

Anton Pannekoek wrote 'Workers Councils' during and just after the second world war. He translated it into English. This translation was published by a small Australian group : the Southern Advocate for Workers Councils, Melbourne, at first in several booklets between 1947 and 1949, then in a complete book in 1950.

It remained, until now, the only English edition. An American group—Root and Branch—used the edition for a reprint of the first two parts in 1970.

The present edition is also a reprint of the whole book as it was published in Australia, but the contents will cover four booklets to be published successively. Volume 4 contains a biography of Pannekoek and a previously unpublished interview with Paul Mattick about Pannekoek's view of the movement for workers' councils.

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**anton pannekoek**

# **workers' councils**

**4. the war (1944)  
the peace (1947)  
appendices**

# WORKERS' COUNCILS

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## IV.—THE WAR

### 1.—JAPANESE IMPERIALISM

The preceding chapters were composed in the first years of the war, 1941-1942, a summary of what past times of struggle provided in useful information for the working class, an instrument helpful in their further fight for freedom. Now, 1944, the war, begun as an attempt of German capital to wrench world power from the English bourgeoisie, has extended over the entire world. All the strains created by the growth of capitalism in different continents, all the antagonisms between new rising and old powerful bourgeoisies, all the conflicts and excitations in near and far away countries have coalesced and exploded in this truly world war. And every day shows how much deeper, more tremendous and more thorough than in any former war its effects will be, in America and Asia, as well as in Europe. Mankind in its entirety is involved, and the neutrals, too, experience its consequences. Every nation is implicated in the fate of every other nation, however remote. This war is one of the last convulsions in the irresistible process of unification of mankind; the class fight that will evolve from the war will make this unity into a self-directing community.

Besides Europe, its first scene, Eastern Asia has become a second, no less important, centre of the war. In China war with Japan was already going on for some years when, by the outbreak of the war between America and Japan, it was included as a subordinate part in the world fight. This struggle in East Asia will have the same importance for the world's course as the fight in Europe. Hence its origins, as well as its tendencies, must be considered here somewhat more attentively.

The dense populations thronged together in the fertile plains of East and South Asia and the adjacent islands have long resisted the invasion of capitalism. With their number of nearly a thousand millions they constituted almost the half of mankind. Hence, as long as they remain in the condition of small agriculture and small handi-

craft, capitalism cannot be said to occupy the world, capitalism is not yet at the end of its task and its growth. The old powerful monarchies stiffened in their first contact with the rising capitalism of the 16th and 17th centuries, they kept off its intrusion and shut out its dissolving effects. Whereas in India and the Indian islands commercial capital could gradually establish its sway, China and Japan could maintain themselves as strong military powers during some centuries. In the 19th century the military power of modern capitalism broke the resistance. The development of capitalism, first in Japan, now in China, was the origin, is the content and will be the outcome of the present world war.

In the 17th, 18th, and the first half of the 19th century Japan was a feudal-absolutist state separated from the outer world by strict prohibitional laws. It was governed by some hundred small princes (daimyos), each lord over his own realm, but all strictly subjected under the sway of the Shogun in the capital, formally the military chief for the nominal emperor, the Mikado in Kyoto, but practically the real ruler. The Shoguns, whose office was hereditary in the Tokugawa family, retained the daimyos in submission and kept internal peace during two and a half centuries. A strict feudal organisation of four orders in society was maintained; but in the long run it could not prevent an inner development.

The basis of society was small farming, on lots mostly of only one or some few acres. Legally half the product had to be delivered to the prince, in kind (mostly rice), but often more was taken from the farmers. Above them stood the ruling and exploiting class of warriors, the samurai, forming the uppermost order ranged in a number of ranks, from the princes down to the common soldiers. They constituted the nobility, though their lowest most numerous ranks had only a small rice-income; they were a kind of knights, living around the castles of their lords. Since through the cessation of the internal wars of old their special office, fighting, was no longer needed, they had turned into a purely parasitic class, living in idleness or occupying themselves with literature and art—they were the producers of the famous Japanese art, afterwards so much admired in Europe. But they had the right to slay everyone of the lower orders they came across without being punished. Below the second order, the farmers, stood the lowest orders, the artisans and the merchants, who worked for the samurai, their patrons and customers; they earned money and gradually out of them arose a first species of bourgeoisie.

The basis of the system was heavy exploitation of the farmers; Japanese authors said the policy of the government consisted in leaving to the farmers so much that they neither could die nor live.

They were kept in absolute ignorance, they were bound to the soil, which they could not sell, all ease of life was denied to them. They were slaves of the State; they were looked upon as machinery for production of the rice the ruling class needed. Sometimes the famished peasants rose in local revolt and obtained some redress, because the inept soldiers did not dare to oppose them. But hunger and misery remained the prevailing conditions.

Still, although the laws meant to establish a petrified immutability, conditions gradually changed. The extension of craft and commerce, the increase of the production of commodities, brought luxury into the towns. The ruling nobility, to satisfy their new needs, had to borrow money and became debtors of the merchant class, the highest daimyos, as well as the common soldiers. The latter, reduced to poverty, sometimes, notwithstanding the prohibition, escaped into other professions. In the 19th century their growing discontent crystallised into a systematic hostility to the system of government. Because they formed the most intellectual class and were influenced by some European ideas trickling through the narrow chink of Dutch commerce at Deshima, they were able to formulate their opposition in the nationalist programme of "respect for the Emperor" as a symbol of national unity. So there were forces for change from feudal absolutism in the direction of capitalism; but they would have been too weak for a revolution, had not the big push from aggressive Western capitalism come to enforce admission.

In its first rise already, in the discovery of the entire earth in the 16th century, capitalism had knocked at the gates of Japan; it kindled wars between the feudal lords and princes; the spreading of Christendom over against Buddhism was an expression of the paralyzing disruption of the empire. A couple of consecutive strong Shoguns averted the danger by subjecting the rebellious lords to their centralised power; the foreigners were driven out, and with a booming blow—prohibition and extermination of Christendom the gate was closed for two centuries and a half. Then modern capitalism in its world conquest again knocked at the gate, and with its guns forced it open. American and Russian men-of-war came in 1853, others followed, treaties for commerce were made with the Western powers. And now the old worm-eaten system of government broke down, the Shogunate disappeared, clans hostile to it got the upper hand, and through the "restoration" of 1868 established a strongly united state under the government of the Mikado.

This meant the introduction of capitalism. First the juridical basis for a middle-class society was laid: the four orders were abolished and all inhabitants became free citizens with equal rights.

Freedom of trade, of living and travel, private property, also of the land, that could be bought and sold now, were established. Instead of the tiller of the soil paying half the product in kind, land taxes in money were laid upon the owner. The samurai lost their feudal privileges, and instead got an amount of money to buy a lot of land or to start a business; as artisans and employers they formed part of the rising bourgeoisie. The state officials, the army and naval officers, the intellectuals in the new society chiefly came from this samurai class. The upper ranks remained in power; part of the feudal princes now formed the Secret Council, which, behind the scenes directed government; their retainers, still linked together by the old clan ties, became cabinet ministers, generals, party chiefs and influential politicians.

So in Japan things were different from Europe. *Capitalism did not come because a rising bourgeoisie vanquished the feudal class in a revolutionary struggle, but because a feudal class transformed itself into a bourgeoisie, certainly a performance worthy of respect.* Thus it is easily understood that also under capitalism the feudal spirit, with its prejudices of ranks, its overbearing haughtiness, its servile respect to the emperor, persisted in the Japanese ruling class. The middle-class spirit of European capitalism was entirely lacking; Germany, that most resembles it, differs from Japan by the diversity there between the land owning nobility and the middle-class industrialists. Not till some dozens of years later a constitution was made, after the German model, with a parliament without power over the administration and the budget. Civil rights hardly existed, even on paper; government and officials had absolute power over the people. The peasants remained the deeply subjected, heavily exploited mass of starvelings; the substitution of capitalist for feudal pressure meant that they had to pay a lot of money in taxes or rent, that their land came into the hands of big landowners, that they could be evicted by withdrawal of the lease, that instead of the former known misery there came unforeseen ruin through unknown influences of market and prices. Peasant revolts were numerous after the first years of the Restoration.

Capitalism was introduced from above. Capable young men were sent to Europe to study science and technics. The government erected factories, in the first place armament works and shipyards; for military strength against the other powers was most urgent. Then railways and ships were built, coal mines constructed, afterwards the textile industry developed, chiefly silk and cotton, banks were founded. Private business was encouraged by subsidies, and state industries were turned over to private hands. In this way the government spent much money, got partly by taxes, partly by

borrowing, or by the issue of paper money, which rocketed prices. This policy was continued later on; capital was fattened by government subsidies, especially navigation, with its ensuing artificial prosperity. The system often developed into sheer corruption; the new-made capitalist class, through the absence of inherited business maxims in its dealings, exhibited a brazen lack of ordinary honesty; plundering public funds for personal enrichment is considered a common affair. Even the highest officials and politicians take part in big enterprises and procure orders for them by means of political influence.

Large numbers of impoverished peasants flowed into the towns, to the factories, where a heavily exploited proletariat, almost without rights, accumulated in the slums, ravished through low wages (half a yen per day), long hours (14-16 hours), and child labour. State officials in the lower ranks, even intellectuals, engineers, marine officers are paid far lower wages than in Europe. The working classes in the country, as well as in the towns, lived in a state of hopeless misery, of squalor and despair, surpassing the worst conditions in Europe of olden times. In the textile industry there is a regular slave system; the farmers sell their daughters for a number of years to the factories, where they live intern under the most horrible unhygienic conditions; and after the contract expires they return in part only to their villages, bringing with them tuberculosis. Thus, Japanese production was cheap, and through the low prices of its trash could outbid Western products on the Asiatic market. On the basis of highly developed machine technics—complemented by extensive primitive home industry and the low standard of life of the workers—capitalist industry and commerce shot up powerfully; every ten years import and export were doubled. Though it did not equal America, England and Germany, it rose above most other countries. The number of industrial workers reached two millions in 1929; agriculture occupied less than half the population already. The workers lived in a state of partial slavery; only in machine industry and among the sailors was there a bit of organisation. Strikes broke out, but were forcibly beaten down. Socialist and communist ideas, naturally finding their way under such conditions, were persecuted and exterminated ferociously. This fitted entirely in the system of police arbitrariness, of lack of personal rights, of brutal cruelty and lawless violence against their own, as well as against subjected alien people, which showed already the character of later fascism.

Imperialism, the big-capitalist politics of conquest, had no need to develop gradually here; from the first it belongs to the policy of

introduction of capitalism from above. From the beginning militarism was the chief aim and ideal of the new system, first as a means of defence against the white powers, then as a means of conquest of markets and sources of raw materials. All the old fighting instincts, traditions of discipline and impulses of oppression of the former samurai class could exhibit themselves and revive in the military spirit of exalted nationalism. First by defeating in 1895 the mouldy Chinese power and conquering Korea and Formosa, it took its place among the big powers. Then its victory over the equally mouldy power of Russian Czarism in 1904, opened the way into the inner Asiatic realms. Now the Japanese rulers grew cockier and began to speak of Japan's world mission to lead East Asia and to free Asia entirely from the white domination.

This policy of conquest is often defended with the argument that the rapid increase of the population—a doubling in 35 years—that cannot find a sufficient living on the small lots of tillable soil in these mountainous islands, compels emigration or the increase of industrial labour for which markets and raw material must be available. Everywhere the rise of capitalism, with its abolition of old bonds and its increasing possibilities for living has brought about a rapid increase of population. Here, on the reverse, this consequence, considered as a natural phenomenon, is used as an argument for conquest and subjugation of other peoples. The real reason, however, of this policy of conquest, first of Manchuria, then of the northern provinces of China, consists in Japan's lack of iron ore. All industrial and military power nowadays is based upon the disposal over iron and steel; hence Japan wants the rich mineral deposits of Jehol and Shansi. At the same time Japanese capital invaded China and set up factories, chiefly cotton mills, in Shanghai and other towns. And there a vision loomed of a future of greatness and power: to make of these 400 millions firstly customers of its industry, and then to exploit them as workers. So it was necessary to become the political master and leader of China. And most experts in Eastern affairs did not doubt that Japan, with its military power, its big industry, its proud self-reliance, would succeed in dominating the impotent and divided Chinese empire.

But here the Japanese rulers met with a heavy reverse. First with the unexpected tenacious resistance of the Chinese people, and then with a mightier opponent. Mastery over the markets and the future development of China is a life issue for American capitalism in its present state of development. Notwithstanding the most careful and extensive preparations Japan cannot match the colossal industrial resources of America, once they are transformed into military potency. So its ruling class will succumb. When the

military power of Japan will be destroyed and its arrogant capitalist barons have been beaten down, then for the first time the Japanese people will be freed from the feudal forms of oppression.

For Japan this will be the dawn of a new era. Whether the victorious allies enforce a more modern form of government, or with the collapse of the suppressing power a revolution of the peasants and the workers breaks out, in every case the barbarous backwardness in living standards and in ideas will have lost its basis. Of course, capitalism does not disappear then; that will take a good deal yet of internal and world fight. But the exploitation will assume more modern forms. Then the Japanese working class will be able, on the same footing as their American and European class-fellows, to take part in the general fight for freedom.

## 2. THE RISE OF CHINA

China belongs to those densely populated fertile plains watered by great rivers, where the necessity of a central regulation of the water for irrigation and for protection by dykes, in the earliest time already produced unification under a central government. It remained so for thousands of years. Under a strong and careful government the land rendered rich produce. But under a weak government, when the officials neglected their duties, when governors and princes made civil war, the dykes and canals fell into decay, the silted rivers overflowed the fields, famine and robbers ravished the people, and "the wrath of heaven" lay on the land. The population consisted chiefly of hard toiling peasants, carefully tilling their small lots. Through the primitive technics and the lack of cattle for ploughing, with the hardest labour during long days they could produce hardly more than a bare existence. The slight surplus produce was taken from them by the ruling class of landowners, intellectuals and officials, the mandarins. Since usually more even was taken from them, they often stood on the brink of famine. The plains were open to the north, the Central-Asiatic steppes, from where warlike nomads came invading and conquering. When they conquered the land they became the new ruling class, formed a kind of aristocracy, but were soon assimilated by the higher Chinese civilisation. So came the Mongols in the Middle Ages; so came in the

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17th century the Manchus from the north-east, extended their empire in the 18th century far over Central Asia, but fell into decay in the 19th century.

In the numerous towns lived a large class of small artisans and dealers with a proletarian class of coolies below and the wealthy class of merchants above them. From the seaports, as well as on caravan routes to the West across deserts and mountains, the precious wares of Chinese origin: tea, silk and porcelain were exported, even into Europe. So there was a middle class comparable with the European as to free initiative in business. But in the Chinese peasants too lived the same spirit of independence and self-reliance, far stronger than in the Japanese, deeply curbed as they were under feudalism. If the oppression of the officials, tax farmers, landlords or usurers became too heavy, revolts broke out, increasing sometimes to revolutions, against which the possessing class sought protection from foreign military powers; in such a way the Manchus came into the country.

In the 19th century Western capitalism begins to attack and invade China. The strict prohibition of opium import led to a war with Britain, 1840, and to the opening of a number of ports for European commerce. This number increases in later wars and treaties; European merchants and missionaries invade the country, and by their use and abuse of their specially protected position incite the hatred of the population. Cheap European wares are imported and undermine home handicraft; heavy war contributions imposed upon China aggravate the tax burden. Thus revolutionary movements flare up, such as the Taiping insurrection (1853-1864), having its own emperor in Nanking, and the Boxer revolt, 1899; both were suppressed with the help of European military power, which showed itself as barbarian destroyers of old Chinese culture. When the war with Japan lays bare Chinese impotence, all the Western powers, including Japan, seize parts of it as "concessions," tearing it asunder in "spheres of influence." Foreign capital builds some few railways and instals factories in the great harbor towns; Chinese capital, too, begins to take part. And now the obsolete Manchu dynasty crumbles in 1911, and is replaced in name by a Chinese republic proclaimed in Nanking, in reality, however, by the rule of provincial governors and generals, the so-called "war lords," often upstart former bandit chiefs, who now with their gang of soldiers in continuous wars pillage the country.

For the rise of a Chinese capitalism the elements were present: a class of wealthy or even rich merchants in the cities, mostly agents of foreign capital, which could develop into a modern bourgeoisie; a numerous class of poor urban proletarians and artisans, with a low

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standard of life; and an enormous population as customers. Western commercial capital, however, was not a driving force towards a development to higher productivity; it exploited the primitive forms of home industry for commercial profit, and impoverished the artisans by its imports. Hence the dominating position of this Western capital, on the way to make China into a colony, had to be repelled through organisation of the Chinese forces. This work of organisation fell as their task to the young intellectuals who had studied in England, France, America or Japan, and had imbibed Western science and Western ideas. One of the first spokesmen was Sun Yat-Sen, formerly a conspirator persecuted by the Manchu government, a well-known figure in European socialist circles, then the first President in name of the Chinese republic. He designed a program of national unity, a mixture of middle-class democracy and government dictatorship, and after his death in 1925 he became a kind of saint of the new China. He founded the Kuomintang, the political organisation and leading party of the rising Chinese bourgeoisie.

