

INTERNATIONAL

COUNCIL

CORRESPONDENCE

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By the Groups of Council Communists of America

The period of progressive capitalist development is historically closed. The decline period of capital, a permanent condition of crisis, compels to ever greater convulsions of economy, to new imperialistic and military conflicts, to ever increasing unemployment and to general and absolute impoverishment of the workers. Thus is given the objective situation for the communist revolution in the capitalist countries. For the working class, there is only the revolutionary way out, which leads to the communist society. No one can deprive the workers of this task, which must be carried out by the class itself.

The publishers of Council Correspondence see in the acting self-initiative of the workers and in the growth of their self-consciousness the essential advance of the labor movement. We therefore combat the leadership policy of the old labor movement, and call upon the workers to take their fate in their own hands, to set aside the capitalist mode of production and themselves to administer and direct production and distribution in accordance with social rules having universal validity. As a fighting slogan and statement of goal we propose:

All power to the workers' councils! The means of production in the hands of the Workers!

Notes on the War Question

The problem of war, which has long been the object of so much discussion, has become a concrete question of the day thru the proceedings in Ethiopia. The enormous significance of this war lies in the fact that it illuminates as with a flash of lightning the general imperialistic rivalries and points to the inevitability of a new world slaughter. No thinking person seriously believes today that the war for the redistribution of the shares of profit can long be deferred any more, and the various nations are consciously making ready for this conflict. What the bourgeoisie and the various capitalist groups of interests have to say or conceal as to the war situation, we learn from their press; what they are doing in order that the war shall find them prepared is indicated by their arming manoeuvres and their "diplomacy".

The only thing that interests us here is the position to be taken on the war question by the revolutionary workers. First, in case the african war remains localized or is brought to an end thru imperialistic understandings before the world war breaks out; and secondly, what their position shall be in case the african adventure should presently develop into a new world war. The criterion for the position taken by us are the

real, international class interests of the proletariat. We have no desire either to defend the feudalistic regime in Abyssinia nor to justify fascist Italy nor to identify ourselves with the imperialistic interests of England; nor to confine ourselves, for lack of anything else to say, to the problems of the class struggle in the United States; nor thru the "maintenance of world peace" to preserve state-capitalist Russia from convulsion; nor to take up with the alliance policy of France against Germany (or the other way 'round). Our standpoint poses only the one question: what must, can and will the working class do?

The war--whether the one in Africa or the coming world war--has no other immediate significance for the workers than that a part of them will be killed off in the most revolting manner and that as a class, insofar as they are not slaughtered, they will be immeasurably impoverished. War, bringing death and misery to the workers, cannot from the working-class standpoint be bade welcome. But the preponderant working masses have today no class standpoint of their own; they are under the sway of the bourgeois ideology and follow the movements of their masters, willingly or unwillingly ready to suffer and die for them.

Our standpoint is not that of the working masses, but of a small part of their more or less class-conscious elements. We don't, however, damn the working class because of the circumstance that it is again making ready on an international scale to go under in millions for Capital. We realize that the ideas of a time are always those of the ruling class, and we know the objective as well as the subjective grounds which for the moment repress the revolutionary nature of the proletariat and which cause it to continue waging war for Capital, just as it also works for Capital.

The causes of the revolutionary unripeness of the proletariat shall not concern us at this place; we make these statements merely in order to draw the conclusion that the international working class will not in the near future thru revolutionary overturns put an end to capitalism and its wars. In this case there remains to the proletariat nothing other than to go along with capitalist policy; it has to decide for this or that capitalist group of interests and to fight for it.

What the proletariat would have to do in its own interest--that is, prevent the war--is possible only thru the revolutionary setting aside of capitalism. Still, the improbability of a revolution prior to the coming war makes the war certain already; and if the proletariat takes part in the war, it will do so not with a special

ideology, but that of its bourgeoisie. In such circumstances, the great mass of the workers will no doubt, just like the bourgeoisie, line up against revolutionists, and for these latter there will be for a time no other working possibility than such as exists under the present-day german fascism: the training and most careful selection of the revolutionists themselves, cautious increase of their numbers, and the endeavor to bring them alive thru the "dead time" (from the revolutionary standpoint), until the war has exhausted itself and has created the subjective ripeness for revolution. For if capitalist production has a revolutionizing character, so also has its destructive phase. If, in the course of its development, Capital shapes the greatest productive force, the proletariat, which is compelled to shatter the capitalist relations in order to consummate itself, --so in war it shapes, under the present conditions, a situation which, seen from any point of view, can only issue in the proletarian revolution.

