

All those workers who have joined the anarchist and syndicalist camp have been provoked by the betrayal of the parliamentary leaders. But at least they have recognised how serious have been the errors committed by the parliamentary workers' movement. Our task therefore must be to draw them once again out of their present allegiance, and that means that it should be a matter of concern for Communists if they find themselves unable to devote themselves to this work. Indeed, it is not even a matter just of this, since for Communists it is no longer merely a question of principle whether or not one rejects parliamentarism, whether or not one rejects the trades union movement; today these matters have become, to a far greater degree than ever before, practical questions, and today history has placed them firmly on the agenda, has presented them for solution. If we observe matters in this way, we can see that it is precisely in America and in the West European countries that large workers' organisations are to be found which demand an anti-parliamentary policy and a break with the trades union movement.

And so we now have before us, today, the question as to what decision this Congress will reach. Should it adopt the line of the old workers' movement, then it will also find its way to the same fatal end. But should it adopt, decisively and with determined step, the path of unity with the left elements, who today are also to be found in Moscow; and should it recognise that there is much of value in them also, then the revolution will receive from the Third Congress of the Communist International a new forward driving force; on the other path, however, it will collapse into the sand and fall to pieces. It is the responsibility of this Congress to reach the correct decision. And it is from this standpoint also that we regard the question of our participation in the Third International.

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2. "The proletarian workers state must ..."

This is, of course, the well-known quotation from "Anti-Dühring" (p. 115): "Socialism", Chap. II: "Theoretical", Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1955, p. 115. It should be noted, however, that in his other great work, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", he makes in Chapter VII, page 176 of the present work, Engels give expression to the opposite view of Communism, that outlined by all Marxists: "The social foundation of Communism, as an 'Association of Free and Equal Producers' ..."

3. In the year 1847 the ...

NOTES AND COMMENTS

CHAPTER 1

1. "State Communism"

In the usage adopted by Marx and Engels, the terms "Communism" and "Socialism" were largely synonymous. However, since the ascendancy of right Social Democracy and Reformism in the working class movements of the developed capitalist lands, as well as of Social Democracy in its left or Leninist-Bolshevik form in Tsarist Russia and, after the 1917 Revolution, in the USSR, the term "Socialism" has increasingly come to be associated with the method of "socialist transformation" through state nationalisation. This may be either as the political cornerstone of a parliamentary-reformist programme, as in the case of the right Social Democratic Parties in the advanced capitalist lands, or as a full-scale revolutionary perspective, as in the case of the Bolshevik Party in Russia. In view of this, and in order to maintain a clear distinction between both of these degenerated forms and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the economic foundation of which lies in the Association of Free and Equal Producers and the implementation of the Average Social Hour of Labour as universal unit of economic regulation and control, the term "State Socialism" might be considered as better fitted to describe a society wholly delivered over to the mindless rule of an unrestrained party bureaucracy in which the absence of any objective framework of economic regulation gives rise to both unbridled economic power and privilege and a heartless, despair-ridden mode of distribution. In such a society, the more a pragmatically conceived system of "social planning" is applied as the alleged panacea of all social progress, the greater is the ensuing social chaos !

2. "The proletariat conquers state power and ... proclaims the means of production to be state property" (Engels).

This is, of course, the well-known quotation from "Anti-Dühring" (Pt. III: "Socialism", Chap. II: "Theoretical", Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, p.362). It should be noted, however, that in his other great work, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", as quoted in Chapter VII, page 106 of the present work, Engels gives expression to the opposite view of Communism, that adopted by his life-long friend and co-worker, Karl Marx, which defines the social foundation of Communism as an "Association of Free and Equal Producers".

3. "In the year 1917 the producers in Russia began to expropriate the owning class throughout the whole economy, with the intention of ordering production and distribution according to Communist principles".

Unlike the authors of "Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution", who did not enjoy our advantage of historical hindsight, we now know that the arena covered by the strictly

proletarian revolutionary movement in Russia was largely restricted to those areas of Tsarist Russia in which industry was most heavily concentrated (in the main St. Petersburg [later Leningrad], Moscow, Kharkov, the Donbas coal basin and the Tiflis and Baku oilfields), and embraced a total proletarian mass of no more than 7 million workers out of a total population of some 120 million throughout European and Asiatic Russia. The bulk of the Russian population were peasants, and this constituted the main factor underlying the historical prematureness of the proletarian revolutionary movement there, just as it also provides the socio-economic explanation for the failure of Lenin, the Bolsheviks and even Trotsky to comprehend Marxism except in the mechanical-determinist terms of a system of empirical "planning" based on state nationalisation.