A strong impulse came from the Russian revolution. In 1920 students in Paris and workers (chiefly miners, railway men, typos and municipal workers) in Shanghai and Canton founded a Chinese Communist Party. Big strikes broke out against the mostly foreign employers, and by their exemplary solidarity the workers were able to get many of their demands conceded by the powerful capital; often, however, the fight led to bloody reprisals from the war lords. Now also the bourgeoisie took heart; in the next years the Kuomintang allied itself with the communist party and with Russia. Of course, the Chinese bourgeoisie did not profess any inclination to communist ideas; but it felt that such an alliance offered a lot of advantages. Merely by allowing them to shout for liberty and communism it gained the service of the most active groups of workers and enthusiastic young intellectuals for its purposes, and found skilled Russian organisers from Moscow as "advisers," to lead its fight and to instruct its cadres. Russia, moreover, gave it exactly the slogans it needed for its liberation from the grip of the all-powerful Western imperialism: the doctrine of world revolution against world capital, especially against its chief exponent, the English world power. Soon strictly enforced boycott and strike movements undermined European business and commerce; a sharp anti-foreigner excitation flooded the country; and from the interior, a terrified flock, came a stream of white missionaries, dealers and agents, fleeing to the seaports and the protection of the guns of the men-of-war. From Canton, 1926, an expedition went to the North, partly military conquest, partly intense nationalist propaganda campaign, "watering its horses in the Yang-tse River," chasing the

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war lords or compelling them to join, and uniting Central and Southern China into one state, with Nanking as its capital.

But now the long smouldering and ever again suppressed fight of the classes broke loose. The workers of the big towns, especially the industrial workers of Shanghai, the emporium of the East, took communism in its proletarian sense, as the workers' class fight. Their wages hardly sufficed to appease direct hunger, their working time was 14 to 16 hours daily; now they tried to raise their miserable conditions by striking, notwithstanding that Russian propaganda always had taught coalition with the bourgeoisie. The C.P. of China had been instructed from Moscow that the Chinese revolution was a middle-class revolution, that the bourgeoisie had to be the future ruling class, and that the workers simply had to assist her against feudalism and bring her into power. The C.P. had followed this lesson, and so had entirely neglected to organize and to arm the workers and the peasants against the bourgeoisie. It kept faith with the Kuomintang, even when this party ordered the generals to beat down the peasant revolts; so the communist militants were left at a loss, wavering between contradictory class sentiments and party commands. The mass actions that broke out in Canton and Shanghai were quenched in blood by the Kuomintang armies of Chiang Kai-shek, financed for that purpose by the Chinese and international bankers. A sharp persecution of communism set in, thousands of spokesmen and militants were slaughtered, the Russian "advisers" were sent home, the workers' organisations were exterminated, and the most reactionary parts of the bourgeoisie took the lead in government. These were chiefly the groups of rich merchants, whose interests as agents of foreign commercial and banking capital were bound to this capital and to the preservation of the old conditions.

Communism in the meantime had spread over the countryside. During all these years of anarchy the condition of the peasants had gone from bad to worse. By the landlords and tax collectors they were stripped to the bone; the war lords often demanded taxes for many years to come, and when they had been driven out by others who demanded the same taxes again, these were deposed safely in a foreign Shanghai banking house. Nobody took care of the canals and the dykes; through floods and the ensuing famine and pestilence uncounted millions perished. For some few pieces of bread the famished peasants sold their land to full-stocked hoarders and money lenders, and roamed as beggars or robbers through the land. Under such conditions communism, in its Russian bolshevist form of a workers and peasants republic, without capitalists, landlords and usurers, was hailed and made rapid progress in the most distressed

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that

provinces. At the same time it was extinguished in the towns, communism rose in the countryside as a mighty peasant revolt. Where it won power it began already to drive out the landlords and to divide up their land among the peasants and to establish Soviet rule. Part of the armies, consisting chiefly of workers and peasants, joined by their officers, mostly intellectuals sympathizing with the popular movement, revolted against the reactionary Kuomintang policy, and formed the nucleus of a Red Army.

The civil war thus ensuing was waged by the Kuomintang government as a campaign against the "communist bandits," who were branded with all kinds of atrocities—doubtless the rebellious peasants often were far from soft against their tormentors—and which had to be exterminated before unity of the nation was possible. From the side of the peasants it was a tenacious and heroic defence of their besieged chief territory in the south-eastern provinces Kiangsi and Hunan. Every year again from 1930 onward, the war of extermination is resumed with ever larger armies, and ever again it is frustrated by the superior skill, the indomitable courage and the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of the red troops that in careful and intrepid guerilla fighting had to win their very arms from the routed enemy regiments. Meanwhile, Japan makes use of this mutual destruction of Chinese military forces by occupying consecutively Manchuria and the Northern provinces.

What may be the reason that the Chinese bourgeoisie so ferociously made war upon the peasants and thereby squandered its military and financial resources? If we speak, for shortness of a Chinese bourgeoisie, we should bear in mind that this class differs considerably from the bourgeoisie of Europe, so that ideas instinctively associated with the latter class are not all applicable here. In Europe the rising bourgeoisie, a class of industrial and commercial employers and capitalists, in a social revolution, assisted by the peasants, had to break the political dominance of a land-possessing nobility. In China this antagonism is lacking; the bourgeoisie itself was the land-possessing class, and from herself came the ruling officials. On account of the lack of a rapidly rising industry the rich urban merchants and business men invested their money in land; and rent was as important a source of their income as profit; on the reverse landowners went into the town to set up a business. They combined the characters of two opposite European classes. Thus the peasants' fight found its most fitting expression in the communist slogan of fight against capitalism. In its character of landowners subjection and exploitation of the peasants was a life interest of the Chinese bourgeoisie; its deepest feelings were affected

by the land expropriation of the red soviets. So the conservative elements of this class, who had first distrusted the Kuomintang as a disguised red organisation, as soon as possible expelled the communists and made it an instrument of reactionary middle-class politics. They felt the lack of power on the part of the Chinese government to bring order into the chaos: so they sought support from the strongest anti-communist power, from Japan. Japan, aiming at dominance over the resources, the mineral riches and the labour power of China, came forward as the protector of the landowning interests against the rebellious masses. In every next treaty it imposed upon the Chinese government the duty to exterminate communism.

Against this conservative there was, however, an opposite trend, especially among the smaller bourgeoisie and the intellectuals. It anticipated and represented the future; it gave expression not to what the bourgeoisie had been till now, but to what it would be and should be. Its spokesmen realized that a wealthy class of peasants with purchasing power was the chief and necessary condition for a powerful development of capitalist industry in China. Their middle-class feeling understood instinctively that all these landowners and usurers represented a piece of feudalism, barring the way to the future development of China; and that a free landowning peasantry belongs to the middle-class world and would form its solid basis. Hence, next to and opposite to the conservative tendency there was a strong democratic stream of thought among the rising Chinese bourgeoisie. It was strongly nationalistic; the Japanese aggression, the seizure of precious provinces in the North, and the haughty brutalities of Japanese militarism filled it with indignation. It wished to end the civil war by concessions to the peasants in order to unite all force in a common resistance to Japanese imperialism.

Five years the extermination campaign lasted in Kiangsi, and, on a minor scale, in other provinces, without success. The communist armies were firmly rooted in the peasant population, among which they made extensive educational propaganda, and from which ever new forces came to join them. When at last their position against the besieging superior forces ably led by German military advisers, became untenable, they broke through the iron ring and invaded the South-western provinces. Then in 1934 the Red Army began its famous long march, over the highest, nearly unpassable, mountain passes, across the wildest and most dangerous rivers, through endless swampy steppes, through the extremes of heat and cold, always surrounded and attacked by better equipped superior White forces, until after heavy privations, heroic struggles and severe

losses it arrived, a year later, in the North-western provinces, where in Shensi a new Soviet government was organized.

But now, in the meantime, tactics and aims had changed. Not against capitalism and landlords the communist fight was directed in the first place, but against Japan and Japanese imperialism. Before the start of their long march already the C.P. of China had proposed, publicly, to the Kuomintang to cease the civil war in order to fight in common the Japanese aggression, in which case it would stop the expropriations and respect the existing property rights, in exchange for social reform and democratic rights of the people. But this offer had not been regarded.

This change of tactics has been sharply criticised in other countries as an opportunistic renouncement of communist principles. Such criticism, however, is based on the false supposition that the C.P. was a party of industrial workers exploited by big capitalism. The Chinese C.P., and still more the Red Army, however, consists of rebellious peasants. Not the name stuck on a label outside, but the class character determines the real content of thought and action. The party leaders saw quite well that Japanese military power was the most dangerous threat to the Chinese peasants, and that a coalition of the Chinese bourgeoisie with Japan would make their liberation impossible. So it was imperative to separate them and to direct all military and economic potencies of China against Japan. To the red leaders the ideal of the future was a democratic middle-class China, with free peasants as owners, or at least well-to-do farmers of the soil. Under communist ideas and slogans they were the heralds and champions of the capitalist development of China.

From these tendencies on both sides arose the new policy, in the dramatic form of the capture, December, 1936, in Sianfu, of the generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek by the government's own Manchurian troops, who wanted to fight the Japanese rather than the Reds. The nationalist leader, in involuntary discourses with the communist leaders, could make certain that they were equally nationalist and middle-class minded as himself, and were ready to put themselves under his command in a war with Japan. When, then, the civil war ceased and the most reactionary leaders were turned out of the government, Japan immediately drew the consequences and began war with a heavy attack on Shanghai. China, with its undeveloped sleeping resources at first sight might seem no match for the tremendous, carefully prepared war machinery of Japan. But it had trained armies now, it was filled with a strong nationalist spirit, and it got war materials from England and America. To be sure, its armies had to give way, the government had to retreat to Chungking in the South-western province of Szechuan, and Japanese troops

occupied the Eastern towns. But behind their back ever new armies of partisans stood up as guerilla and exhausted their forces. Till, in 1941, after the war in Europe had gone on for nearly two years, the long foreseen conflict between America and Japan broke out in consequence of America's ultimatum that Japan should leave China. Thus the Chinese war became part of the world war.

This world war means the rise of China as a new capitalist world power. Not immediately as an independent power on an equal par with its allies, Russia on the one, America on the other side, though it exceeds both in population. Its economical and political dependence on America, to which it is heavily in debt because of its war supplies, will mark the new future; American capital will then have the lead in building up its industry. Two great tasks are standing in the forefront; the construction of railways and roads, combined with the production of engines and motor cars, to modernize the primitive expensive traffic; and introduction of mechanical power in agriculture to free the human beast-of-burden and make its labour efficient. The accomplishment of these tasks requires a big metal industry. China possesses all the resources necessary for capitalist development. It has coal, iron and other minerals, not enough to make it an industrial country for export as England or Germany, but enough for its own needs. It has a dense population with all the qualities necessary for capitalism: a strong individualism, painstaking diligence, capability, spirit of enterprise, and a low standard of needs. It has, moreover, a fertile soil, capable of producing an abundance of products, but requiring security by wide scientific care and regulation of the water, by constructing dykes and excavating and normalizing the rivers.

The ideals and aims for which the working masses of China are fighting, will of course not be realized. Landowners, exploitation and poverty will not disappear; what disappears are the old stagnant, primitive forms of misery, usury and oppression. The productivity of labour will be enhanced; the new forms of direct exploitation by industrial capital will replace the old ones. The problems facing Chinese capitalism will require central regulations by a powerful government. That means forms of dictatorship in the central government, perhaps complemented by democratic forms of autonomy in the small units of district and village. The introduction of mechanical force into agriculture requires the conjunction of the small lots into large production units; whether by gradual expropriation of the small peasants, or by the foundation of co-operatives or kolchozes after the Russian model, will depend on the relative power of the contending classes. This development will not go on without producing deep changes in the economic, and thereby in the social

relations, the spiritual life and the old family structure. The dimensions, however, of things there, of the country, of the population, of its misery, of its traditions, of its old cultural life are so colossal, that an innovation of conditions, even if taken up with the utmost energy, will take many dozens of years.

The intensity of this development of economic conditions will stir the energies and stimulate the activity of the classes. Corresponding to capitalism the fight against capitalism will arise simultaneously. With the growth of industry the fight of the industrial workers will spring up. With the strong spirit of organisation and great solidarity shown so often by the Chinese proletarians and artisans, even a rise more rapid than in Europe of a powerful working class movement may be expected. To be sure, the industrial workers will remain a minority compared with the mass of the agrarian population, equally subjected to capitalist exploitation, though in another way. The mechanisation of agriculture, however, will weave strong ties between them, manifesting itself in the community of interests and fights. So the character of the fight for freedom and mastery may take in many regards another aspect in China than in Western Europe and America.

### 3. THE COLONIES.

When socialism grew up, half a century ago, the general expectation was that the liberation of the colonial peoples would take place together with the liberation of the workers. The colonies there and the workers here were exploited by the same capitalism; so they were allies in the fight against the common foe. It is true that their fight for freedom did not mean freedom for the entire people; it meant the rise of a new ruling class. But even then it was commonly accepted, with only occasional doubts, that the working class in Europe and the rising bourgeoisie in the colonies should be allies. For the communist party this was still more self-evident; it meant that the new ruling class of Russia looked upon the future ruling classes in the colonies as its natural friends, and tried to help them. Certainly the forces for colonial liberation were still weak. In India, with its 300 millions of people, industry and a class of employers gradually developed, giving the basis for an independence movement, that

suffers, however, from the great diversity of races and religions. The 50 millions population of Java is well-nigh homogeneous, but entirely agrarian, and the opposition was till recently restricted to small groups of intellectuals.

These colonial peoples are no savages or barbarians, as the tribes of central Africa or the inhabitants of remote Indian islands. They live densely crowded in fertile areas with a highly developed agriculture. Often they have a thousand years old civilization; there is a separation between a ruling class of priests and nobility spending their portion of the total product in often refined artistic and spiritual culture, and the subjugated masses of heavily exploited peasants. Foreign warlike peoples invaded India and formed new upper social layers; incessant wars between larger and smaller princes checked the increase of the population. Agriculture was the chief occupation; because during many months agricultural labour had to rest, there was also an important cottage industry in the villages. This handicraft, artistic and highly developed, differing according to natural produce, raw materials and inherited endowments in different regions, produced a large amount of goods for export. Cotton goods, fine dyed cloths in many designs, silk wares, goldsmiths' and copper wares, beautifully decorated swords formed the contents of an extensive trade over Southern and Eastern Asia, and far to the West, even into Europe. Here the precious coloured textile wares from the East, chiefly from Indian village industry, formed the main part of medieval traffic, produced the materials for the dress of princes, nobility and rich bourgeoisie, up to the 18th century, and brought a continuous flow of gold from Europe to India.

Against the invading European capitalism the Indian countries, mostly divided into small states, were soon powerless. The armed Western merchant vessels began to monopolize forcibly the entire trade of the Indian seas, with its enormous profits. Thereafter direct conquest and pillage brought the accumulated riches of Eastern treasuries into the hands of Western officials and adventurers, and contributed in England in the 18th century to form the capital needed in the industrial revolution. More important still was regular exploitation by enforced delivering of precious products—on the Molucca islands of spices, on Java of pepper, indigo, sugar—for which hardly anything was paid, a few coppers for what in Europe brought hundreds of florins. The population had to spend a great deal of its time and of its soil in these products for export, thus leaving not enough for their own food; famine and revolts were the result. Or heavy taxes were imposed upon the people of India, to procure high incomes for a parasitical class of English officials and

nabobs. At the same time England employed its political power to forbid, in the interest of the Lancashire cotton industry, the export of Indian textile goods. Thus the flourishing Indian cottage industry was destroyed and the peasants were still more impoverished. The result was that in the 19th century, and even up to the present day, for the majority of the villagers life is a continuous state of hunger. Famines and pestilences, formerly unavoidable local occurrences, now take place in devastated larger regions and more often. But also in normal times in the villages and urban slums a state of misery reigns, worse than at any time in Europe.

The essence of colonial policy is exploitation of foreign countries while preserving their primitive forms of production or even lowering their productivity. Here capital is not a revolutionary agent developing production to higher forms; just the reverse. European capital is here a dissolving agent, destroying the old modes of work and life without replacing them by better technics. European capital, like a vampire, clasps the defenceless tropical peoples and sucks their life blood without caring whether the victims succumb.