While the last war had led almost to the door of the world revolution, this door will no doubt be opened by the new world war. For just as Capital is incapable of controlling production, which turns against it, so it is equally incapable of keeping destruction in forms and paths which offer the possibility of any desired diversion into "normal" situations. The magnitude and virulence of the coming war preclude its mastering by way of Capital. As in crisis, so also in war, Capitalism swims helpless in a sea of troubles; which is merely another confirmation of the fact that it is historically surpassed.

From the revolutionary point of view, war accelerates the advent of a truly revolutionary situation, and all forces will have to be properly directed to this factor. In unrevolutionary times, one need not, because of some silly idealistic fancies or other, lavish himself to no purpose, but will adjust his tactic and his will to the final struggle, which will be found in the wake of the war.

Capital pursues no social goals; there is today no "social will", but only particular strivings and groups of interests. Capital develops thru the sharpening of the conflicts of interests. If the number of these conflicts diminishes thru concentration, they become correspondingly harsher and more disintegrating. The more the conditions for a systematic social direction of economy from the technical and organizational standpoint are evolved, the more this possibility is precluded by reason of the persisting economic relations of present-day society. If economy cannot be planfully

organized even within the framework of a single nation, nor any peacefully regulated distribution of the shares of profit introduced, such a thing is still more thoroughly precluded on the international field. Necessary reorganizations, forced by reason of the sharpening contradiction between increasing productive forces and the persisting profit order (so as not to abolish the latter) can be brought about only by way of violence. If capital's concentration process and the crisis are means to the "extra-human" reorganization of profit economy--a reorganization determined by commodity fetishism--war likewise has no other significance. A capitalist war is not, however, always the same capitalist war. If the capitalist problem is one of creating additional surplus value, then a war which increases the profitability of capital may mean a way out of the capitalist difficulties and furnish the impulse for an accelerated advance. The war would here be a means of hastening the accumulation and would be followed not by revolutionary uprising but possibly by a general upswing. The fact that war always enriches only a few and impoverishes the mass under all circumstances is not the particular feature of war but the general tendency of the capitalist development. War itself does not create but destroys profit. It may, however, lead to the opening of new sources of profit which not only make up for the temporary loss but convert it into gain. War in this case is an accelerator for an otherwise slower movement. If war can accelerate accumulation, still on a higher stage of accumulation it is necessarily compelled to slow this accumulation down or, when it has come to a standstill, make its revival still more difficult. If the accelerated accumulation leads to over-accumulation and thereby to its arrest, it leads also to a situation in which the war must become a hindrance to further accumulation; a situation in which the war, instead of revealing new sources of profit, can continue to be conducted only for the sake of reorganizing the distribution of the profit internationally won and internationally determined. It is then a question not of increasing the profit and hence of overcoming the crisis, but of the altered distribution of the profit, in which connection the expenses of this process of distribution, the war costs, have to be set down as a pure loss by which the difficulties of capital are made more difficult.

The concentration of capital is, from the capitalist standpoint, progressive only in case there is a simultaneous growth of capital. Concentration without growth is only accelerated increase of the capitalist contradictions and difficulties. The character of the present crisis, as we have pointed it out (Council Correspondence, Vol 1, #2,) is not such as to permit of seeing in the coming world war a means of overcoming crisis.

The war can only deepen the crisis to a point at which the proletarian revolution must be released. But even though the war cannot be regarded as a means of overcoming the crisis, still there is capitalistically no possibility of preventing the war. If the profits can no longer be increased to conform to the further needs of accumulation, there remains to capital no other activity than the sharpened competitive struggle for the diminished or stagnating profit mass. The longer the crisis lasts, the more closely the war approaches. Though war most probably means the beginning of the capitalist end, still at the same time it is the only way out for capital, which can live only so long as it destroys. The paradoxical nature of this situation rests on the capitalist contradiction between exchange value and use value, on the fact that capital has to exercise production and destruction at the same time in order to exist at all. This is illustrated also in the increasing wealth of society with simultaneously decreasing profits, in the starving of human beings in the midst of superfluous products, etc.