In reality, therefore, we have in the case of the Russian Revolution not so much "the first victorious proletarian revolution in history which ushers in the era of Communism", a victory obtained with the support of the peasantry, as Bolshevik mythology would have us believe, but rather a *special form of the bourgeois revolution* - special because it took place at an advanced stage in the development of the world capitalist system, but over a national terrain which in itself was capitalistically extremely backward.

When the revolution of February 1917 finally broke, it was seen to possess two unique socio-historical features. Firstly, it took the form of a *wholly spontaneous social upheaval*, one in which no organised political force, including the Bolshevik Party, played any ideological or political role of any significance in the arousal or mobilisation of the social classes involved, which were the urban proletariat, urban petite bourgeoisie and peasantry. Indeed, the latter was at that point in its history far too weak to have intervened in any decisive way, numbering as it did a mere 40,000 or so members. As its second unique feature, the February Revolution proved to be *the only bourgeois-type revolution in history in which the bourgeoisie itself was found to be too weakly developed as to be able to fulfil a revolutionary role as leader of the revolution* - indeed, it had even permitted itself to be manipulated by Tsarism into adopting a counter-revolutionary position.

Historically, this had arisen because of the unique socio-political character of Tsarism as a combination of feudal absolutism and oriental despotism, an outgrowth of the incursions of the Tartar hordes, beginning with that of Baku Khan in 1238, into almost the entire area of Russia except the north, and the subsequent spontaneous incorporation of the political methods and institutions of oriental despotism into the political and state system of Tsarism after the eventual expulsion of the Mongol invaders under the leadership of Tsar Ivan III in 1492. As a result of this unique combination of oriental despotism and a socially inhibited feudalism, the class of feudal landowners was rendered economically and politically subservient to the Tsarist state, which was able to maintain itself by playing off the subjugated peasantry against an even more suppressed bourgeoisie. The latter, indeed, was never able to develop any revolutionary movement under its class leadership after the relatively weak and socially narrow Decembrist uprising of 1825, and in its later development Tsarism was able to buy off the bourgeoisie as a potential revolutionary threat to its rule through the system of state subsidies to encourage the growth of "feudal

capitalism".

The outcome of this anachronistic history was that the uniqueness of the Russian Revolutions of February and October 1917 lay, not in their culminating in the "first victorious establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", as Bolshevik Legend would have it, but in the greatest and final anachronism in an entire history of anachronisms: the onset of a bourgeois-type revolution in which the organically determined leading beneficiary class, the bourgeoisie, itself plays a counter-revolutionary role! As a consequence, leadership in the revolution devolved naturally upon the next lower class in the developing - but, in the event, stillborn - class structure of embryonic bourgeois society: the professional intelligentsia, and it was this stratum of the petite-bourgeoisie whose interests were represented in the Bolshevik Party, not that of the - numerically extremely small but highly militant - proletariat. In fact, it was the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership which, in part by means of an astute adaptation of Marxist concepts and terminology to the needs of a new proprietorial class, the professional intelligentsia, and in part through an almost boundless but always pragmatically astute political demagoguery, was able to manipulate ideologically and politically a majority of the industrial workers - though by no means all, as the Kronstadt Revolt of March 1921 was to reveal - into acting as revolutionary canon-fodder on behalf of the revolutionary cause of an alien class, in the mistaken belief that the victorious revolution would make them masters of their own destiny in a genuine Communist society. In this respect, the political methods of the Bolsheviks and of their motivating ideology, Leninism, were not fundamentally different in political character from the manipulation of the *sans culottes* by the Jacobins in the French Revolution.

Thus the complex structure of the Russian Revolution reveals a fundamentally bourgeois-type revolutionary movement within which was encapsulated - and hence unable to develop on a wider all-Russian scale or to acquire an international extension - a numerically much smaller proletarian revolutionary movement. This proletarian movement was, for both the above reasons but particularly on account of its *historical prematureness*, doomed to be ultimately stamped out by the rising system of State Socialism, in which the privileged class was that of the former professional intelligentsia now turned state bureaucrats, and the political leadership and representation of which was provided by the Bolshevik Party - disguised ideologically, of course, by "Marxism-Leninism".

The last stand of the heroic Russian proletarian revolutionaries was at the island fortress of Kronstadt, near St Petersburg. Here, in March 1921, many thousands of the cream of the Russian working class, representing those who had not been taken in by the ideological blandishments of Leninism, had organised themselves in the St. Petersburg and Kronstadt Soviets, in order to demand of Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership on the eve of the Xth. Bolshevik Party Congress that they might at last agree, some 4 years after the overthrow of Tsarism, to replace the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party with the dictatorship of the proletariat and the control of the economy by the producers themselves. Lenin's reply was to assemble units of the Red Army under the leadership of the former