Western science of course demonstrates that the domination of colonies by the Europeans is based on nature, hence is a necessity. The basis is formed by the difference of climate. In cool and moderate climates man can extort his living from nature by continuous exertion only; the temperature allows of assiduous hard working; and the inconstancy of the phenomena, the irregular change from storm and rain to sunshine stimulates the energy into restless activity. Labor and energy became the gospel of the white race; so it gained its superior knowledge and technics that made it master of the earth. In the hot tropical and sub-tropical countries, on the contrary, nature by itself or with slight labor bears abundant fruit; here the heat makes every continuous exertion a torment. Here the dictum could originate that to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow was the worst curse to man. The monotonous equality of the weather, only interrupted at the change of seasons, deadens the energy; the white people, too, when staying too long in the tropics, are subjected to these influences that render laziness the chief characteristic and Nirvana the highest ideal. These dicta of science doubtless are true, theoretically. But practically we see that the Indian and Javanese peasants till their soil and perform their handicraft with unflagging zeal and painstaking assiduity. Not, of course, in the nerve-racking tempo of modern factory work; economic necessity determines the character of their labor.

The Western bourgeoisie considers its rule over the colonies a natural and lasting state of things, idealizing it into a division of tasks profitable to both parties. The energetic intelligent race from

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the cool climes, it says, serves as the leaders of production, whereas the lazy, careless coloured races execute under their command the unintelligent manual labor. Thus the tropical products, indispensable raw materials and important delicacies are inserted into the world's commerce. And European capital wins its well deserved profits because by its government it assures to the fatalistic aborigines life, security, peace and, by its medical service and hygienic measures, health, too. Suppose this idyll of a paternal government, honest illusion or deceptive talk of theorists and officials, to be as true as in reality it is impossible under capitalist rule, then still it would be faced by an insoluble dilemma: If by the cessation of wars, epidemics and infant mortality the population increases, there results a shortage of arable land notwithstanding all the irrigation and reclaiming that only postpones the conflict. Industrialization for export, properly speaking an unnatural way out for the most fertile lands, can give only temporary relief. Into such a final state every population that, ruled from above, is left to its own life instincts, must arrive. Every economic system develops its own system of population increase. If by an autocratic rule from above the feelings of responsibility are suppressed, then any active force of self-restraint and self-rule over the conditions of life is extinguished. The impending clash between increase of population and restriction of means of subsistence can find its solution only in a strong display of inner energy and will-power of a people, consequence of its self-reliance and freedom, or of an active fight for freedom.

In the later part of the 19th century and thereafter it is not the commercial capital in the first place that exploits the colonies. Capitalist enterprises come forth in ever greater numbers: partly agricultural and mining enterprises for cultivating rubber, coffee, tea, for winning oil, tin and other metals, partly industrial or mixed enterprises to work the tropical raw materials, such as textile or sugar factories. It is mostly European capital, drawing high profits from this exploitation. In India, where in such towns as Bombay lived a class of rich merchants, these also take part and constitute a first instance of a modern Indian bourgeoisie. This Indian industry consists well nigh exclusively of textile factories; and from all the textile goods consumed in India nearly 60 per cent. is imported from England and Japan, 20 per cent. comes from the cottage industry, and only 20 per cent. is provided by Indian factories. Yet to exhibit and introduce aspects of modern work and life is sufficient inspiration to a nationalist movement, for throwing off the yoke of the Western rulers. Its spokesmen are the intellectuals, especially the younger generation, who are acquainted with

## THE COLONIES

Western science, and in opposition to it study and emphasize with strong conviction their own national culture. They feel deeply hurt by the racial haughtiness of the whites, who admit them in lower offices only; they come forward as the leaders of the oppressed masses, involving them into their fight for independence. Since the impudent riches of the rulers contrasts so sharply with the abject misery of the masses, this is not difficult. Though as yet the fight can only be peaceful propaganda, passive resistance, and non-co-operation, i.e., the refusal of collaboration with the English government, it alarms public opinion in England, inspiring so much apprehension in the rulers there that they resort to vague promises of self-government, and at the same time to sharp persecutions. The movement, of course, is too weak still to throw off the domination of Western capitalism. With the capitalist factories a class of industrial workers is coming into being with extremely low wages and an incredibly low standard of living! strikes occurred against Indian, as well as against European employers. But compared with the immense population all this is an insignificant start, important only as indication of future development.

With the present world war colonial exploitation, as well as the problem of liberation, acquires a new aspect. Against the enormously increasing power of capitalism a fight for independence in its old meaning has no longer any chance. On the other hand, it is probable that from now on world capital under American hegemony will act as a revolutionary agent. By a more rational system of exploitation of these hundreds of millions of people capital will be able to increase its profits considerably; by following another way than the previous primitive impoverishing methods of plunder, by raising labor in the colonies to a higher level of productivity, by better technics, by improvement of traffic, by investing more capital, by social regulations and progress in education. All of this is not possible without according a large amount of independence or at least self-rule to the colonies.

Self-rule of the colonies, of India, and of the Malayan islands, has already been announced. It means that parliaments in Europe and viceroys sent from thither can no longer govern them despotically. It does not mean that politically the working masses will be their own masters, that as free producers they will dispose of their means of production. Self-rule relates to the upper classes of these colonies exclusively; not only will they be inserted into the lower ranks of administration, but they will occupy the leading places, assisted of course by white "advisers" and experts, to ensure that capital interests are served in the right way. Already from the upper classes of India a rather numerous group of intellectuals has

proceeded, quite capable as ruling officials to modernise political and social life.

To characterize modern capitalist production as a system wherein the workers by their own free responsibility and will-power are driven to the utmost exertion, the expression was often used that a free worker is no coolie. The problem of Asia now is to make the coolie a free worker. In China the process is taking its course; there the workers of olden times possessed a strong individualism. In tropical countries it will be much more difficult to transform the passive downtrodden masses, kept in deep ignorance and superstition by heavy oppression, into active well-instructed workers capable of handling the modern productive apparatus and forces. Thus capital is faced with many problems. Modernization of the government apparatus through self-rule is necessary, but more is needed: the possibility of social and spiritual organisation and progress, based on political and social rights and liberties, on sound general instruction. Whether world capital will be able and willing to follow this course cannot be foreseen. If it does, then the working classes of these countries will be capable of independent fighting for their class interests and for freedom along with the Western workers.

To all the peoples and tribes living in primitive forms of production in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, it will, of course, mean an entire change of the world, when the working class will have annihilated capitalism. Instead of as hard exploiting masters and cruel tyrants, the white race will come to them as friends to help them and to teach them how to take part in the progressing development of humanity.

#### 4. RUSSIA AND EUROPE

With this war Russia, the Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics, as it calls itself, has made its entry among the recognised capitalist powers. In the Western countries an entire change has taken place in valuation of and attitude towards Russia and bolshevism. Certainly, the first fear of a communist revolution and the accompanying calumnies had already died away gradually in the ruling classes. Yet they were not quite at ease about their workers, and since the talk of the C.P. on world revolution went on, reports of forged atrocities and real cruelties were a motive to exclude Russia

from the community of civilized nations. Until they needed Russia as an ally against Germany; then sentiment made a turn, though at first only in the kind wish that both dictatorships might devour one another. Then there they met governing politicians, officials, generals and officers, factory directors, intellectuals, an entire well-dressed, civilized, well-to-do class ruling the masses, just as at home. So they were reassured. The church only kept aloof, because of the bolshevist anti-religious propaganda.

The similarity of political forms and methods of government in Russia and Germany strikes the eye at first sight. In both the same dictatorship of a small group of leaders, assisted by a powerful well-organized and disciplined party, the same omnipotence of the ruling bureaucracy, the same absence of personal rights and of free speech, the same levelling of spiritual life into one doctrine, upheld by terrorism, the same cruelty towards opposition or even criticism. The economic basis, however, is different. In Russia it is state capitalism, in Germany state-directed private capitalism. In Germany there is a numerous class of owners of the means of production, a bourgeoisie, which, because of the difficulty of the fight for world power, gave itself a tyrannical dictatorship; it is augmented by an increasing bureaucracy of officials. In Russia bureaucracy is master of the means of production. The conformity in the necessary forms of practical rule and administration, domination from above, gave them the same system of dictatorship.

There is similarity also in the character of their propaganda. Both make use of the ideology of community, because both represent organized against unorganized capitalism. As in Russia, the anti-thesis to old capitalism was expressed in the catchword of communism, so in Germany by socialism. These are the names under which, in extensive propaganda, the fight for their own power against the old capitalist powers is urged upon the masses as a fight against capitalism. Thus they present themselves as more than a mere nationalism, they proclaim new world principles, fit for all countries, to be realized by world-revolution and world war against the exponents of the old order, English and American capitalism. So they find adherents to their cause, followers of their party, within the country of their opponents, ready to undermine from within their power of resistance.

As similar hostile rivals they find a basis for their opposition in their origin and the consequent traditions. National socialism came to power as an agent of big capitalism, wiping out the old labor movement, in conscious sharp antagonism to the "Marxian" trends of social-democracy and communism. In their own country only it could proclaim itself a party of the workers and impose by terror-propa-

ganda this trickery upon uncritical adherents. The Russian ideology proceeded directly from a revolution made by the workers under the communist banner, and appealed to Marxian doctrines that had been adapted to its cause; but in foreign countries only could it find belief that indeed it represented dictatorship of the workers. Here it could impose upon young people desirous to fight capitalism and exploitation, whereas national-socialism was considered everywhere as a genuine enemy of the workers, and found sympathy only among the upper and lower part of the bourgeoisie.

The foreign policy of the Russian revolution was a logical consequence of its basic ideas. Though a socialist community has no wishes but to live in peace besides other peoples, it is in danger of being attacked by capitalist states. Hence, it must prepare for war. Moreover, world revolution, annihilation of capitalism all over the world remains the supreme aim; only in this way, by liberating the workers elsewhere, the socialist state can secure its own freedom. So the socialist state arms and prepares for war, not only for defence, but also for attack. And with surprise naive idealists perceive that what seemed a haven of peace reveals itself a power for war. And they ask whether indeed compulsion by the sword can bring freedom to others.

The contradiction is easily explained. What is named state-socialism discloses itself as state-capitalism, the rule of a new exploiting class, bureaucracy, master of the production apparatus, as in other countries the bourgeoisie. It, too, lives on surplus value. The larger its realm, its power, the larger its share, its wealth. Thus, for this bureaucracy war assumes the same significance as for the bourgeoisie. It takes part in the world contest of Powers, on the same footing as other States, but with the pretension to be the world-champion of the working class. And though in view of the allied governments it cannot make too much show of it, and temporarily even silences the Comintern, yet it knows that in all foreign countries communist parties are working on its behalf. Thus the role of Russia in and after the war begins to depict itself. Behind the old now deceitful aims of extending the realm of communism stands the reality of extending the own international power. If the German bourgeoisie tries to steer its course in the track of England and America, the working class, prevented during long years from finding its own new way, may produce communist parties as agents of Russian hegemony over the Mid-European regions.

This policy and position among the other capitalist powers has its basis in an inner change of policy in Russia itself. State capitalism has consolidated its power in and through the war, the completion of the preceding development. Since the revolution there was a

continual struggle between the socially important groups. First, State bureaucracy, with the Communist Party as its organ, being master of the industrial production, in a hard fight subdued the peasants in its campaign of founding the kolchoses. Besides them, however, stood the army officers and the numerous technical experts and officials in the factories, commonly called the engineers. They had an important function as technical leaders of the production, they had their own union, and were mostly non-party men. The well-known trials of engineers on forged charges of sabotage were an episode in the silent struggle; they were condemned not because they had committed the imputed crimes, but for intimidation and to forestall any attempt at independent political action. In the same way in the trial of General Tukhachevsky and other officers all elements from whom independent action was feared, were shot and replaced by others. Thus the political bureaucracy remained master, but it had to regard the other groups.

The war made a unification of all these forces necessary, and at the same time possible, on the basis of a strong nationalism aspiring to expansion. In the preceding years some so-called reforms had been proclaimed, though by the absence of free speech and free press they had no meaning for the working masses; they now could afford an opportunity for non-party men to take part in the governing apparatus. Party rule and Comintern was pushed into the background. Now under a firmly consolidated ruling class the masses, as in every capitalist state, could be led to the front in well-disciplined gigantic armies.

At the same time the war has brought about an increase of the spiritual influence of bolshevism in Western Europe. Not among the bourgeoisie; now that organized big capitalism is becoming master of the world it has not the least inclination to make way for state capitalism. Not very much among the workers; in the beginning the recognition perforce of the communist parties by the governments may increase its credit among workers dominated by nationalism; but its support of government policy, however masked by a seeming of wild opposition talk, will soon discredit it among the fighting masses of the working class. Among the Western intellectuals, however, Russian bolshevism attracts ever more attention.

Under the rule of big capitalism it is the class of intellectuals that has the technical lead of production, and the spiritual lead of society in its hands. Now it begins to ask—in so far as it is not entirely occupied by its narrow personal job—why shareholders and stock jobbers should have the upper command over production. It feels itself called upon to lead social production as an organized

process, to throw off the dominance of a parasitical bourgeoisie and to rule society. It is divided, however, in a series of higher and lower ranks, arranged after usefulness or what else; they form a ladder on which, in mutual rivalry, one may ascend by ambition, capacities, favor or cunning. The lower and badly paid ranks among them may join the fight of the working class against capital. Its higher and leading elements, of course, are hostile to any idea of mastery by the workers over the process of production. Their prominent thinkers and learned scholars, often refined or ingenious spirits, strongly feel their superiority threatened by the phantom of a general "levelling." The intellectual class feels quite well that its ideal of social order cannot exist without a strong power apparatus, to keep down private capital, but chiefly to keep down the working masses. What they want is a moderate dictatorship, strong enough to resist attempts to revolution, civilized enough to dominate the masses spiritually and to assure a rational liberty of speech and opinion to the civilized; anyhow, without the rough violence that made national socialism the object of hatred all over Europe. A free road to the talented, and society led by the intellectual elite, such is the social ideal rising in this class.

This they see realized to a fair extent, though mixed up with barbarous remnants, in the Russian system. And the Russians have exerted themselves to promote such ideas. Soon after the revolution already scientific congresses were organized where the assembled scholars from all countries were regally entertained—though there was dearth in the land—and got the most favorable impression of the young enthusiasm and the fresh energy bestowed by the new-shaped society upon science and technics. Of the Solovki camps, where the deported peasants and workers are ill-treated till they perish, of course, nothing was shown to them, nor did they know of the deadly hard labor of millions of victims in the icy wilds of Siberia; probably not even the ordinary "black workers" in the factories did they meet with. Such inspiring experiences could not but strongly impress the younger Western intellectuals; what trickled through about atrocities was easily effaced by the splendour of increasing production figures in the world-wide propaganda of the C.P. And now the military successes of the Russian armies enhance the image of Russia as a vigorous civilized modern State.

So we may surmise something about the future of Russia and Bolshevism in Europe. In its antagonism to the Western powers of private capitalism, England and America, its ideology may serve as a valuable weapon to undermine the solid power of their bourgeoisie, by rousing, in case of need, working class opposition against her. As a recognised respectable party the C.P. will try to win

posts of influence in politics, either in competition or in collaboration with social democracy; by a seeming show of sparkling opposition talk it seeks to gather the workers in its fold, to deter them from taking their own road to freedom. As it does already now, it will try, by a quasi-scientific propaganda among intellectuals, to win them over to some bolshevist kind of dictatorial government, and adorn it, may be, with the mark world-revolution.

More direct and important will be the Russian influence upon Central Europe. In the wake of the annihilation of military power comes economic slavery. To impose as much as possible of the burdens on the defeated foe, through the necessity of restoration and compensation of the immeasurable wanton destruction and pillages by the German armies, not only all property, so far as it is left, will be seized, but also all the peoples in so far as they are left, will be harnessed under the yoke of hard labor. The victors probably will not, as after the first world war, leave to the German bourgeoisie the possession of the production apparatus and the rule of the country.

Before, then, an effective fight for their cause will be possible to the Central European workers, a deep change in their thinking and willing must take place. They are faced not only by the formidable physical power of victorious world capitalism, but they will also encounter extreme difficulty in resisting the spiritual forces of Bolshevism on the one side, nationalism on the other side, to find the way clear to their class task. In this fight they must involve the Russian workers. Russian State capitalism, as well, has been exhausted and ravaged by the war; to restore itself it will have to lay a harder pressure upon the workers. So the Russian workers will be compelled to take up the fight for freedom, for liberation out of slavery, as a new great task, the same as the workers all over the world.

## 5. IN THE ABYSS

The second world war has thrown society into an abyss deeper than any former catastrophe. In the first world war the contending capitalisms stood against one another as Powers of old form, waging war in old forms, only on a larger scale and with improved technics. Now the war has reversed the inner structures of the States, and new political structures have arisen; now the war is a "total war,"

into which all forces of society are linked up as its subordinate means.

In and through this war society is thrown back to a lower level of civilisation. That is not so much because of the immense sacrifices of life and blood. During the entire period of civilization—i.e., the period of written history and of the division of society into exploiting and exploited classes, between the primitive tribal life and the future world unity of mankind—war was the form of the struggle for existence. So it is quite natural that the last world fights, before the final consolidation drawing along all people, should embrace greater names and be more bloody than any former war.