We have said that if the proletariat cannot conduct an independent policy and if it fails to do so, then it can only come forth as an appendage of the bourgeoisie, with the interests of which it is compelled to conform. The african conflict presents an example of this fact. The mass of the italian workers still stands on the side of Mussolini, as the mass of the german workers still stands behind Hitler (indifference amounts to supporting the bourgeoisie) and the mass of the english workers identifies itself with the interests of its bourgeoisie. Even the policy of the "official labor movement" is a mere reflection of capitalist necessities. The Second International has identified itself with the imperialist measures and plans of England against Italy. The policy of "sanctions", the support of the League of Nations, even the transport strike which has remained no more than a phrase, or the petition for the closing of the Suez Canal--whatever was recommended against the war promoters on the part of the labor movement were recommendations in the interest of english imperialism. And if the Second International came out for english imperialism, so in turn english imperialism has come out for the labor movement in its struggle against "Fascism", which it has attacked as an "inciter of wars". We live in a funny world. Both the Second International as well as english imperialism, naturally want to maintain peace, which maintains the privileges of english imperialism, but the programs selected to this end are practically declarations of war. The Second International is for the english "peace" and hence for the english war.

The french reformists were more cautious in their demands for sanctions; the interests of the English are not identical with those of France. France's support of the english policy is an involuntary one. The policy of the Second International with regard to the war situation is a repetition of its position during the previous war: it is driving the masses to the shambles in the interest of the bourgeoisie.

The position of the Third International, identical with Russia's attitude on the war, is outwardly a silly cry for peace. On the african situation, it scarcely ventures to take a position. Radek writes in the "Rundschau" (#57): "Thruout the world the working people are following this war, and wish for the abyssinian masses not only that they will not come under any colonial yoke, but also that in this great historical test they will rend asunder the chains of feudalism and of slavery at home". But even this pious wish of the Third International in the interest of abyssinian independence came rather late, since Russia, like France, has no desire to offend Italy if such can in any way be avoided. It was not until her french ally, considering that the time for the world war has not yet come, made half-way concessions to England that Russia also found herself in a position where it became advisable to emit a few weak-kneed protests against Italy's aggressions, without, however, for that reason imposing any restrictions on the furnishing of Italy with raw materials necessary for war purposes.

If, in the opinion of the Third International, the workers should merely "follow" the war and in their hearts wish the Abyssinians luck, this is proof for the Trotskyists that Stalin has once more betrayed Leninism, for Lenin was of course for the unconditional support of all national movements and suppressed peoples. So then the "uncorrupted Leninists" write in "The New International" (Oct. 1935), without realizing how ridiculous they make themselves: "The position of neutrality of the international revolutionary proletariat we dismiss with a wave of the hand: if it is true that the revolutionary proletariat is for the defeat of Italy, when it is not neutral, then it is for the victory of Ethiopia. If it desires the victory of Ethiopia, then it must help to produce it. This means that it does not remain "neutral", but that it actively intervenes for Ethiopia." According to this conception, the most consistent revolutionists would be those who should join Haile Selassie's army and fight for him. Since, however, the trip to Africa costs money, one must after all confine himself to a few phrases which hurt nobody. Here are the concrete demands of the 200-percent Leninists: "Prevention of troop transports and of arms and munitions

