

# Dogmatism and Opportunism.

By HERMAN GORTER.

## The Example of Holland.

In the first article we showed why, theoretically, the use of Parliament in a country like Germany, where the revolution has broken out, is harmful to the proletariat. In the second article we proved the same, from a practical point of view. We will see how dangerous the use of Parliamentarism may be in a country where revolution has not yet broken out.

There is a country where a radical revolutionary Socialist movement has existed these five-and-twenty years, where a Communist Party has succeeded in getting seats in Parliament, and where, therefore, we can study the results of practical participation in Parliamentary action. This country is Holland. A short survey of the history of the Dutch movement should precede.

## Birth of Dutch S.D. Party.

After a long struggle with Anarchists and Syndicalists, the old Social-Democratic Party was born in 1894. After a very few years of really Marxian revolutionary propaganda and practice, opportunism began to manifest itself. Immediately we took action against it. We tried to hold it back. We fought opportunism in nearly every question of internal politics, in the agrarian question, the educational problem, the suffrage, the colonies, in the problems of the workers' insurance, the eight hours' working day, of militarism, of imperialism. We never gave in, but we did not succeed. We gathered a minority around us, however. This fight was fought for the most part theoretically, in written and oral debates, at congresses, etc. Of this struggle Henriette Roland Holst and the writer of this present article were the leaders.

Then a new generation came, who took up the fight on other, more practical lines. They began to organise the opposition in the groups of the party, and founded a weekly, the *Tribune*, of which the writer became a collaborator, and Wynkoop and van Ravestejn were the leaders.

## Expelled from Party.

Our fight grew so fierce, that, in 1909, the leader of the opportunist party, Troelstra, caused us to be thrown out of the Party, an unprecedented proceeding in the International till then.

It proved to be a blessing to us. For this was the time of the growth of Imperialism, and now our fierce struggle for life against the almighty old Party constrained us to fight even more strongly, and to the utmost, for Marxian principles. We had to take all consequences, draw all issues—in the first place in the question of militarism, colonisation and imperialism. We numbered only a few hundred, so that we had to find our weapons in hard study, truth, and the keenest fighting.

And thus we succeeded in forming a very small, but very strong party; a party that fought on straight lines, theoretically as well as practically, and on every question. Two proofs will suffice here. In 1912, when a world-war threatened to break out (by the conflict in Bosnia), we proposed at the Basle Congress immediately to proclaim the general European strike against war, a course of action which, in 1914, proved to have been right. In July and August, 1914, when it was generally believed that Holland would be likewise involved in the war, the course of action taken by our Party was exemplary. And so it has been for many years since. Our Party was rightly called the Bolshevist Party of Western Europe.

Now all this has changed completely. Although much stronger externally, the party has weakened considerably internally. We are a strong party no longer.

Little united as we are, we no longer present one single front. We have grown opportunist, erring in many directions, on many questions of principle, uncertain, often, how to act. And through what reason? Through the use of Parliamentary action, and of the elections.

In showing how much the Dutch Party (since 1918 no longer the S.D.P., but the C.P.: Communist Party) has deteriorated through the use of Parliamentarism, I will have to be most careful. The English worker cannot read our Press, and cannot therefore verify what I am going to say. For that reason I will omit all cases that are in any way dubious, stating only such facts as I have brought forward a hundred times in Holland, and as have never been opposed or denied.

As I have said before, our fight had ever been clear and straight in every direction. Then in 1917 our electoral campaign began, and things became quite different.

## Dutch Workers During War.

In order to understand this, we should know the position of the Netherlands workers during the war. As everybody knows, Holland depended on Germany, economically and consequently politically also. For that very reason the old party, and its leader Troelstra, opportunist and nationalistic to the core, were pro-German. The Anarchists and Syndicalists, and many petty-bourgeois, were pro-Entente, in the first place on account of the invasion of Belgium. In the electoral fight against that old party, the votes of these petty-bourgeois, the Anarchists and Syndicalists would be obtained, by being pro-Entente.

And thus our "leaders," Wynkoop and van Ravestejn, changed their tactics. To get seats in Parliament, to obtain "power" for the party and for themselves, these true and splendid fighters, these

true and sincere Marxists, became the enemies of German imperialism only, and turned into partisans of the Entente! In the opening speech of Wynkoop's electoral campaign, German imperialism was denounced, whilst there was a complete silence with regard to England and the Entente. And in our paper, the *Tribune*, it has been the same, for many years.

I will next give the mere facts. In April, 1917, Lenin, Zinovieff and others went from Switzerland, through Germany, to Russia. The editors of our paper (Wynkoop and van Ravestejn) wrote disapprovingly about that voyage. (It might possibly be harmful to the Entente!)

In July, 1917, Kerensky and Brusiloff made their last desperate offensive to save the cause of the Entente. This offensive, according to Trotsky, was the most terrible blow to the world-revolution and the Russian workers. Our daily paper, the *Tribune*, formerly the champion of Marxism and the revolution, approved openly of the Kerensky-Brusiloff offensive. And they wrote their disapproval of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, by which Lenin weakened the cause of England!

An Amsterdam comrade and the present writer, in August, 1917, wrote against this attitude of Wynkoop and van Ravestejn. Our opposition, however, was crushed. Two articles of mine against English Imperialism (in which I proved it to be as bad for the workers of the world as German Imperialism) were suppressed during nine months; the last of them, a keen attack against England, was not printed till after the elections, when it could do harm no longer! Thus the freedom of speech in our once so splendid party was done away with, only for the sake of some seats in Parliament!