What makes this retrogressive is first the regress from military and juridical norms that in the 19th century gave a certain appearance of humanity to warfare. The enemies were nominally considered as equal humans and soldiers, political rights of vanquished or occupied countries were recognised, national sentiments respected; civilians usually stood outside the fighting. In international treaties on "the laws of war" these principles were endorsed, and however often violated, they stood out as international law, that could be appealed to against the arbitrariness of a victor. Total war tramples on all these scraps of paper. Not only are all supplies seized and all industry is put into the service of the conqueror, not only are prisoners of war set to work for the enemy, but on an ever larger scale all people from occupied regions are forcibly, in a real slave hunting, dragged off to work in the German war industry. So, by producing arms for the foe, they are constrained to aid him against their own nation; at the same time relieving the enemy's workers for service at the front. Now that war is a matter of industrial production, slave labor becomes one of the foundations of warfare.

It is natural that in the occupied countries—half of Europe—resistance sprang up, and it is natural that it was suppressed severely, even when it consisted only in tentative first traces. It is not natural, however, that in the repression such a height of cruelty was reached, as first applied in the rough mishandling and extermination of the Jewish citizens and then extended to all national opposition. The German soldier, himself an unwilling slave of the dictatorial apparatus, develops into a master and instrument of oppression. As a filthy contamination the habits of violence and outrage spread over the continent, wakening an immense hatred against the German occupants.

In former wars occupation of a foreign country was considered a temporary situation, and international law expressed it in this way, that the occupant was not allowed to change anything in the

fundamental law of the country, and only took the administration in its hands insofar as war conditions necessitated it. Now, however, Germany interfered everywhere in the existing institutions, trying to impose the national-socialist principles, pretending it was the beginning of a new era for the entire Europe in which all the other countries as allies, i.e., vassals, had to follow Germany. Underlings it found in the small number of foreign adherents to its creed, and the larger number who saw their chance now; they were made rulers over their compatriots and exhibited the same spirit of wanton violence. The same spiritual tyranny as in Germany itself is imposed; and especially in the Western countries, with their large civil liberties, this arouses an increasing embitterment, that found expression in underground literature. Neither the silly fiction of the unity of the Teutonic race nor the argument of the united continent of Europe made any impression.

The fall into barbarity is due, firstly, to the destructive power of modern war machinery. More than in any previous time all industrial and productive power of society, all ingenuity and devotion of men is put into the service of the war. Germany, as the aggressive party, set the example; it perfected the air weapon into bombers that destroyed, with factories of war supplies, the surrounding city quarter. It did not foresee at the time that the steel production of America many times surpassed that of Germany, so that the system of destruction, once that America would have transformed its industrial into military power, would fall back with multiple vehemence upon Germany itself. In the first world war much lamenting was heard about Ypres being destroyed and some French cathedrals damaged; now, first in England and France, and then on a larger scale in Germany, towns and factory quarters, grand monuments of architecture, remnants of irretrievable mediaeval beauty, went to rack and ruin. Week after week the wireless boasted of how many thousands of tons of explosives were thrown upon German towns. As an instrument of terror to bring the German population upon its knees, or to rouse the desire for peace into resistance to the leaders, these bombardments were a failure. On the contrary, through the exasperation over the wanton destruction and killings a disheartened population was bound the firmer to its rulers. They rather gave the impression as if the Allied rulers, sure about their industrial and military superiority, wished to prevent a revolution of the German people against the national-socialist rulers which would have led to milder peace conditions, preferring to beat down German attempts at world power once and for all by a downright military victory.

Besides the material, the spiritual devastation perpetrated among

mankind represents no smaller fall into barbarity. The levelling of all spiritual life, of speech and writing to one prescribed creed, and the forcible suppression of any different opinion has grown in and through the war into a complete organisation of falsehood and cruelty.

Censoring of the press had already proved necessary in former wars to prevent sensational news harmful to the warfare of the country. In later times, when the entire bourgeoisie felt keenly nationalist and closely bound to the government, the papers felt it their duty to collaborate with the military authorities in upholding morale by optimistic statements, in criticizing and abusing the enemy, and in influencing the neutral press. But censorship became more needed than before to suppress resistance on the part of the workers, now that the war brought a heavier pressure of long hours and of shortness of provisions. When propaganda is needed, artificially to rouse in the people enthusiasm for war, counter propaganda revealing the capitalist background of the war cannot be tolerated. So we see in the first world war the press turned into an organ of the army staff, with the special task to uphold the submissiveness of the masses, as well as the fighting spirit.

In the present war this may still represent the state of things on the Allied side; but on the other side it is far surpassed by the adaptation to war conditions of the already existing department of propaganda, with its staff of artists, authors and intellectuals. Now its system of directing opinion, raised to the utmost perfection and extended over Europe, reveals its full efficiency. By stating its own case as the case of highest right, truth and morals, by relating every action of the foe as an act of weakness, or of baseness, or of embarrassment, an atmosphere of faith and victory is created. It proved itself capable of transfiguring the most obvious defeat into a brilliant success, and to represent the beginning of collapse as the dawning of final victory, and thus to inspire stubborn fighting and to postpone the final collapse. Not that people accept it all as truth; they are suspicious of anything they hear; but they see the resolution in the leaders and feel powerless through lack of organisation.

Thus the German masses are the victims of a system growing more violent and more mendacious as ruin approaches. So the destruction of the power of German capitalism will be accompanied by the aimless destruction and new slavery of the German people, not by its rise to a new fight for a new world of real freedom.

As a destructive catastrophe, the reign of national-socialism passed over Germany and the surrounding countries. A torrent of organised cruelty and organised falsehood has flooded Europe. As

a poisonous taint they have infected mind, will and character of the peoples. They are the mark of new dictatorial capitalism, and their effect will long be felt. They are not a chance degeneration; they are due to special causes characteristic of the present times. Whoever recognises as their deepest cause the will of big capital to keep and to extend its domination over mankind, knows that they will not disappear with the end of the war. Nationalism excited to red heat everywhere, imputing all this to the bad racial character of the foe, thereby rousing stronger national hatred, will always be a fertile soil for new violence, material and spiritual.

The fall into barbarity is not a biological atavism to which mankind might be subjected at any time. The mechanism of how it came to work lies open to the view. The reign of falsehood does not mean that what is said and written is all lies. By emphasising part of the truth and omitting other parts the total can turn into untruth. Often it is combined with the conviction of its truth on the part of the speaker. Doubtless, it holds for everybody that what he says is never the objective, material, all-sided truth, but always subjective truth, a coloured personal, one-sided image of reality. Where all these subjective, personal, hence incomplete, partial truths complete, control and criticise one another, and where most people thereby are compelled to self-criticism, there arises out of them a more general aspect which we accept as the nearest approach to objective truth. If, however, this control is taken away and criticism is made impossible, whilst only one special opinion is put forward, the possibility of objective truth entirely vanishes. The reign of falsehood finds its essential basis in the suppression of free speech.

Cruelty in action often is accompanied by ardent devotion to new principles, that is, irritated by its failure to make progress rapidly enough. In normal society there is no other way than patient propaganda and the thorough self-education in working out arguments. If, however, dictatorship gives to the few power over the many, then, excited by the fear of losing this power, it tries to obtain its aims through increasing violence. The reign of cruelty finds its essential basis in the dictatorial power of a minority. If we wish that in the coming times, in the fight of classes and peoples, the downfall into barbarity be prevented, these are the things we must oppose with all energy; dictatorial power of a small group or party, and suppression or limitation of free speech.

The storm now sweeping over the earth has raised new problems and new solutions. Besides the spiritual devastation it brought spiritual renovation, new ideas on economic and social organisation, most conspicuous among them ideas on new forms of suppression, dominance and exploitation. These lessons will not

be lost to world capital; its fight will be more tenacious, its rule stronger by using these new methods. On the other side in the workers a stronger consciousness will dawn of how completely their liberation is bound up with the opposite factors. Now they feel in the body how much the reign of organized falsehood hampers them in gaining the simplest inkling of the knowledge they need, how much the reign of organized terror makes their organisation impossible. Stronger than ever before the will and the strength will arise in them to keep open the gates to knowledge by fighting for freedom of speech against any attempt to restrict it; to keep open the gate to class organisation by refusing and repelling any attempt at forcible suppression, in whatever guise of proletarian interest it may present itself.

*In this second world war the workers' movement has fallen much deeper than in the first. In the first world war its weakness, so sharply in contrast with former pride and boasting, manifested itself in that it was dragged along, that deliberately, by its own will, it followed the bourgeoisie and turned into underlings of nationalism. This character persisted in the next quarter of a century, with its idle talk and party intrigue, though gallant fighting in strikes occurred. In the present war the working class had no will of its own any more to decide on what to do; it was already incorporated into the entirety of the nation. As they are shuffled to and fro over factories and shops, uniformed and drilled, commanded to the fronts, mixed up with the other classes, all essence of the former working class has disappeared. The workers have lost their class; they do not exist as a class any more; class-consciousness has been washed away in the wholesale submission of all classes under the ideology of big capital. Their special class-vocabulary: socialism, community has been adopted by capital for its dissimilar concepts.*

This holds good especially for Central Europe, where in former times the workers' movement looked more powerful than anywhere else. In the Western countries there remains a sufficient amount of class feeling soon to find them back on the road to fight in the transformation of war industry to peace industry. Encumbered, however, with the heavy load of old forms and traditions, leading to battle in the old forms, it will have some difficulty to find its way to the new forms of fight. Still, the practical needs of the struggle for existence and working conditions will, more or less gradually, compel it to put up and clarify the new aims of conquering the mastery over production. Where, however, dictatorship has reigned and has been destroyed by foreign military power, there under new conditions of oppression and exploitation, a new working class must first take its rise. There a new generation will grow up, for whom

the old names and catchwords have no meaning any longer. Certainly, it will be difficult under foreign domination to keep the class feeling free and pure from nationalism. But with the collapse of so many old conditions and traditions, the mind will be more open to direct influence of the new realities. Every doctrine, every device and catchword will be taken, not at its face value, but at its real content.

More powerful than before, capitalism will tower after the war. But stronger also the fight of the working masses, sooner or later, will arise over against it. It is inevitable that in this fight the workers will aim at mastery over the shops, mastery over production, dominance over society, over labor, over their own life. The idea of self-rule through workers' councils will take hold of their minds, the practice of self-rule and workers' councils will determine their actions. So from the abyss of weakness they will rise to a new unfolding of power. Thus a new world will be built up. A new era is coming after the war, not of tranquility and peace, but of constructive class fight.

## 5. THE PEACE

### 1. TOWARDS NEW WAR

Hardly had Berlin fallen, hardly had the German power been annihilated, when in the American press well nigh unanimously a new war cry arose, proclaiming Russia the new enemy. With all the armies still in the field, a panic of new war spread over the exhausted tormented world. The new weapon, the atomic bomb, that had turned into dust two big industrial towns and killed at one stroke a hundred thousand people, struck terror into the hearts of civilised mankind and made the Americans realize their own insecurity. "There is no secret, and there is no defence," was the verdict of the atomic physicists who had constructed the bomb; in a couple of years every government can have them made, and they can be carried across the oceans or easily smuggled into America. An intensive campaign in the "Security Council of the 'United Nations'" for eliminating the threat was started. America proposed to establish an international, supernational board or authority; sole master of dangerous material all over the world, qualified to inspect manufacture in every country. The Russian Government refused

to admit such a committee with such powers into its territory and demanded that first America should destroy all its atomic bombs and give up its supremacy.

Why could not the Russian Government agree to an international control? Russian scientists, speaking for their rulers, said that Russia, the only country free from capitalism, must keep strictly to its sovereignty, cannot take part in a capitalist world unity, cannot suffer its socialism to be corrupted by capitalist-minded inspecting authorities. One would say that to open up their happier and progressive way of life to the view of the rest of the world should only propagate their economic system. So the Russian rulers' true reason for shunning a close contact of their subjects with the peoples of freer private capitalism must be that there is, besides war secrets, too much to conceal. During and after the war so many more details have come to light about conditions in Russia: the general low standard of living of the masses, the wide divergence between low wages of the workers and high salaries of the political and technical leaders, the concentration camps, where ten or more millions of people are starved and worked to death under the most horrible working conditions. The existence of this immense army of slave-labourers testifies that besides the much praised highly technical sector of Russian economy there is a large sector consisting of unskilled forced labor of the lowest level of productivity. It means a state of economic backwardness, not suspected before beneath the glorifying figures of five-year plans and stackhanovism, an inner weakness beneath the apparent progress. Whereas organisation and skilful planning, according to either admiring or hostile socialist opinion in the Western world should imply a higher form of production system, the effect seems to be frustrated to a high degree by the secret police, essential instrument of dictatorship, that ever endangers the security and state of life of any member of the technical and bureaucratic officialdom.

Russia and America are not only rivals in that they both are in need of the oil abundance in the Near East. Moreover, Russia has to fear the power of America. The yearly production of steel in 1945 for America was 80 millions of tons, for Russia (after the fourth five-year plan 24 millions; for coal these figures are 575 and 250 millions of tons. This shows the relative industrial strength, that cannot be compensated by Russia having 170 millions against America 130 millions of people. And now America transformed its industrial power into military and political power. This political power finds its ideological expression in the call for world-unity. "One world or none" was the panic cry of the atomic scientists when aghast they saw the consequences of their work; if this terrible new

power is not fettered through international unity, it will destroy mankind itself. But it stands to reason that in any world organisation of "united nations" the most powerful will dominate the others. The Russian rulers fully realize that to consent to the establishment of a superpower with large competencies means subjection under the most powerful of the associates, under American capitalism. They refuse.

So both prepare for war. Is it inevitable? All we can see and consider is what deep-seated forces lie at the root of this threat. It is to America in the first place that we have to turn. Here private capitalism is in full development, here socialism is insignificant, practically absent in politics, here planned economy and State direction of production was only a short-lived war necessity, soon replaced by free enterprise. All the conditions and phenomena of former free capitalism in Europe, especially in England and Germany, repeat themselves here, now on a far bigger scale. In 1928 already American production exceeded that of total Europe; at the beginning of the war, notwithstanding nine millions of unemployed, it produced more than in any former year. Then during the war the production increased enormously, as well on account of the greater number of workers as of a rapid rise in technical productivity; so that, despite the tremendous production of war materials, it was not necessary to impose strict limitations on the people's consumption, as was the case in European countries. War is always a golden time for capitalist profit, because the State, as buyer, pays willingly the highest prices. In America it was a gold rush as never before; war profits were not in terms of millions, but of billions of dollars. And the end of the war that devastated the production apparatus of Europe, sees America with a production apparatus more than fifty per cent. larger than at its beginning, with an industrial production twice as large as that of the rest of the capitalist world. For this increased capacity of output a market must be found. This is the problem facing American capitalism.

An inner market might easily be found: by giving a larger share to the working class, thus increasing their buying capacity. But this course, a cutting of profits, capitalism cannot take. It is convinced that the workers, if they can provide a fourth-hand car and a refrigerator, are well off and have nothing to desire. The essence of capital is to make profit.

So foreign markets have to be found. First there is devastated Europe. Its production apparatus has to be restored by American exports made possible through big loans. Part of it is already American property, and for what nominally remains European

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property heavy interest will have to be paid to American finance. European economy stands under direct control of American supervision agents who will see to it that the loans are spent in such a way that Europe cannot develop into a serious competitor. In Europe American capital finds a working class with much lower standard of life than that of the American workers, hence promising bigger profits than at home. But this is only possible if first of all its labor power is restored by sending as relief gifts of food, clothes, fuel, to the hungry impoverished peoples. It is investment at long, promising profits only in the long run. Moreover, it is here confronted with Russia trying to extend its exploitation system over Central and Western Europe.

Then there is China, the most promising market for American products. But here American capitalism has done its very best to spoil its own chances. In the civil war it supported the capitalist government against the red peasant armies, with the sole result that the American officers and agents turned away with disgust from the incapable rapacious Kuomintang rulers; that the peasant armies could neither be defeated nor win entire power, so that the permanent civil war brought chaos and prevented recovery. The natural sympathy of American capitalist rulers towards exploiting classes in other parts of the world, and its equally class-born hostility against popular movements, makes them blind to the fact that only out of the latter the basis for strong economic development may arise. Thus an entire reversal of policy would be necessary. The fact that the communist armies are backed by Russia intensifies American antagonism towards the Chinese people's masses, thus preventing China from becoming a market for American export.

Then there is Russia, the U.S.S.R., in extension and population a continent in itself, after the U.S.A., the second realm of the world in industrial development under one State government, with immense sources of the most valuable raw materials, the second gold producer of the world, abounding in fertile land, with a rapidly increasing population estimated within twenty years to reach up to 250 millions. It is closed to foreign commerce; an iron wall isolates it from any foreign influence. American capitalism, so much in need of markets for its outpouring mass of products can it suffer such a wall to exist without trying to break it open? It waged a war for "liberty"; liberty means free commerce and intercourse all over the world. It is not to be expected from the mightiest capitalist class that it should tolerate exclusion from a third part of the industrially developed world.