supplies for Italy; support for arm supplies to Ethiopia: unambiguous, loud, fearless propoganda for the justness of the war from the ethiopian standpoint," etc. It never occurs to these people that the whole question of the "neutrality" of the proletariat, so hotly rejected, is no question at all. Either the proletariat fights with its bourgeoisie the war of the bourgeoisie, or else it makes revolution. These are the only two possibilities, and the possibility of a "neutral" attitude on the part of the proletariat does not exist. And so these people are merely tilting at their own fancies. Like parrots, they repeat leninist phrases which were revealed as humbug even during the last war. In the present-day imperialistic milieu there are no longer any national wars of liberation. Not much was lacking during the last war and Ethiopia would have gone in as a matter of self-interest. She was quite ready to take part in the imperialistic affray in order to profit by it. The feudal condition of the country does not preclude becoming involved in imperialistic policy. Only the lack of inner unity prevented at that time the participation of Ethiopia in the imperialist world war, as it today makes a struggle for "national liberation" or "independence" a silly phrase. Ethiopia is by no means a unified formation which takes up arms for its national independence, but a country disrupted by struggles of groups and interests; certain parts of which are ready to make common cause with Italy, while other parts prefer to continue exploiting their slaves by the grace of England. Within Ethiopia there are "suppressed nations" which line up against Haile Selassie just as Selassie does against Italy. So why not go still farther and carry the right of self-determination to Ethiopia itself, sabotage the ethiopian army and arm the suppressed tribes? Regardless of how zealously one may come out for the independence of Ethiopia, this "leninist principle" would always remain identical with support of the imperialist interests of England. It is about time that this silliest point of Leninism be thrown overboard, and one learns to realize that in the international field there are only two alternatives left today: either imperialist policy or -- working-class policy.

The abyssinian conflict has so far remained localized because the fronts for the coming world war are not yet drawn clearly enough. We see no use in considering here the question of when and with what combinations of powers the next war will occur and which of these combinations will have the best prospects. There is no imperialist country which has like-directed and unequivocal imperialistic interests; if only with the development of capital export, new oppositions of interests have taken form both on the international and the national planes, oppositions by which country and world

are divided into groups, some of which gain by peace and others of which profit from war. German fascism is actually being directed also against Capital, that is, against capitalist circles which are unable to identify themselves completely with the interests of the german imperialists. German as well as italian fascism have anticipated what had to wait until after the outbreak of the last war to be created; the coordinating war economy which passed for dictatorial subordination of all separate capitalist interests under the strongest imperialist interests, and which Lenin celebrated as state capitalism and the presupposition for socialism. Fascism is thus not merely an expression of the monopolistic concentration of economic policy, of the complete subordination of the workers under the profit needs of capital, but also a war measure for the new imperialistic conflicts. The objective unripeness of the war situation was illustrated in the japanese policy with regard to China, a policy which met with no real opposition among the other interested powers. The re-arming of Germany, the tearing up of the Versailles treaty, showed once more that a new world war requires first a reorientation of the various imperialisms. The isolation of the war in Africa merely points to the fact that this regrouping of imperialist interests is not yet completed. The war in Africa has so far given a new impetus only to diplomacy, the process of clarification, and only in this sense is it tied up with the coming world war.

The restraint on the part of England is to be understood only as preparation for war, just as the "neutrality" of Germany is identical with her re-arming and the vacillation of France is to be explained by the military unreadiness of Germany. A great number of surprises are still possible before the world war breaks out. It cannot be foreseen as yet what groups of powers will stand opposed to other groups. The one thing that is clear is that rivalries of great magnitude, such as the one between England and the United States, will help in determining those of the other countries, and that the smaller rivalries can work themselves out only within the framework of the large ones. If japanese imperialism functions almost exclusively on the basis of the english-american opposition, so the european alliance policy is likewise adjusted to that opposition. In whatever particular manner the powers may line up (we shall come back to this point in a special article), the process of formation may last a few years longer, but it may also be decided all of a sudden. The war is possible tomorrow, but it may equally well be delayed a few years longer. Looked at from the class standpoint, the proletariat must answer the war with the revolution. No other answer is possible. Just as it can only save itself thru the overthrow of capital, so it must endeavor even today

to assure its own life and must fight against capital for its material interests. Sharpening of the class struggle in peace and in war is ever the correct watchword. So far as concerns the present war in Africa, it presents no special problem. The proletariat can only come out for itself, by which it comes out for humanity. It cannot come out for the "independence of Ethiopia". The backward peoples fight, when they fight, for the development of their national capitalism, because nothing else is possible. It cannot be the task of the proletariat to fight for new as against old capitalist nations; it has to overthrow world capitalism. The proletariat has no word for Ethiopia, since Ethiopia still has no proletariat. But the proletariat has a word for Italy and for all other capitalist countries: the overthrow of world capitalism, and therewith the end of imperialism. With the end of world capitalism there is taken away at the same time the possibility of capitalizing the backward countries. However complicated the colonial question may appear within the framework of capitalism, the position of the proletariat has to be limited to the simplest formula: the safeguarding of the class interests of the proletariat, and nothing else.

