTER- (1858–1943). Beatrice Potter-Webb was the daughter of a wealthy Englishman. Worked with her cousin, Charles Booth, on his seventeen-volume *Life and Labor of the People of London*, one of the important empirical sociological studies. Married Sidney Webb, with whom she wrote all of her works from that time on. Sidney Webb was a founder of the Fabian Society (1889). With his wife, he founded *The New Statesman*. Among their books: *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and *Industrial Democracy* (1897). He later became the first Baron Passfield.

WEITLING, WILHELM (1808–1871). German tailor. Wrote three important books before 1844: *Man As He Is and Ought to Be*, *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, and *The Evangel of the Poor Fisherman*. A very important leader of the first stages of German socialism. Marx spoke very highly of his works before 1844, though he later criticized them strongly, especially after Weitling’s communism be-

came more and more messianic. After 1848, Weitling emigrated to the United States.

WIENER ARBEITERZEITUNG. Central organ of Austrian Social Democracy, founded in Vienna in 1889, published daily from 1895.

WINNIG, AUGUST (1878–1956). President of the German Builders' Union. Strong nationalist during the war, supporting an annexationist politics which he thought was in the interest of the German working class. After November 1918 became Reich Commissar to the Baltic States. Founded an army to fight against the Russian Revolution. After the 1920 Kapp putsch, became a rightist.

WOLF, JULIUS (1862–1937). Austrian economist, became a professor at Zurich at twenty-six. Among his students there were Marchlewski and Daszyński, as well as Rosa Luxemburg. Of the latter, he wrote in his memoirs: "The most gifted of the students during my Zurich years, Rosa Luxemburg, who—it is true—came to me from Poland and Russia already a Marxist. . . ." As an economist, Wolf was an eclectic. Rosa Luxemburg often poked fun at him as a typical liberal academic.

WOLTMANN, LUDWIG (1871–1907). Revisionist. Strongly influenced by Darwinism, he later founded a political-anthropological journal, developing a racist theory along the lines of that of Gobineau.

ZEMSKY SOBOR. An early Russian form of national assembly often used during the last half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in order to hold together the nation in face of the centrifugal force of the individual ambitions of the nobility. In 1598, a Zemsky Sobor elected Boris Godunov Czar, and in 1613 the same body was called to end the struggles for succession, electing Michael, the first Romanov Czar. With the development of a strong central government under the Romanovs, and the growth of the institution of serfdom, the Zemsky Sobor lost its original importance as an independent assembly, and fell into disuse. During the slightly more than one hundred years when it was used, it played a significant political role in maintaining Russian unity and resolving political crises.

ZETKIN, CLARA (1857–1933). Editor of the SPD woman's paper, *Die Gleichheit*. Consistently left wing. Member of the Party control commission. Member of the Spartacus League. Later, member of the German Communist Party and supporter of the Bolsheviks. Important pamphlet: *Lenin on the Woman Question*. Close friend of

Rosa Luxemburg's, later writing a book, partly to "prove" that she was not really anti-Bolshevik. Rosa Luxemburg is reported to have remarked that on their gravestones should be written: "Here lie the last two *men* in Social Democracy."