Moreover, American capitalists are confident that against the

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impact of even peaceful commerce Russian economy will not be able to hold out, but will gradually give way to private ownership. So, apparently, think the Russian rulers; they refuse to expose their skilfully constructed higher organisation of planned economy to the corrupting influences of private capitalism.

Thus the conditions for a deep-seated conflict are given. By its very nature American private capitalism is, fundamentally, the aggressor; Russian state-capitalism has to defend its position. Of course, defence often has to consist in attacking; in any war preparation each party imputes aggression to the other. So Russia tries to establish a protecting fringe beyond its borders and tries to extend its domination over Europe. Moreover, in all capitalist countries it has an organisation of devoted adherents and agents, allured by the revolutionary traditions of 1917, convinced that organized state-directed economy means socialism, firm in the expectation of an approaching economic crisis that will upset the system of private capitalism.

Among expert economists, too, there is a widespread opinion that world industry, that is, especially American industry, is to face a heavy crisis. Its productive capacity, its output of products is so large that there is no market for it. So, after the first peace boom supplying the deficiencies of the war years, there will come a heavy slump, with large unemployment and all its consequences. Strictly speaking, it is a continuation of the 1930-33 slump, after which no real recovery until 1940 took place. Then the war provided an enormous market for a rapidly expanding production, a market never choked because all products were rapidly destroyed. Now that the war is over the capitalist class again faces the pitiful situation that the world cannot absorb its products. Is it to be wondered at that once more its thoughts turn to those golden years of high profits when death and destruction of uncounted human lives brought in such a rich harvest? And that even great parts of the workers, narrow capitalist-minded as they are, think of that time only as years of high wages and exciting adventure?

War as a market can be partly substituted by war preparation as a market. Armaments already occupy a notable part of the productive force of Society. For the budget year 1946-47 America's military budget amounted to 12 billions of dollars. Compared with an estimated total yearly national product of 180 billions it may not look impressive; but compared with an American peace-time export of seven billions it gains in importance. The bulk of production is always destined for home consumption of food, clothes, tools, machinery, etc.; the fringe of export and extension is the active force

that stimulates the entirety of production, increasing the need for productive apparatus and labor hands, who, in their turn, need commodities; under capitalism each extra demand from outside tends to raise, directly and still more indirectly at a much enhanced rate, the extent of production. The continued demand for war materials to be destroyed and to be replaced continually because in a few years they are superseded by new inventions, may act as a force postponing the impending industrial crisis.

It is highly questionable, however, whether such a rate of war preparedness can last indefinitely. Though theoretically it seems possible that two lots of slave-drivers, practising different methods, but not so very different in deepest character, when viewing the risks, may prefer to come to terms with one another, it does as yet not look probable. The American capitalist class, knowing that at the other side of the iron curtain war preparations go on in the same feverish tempo, trusting that at the moment America is the strongest in war technics, driven by the desire to have the entire world open to international trade, believing in America's mission to make the world into one unity, might in view of the allurements of war well be expected to overcome its fear of seeing its big cities turned into dust by atom bombs. And then hell again breaks loose over mankind.

Is war inevitable? Is not war an anachronism? Why should man, able to discover atomic processes, not be able to establish world peace? Those who pose this question do not know what capitalism means. Can there be world peace when in Russia millions of slaves are worked to death in concentration camps, and the entire population lacks freedom? Can there be world peace when in America the kings of capital keep the entire society in subjection and exploitation without being faced by any trace of a fight for social freedom? Where capitalist greed and capitalist exploitation dominate world peace must remain a pious wish.

When we say that, hence, war is inseparable from capitalism, that war can only disappear with capitalism itself, this does not mean that war against war is of no use and that we have to wait till capitalism has been destroyed. It means that the fight against war is inseparable from fight against capitalism. War against war can be effective only as part of the workers' class war against capitalism.

If the question is raised whether it is possible to forestall a threatening war, it is pre-supposed that there is a conflict between government, invested with power and authority on war and peace, and the masses of the population, especially the working class. Their

voting power is without effect since it works only on election day; parliaments and Congresses are part of the ruling Power. So the question comes down to this: Have the workers, and in a wider sense the people's masses, at the moment of danger the possibility, by other than parliamentary means, to enforce their peace-will upon the war-preparing rulers? They have. If such a will actually lives within them, if they are prepared to stand with resolute conviction for their aim. Their form of fight then consists in direct mass-actions.

A government, a ruling class cannot go into war with the people unwilling and resisting. Therefore a moral and intellectual preparation is no less necessary than a technical and organisational preparation. Systematic war propaganda in the press, in broadcasting, in movies, must waken a bellicose spirit and suppress the instinctive but unorganised spirit of resistance. Hence it is certain that a decided conscious refusal on the part of the people's masses, demonstrated in outspoken widely heard protest, can have a determining influence upon the governmental policy. Such a protest may appear first in mass meetings voting sharp resolutions. More efficient will be the protest if the masses go into the streets demonstrating; against their ten and hundred thousands all riot acts and court injunctions are meaningless. And when these are not sufficient, or are suppressed by military violence, the workers and employees in traffic and industry can strike. Such a strike is not for wages, but to save society from utter destruction.

Government and the ruling class will try to break the resistance with all means of moral and physical suppression. So it will be a hard fight, demanding sacrifices, steadfastness and endurance. The psychological basis for such fight is not at once present in full vigour; it needs time to develop, and does so only under heavy spiritual strain. Since the middle classes always tend to vacillate between opposite moods, capitalist greed expressing itself in nationalist aggressiveness, and fear for destruction, from them stubborn resistance cannot be expected. The fight, therefore, takes the character of a class fight, with mass strikes as its most powerful weapon.

In the 19th century the idea of a universal strike at the outbreak of war, as well as that of a general refusal to take up arms, was propagated, especially by the anarchists; it was meant as a direct impediment to mobilisation and warfare. But the power of the working class was far too small at the time. In the first decade of the 20th century, when an imperialist war became ever more threatening, the question of how to prevent it became urgent among

European socialists. In the German socialist party there were discussions about mass strikes, and the idea gained ground whether mass actions could be used against war. But the party—and union—leaders opposed all such actions because they feared that in that case Government would suppress and annihilate their laboriously built-up organisations. They wished to restrict the workers' movement to parliamentary and trade union action. In 1912, when again war loomed near, an international peace congress was held at Basle. Under solemn babbling of the bells the delegates entered the cathedral, to listen to fine speeches from the most prominent leaders on the international unity and brotherhood of the workers. Part of the delegates wished to discuss ways and means how to oppose war; they intended to propose resolutions calling up the workers of all countries for discussion and mass action. But the presidium said no; no discussion was allowed. Whereas now the splendid demonstration of unity and peace-will, it said, would impress and warn the war-mongers, the discussions exposing our dissensions about the ways of action would encourage the militarists. Of course, it was just the reverse. The capitalist rulers were not deceived by this show; they at once sensed the inner weakness and fear; now they knew they could go on and that the socialist parties would not seriously oppose the war. So the disaster took its inevitable course. When in 1914, during the last days of July, working masses demonstrated in the streets of Berlin they felt uneasy, because the socialist party failed to give energetical directions; their calls were drowned in the louder national anthems of the bourgeois youth. The war started unhampered, with the working class organizations tied firmly to its chariot.

Basle had been a symbol, a test, a crossroad. The decision taken there determined all further events, the four years of murder over Europe, the catastrophe of all moral and spiritual progress, and then beyond, Hitlerism and the second world war. Could it have been otherwise? The Basle result was not chance, but a consequence of the actual inner state of the workers' movement: the supremacy of leaders, the docility of the masses. Social developments depend on the deeper general power relations of the classes. But just as in geography small structure details of watersheds determine whether the water flows to one or to another ocean, so small hardly noticed differences in relative strength at definite moments may have decisive effects on the course of events. If the opposition in the socialist parties had been stronger, more self-confident; if at the time in the workers the spirit of independent action had been stronger; if, hence, the Basle congress had been

compelled to discussion and thus had brought more clearness, then the war, surely, would not have been prevented. But from the onset it would have been crossed by class fights, by internal strife within each country breaking up national unity, exalting the workers' spirits. Then the history of the later years, the state of socialism, the relations of the classes, the conditions of society would have been different.

Now again society at large, and the working class especially, stands before the same question: can the war be prevented? Of course, there are differences; then the bourgeoisie was mostly unaware of the danger, whereas now it is itself full of apprehension; then the working class was well organized in a socialist party proclaiming itself hostile to imperialist policy, and the deadly foe of all capitalism, whereas present day America shows nothing of the sort. It is not certain whether this is only weakness. The Russian workers are entirely powerless; they lack the liberties which the American workers enjoy and may use in their fight: freedom of speech, of press, of discussion, of organization, of action. So, in any case, it is up to the American working class to decide whether as obedient instruments they will help to make their capitalist masters all-powerful masters of the world, or whether, by making war against war, they will enter for the first time into the war against capitalism, for their own freedom.

## 2. TOWARDS NEW SLAVERY

The second world war has devastated Europe. In Germany nearly all towns have been turned into ruins and rubbish by American bombers, where 60 millions of people, starving and naked, have to live as savages in their holes. In France, Italy, Holland, Poland, England, large parts have been devastated in the same way. More vital still than this visible lack of housing is the destruction of the production apparatus. Under the industrial system of capitalism the production apparatus, the factories, machines, traffic are the backbone, the basis of life. Under primitive, pre-capitalist conditions of simple agriculture the soil secures life. Under capitalism—in ruins agriculture, retrograde as it is, cannot provide sufficient food for the industrial millions, and ruined industry cannot provide tools and fertilizers to restore agriculture. So Europe, after the war, as first and main task, faces the problem of recovery.

Recovery, reconstruction, was the watchword proclaimed and heard everywhere. It meant more than simply reconstruction of the production apparatus, the construction of new machine ships,

trucks and factories. It meant reconstruction of the production system, of the system of social relations between capital and labor, the reconstruction of capitalism. Whereas during the war ideas arose and were heard of a new world to come after the war, a better world of harmony, social justice and progress, even of socialism, now it was made clear that, practically, capitalism and exploitation were to remain the basis of society. How could it be otherwise? Since during the war the workers acted only as obedient servants, soldiers to vanquish their masters' enemies, with never a thought of acting for their own freedom, there can be no question to-day of any change in the basic principle of society, capitalist exploitation.

This does not mean restoration of old capitalism. It has gone for ever. Conditions have changed. Capitalism is in distress. We are poor. Where productive force has been destroyed so thoroughly, it stands to reason that there must be scarceness of all life necessities. But there is more to it. Poverty is not equally distributed. As President Truman lately stated, wages had risen less and profits had risen more than the prices. The poor are poorer now, the rich are richer than before. This is no chance result of temporary conditions. To grasp its meaning we have to consider the deeper economic basis of the new social conditions. Formerly, in ordinary times, the gradual renovation of the productive apparatus at the rate in which it was used up or became antiquated, took a certain regular percentage of the entire labor of society. Now the mass destruction demands a mass renovation in a short time. This means that a larger part of the total labor has to be spent on the production of means of production, and a smaller part is left for consumption goods. Under capitalism the means of production are the property of the capitalist class; they are renovated out of the surplus-value. Hence more surplus-value is needed. This means that a larger share of the produce has to fall to the capitalist class, a smaller share to the working class. As capitalist opinion in the middle class literature expresses it: For recovery of prosperity the first condition is production of capital, accumulation of profits; high wages are an impediment to rapid recovery.

Thus the main problem of capitalist policy since the war is how to increase the surplus-value by depressing the standard of life of the workers. Automatically this happens already by the steady rise of prices, a consequence of the continuous issue of paper money under scarcity of goods. So the workers have to fight ever again for increase of the nominal wages, have ever again to strike, without attaining more than that the wages slowly, at a distance, follow the increasing cost of living. Still there may be a willingness among

individual employers—in view of the shortness of labor power—to pay more than the contracted scale of wages; so the State intervenes in the interest of the entire capitalist class. First by means of the institute of mediators. These state-appointed mediators, formerly designated to arbitrate in case of wage disputes, now have the function of imposing standard wages, maximum wages not to be surpassed by any employer. It now happens that in a strike the employer is willing to pay more wages, but the State forbids it. Or the government proclaims a general wage-pegging which, in view of the rising prices, means a continuous lowering of life standard. Thus the strike against individual employers or employers' unions becomes meaningless; each strike is directed and must be directed consciously against State power.

Trade unions, too, now acquire a new function. They are directly interposed as officially recognized institutions that negotiate and make treaties, in the name of the workers, with the governmental and capitalist bodies. Government gives legal sanction to the decisions of the union; this means that the workers are bound morally and legally to the contracts made by the union leaders considered as their representatives. Formerly it was the workers themselves who in their assemblies had to decide on the new working conditions; they could, by their vote, accept and reject them. Now this semblance of independence, of at least formal free decision in bargaining, is taken from them. What the union leaders in conference with government and capitalists arrange and agree upon, is considered law for the workers; they are not asked, and should they refuse, all the moral and organisational power of the union is used to force them into obedience. It is clear that unions as formally self-ruling organizations of the workers with chosen leaders are far more apt to impose the new bad working conditions than would be any power institute of the State. Thus the trade unions are made part of the power apparatus dominating the working class. The union is the salesman of the labor power of the workers, and in bargaining in conference with the State officials sells it to the employers.

This does not mean, of course, that now the unions and their leaders in every case consent to the capitalist demands. Thereby their authority would soon break down, as is actually the case to a certain degree now. Their attitude, moreover, often depends on political considerations, whether they stand entirely at the side of the Government, as in England, or are hostile against the Government, as in France. The trade union leaders in France, belonging to the C.P., hence agents of the Russian rulers, have not the least interest now to sustain the French capitalist class and its govern-

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ment, as they did some years ago when they took part in government themselves and stood hostile against the workers' strikes. Thus the fight of the workers against impoverishment is used by the political parties as a subordinate means in the struggle between the Western system of private capitalism and the Russian system of state capitalism.

The problem facing European capitalism, however, has a still wider scope. It is not only a matter of wages; it is the question whether, after this breakdown of the economic system, the working masses are willing to rebuild it. Capitalism knows that "labor only can save us." Hard work and low wages are the conditions for recovery. Will the workers, who remember the hard life under capitalist exploitation before the war, consent to a still harder life in order to restore that state of things? They may, if they can be convinced that it is for a better world that they now exert themselves, for a world of freedom for their class, for socialism. Socialism is the magic word able to transform sullen rebels into ready co-operators.

In broad layers of the middle class the conviction awoke that socialism, in one way or another, was needed for recovery; in most countries socialist ministers took office, socialist and communist parties dominated the parliaments. In England the slogan read: "Labor only can save us"; a large combined middle class and workers' vote gave an overwhelming majority to the Labor Party that in former governments had shown its capitalist reliability. Where a downright capitalist government would have been unable to suppress forcibly the resistance of the workers and to enforce the new hard living conditions upon them, a Labor Government was the only escape.

England, indeed, was in a critical condition. The second world war had exhausted its capital of foreign investments, the interest of which formerly directed a stream of unpaid consumption goods into the country. Uncle Shylock had given his generous aid only after his hard-pressed Ally had delivered most of its assets—notwithstanding the fact that the war essentially had served to destroy America's most dangerous rival to world domination, a Germany disposing of the resources of the entire European continent. England had to give up a large part of its colonies, it could hardly bear the expenses of playing the part of a Big Power any longer. Also we see the English bourgeoisie lose its old self-reliant feeling of confidence; its foreign policy, *e.g.*, in the Near East, shows signs of diffidence. The privileged position formerly occupied by the British working class, having its share in England's exploitation of the

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world, had gone. Now the Labor Party faced the task of clearing the bankrupt estate.

Socialism, however, was not to be simply make-believe. A good dose of Socialism was really needed to restore capitalism. Some of the basic industries of capitalist production, as coal mining and railway traffic, as a consequence of private ownership encumbered with an entirely antiquated lack of organisation, constituted a ridiculous muddle of inefficiency. To a well-developed capitalist production good organisation of such basic branches as coal, steel, traffic, is just as necessary as that of post and telegraph; so nationalization is a capitalist necessity, to which the name socialisation is given. Though there is nothing revolutionary in it, former governments were too full of respect for private enterprise to satisfy those general needs; a "socialist" Labor Government was needed to establish capitalist efficiency. When now the miners complain that they find no difference in treatment between the former mine owners and the new Coal Board they have to consider that the reform was not made for them, but for capitalism. It was not an attack on capitalist property; the coal mine shares—of doubtful quality—were replaced by Government Bonds; this manipulation has in no way lessened the exploitation of the workers.