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PLEASE NOTICE

The United Workers Party has found it advisable to drop the party name. In view of the fact that the U.W.P. was not a "party" in the traditional sense, the retention of the word has led to a lot of needless misunderstandings. The name "United Workers Party" had been selected at a time -- and then only as a temporary solution -- when the members of this organization were just beginning to find their present position. The new name, Groups of Council Communists, strikes us as a more accurate indication of our attitude, and all concerned are requested to note this change.

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TRADE UNIONISM

How must the working class fight capitalism in order to win? This is the all important question facing the workers every day. What efficient means of action, what tactics can it use to conquer power and defeat the enemy? No science, no theory, could tell them exactly what to do. But spontaneously and instinctively, by feeling out, by sensing the possibilities, they found their ways of action. And as capitalism grew and conquered the earth and increased its power, the power of the workers also increased. New modes of action, wider and more efficient, came up beside the old ones. It is evident that the changing conditions, the forms of action, the tactics of the class struggle have to change also. Trade unionism is the primary form of labor movement in fixed capitalism. The isolated worker is powerless against the capitalistic employer. To overcome this handicap, the workers organized into unions. The union binds the workers together into common action, with the strike as their weapon. Then the balance of power is relatively equal, or is some times even heaviest on the side of the workers, so that the isolated small employer is weak against the mighty union. Hence in developed capitalism trade unions and employer's unions (Associations, Trusts, Corporations, etc.), stand as fighting powers against each other.

Trade unionism first came up in England, where industrial capitalism first developed. Afterward it spread to other countries, as a natural companion of capitalist industry. In the United States there were very special conditions. In the beginning, the abundance of free unoccupied land, open to settlers, made a shortage of workers in the towns and relatively high wages and good conditions. The American Federation of Labor became a power in the country, and generally was able to uphold a relatively high standard of living for the workers who were organized in unions.

It is clear that under such conditions the idea of overthrowing capitalism could not for a moment arise in the minds of the workers. Capitalism offered them a sufficient and fairly secure living. They did not feel themselves a separate class whose interests were hostile to the existing order; they were part of it; they were conscious of partaking in all the possibilities of an ascending capitalism in a new continent. There was room for millions of people, coming mostly from Europe. For these increasing millions of farmers, a rapidly increasing industry was necessary, where, with energy and good

luck, workmen could rise to free artisans, to small business men, even to rich capitalists. It is natural that here a true capitalist spirit prevailed in the working class.

The same was the case in England. Here it was due to England's monopoly of world commerce and big industry, to the lack of competitors on the foreign markets, and to the possessions of rich colonies, which brought enormous wealth to England. The capitalist class had no need to fight for its profits and could allow the workers a reasonable living. Of course, at the first, fighting was necessary to urge this truth upon them; but then they could allow unions and grant wages in exchange for industrial peace. So here the working class was also imbued with the capitalist spirit.

Now this is entirely in harmony with the innermost character of trade unionism. Trade unionism is an action of the workers, which does not go beyond the limit of capitalism. Its aim is not to replace capitalism by another form of production, but to secure good living conditions within capitalism. Its character is not revolutionary, but conservative.

Certainly, trade union action is class struggle. There is a class antagonism in capitalism--capitalists and workers have opposing interests. Not only on the question of conservation of capitalism, but also within capitalism itself, with regard to the division of the total product. The capitalists attempt to increase their profits, the surplus value, as much as possible, by cutting down wages and increasing the hours or the intensity of labor. On the other hand, the workers attempt to increase their wages and to shorten their hours of work. The price of his labor power is not a fixed quantity, though it must exceed a certain hunger minimum; and it is not paid by the capitalist of his own free will. Thus this antagonism becomes the object of a contest, the real class struggle. It is the task, the function of the trade unions to carry on this fight.