The State has to assume functions in the production apparatus that formerly were the domain of private enterprise. This does not yet mean state-capitalism, as in Russia, but only state-directed capitalism, somewhat as it was in Nazi-Germany. And there are more points of resemblance. Capital is scarce in post-war Europe, as it was in Germany after the first war. The strictest economy is necessary. No more than under German fascism can it now be left to the free will of the capitalist class to spill the available national capital by importing luxuries or materials for the production of luxuries. To rebuild the production apparatus of the country Government has to take in hand the control and command of all imports and exports, of all transport of values across the frontiers. International trade then cannot be left to private merchants; the governments negotiate trade pacts, often strictly bilateral, on quantities comprising the bulk of food supplies and the industrial produce of the entire country. What Nazi-Germany introduced as the new totalitarian system of trade is now imitated by all the European States, an emergency measure here, just as it was there. But the character of the emergency is different; there it was to spare forces for a new assault toward world conquest, to prepare for world war; here it is to stave off starvation and revolution, a result of world war. Every government has to import foodstuffs from

abroad—grain production in Europe by deterioration of the soil and lack of hands having diminished to only half or two-thirds of its pre-war amount—lest the hungry population should revolt and bring the C.P. into power. But they must be paid by the export of industrial products withheld from their own people; or by loans from America, tying Western Europe with the bonds of debt slavery to the master of the world's gold.

So the State has a far greater power now than before. It is the consequence of war destruction. This does not mean, however, that it is a temporary abnormal state of things. Nobody believes that hereafter old private capitalism can return. The increasing size of enterprises, the interconnection of world economy, the concentration of capital demand planning and organisation; though now and then it needs catastrophes to enforce these tendencies. These post-war conditions form a transition, an introduction to a new world, the world of planned capitalism. The State rises as a mighty power above society. It dominates and regulates economic life, it directs planned production, it distributes food and other life necessities according to its judgment of primary needs, it distributes the surplus-value produced by the workers among the owners of capital; it directs more or less even the spiritual food, having distributive power over the paper needed for the printing of books. In its organisation the political parties are its bickering office-of-publicity holders, and the trade unions are part of its bureaucracy. And, most important, the totalitarian State incorporates the working masses into its social organisation as the obedient producers of value and surplus-value. This is performed by calling planned capitalism by the name of socialism.

This is not simply usurpation of a name. A simple word, a deceitful name, has no such power. The name is the expression of a reality. Socialism was the watchword of the suffering and fighting workers in the past century, the message of their liberation, the magic word occupying their hearts and heads. They did not see that it meant only an imperfect liberation, the rule of their leaders as new masters, disposing over production apparatus and product. Socialism was the program of the leaders and politicians they sent into the parliaments there to fight capitalism and exploitation. The goal of socialism, after the conquest of State power, was the organisation of production, planned economy, transferring the productive apparatus into the hands of the community, represented by the State. Now that in the 20th century capitalism in emergency needs planned economy, direction and organization of production through State power, the old slogan of the workers just fits in with the new

needs of capitalism. What had been the expression of their modest hopes for liberation becomes the instrument of their ready submission under stronger slavery. All the traditions of former aspirations, sacrifices, and heroic struggles, binding socialist workers to their creed and their party and condensed in the name socialism, now act as fetters laming resistance against the growing power of the new capitalism. Instead of clearly seeing the situation and resisting, blindfolded by the dear traditional slogans, they go into the new slavery.

This socialism is for Europe; it is not for America, nor for Russia. It is born in Europe, it has to save capitalist Europe. Why did Europe succumb into such utter powerlessness? It has outside Russia, 400 millions of people, more than the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. together, it is rich in raw materials for industry, rich in fertile land; it had a highly developed industry and a well-instructed population disposing of an abundance of capital. Why, then, such a lack of capitalist power? Because Europe is divided up in a dozen nationalities, speaking several dozens of languages, and so is driven by fierce centuries-old antagonisms and national hatreds. At the rise of capitalism these nations were the right size for economic units; now that capitalist efficiency needs larger units, of continent size, Europe is at a disadvantage against the new powers America and Russia. Its inner inextinguishable enmities and wars called in those mightier rivals who trampled it down, physically and economically. What at the end of the Middle Ages happened to the Italian towns, which had been the birthplaces of burgher power and early capitalism, but which, torn by their mutual feuds and hatreds, could not establish a larger national unity, and so were, as battlefield, trampled by the French and the Spanish armies and subjected to mightier foreign powers—now happened to Europe on a larger scale. European capitalism is now the victim of that nationalism that once was its force. When after the first world war President Wilson, as the arbiter of Europe, proclaimed the principle of national self-determination this was the very means to keep Europe powerless, divided up into a host of independent, mutually fighting parts. It is quite natural that now socialist politicians propagate the idea of one consolidated socialist Europe; but they are too late; Europe is being partitioned already into an Eastern and a Western block. The idea itself of trying to make socialist Europe a third world power bridling the aggression of the others, belongs to the realm of middle class ideology that sees only contending nations, of continent size now; this ideology means the salvation of European capitalism.

Looking from a general point of view we may say that the development of the productive forces of society renders inevitable their social organisation into one well-planned entirety. It may take place in two different ways. One is the way of capital, making State power the directing power of the production, making managers appointed from above the commanders of labor. It leads to totalitarianism in different degrees, the State extending its regulative power over ever more realms of human and social life. It leads to dictatorship, more or less camouflaged by parliamentary or sham democratic forms. Such dictatorship does not necessarily assume the brutal forms we have seen in Germany and Russia, with an all-powerful secret police keeping all classes in its cruel grip. For the working class the difference between Western democratic and Eastern dictatorial forms of Government is not essential, economically; in both it is subjected to exploitation by a ruling class of officials that commands production and distributes the produce. And to stand over against the State as the all-powerful master of the production apparatus, means loss of a good deal of that limited amount of free action by which it could formerly resist the demands of capital.

The other way is the way of the working class, seizing social power and mastery over the production apparatus.

### 3. TOWARDS NEW FREEDOM

The second world war has inaugurated a new epoch. More than the first world war it has changed the structure of the capitalist world. Thereby it has brought a fundamental change in the conditions of the workers' fight for freedom. These new conditions the working class has to know, to understand, and to face. It has, first, to give up illusions. Illusions about its future under capitalism, and illusions about an easy way of winning freedom in a better world of socialism.

In the past century, the first epoch of the workers' movement, the idea of socialism captured the mind. The workers built up their organisations, political parties, as well as trade unions, and attacked and fought capitalism. It was a fight by means of leaders; parliamentarians as spokesmen did the real fighting, and it was assumed that afterwards politicians and officials should do the real work of expropriating the capitalists and building up the new socialist world. Where reformism pervaded the socialist parties it was believed that by a series of reforms they would gradually mitigate and finally transform capitalism into a real commonwealth. Then at the end of the first world war hopes ran high about a near

world revolution led by the communist party. By proclaiming strict obedience of the workers towards the leaders under the name of discipline, this party believed it could beat down capitalism and establish state socialism. Both parties denounced capitalism, both promised a better world without exploitation, under their rulership. So millions of workers followed them, believing they would defeat capitalism and liberate the proletariat from slavery.

Now these illusions have broken down. First about capitalism. Not a mitigated, but an aggravated capitalism faces us. It is the working class that has to bear the burden of capitalist recovery. So they must fight. Ever again strikes flare up. Though successful in appearance, they do not succeed in staving off want and misery. Against the formidable power of capitalism they are too weak to bring relief.

Not illusions about party communism. Such could hardly have existed; because the C.P. never concealed its intention to establish a despotic rule over a subordinate working class. This goal stands squarely opposite to the workers' goal of being free masters of society themselves.

There were, too, illusions about socialism and unions. Now the workers discover that the organisations they considered as part of themselves stand as a power against them. Now they see that their leaders, political and union leaders, take side with capital. Their strikes are wild-cat strikes. In England Labor holds the State office for capitalism-in-need, and the trade unions are inserted as part of the apparatus of the State. As in the Grimethorpe strike a miner said to a reporter: "As usual, we are united and every one is against us."

This, indeed, is the mark of the new time. All the old powers stand against the workers, driving, sometimes cajoling, mostly denouncing and abusing them: capitalists, politicians, leaders, officials, the State. They have only themselves. But in their fight they are firmly united. More firmly, more unbreakably than in former contests, their mutual solidarity forging them into one solid body. Therein lies an indication of the future. To be sure, such small strikes cannot be more than a protest, a warning, to reveal the mood of the workers. Solid unity in such small units can be no more than a promise. To exert pressure upon the government they must be mass strikes.

In France and Italy, where the government tried to maintain wage-pegging without being able to prevent a rise of prices, mass strikes flared up, now indeed consciously directed against the government; combined with stronger forms of fight, with shop occupation,

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seizure by the workers of the offices. It was not, however, a pure class action of the workers but at the same time a political manoeuvre in party strife. The strikes were directed by the central committee of the trade unions (C.G.T.), dominated by the Communist Party, and had to serve as an action of Russian politics against the Western governments. Thus from the onset there was an intrinsic weakness in them. The fight against private capitalism took the form of submission to state capitalism; hence it was opposed by those who abhorred state capitalist exploitation as a worse condition. So the workers could not arrive at real class unity; their action could not display as real massal class action; their great aim of freedom was obscured through servitude to capitalist party slogans.

The fierce antagonism sprung up at the end of the war between Russia and the Western powers has changed the attitude of the classes towards Russian communism. Whereas the Western intellectuals take side with their capitalist masters against dictatorship, large parts of the workers once more see Russia as their partner. So the difficulty for the working class to-day is that it is involved in the struggle of two world powers, both ruling and exploiting them, both referring to the exploitation on the other side in order to make them obedient adherents. In the Western world the Communist Party, agent of Russian state capitalism, presents itself as the ally and leader of the workers against home capitalism. By patient, petty work in the organizations it shoved itself into the leading administrative places, showing how a well-organized minority is able to dominate a majority; unlike the socialist leaders bound to their own capitalism it does not hesitate to put up the most radical demands for the workers, thus to win their favor. In countries where American capitalism retains in power the most reactionary groups, the C.P. takes the lead of popular movements, as the future master, to make them allies of Russia should they win dominance. If in America itself the working masses should come to mass actions against new war, the C.P. will immediately join and try to make the action a source of spiritual confusion. On the reverse, American capitalism will not be slow to present itself as the liberator of the enslaved Russian masses, hereby to claim the adherence of the American workers.

This is not a chance situation of to-day. Always capitalist policy consists in dividing the working class by making it adhere to two opposite capitalist parties. They feel by instinct that in this way the working class is made powerless. So the more they are alike, two lots of profit-seeking exploiters and office-seeking politicians, the stronger they emphasize their often traditional artificial differences

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into sounding slogans simulating fundamental principles. So it was in home politics in every country, so it is now in international politics, against the working class of the world. Should capitalism succeed in establishing "one world" it certainly would discover the necessity to split into two contending halves, in order to prevent unity of the workers.

Here the working class needs wisdom. Not solely knowledge of society and its intricacies, but that intuitive wisdom that is growing out of their plain condition of life, that independence of mind that is based upon the pure principle of class struggle for freedom. Where both capitalist powers try to win the working masses by their noisy propaganda and thus to divide them, these have to realize that theirs is the third way, the fight for their own mastery over society.

This fight arises as an extension of their present small attempts of resistance. Up till now they struck separately; when one factory or industry went on strike the others looked on, apparently uninterested; so they could only worry the rulers who at most appeased them with small concessions. Once they perceive that the first condition to enforce their demands is mass unity of action they will begin to raise their class power against State-power. Up till now they let themselves be directed by capitalist interests. Once they understand that the other condition, not less primary, is to keep the direction in their own hands by means of their delegates, their strike committees, their workers' councils, and do not allow any leaders to lead them, they will have entered the road to freedom.

What we now witness is the beginning of breakdown of capitalism as an economic system. Not yet visible over the entire world, but over Europe, where it took its origin. In England, in Europe, capitalism arose; and like an oil-spot it extended ever wider over the world. Now in this centre we see it decay, hardening into despotic forms to stave off ruin, showing the now flourishing new sites, America, Australia, their future.

The beginning of breakdown: what was supposed to be a matter of the future, the limitedness of the earth as an impediment to further expansion of capitalism now manifests itself already. The slow increase of world trade since the first world war indicates the slackening tempo, and the deep crisis of 1930 has not been vanquished by a new prosperity. The slackening at the time did not enter into the consciousness of man; it could only be made out afterwards in statistical figures. To-day the breakdown is conscious experience; the broad masses of the people feel it and know it, and in panic try to find a way out.

The breakdown of an economic system: not yet of a social system.

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The old dependencies of the classes, the relations of a master and a servant class, the basic fact of exploitation as yet are in full vigour. Desperate efforts are made to consolidate them. By transforming the chance economy into planned economy, by increasing State-despotism, by intensifying the exploitation.

The beginning of breakdown of an old system: not yet the beginning rise of a new system. The working class is far back, compared to the master class, in recognizing the changed conditions. Whereas the capitalists are active in transforming old institutions and adapt them to new functions, the workers stubbornly adhere to traditional feelings and actions, and try to fight capital by putting their trust in agents of capitalism, in unions and parties. Surely the wild strikes are first indications of new forms of fight. But only when the entire working class is permeated by the new insight into the significance of self-action and self-rule, the way to freedom opens out.

*The breakdown of capitalism is at the same time the breakdown of the old socialism. Because socialism now turns out to be a harsher form of capitalism.* Socialism, as inherited from the 19th century, was the creed of a social mission for the leaders and politicians: to transform capitalism into a system of State-directed economy without exploitation, producing abundance for all. It was the creed of class struggle for the workers, the belief that by transferring government into the hands of these socialists they would assure their freedom. Why did it not happen? Because the casting of a secret vote was too insignificant an effort to count as a real class-fight. Because the socialist politicians stood single-handed within the entire capitalist fabric of society, against the immense power of the capitalist class being master of the production apparatus, with the workers' masses only looking on, expecting them, little squad, to upset the world. What could they do otherwise than run the affair in the usual way, and by reforming the worst abuses save their conscience? Now it is seen that socialism in the sense of State-directed planned economy means state-capitalism, and that socialism in the sense of workers' emancipation is only possible as a new orientation. The new orientation of socialism is self-direction of production, self-direction of the class-struggle, by means of workers' councils.

What is called the failure of the working class, alarming many socialists, the contradiction between the economic breakdown of capitalism and the inability of the workers to seize power and establish the new order, is no real contradiction. Economic changes only gradually produce changes in the mind. The workers educated

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in the belief in socialism stand bewildered now that they see that the very opposite, heavier slavery, is the outcome. To grasp that socialism and communism now both mean doctrines of enslavement is a hard job. New orientation needs time; maybe only a new generation will comprehend its full scope.

At the end of the first world war world revolution seemed near; the working class arose full of hope and expectation that now its old dreams would come true. But they were dreams of imperfect freedom, they could not be realized. Now at the end of the second world war only slavery and destruction seem near; hope is far distant; but, a task, the greater aim of real freedom looms. More powerful than before, capitalism rises as master of the world. More powerful than before the working class has to rise in its fight for mastery over the world. More powerful forms of suppression capitalism has found. More powerful forms of fight the working class has to find and use. So this crisis of capitalism at the same time will be the start of a new workers' movement.

A century ago, when the workers were a small class of down-trodden helpless individuals, the call was heard: proletarians of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win. Since then they have become the largest class; and they have united; but only imperfectly. On, in groups, smaller or larger, not yet as one class-unity. Only superficially, in outer forms, not yet in deep essence. And still they have nothing to lose but their chains; what else they have they cannot lose by fighting, only by timidly submitting. And the world to be won begins to be perceived dimly. At that time no clear goal, for which to unite, could be depicted; so their organizations in the end became tools of capitalism. Now the goal becomes distinct; opposite to the stronger domination by state-directed planned economy of the new capitalism stands what Marx called the association of free and equal producers. So the call for unity must be supplemented by indication of the goal: take the factories and machines; assert your mastery over the productive apparatus; organize production by means of workers' councils.

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Appendix 1

Anton Pannekoek

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Anton Pannekoek's life span coincided with what was almost  
the whole history of the modern labour movement; he  
experienced its rise as a movement of social protest, its trans-  
formation into a movement of social reform, and its eclipse  
as an independent class movement in the contemporary  
world. But Pannekoek also experienced its revolutionary  
potentialities in the spontaneous upheavals which, from time  
to time, interrupted the even flow of social evolution. He  
entered the labour movement a Marxist and he died a Marxist,  
still convinced that if there is a future, it will be a socialist  
future.

As have many prominent Dutch socialists, Pannekoek  
came from the middle class and his interest in socialism, as he  
once remarked, was due to a scientific bent strong enough to  
embrace both society and nature. To him, Marxism was the  
extension of science to social problems, and the humanisation  
of society. His great interest in social science was entirely  
compatible with his interest in natural science; he became not  
only one of the leading theoreticians of the radical labour  
movement but also an astronomer and mathematician of  
world renown.