Trade unionism was the first training school in proletarian virtue, in solidarity as the spirit of organized fighting. It embodied the first form of proletarian organized power. In the early English and American trade unions this virtue often petrified and degenerated into a narrow craft-corporation, a true capitalistic state of mind. It was different, however, where the workers had to fight for their very existence, where the utmost efforts of their unions could hardly uphold their standard of living, where the full force of an energetic, fighting and expanding capitalism attacked them. There they had to learn the wisdom that only the revolution could de-

finitely save them.

So there comes a disparity between the working class and trade unionism. The working class has to look beyond capitalism. Trade unionism lives entirely within capitalism and cannot look beyond it. Trade unionism can only represent a part, a necessary but narrow part, in the class struggle. And it develops aspects which bring it into conflict with the greater aims of the working class.

With the growth of capitalism and big industry, the unions too must grow. They become big corporations with thousands of members, extending over the whole country, having sections in every town and every factory. Officials must be appointed: presidents, secretaries, treasurers, to conduct the affairs, to manage the finances, locally and centrally. They are the leaders, who negotiate with the capitalists and who by this practice have acquired a special skill. The president of a union is a big shot, as big as the capitalist employer himself, and he discusses with him on equal terms, the interests of his members. The officials are specialists in trade union work, which the members, entirely occupied by their factory work cannot judge or direct themselves.

So large a corporation as a union is not simply an assembly of single workers; it becomes an organized body, like a living organism, with its own policy, its own character, its own mentality, its own traditions, its own functions. It is a body with its own interests, which are separate from the interests of the working class. It has a will to live and to fight for its existence. If it should come to pass that unions were no longer necessary for the workers, then they would not simply disappear. Their funds, their members, and their officials, all these are realities that will not disappear at once, but continue their existence as elements of the organization.

The union officials, the labor leaders, are the bearers of the special union interests. Originally workmen from the shop, they acquire, by long practice at the head of the organization, a new social character. In each social group, once it is big enough to form a special group, the nature of its work, molds and determines its social character, its mode of thinking and acting. Their function is entirely different from that of the workers. They do not work in factories, they are not exploited by capitalists, their existence is not threatened continually by unemployment. They sit in offices, in fairly secure positions. They have to manage corporation affairs and to speak at workers meetings and discuss with employers. Of course, they have to stand for the workers, and to defend their interests and wishes against the capitalists. This is,

however, not very different from the position of the lawyer who, appointed secretary of an organization, will stand for its members and defend their interests to the full of his capacity.

However, there is a difference. Because many of the labor leaders came from the ranks of the workers, they have experienced for themselves what wage slavery and exploitation means. They feel as members of the working class and the proletarian spirit often acts as a strong tradition in them. But the new reality of their life continually tends to weaken this tradition. Economically they are not proletarians any more. They sit in conferences with the capitalists, bargaining over wages and hours, pitting interests against interests, just as the opposing interests of the capitalist corporations are weighted one against the other. They learn to understand the capitalist's position just as well as the worker's position; they have an eye for "the needs of industry"; they try to mediate. Personal exceptions occur, of course, but as a rule they cannot have that elementary class feeling of the workers, that does not understand and weigh capitalist interests over against their own, but will fight for their proper interests. Thus they get into conflict with the workers.

The labor leaders in advanced capitalism are numerous enough to form a special group or class with a special class character and interests. As representatives and leaders of the unions they embody the character and the interests of the unions. The unions are necessary elements of capitalism, so the leaders feel as necessary items, as most useful citizens in capitalist society. The capitalist functions of unions is to regulate class conflicts and to secure industrial peace. So labor leaders see it as their duty as citizens to work for industrial peace and mediate in conflicts. The test of the union lies entirely within capitalism; so labor leaders do not look beyond it. The instinct of self-preservation the will of the unions to live and to fight for existence, is embodied in the will of the labor leaders to fight for the existence of the unions. Their own existence is indissolubly connected with the existence of the unions. This is not meant in a petty sense, that they only think of their personal jobs when fighting for the unions. It means that primary necessities of life and social functions determine opinions. Their whole life is concentrated in the unions, only here have they a task. So the most necessary organ of society, the only source of security and power is to them the unions; hence it must be preserved and defended with all possible means. Even when the realities of capitalist society undermine this position, This capitalism does, when with its expansion class conflicts become sharper.

The concentration of capital in powerful concerns and their connection with big finance renders the position of the capitalist employers much stronger than the workers. Powerful industrial magnates are reigning as monarchs over large masses of workers, they keep them in absolute subjection and do not allow "their" men to go into unions. Now and then the heavily exploited wage slaves break out in revolt, in a big strike. They hope to enforce better terms, shorter hours, more human conditions, the right to organize. Union organizers come to aid them. But then the capitalist masters use their social and political power. The strikers are driven from their homes; they are shot by militia or hired thugs; their spokesmen are railroaded into jail; their relief actions are prohibited by court injunctions. The capitalist press denounces their cause as disorder, murder and revolution; public opinion is aroused against them. Then, after months of standing firm and of heroic suffering, exhausted by misery and disappointment, unable to impress the capitalist steel structure, they have to submit and to postpone their claims to more opportune times.

In the trades where unions exist as mighty organizations, their position is weakened by this same concentration of capital. The large funds they had collected for strike support are insignificant in comparison to the money power of their adversaries. A couple of lock-outs may completely drain them. No matter how hard the capitalist employer presses upon the worker by cutting wages and intensifying their hours of labor, the union cannot wage a fight. When tariffs have to be renewed, the union feels itself the weaker party. It has to accept the bad terms the capitalists offer; no skill in bargaining avails. But now the trouble with the rank and file members begins. The men want to fight; it will not submit before they have fought; and they have not much to lose by fighting. The leaders, however, have much to lose - the financial power of the unions, perhaps its existence. They try to avoid the fight, which they consider hopeless. They have to convince the men that it is better to come to terms. So, in the final analysis, they must act as spokesmen of the employers to force the capitalists' terms upon the workers. It is even worse when the workers insist on fighting, in opposition to the decision of the unions. Then the union's power must be used as a weapon to subdue the workers.

So the labor leader has become the slave of his capitalistic task of securing the industrial peace - now at the cost of the workers, though he meant to serve them as best he could. He cannot look beyond capitalism, and within the horizon of capitalism with a capitalist outlook, he is right when he thinks that fighting is of no use. The

criticism can only mean that trade unionism stands here at the limit of its power.

Is there another way out then? Could the workers win anything by fighting? Probably they will lose the immediate issue of the fight; but they will gain something else. By not submitting without having fought, they rouse the spirit of revolt against capitalism. They proclaim a new issue. But here the whole working class must join in. To the whole class, to all their fellow workers, they must show that in capitalism there is no future for them, and that only by fighting, not as a trade union, but as a class unity, they can win. This means the beginning of a revolutionary struggle. And when their fellow workers understand this lesson, when simultaneous strikes break out in other trades, when a wave of rebellion goes over the country, then in the arrogant hearts of the capitalists there may appear some doubt as to their omnipotence and some willingness to make concessions.

The trade union leader does not understand this point of view, because trade unionism cannot reach beyond capitalism. He opposes this kind of fight. Fighting capitalism in this way, means at the same time rebellion against the trade unions. The labor leader stands beside the capitalist in their common fear for the workers rebellion.

When the trade unions fought against the capitalist class for better working conditions, the capitalist class hated them, but it had not the power to completely destroy them. If the trade unions would try to raise all the forces of the working class in their fight, the capitalist class would persecute them with all its means. They may see their actions repressed as rebellion, their offices destroyed by militia, their leaders thrown in jail and fined, their funds confiscated. On the other hand, if they keep their members from fighting, the capitalist class may consider them as valuable institutions, to be preserved and protected; and their leaders as deserving citizens. So the trade unions find themselves between the devil and the deep sea; on the one side persecution, which is a tough thing to bear for people who meant to be peaceful citizens; on the other side, the rebellion of the members, which may undermine the unions. The capitalist class, if it is wise, will recognize that a bit of sham fighting must be allowed to uphold the influence of the labor leaders over the members.