This unifying attitude regarding natural and social science  
and philosophy determined the character of most of Panne-  
koek's work. One of his earliest publications, *Marxism and  
Darwinism*, elucidates the relationship between the two  
theories; one of his last, *Anthropogenesis*, deals with the  
origin of man. "The scientific importance of Marxism as well  
as of Darwinism," he wrote, "consists in their following out  
the theory of evolution, the one upon the domain of the  
organic world, the other upon the domain of society." What  
was so important in Darwin's work was the recognition that  
"under certain circumstances some animal-kinds will  
necessarily develop into other animal-kinds." There was a  
"mechanism," a "natural law," which explained the evolu-  
tionary process. That Darwin identified this "natural law"

with a struggle for existence analogous to capitalist competition did not affect his theory, nor did capitalist competition become therewith a "natural law."

It was Marx who formulated the propelling force for social development. "Historical materialism" referred to society; and though the world consists of both nature and society—as expressed in the need for man to eat in order to live—the laws of social development are not "laws of nature". And, of course, all "laws," whether of nature or society, are not absolute. But they are reliable enough, as verified by experience, to be considered "absolute" for purposes of human practise. At any rate, they deny sheer arbitrariness and free choice and relate to observed rules and regularities which allow for expectations that form the rationale for human activities.

With Marx Pannekoek held that it is "the production of the material necessities of life which forms the main structure of society and determines the political relations and social struggles." It is by way of class struggle that decisive social changes have been brought about and these changes have led from a less to a more productive level of social production. Socialism, too, implies the further development of the social forces of production, which are now hampered by the prevailing class relations. And this can only be done by a labouring population able to base its expectations on the emergence of a classless society.

In known history, stages of human and social existence are recognisable through changing tools and forms of production that alter the productivity of social labour. The "origin" of this process is lost in pre-history, but it is reasonable to assume that it is to be found in man's struggle for existence in a natural setting which enabled and forced him to develop a capacity for work and social organisation. Since Friedrich Engels wrote *The Role of Labour in the Transformation of Ape into Man*, a whole literature has been built around

the question of tools and human evolution.

In *Anthropogenesis*, Pannekoek returned to problems raised in his early *Marxism and Darwinism*. Just as there are "mechanisms" that account for social development and natural evolution, so there must be a "mechanism" that explains the rise of man in the animal world. Society, mutual aid, and even the use of "tools" are characteristic of other species besides man; what is specific to man is language, reason, and the making of tools. It is the last, the making of tools, which in all probability accounts for the simultaneous development of language and thought. Because the use of tools interposes itself between an organism and the outer world, between stimulus and action, it compels action, and hence thinking, to make a detour, from sense impressions by way of the tool, to the object.

Speech would be impossible without human thinking. The human mind has the capacity for abstract thought, of thinking in concepts. While mental life for both man and animal starts from sensations, which combine into images, the human mind differentiates between perceptions and actions by way of thought, just as the tool intervenes between man and that which he seeks to attain. The break between perceptions and actions, and the retention of past perceptions, allows for consciousness and thought, which establishes the inter-connections of perceptions and formulates theories applicable to practical actions. Natural science is a living proof of the close connection that exists between tools and thinking.

Because the tool is a separate and dead object which can be replaced when damaged, can be changed for a better one and differentiated into a multiplicity of forms for various uses, it assured man's extraordinary and rapid development; its use, in turn, assured the development of his brain. Labour, then, is the making and the "essence" of man, however much the worker may be despised and alienated. Work and the making of tools lifted man out of the animal world to the

plane of social actions in order to cope with life's necessities.

The change from animal to man must have been a very long process. But the change from primitive to modern man is relatively short. What distinguishes primitive from modern man is not a different brain capacity but a difference in the uses of this capacity. Where social production stagnates, society stagnates; where the productivity of labour develops slowly, social change is also tardy. In modern society social production developed rapidly, creating new and destroying old class relationships. Not the natural struggle for existence but the social struggle for one or another concept of social organisation has determined social development.

From its very beginning, socialism has been both theory and practise. It is thus not restricted to those who are thought to benefit by the transformation from capitalism to socialism. Being concerned with the classless society and the ending of social strife, and by attracting intelligent men from all layers of society, socialism demonstrated its possible realisation in advance. Already as a young student of the natural sciences, specialising in astronomy, Pannekoek entered the Sociaal-Demokratische Arbeiderspartij (S.D.A.P) and found himself, at once, in its left wing, on the side of Herman Gorter and Henriette Roland-Holst.

This party had been preceded by the Sociaal-Demokratische Bond (S.D.P) which under the influence of Domela Nieuwenhuis dissociated itself from the Second International. Anti-militarism was its foremost concern and Nieuwenhuis advocated the use of the General Strike for the prevention of war. He could not get a majority for his proposals and he detected, quite early, the trend towards class collaboration within the International. He opposed the exclusion of the Anarchists from the International and his experiences as a member of Parliament led him to reject parliamentarism as a weapon of social emancipation. The "anarchist-syndicalist" tendencies, represented by Nieuwenhuis, split the organisation,

and the new socialist party, more akin to the "model" German Social-Democracy, came into being. However, the radical ideology of the old party entered the traditions of the Dutch socialist movement.

This traditional radicalism found expression in the new party's monthly, *De Nieuwe Tijd*, particularly in the contributions of Gorter and Pannekoek who fought the growing opportunism of the party leaders. In 1909 the left wing group around Gorter was expelled and established a new organisation, the Sozial-Demokratische Partij. Pannekoek had meanwhile gone to Germany. He lectured in the party schools of the German Sozial-Demokratische Partei, wrote for its theoretical publications and for various other papers, especially the *Bremer Burgerzeitung*. He associated himself with Gorter's new organisation which, years later, under the leadership of van Revesteyn, Wijnkoop, and Ceton became the Moscow oriented Communist Partij.

Though in the tradition of the "libertarian socialism" of Nieuwenhuis, Pannekoek's opposition to reformism and social-democratic "revisionism" was a Marxist opposition to the "official Marxism" in both its "orthodox" and "revisionist" forms. In its "orthodox" form, Marxism served as an ideology that covered up a non-Marxian theory and practise. But Pannekoek's defence of Marxism was not that of the doctrinaire; more than anyone else he recognised that Marxism is not a dogma but a method of thinking about social issues in the actual process of social transformation. Not only were certain aspects of Marxist theory superceded by the development of Marxism itself, but some of its theses, brought forth under definite conditions, would lose their validity when conditions changed.

The First World War brought Pannekoek back to Holland. Prior to the war, together with Radek, Paul Frohlich and Johann Knief, he had been active in Bremen. The Bremen group of left-radicals, the International Communists, later

amalgamated with the Spartakus Bund, thus laying the foundation for the Communist Party of Germany. Anti-war groups in Germany found their leaders in Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring; anti-war sentiment in Holland centred around Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, and Henriette Roland-Holst. In Zimmerwald and Kienthal these groups joined Lenin and his followers in condemning the imperialist war and advocating proletarian actions for either peace or revolution. The Russian Revolution of 1917, hailed as a possible beginning of a world-revolutionary movement, was supported by both Dutch and German radicals despite previous basic differences between them and the Leninists.

While still in prison, Rosa Luxemburg expressed misgivings about the authoritarian tendencies of bolshevism. She feared for the socialist content of the Russian Revolution unless it should find a rectifying support in a proletarian revolution in the West. Her position of critical support towards the bolshevik regime was shared by Gorter and Pannekoek. They worked nevertheless in the new Communist Party and towards the establishment of a new International. In their views, however, this International was to be new not only in name but also in outlook, and with regard to both the socialist goal and the way to reach it.

The social-democratic concept of socialism is state-socialism, to be won by way of democratic-parliamentary procedures. Universal suffrage and trade unionism were the instruments to accomplish a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. Lenin and the bolsheviks did not believe in a peaceful transformation and advocated the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. But their concept of socialism was still that of social-democracy, and instrumentalities to this end still included parliamentarism and trade unionism.

However, Czarism was not overthrown by democratic processes and trade union activities. The organisation of the Revolution was that of spontaneously-evolving soviets, of

workers' and soldiers' councils, which soon gave way, however, to the bolshevik dictatorship. Just as Lenin was ready to make use of the soviet movement, so was he ready to utilise any other form of activity, including parliamentarism and trade unionism, to gain his end—dictatorial power for his party camouflaged as the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Having reached his goal in Russia, he tried to consolidate his regime with the help of revolutionary movements in Western Europe and, should this fail, by trying to gain sufficient influence in the Western labour movement to secure at least its indirect support. Because of the immediate needs of the bolshevik regime, as well as the political ideas of its leaders, the Communist International was not the beginning of a new labour movement but merely an attempt to gain control of the old movement and use it to secure the bolshevik regime in Russia.

The social patriotism of the Western labour organisations and their policy of class collaboration during the war convinced the revolutionary workers of Western Europe that these organisations could not be used for revolutionary purposes. They had become institutions bound to the capitalist system and had to be destroyed together with capitalism. However unavoidable and necessary for the early development of socialism and the struggle for immediate needs, parliamentarism and trade unionism were no longer instruments of class struggle. When they did enter the basic social conflict, it was on the side of capital. For Pannekoek this was not a question of bad leadership, to be solved by a better one, but of changed social conditions wherein parliamentarism and trade unionism played no longer an emancipatory role. The capitalist crisis in the wake of the war posed the question of revolution and the old labour movement could not be turned into a revolutionary force since socialism has no room for trade unions or formal bourgeois democracy.

Wherever, during the war, workers fought for immediate

demands they had to do so against the trade unions, as in the mass-strikes in Holland, Germany, Austria and Scotland. They organised their activities by way of shop committees, shop stewards or workers' councils, independently of existing trade unions. In every truly revolutionary situation, in Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, as well as in the Germany and Austria of 1918, workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets) arose spontaneously and attempted to organise economic and political life by extending the council system on a national scale. The rule of workers' councils is the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the councils are elected at the point of production, thus leaving unrepresented all social layers not associated with production. In itself, this may not lead to socialism, and, in fact, the German workers' councils voted themselves out of existence by supporting the *National Assembly*. Yet, proletarian self-determination requires a social organisation which leaves the decision-making power over production and distribution in the hands of the workers.

In this council movement, Pannekoek recognised the beginnings of a new revolutionary labour movement which, at the same time, was the beginning of a socialist reorganisation of society. This movement could arise and maintain itself only in opposition to the old labour movement. Its principles attracted the most militant sector of the rebellious proletariat, much to the chagrin of Lenin who could not conceive of a movement not under the control of a party, or the state, and who was busy emasculating the soviets in Russia. But neither could he agree to an international communist movement not under the absolute control of his own party. At first by way of intrigue, and then openly, after 1920, the bolsheviks tried to get the communist movement away from its anti-parliamentary and anti-trade union course, under the pretext that it was necessary not to lose contact with the masses which still adhered to the old organisations. Lenin's "*Left-Wing*" *Communism : An Infantile Disorder* was

directed first of all against Gorter and Pannekoek, the spokesmen of the communist council movement.

The Heidelberg Convention in 1919 split the German Communist Party into a Leninist minority and a majority adhering to the the principles of anti-parliamentarism and anti-trade unionism on which the party had originally been based. But there was now a new dividing question, namely, that of party or class dictatorship. The non-Leninist communists adopted the name, Communist Workers Party of Germany (K.A.P.D), and a similar organisation was later founded in Holland. Party communists opposed council communists and Pannekoek sided with the latter. The council communists attended the Second Congress of the Third International in the capacity of sympathisers. The conditions of admission to the International—complete subordination of the various national organisations to the will of the Russian Party—divorced the new council movement from the Communist International altogether.

The activities of the Communist International against the "ultra left" were the first direct Russian interventions in the life of communist organisations in other countries. The pattern of control never changed and subordinated, eventually, the whole world communist movement to the specific needs of Russia and the bolshevik state. Although the Russian-dominated movement, as Pannekoek and Gorter had predicted, never "captured" the Western trade unions, nor dominated the old socialist organisations by divorcing their followers from their leaders, they did destroy the independence and radical character of the emerging new communist labour movement. With the enormous prestige of a successful political revolution on their side, and with the failure of the German revolution, they could not fail to win a large majority in the communist movement to the principles of Leninism. The ideas and the movement of council communism declined steadily and practically disappeared altogether in the fascist

reign of terror and the Second World War.

While Lenin's fight against the "ultra left" was the first indication of the "counter revolutionary" tendencies of bolshevism, Pannekoek's and Gorter's struggle against the Leninist corruption of the new labour movement was the beginning of anti-bolshevism from a proletarian point of view. And this, of course, is the only consistent anti-bolshevism there is. Bourgeois "anti-bolshevism" is the current ideology of imperialist capital competition, which waxes and wanes according to changing national power relations. The Weimar Republic, for instance, fought bolshevism on the one hand and on the other made secret deals with the Red Army and open business deals with bolshevism in order to bolster its own political and economic position within the world-competitive process. There was the Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Russia. The Western allies of yesterday are the cold-war enemies of today, to mention only the most obvious of "inconsistencies" which, in fact, are the "politics" of capitalism, determined as they are, by nothing but the profit and power principles.

Anti-bolshevism must presuppose anti-capitalism since bolshevik state capitalism is merely another type of capitalism. This was not as obvious, of course, in 1920 as it is now. It required experience with Russian bolshevism to learn how socialism cannot be realised. The transfer of control of the means of production from private owners to the state and the centralistic and antagonistic determination of production and distribution still leaves intact capital labour relations as a relation between exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled. In its development, it merely leads to a more modern form of capitalism where capital is directly—and not indirectly, as it was previously—the collective property of a politically maintained ruling class. It is in this direction that all capitalist systems move, thus reducing capitalist "anti-bolshevism" to a mere imperialist struggle for world control.

In retrospect it is easy to see that the differences between Pannekoek and Lenin could not be resolved by way of argument. In 1920, however, it was still possible to hope that the Western working class would take an independent course—not towards a modified capitalism but towards its abolition. Answering Lenin's "*Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*", Gorter still tried to convince the bolsheviks of the "errors" of their ways, by pointing to the differences in socio-economic conditions between Russia and the West, and to the fact that the "tactics" which brought bolshevism to power in Russia could not possibly apply to a proletarian revolution in the West. The further development of bolshevism revealed, that the "bourgeois" elements in Leninism were due not to a "faulty theory," but had their source in the character of the Russian Revolution itself, which had been conceived and was carried out as a state capitalist revolution sustained by a pseudo-Marxian ideology.

In numerous articles in anti-bolshevik communist journals, and until the end of his life, Pannekoek elucidated upon the character of bolshevism and the Russian Revolution. Just as he did in his earlier criticism of Social Democracy, so here, too, he did not accuse the bolsheviks of a "betrayal" of working-class principles. He pointed out that the Russian Revolution, though an important episode in the development of the working-class movement, aspired only to a system of production which could be called state socialism, or state capitalism, which are one and the same thing. It did not betray its own goal any more than trade unions "betray" trade unionism. Just as there cannot be any other type of trade unionism than the existing one, so one cannot expect state capitalism to be something other than itself.

The Russian Revolution, however, had been fought under the banner of Marxism, and the bolshevik state is almost generally considered a Marxist regime. Marxism, and soon Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, remained the ideology of

Russian state capitalism. To show what the "Marxism" of Leninism really implied, Pannekoek undertook a critical examination of its philosophical basis, published under the title *Lenin as Philosopher*, in 1938.

Lenin's philosophical ideas appeared in his work *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, in Russian in 1908 and in German and English translations in 1927. Around 1904 certain Russian socialists, Bogdanov in particular, had taken an interest in modern Western natural philosophy, especially in the ideas of Ernst Mach, and tried to combine these with Marxism. They gained some influence within the Russian socialist party and Lenin set out to destroy this influence by attacking its apparent philosophical source.

Though not in a philosophical sense, Marx had called his system of thought materialism. It referred to the material base of all social existence and change and grew out of his rejection of both the philosophical materialism of Feuerbach and the philosophical idealism of Hegel. For bourgeois materialism, nature was objectively given reality and man was determined by natural laws. This direct confrontation of individual man and external nature, and the inability to see society and social labour as an indivisible aspect of the whole of reality, distinguished middle-class materialism from Historical Materialism.

Early bourgeois materialism, or natural philosophy, had held that through sense experience and the intellectual activity derived therefrom, it would be possible to gain absolute, valid knowledge of physical reality—thought to be made up of matter. In an attempt to carry the materialist representation of the objective world to the process of knowledge itself, Mach and the positivists denied the objective reality of matter, since physical concepts must be constructed from sense experience and thus retain their subjectivity. This disturbed Lenin greatly, because for him, knowledge was only what reflects objective truth, truth, that is, about

matter. In Mach's influence in socialist circles, he saw a corruption of Marxian materialism. The subjective element in Mach's theory of knowledge became, in Lenin's mind, an idealist aberration and a deliberate attempt to revive religious obscurantism.

It was true, of course, that the critical progress of science found idealistic interpreters who would give comfort to the religionists. Some Marxists began to defend the materialism of the once revolutionary bourgeoisie against the new idealism—and the new science as well—of the established capitalist class. To Lenin this seemed particularly important as the Russian revolutionary movement, still on the verge of the bourgeois revolution, waged its ideological struggle to a large extent with the scientific and philosophical arguments of the early Western bourgeoisie.

By confronting Lenin's attack on "Empiriocriticism" with its real scientific content, Pannekoek not only revealed Lenin's biased and distorted exposition of the ideas of Mach and Avenarius, but also his inability to criticise their work from a Marxian point of view. Lenin attacked Mach not from the point of view of historical materialism, but from that of an earlier and scientifically less developed bourgeois materialism. In this use of middle-class materialism in defence of "Marxism" Pannekoek saw an additional indication of the half-bourgeois, half-proletarian character of bolshevism and of the Russian Revolution itself. It went together with the state capitalist concept of "socialism", with the authoritarian attitudes towards spontaneity and organisation, with the out-dated and unrealisable principle of national self-determination, and with Lenin's conviction that only the middle-class intelligentsia is able to develop a revolutionary consciousness and is thus destined to lead the masses. The combination of bourgeois materialism and revolutionary Marxism which characterised Lenin's philosophy reappeared with the victorious bolshevism as the

combination of neo-capitalist practise and socialist ideology.

However the Russian Revolution was a progressive event of enormous significance comparable to the French Revolution. It also revealed that a capitalist system of production is not restricted to the private property relations which dominated its *laissez-faire period*. With the subsiding feeble wave of revolutionary activities in the wake of the First World War, capitalism re-established itself, despite the prevailing crisis conditions, by way of increasing state interventions in its economy. In the weaker capitalist nations this took the form of fascism and led to the intensification of imperialist policies which, finally, led to the Second World War. Even more than the First, the Second World War showed clearly that the existing labour movement was no longer a class movement but part and parcel of contemporary capitalism.

In Occupied Holland, during the Second World War, Pannekoek began his work on *Workers' Councils*, which he completed in 1947. It was a summing-up of his life experience with the theory and practise of the international labour movement and the development and transformation of capitalism in various nations and as a whole. This history of capitalism, and of the struggle against capitalism, ends with the triumph of a revived, though changed, capitalism after the Second World War, and with the utter subjugation of working-class interests to the competitive needs of the two rival capitalist systems preparing for a new world war. While in the West, the still existing labour organisations aspire, at best, to no more than the replacement of monopoly by state-capitalism, the so-called communist world movement hopes for a world revolution after the model of the Russian Revolution. In either case, socialism is confounded with public ownership where the state is master of production and workers are still subjected to a ruling class.

The collapse of the capitalism of old was also the collapse of the old labour movement. What this movement considered

to be socialism turns out to be a harsher form of capitalism. But unlike the the ruling class, which adapts itself quickly to changed conditions, the working class, by still adhering to traditional ideas and activities, finds itself in a powerless and apparently hopeless situation. And as economic changes only gradually change ideas, it may still take considerable time before a new labour movement—fitted to the new conditions—will arise. For labour's task is still the same, that is, the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the realisation of socialism. And this can be brought about only when the workers organise themselves and society in such a way as to assure a planned social production and distribution determined by the producers themselves. When such a labour movement arises, it will recognise its origins in the ideas of council communism and in those of one of its most consistent proponents—Anton Pannekoek.

Appendix 2 :

A Paul Mattick Interview

A Paul Mattick Interview by J.J. Lebel

This interview was given in February 1975. It was never published. Initially it was aimed to be part of a radio programme on workers' councils which never went on the air. A French translation was added to the second French edition of *Workers' Councils* (*Spartacus*, November 1982).

Question : What relevance does Pannekoek's book have in Europe today ? Do you think that the analytic memory and theory of the past experience of council communism, as Pannekoek expresses them, can be "heard" and understood by workers here today ?

Answer : A book, such as Pannekoek's, is not in need of immediate relevance. It concerns itself with a historical period; with past occurrences as well as possible future experiences, in which the phenomenon of workers' councils appearing and disappearing points to a trend of development in workers' class struggle and its changing objectives. Like anything else, forms of class struggle are historical in the sense that they make their appearance long before their full realisation becomes an actual possibility. In an embryonic form, for example, trade unions arose spontaneously as instruments of working class resistance to capitalist exploitation at the very beginning of capitalism's development, only to disappear again because of objectively determined hindrances to their further development. Yet, their temporary irrelevance did not hinder their full unfolding under changed conditions, which then determined their character, possibilities and limitations. Similarly, workers' councils made their appearance under conditions which precluded the release of all their revolutionary potentialities. The content of the social upheavals in which the first workers'

councils arose was not adequate to their organisational form. The Russian workers' councils of 1905 and 1917, for instance, fought for a constitutional bourgeois democracy and for trade union goals such as the eight-hour day and higher wages. The German workers' councils of 1918 gave up their momentarily-won political power in favour of the bourgeois National Assembly and the illusory evolutionary path of German social democracy. In either case, the workers' councils could only eliminate themselves as their organisational form contradicted their limited political and social goals. Whereas, in Russia, it was the objective unreadiness for a socialist revolution, in Germany it was the subjective unwillingness to realise socialism by revolutionary means, which accounted for the decay and, finally, the forced destruction of the council movement. Nonetheless, it had been the workers' councils, not the traditional labour organisations, which secured the success of the revolutionary upheavals however limited they proved to be. Although the workers' councils revealed that the proletariat is quite able to evolve revolutionary instrumentalities of its own—either in combination with the traditional labour organisations, or in opposition to them—at the time of their formation they only had very vague concepts, or none at all, of how to consolidate their power and use it in order to change society. Thus they fell back upon the political instrumentalities of the past. The question of whether or not the council idea, as elaborated by Pannekoek, could be understood and taken up by the workers today, is a rather strange one, because the council idea implies no more, but also no less, than the self-organisation of the workers wherever and whenever this becomes an inescapable necessity in the struggle for their immediate needs, or for farther-reaching goals, which can either no longer be reached by, or are in fact opposed by, traditional labour organisations such as the trade unions and political parties. In order to take place at all, a particular

struggle within a factory, or an industry, and the extension of the struggle over wider areas and larger numbers, may require a system of workers' delegates, committees of action, or workers' councils. Such struggles may or may not find the support of the existing labour organisations. If not, they will have to be carried on independently, by the fighting workers themselves, and imply their self-organisation. Under revolutionary circumstances, this may well lead to a widespread system of workers' councils, as the basis for a total reorganisation of the social structure. Of course, without such a revolutionary situation, expressing a social crisis condition, the working class will not concern itself with the wider implications of the council system, even though it might organise itself for particular struggles by way of councils. Pannekoek's description of the theory and practice of workers' councils relates thus to no more than the workers' own experiences. But what they experience they can also comprehend and, under favourable conditions, apply in their struggle within and against the capitalist system.

Q : How do you think Pannekoek's book came about and in what relationship to his practice (in Germany or Holland)? Do you think his book and his essay on trade unionism (in *Living Marxism*) apply to present-day conditions ?

A : Pannekoek wrote his book on workers' councils during the Second World War. It was a summing-up of his life-experience of the theory and practice of the international labour movement and of the development and transformation of capitalism within various nations and as a whole. It ends with the temporary triumph of a revived, though changed, capitalism, and with the utter subjugation of working class interests to the competitive needs of rival capitalist systems preparing for new imperialistic conflicts. Unlike the ruling classes, which adapt themselves quickly to

changed conditions, the working class, by still adhering to traditional ideas and activities, finds itself in a powerless and apparently hopeless situation. And as socio-economic changes only gradually change ideas, it may still take considerable time before a new labour movement—fitted to the new conditions—will arise. Although the continued existence of capitalism, in either its private or state-capitalist forms, proved that the expectation of the growth of a new labour movement in the wake of the Second World War was premature, the continued resilience of capitalism does not remove its immanent contradictions and will therefore not release the workers from the need to put an end to it. Of course, with capitalism still in the saddle, the old labour organisations, parliamentary parties and trade unions, could also be maintained. But they are already recognised, and recognise themselves, as part and parcel of capitalism, destined to go down with the system on which their existence depends. Long before it became an obvious fact, it was clear to Pannekoek that the old labour movement was a historical product of the rising capitalism, bound to this particular stage of development, wherein the question of revolution and socialism could only be raised but not answered. At such a time, these labour organisations were destined to degenerate into tools of capitalism. Socialism depended now on the rise of a new labour movement, able to create the preconditions for proletarian self-rule. If the workers were to take over the production process and determine the distribution of their products, they needed, even prior to this revolutionary transformation, to function and to organise themselves in an entirely different manner than in the past. In both forms of organisation, the parliamentary parties and the trade unions, the workers delegate their power to special groups of leaders and organisers, who are supposed to act on their behalf, but actually only foster their own separate interests. The workers lost

control over their own organisations. But even if this had not been so, these organisations were totally unfit to serve as instruments for either the proletarian revolution or the construction of socialism. Parliamentary parties were a product of bourgeois society, an expression of the political democracy of *laissez-faire* capitalism and only meaningful within this context. They have no place in socialism, which is supposed to end political strife by ending special interests and social class relations. As there is no room, nor need for political parties in a socialist society, their future superfluity already explains their ineffectiveness as an instrument of revolutionary change. Trade unions, too, have no functions in socialism, which does not know of wage relations and which organises its production not with regard to specific trades and industries but in accordance with social needs. As the emancipation of the working class can only be brought about by the workers themselves, they have to organise themselves as a class, in order to take and to hold power. Regarding present conditions, however, which are not as yet of a revolutionary nature, the council form of working-class activities does not directly betray its wider-reaching revolutionary potentialities, but is a mere expression of the accomplished integration of the traditional labour organisations into the capitalist system. Parliamentary parties and trade unions lose their limited effectiveness when it is no longer possible to combine an improvement of workers' living standards with a progressive expansion of capital. Under conditions which preclude a sufficient capitalist accumulation, that is, under conditions of economic crisis, the reformist activities of political parties and trade unions cease to be operative and these organisations abstain from their supposed functions, as they would now endanger the capitalist system itself. They will rather try to help sustain the system, up to the point of directly sabotaging the workers aspirations for better living and working conditions. They will help capitalism overcome

its crisis at the expense of the workers. In such a situation, the workers, unwilling to submit to the dictates of capital, are forced to resort to activities not sanctioned by official labour organisations, to so-called wildcat strikes, factory occupations and other forms of direct actions outside the control of the established labour organisations. These self-determined activities, with their temporary council structure, indicate the possibility of their radical application under arising revolutionary situations, replacing the traditional organisational forms, which have become a hindrance for both the struggle for immediate needs and for revolutionary goals.

Q : Can you give a few practical and concrete examples of how workers' councils function (in Russia, Germany, Hungary etc.), and how they differed from traditional party or union organisations? What are the basic differences? How do party and council or union clash?

A : As every strike, demonstration, occupation or other kinds of anti-capitalist activity which ignores the official labour organisations and escapes their controls, takes on the character of independent working class action, which determines its own organisation and procedures, may be regarded as a council movement; so, on a larger scale, the spontaneous organisation of revolutionary upheavals, such as occurred in Russia in 1905 and 1917, in Germany in 1918, and later—against the state-capitalist authorities—in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, avail themselves of workers' councils as the only form of working class actions possible under conditions in which all established institutions and organisations have become defenders of the status quo. These councils arise out of necessity, but also because of the opportunity provided by the capitalist production processes, which are already the "natural" forms of working class

activities and organisation. Here the workers are "organised" as a class against the capitalist class; the place of exploitation is also the vehicle for their resistance to capitalist oppression. "Organised" by their rulers in factories, industries, armies, or in separate working-class districts, workers turned these "organisations" into their own, by utilizing them for their independent endeavours and under their own leadership. The latter was elected from their midst, and was at all times recallable. Thus the historically evolved divergence between the institutionalised labour organisations and the working class at large was done away with, and the apparent contradiction between organisation and spontaneity resolved. Until now, to be sure, workers' councils have found their limitations in the limits of spontaneous actions under unfavourable conditions. They have been the sporadic expression of sporadic movements, as yet incapable of turning their potential for becoming the organisational structure of non-exploitative relations into reality. The basic difference between the council movement and the traditional labour organisations is, that whereas the latter lose their functions in a decaying capitalism and have nothing to contribute to the construction of socialism, the former not only become the only form of effective working-class actions regardless of the state in which capitalism finds itself, but are, at the same time, the prefiguration of the organisational structure of socialist society.

Q : Do you see any similarity (in intent, result or form) between council communism and present day workers' struggles in the US and Europe? Do you think any recent events indicate a significant and qualitative evolution towards a different type of society? Or, do you think the recent outstanding struggles (May '68, Lordstown, LIP etc) are just more of the same old programmed modernisations of capitalism?

A : There is, without doubt, a connection between the recent expressions of self-determined working-class actions, such as the French movement of May 1968, the occupation of LIP, but also the rebellions of the workers in East-Germany, Poland and even Russia, and the "instinctive" as well as conscious recognition that the forms of action represented by the concept and the reality of workers' councils is the necessary requirement of workers' struggles under prevailing conditions. Even unofficial strikes in the USA may be regarded as a first expression of a developing class consciousness, directing itself not only against the obvious capitalist enemy but also against the capitalistically-integrated official labour movement. However, traditions are still powerful and the institutions nourished by them constitute part of capitalism's resilience. It seems to require far more catastrophic situations than those recently experienced to release the full power of spontaneous mass actions, overrunning not just the defenders of capitalism but the system itself. In so far as recent and forthcoming workers' struggles escaped or escape the influence and control of the capitalist authorities, which the leadership of the official labour movement also belong to, they were and will be movements that cannot be integrated into the capitalist system and therefore constitute real revolutionary movements.

Q : If new general strikes (such as May '68) or other mass revolutionary movements come up, do you think they can evolve towards workers councils, away from parties and unions ? How ? What do you think can be done to get rid of parties and unions which prohibit self-organisation and direct democracy ?

A : In a general crisis of capitalism there is always the possibility that the social movements resulting from it will go beyond the obstacles placed in their way by traditional forms

of economic and political activity, and proceed in accordance with new necessities which include the need for effective forms of organisation. However, just as capitalism will not abdicate of its own accord, the existing labour organisations will try their utmost to keep control of these social movements and direct them towards goals favourable to themselves. In the "best" case—should they fail to help secure the status quo—they will direct a possible revolutionary upheaval into state-capitalist channels, in order to maintain social production relations which would not only allow for their further existence, but would also transform their organisations into instrumentalities of a modified capitalist system, and their bureaucracies into a new ruling class. In brief, if anything at all, they would attempt to turn a potential socialist revolution into a state-capitalist revolution, with results such as are represented by the so-called socialist nations. They may succeed in such endeavours, however that is the most pressing reason for both advocating and trying to set up workers' councils in any revolutionary situation, and for attempting to concentrate in them all the power needed for working-class self-determination. Social control through workers' councils is one future possibility among others. The probability of its realization is perhaps less than the probability of a state-capitalist transformation. But as the latter is not a solution to the problem inherent in social exploitation relations, a possible state-capitalist revolution would merely postpone, but not eliminate, the need for another revolution with socialism as its goal.

Q : Do you think councils are still, today, the basic pattern for a communist society or must they be updated to fit present day conditions ?

A : Communism will be a system of workers' councils or it will not exist. The "association of free and equal producers,"

which determines its own production and distribution, is thinkable only as a system of self-determination at the point of production, and the absence of any other authority than the collective will of the producers themselves. It means the end of the State, or any state-based system of exploitation. It must be a planned production, without the intervention of exchange relations and the vicissitudes of the market system. The regulation of the social character of production must discard fetishistic value and price relations, and must be carried out in terms of the economy of time, with direct labour-time as a measure of calculation, where calculation is still required. A presupposition of such a development is the absence of a central government with political power of its own. The central institutions of the council system are mere enterprises among others, without a special apparatus to assert their will outside the consent of other councils or of other enterprises. The structure of the system must be such as to combine central regulation with the self-determination of the producers. Whereas, under the conditions of underdevelopment which faced the first councils after a successful political revolution [the reference is to Russia in 1917], it was practically impossible to realize a communist society based on workers' councils; the prevailing conditions in the developed capitalist nations allow much better for the actualisation of socialism via the council system. It is precisely the more advanced form of capitalism, with its advanced technology, high productivity, and network of communication, which offers a material base for the establishment of communism based on a system of workers' councils. The council idea is not a thing of the past, but the most realistic proposition for the establishment of a socialist society. Nothing which has evolved during the last decades has robbed it of its feasibility; on the contrary, it has merely substantiated the non-utopian character of the workers' councils and the probability of the emergence of a truly communist society.