The conflict arising here are not anyone's fault; they are an inevitable consequence of capitalistic development. Capitalism exists, but it is at the same time on the way to perdition. It must be fought as a living thing, and at the same time, as a transitory thing. The workers must wage a steady fight for wages and working

conditions, while at the same time communistic ideas, more or less clear and conscious, awaken in their minds. They cling to the unions, feeling that these are still necessary, trying now and then to transform them into better fighting institutions. But the spirit of trade unionism, which is in its pure form a capitalist spirit, is not in the workers. The divergence between these two tendencies in capitalism and in the class struggle appears now as a rift between the trade union spirit, mainly embodied in their leaders, and the growing revolutionary feeling of the members. This rift becomes apparent in the opposite position they take in various important social and political questions/

Trade unionism is bound to capitalism; it has its best chances to obtain good wages when capitalism flourishes. So in times of depression it must hope that prosperity will be restored, and it must try to further it. To the workers as a class, the prosperity of capitalism is not at all important. When it is weakened by crisis or depressions, they have the best chance to attack it, to strengthen the forces of the revolution and to take the first steps toward freedom.

Capitalism extends its dominion over foreign continents, seizing their natural treasures in order to make big profits. It conquers colonies, subjugates the primitive population and exploits them, often with horrible cruelties. The working class denounces colonial exploitation and opposes it, but trade unionism often supports colonial politics as a way to capitalist prosperity.

With the enormous increase of capital in modern times, colonies and foreign countries are being used as places in which to invest large sums of capital. They become valuable possessions as markets for big industry and as producers of raw materials. A race for getting colonies, a fierce conflict of interests over the dividing of the world arises between the great capitalist states. In these politics of imperialism the middle classes are whirled along in a common exultation of national greatness. Then the trade unions side with the master class, because they consider the prosperity of their own national capitalism to be dependent on its success in the imperialist struggle. For the working class, imperialism means increasing power and brutality of their exploiters.

These conflicts of interests between the national capitalisms explodes into wars. World war is the crowning of the policy of imperialism. For the workers, war is not only the destroying of all their feelings of international brotherhood, it also means the most violent exploitation of their class for capitalist profit. The working class, as the most numerous and the most oppres-

sed class of society, has to bear all the horrors of war. The workers have to give not only their labor power, but also their health and their lives.

Trade unionism, however, in war must stand upon the side of the capitalist. Its interests are bound up with national capitalism, the victory of which it must wish with all its heart. Hence it assists in arousing strong national feelings and national hatred. It helps the capitalist class to drive the workers into war and to beat down all opposition.

Trade unionism abhors communism. Communism takes away the very basis of its existence. In communism, in the absence of capitalist employers, there is no room for the trade union and labor leaders. It is true that in countries with a strong socialist movement, where the bulk of the workers are socialists, the labor leaders must be socialists too, by origin as well as by environment. But then they are right-wing-socialists; and their socialism is restricted to the idea of a commonwealth, where instead of greedy capitalists, honest labor leaders will manage industrial production.

Trade unionism hates revolution. Revolution upsets all the ordinary relations between capitalists and workers. In its violent clashings, all those careful tariff regulations are swept away; in the strife of its gigantic forces the modest skill of the bargaining labor leaders loses its value. With all its power, trade unionism opposes the ideas of revolution and communism.

This opposition is not without significance. Trade unionism is a power in itself. It has considerable funds at its disposal, as material element of power. It has its spiritual influence, upheld and propagated by its periodical papers as mental element of power. It is a power in the hands of the leaders, who make use of it wherever the special interests of trade unions come into conflict with the revolutionary interests of the working class. Trade unionism, though built up by the workers and consisting of workers, has turned into a power over and above workers. Just as government is a power over and above the people.

The forms of trade unionism are different for different countries, owing to the different forms of development in capitalism. Nor do they always remain the same in every country. When they seem to be slowly dying away, the fighting spirit of the workers sometimes is able to transform them, or to build up new types of unionism. Thus in England, in the years 1880-90, the "new unionism" sprang up from the masses of poor dockers and the other badly paid, unskilled workers, bringing a new