## Celebrating Wilson.

Matters grew still worse, however. After the United States had joined in the war, van Ravestejn and Wynkoop began to celebrate Wilson. When at the Amsterdam Conference I told this to Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst and others they would not believe me. I will add here the words written by these editors of the *Tribune*:

"Indeed, for the United States it is not in the first, and not even in a foremost place, the direct, we might say the tangible, imperialistic interests which are at stake—interests, therefore, of a territorial, economic or financial nature."

According to the *Tribune*, therefore, the United States do not fight for power in China, on the Pacific, in Japan, in Siberia and in Russia. According to the *Tribune* the United States do not fight in order to obtain world-dominion! This is surely the most untrue utterance ever published by a Communist paper.

And the editors go still further. They say:—

"Wilson strives in the first place to defend the Union from a terrible danger he sees looming ahead, and to create a new world-order, in which that threatening danger, if it cannot be averted altogether, will at any rate be far more easily mastered, and it which it might even be possible for ever to avoid great collision between the powers. This is the material foundation for his 'idealism' and his war-madness. A capitalistic ideal, it is true, but an order of things which would undoubtedly mean a higher stage of development."

"This imperialistic ideal implies . . . nothing less than the possibility, the aim, to guard the capitalist world from a fearful catastrophe, such as it has been undergoing these last four years."

And, according to the editors, this war-aim of Wilson's has become "more and more the war-aim of radical political opinion in many European countries."

Here, therefore, we have approval for the aim of Entente Imperialism.

Here, after it has been said that the United States do not fight for material profit, it is said of the United States and of the entire Entente, nay of all pacifists in Europe, that they may very likely bring about a new capitalistic world-order, in which the great collisions are done away with, or for the most part prevented!

Here reformism is propagated in foreign politics, which can have the same outcome as reformism in home politics.

And in many other places this imperialistic aim of America and England was defended.

The editors of the *Tribune* agree here with all reformists and Social-Patriots, with all false Marxists of the type of Kautzky, with all pacifists, with all bourgeois demagogues like Lloyd George and Wilson, and with all bourgeois parties that try to betray the workers with the possibility of a world-league and world-peace. This world-peace is the most gigantic fraud the world has ever seen, and the *Tribune* agrees with it.

This is opposed to all the teachings the Marxian theory gives us so far. This is the strongest sample of pro-Entente politics on the part of the *Tribune* editors.

As there was a possibility that the Zimmerwald Conference at Stockholm would strengthen the position of Germany, Wynkoop boycotted that Conference, and, by his manoeuvres and his position as president of the Executive of our Party, rendered it impossible for us to go there.

The leaders of the Communist Party (then the S.D.P.), however, have applied these tactics also to practical politics in Parliament.

## Food from America.

The most serious suspicions that Wynkoop and van Ravestejn would be pro-Entente and pro-American also in Parliament, have come true. During the war, in the autumn of 1918, they have in Parliament proposed, "by every means" to obtain food from the United States. This means, therefore, also at the cost of having to give ships, etc., to the United States to help them in their fight against the Central Powers, Russia, etc. For everyone knew—and the term "by every means" proves that Wynkoop also understood—that in case the Netherlands acceded to their proposition, the United States would in their turn claim more ships for war purposes. In order to obtain white bread, therefore, the Parliamentary fraction supported the Entente. And it did so at a moment when the Entente was about to attack and suppress the Russian Revolution, and perhaps, also, the revolutions of Germany and Austria! As for that, the Members of Parliament had promised it already during the elections: "White bread for the people of the Netherlands, above all!"

Whether this proceeding was harmful to the Russian, the German, the Austrian, the International Revolution, was of no concern. Long live the National! This should come before the International! White bread by every means.

The S.D.P. claimed that the others, the German, English, French and American parties, should be international in the war, that they should not support it, that they should all suffer hunger, sorrow, the destruction of their land, the death of their children and women, and their own death, rather than support imperialism. And now, that the S.D.P. and the Netherlands proletariat were to suffer, but a thousand times less than that of the countries at war, now the S.D.P. and the Netherlands proletariat had no need to be international!

It was all make-believe, therefore. The abusing of the Social-Patriots as well as the glorifying of the Bolsheviki. As soon as their proper turn came to suffer for the international ideal, to place it above the national, they have failed. The S.P.D., in taking this course of action, has accepted the standpoint of Kautzky, Longuet, etc. Again, it has placed the small National Party interest over the International class interest. The great need of the present is to forget the party interest, and to place the international class interest above all. Or rather, to render the international interest the Party interest.

## Rotterdam an English Base.

And in practical politics Wynkoop and van Ravestejn added to this that they did not protest against the making of Rotterdam into a base for England and America. Although this base was intended without a doubt against the German Communist revolution also, although England and America will doubtlessly try, when in the future the Communist Revolution again breaks out in Germany, to smother it from this base, as they did in Hungary and tried to do in Russia, although in ceding Rotterdam as a base the Netherlands Government for the first time joined the world's reaction, although this was the first opportunity for the Netherlands proletariat to join on the one front in the international struggle against world capital for the world revolution, the Communists in the Netherlands have not uttered a single word of opposition or protest.

And, lastly, the leaders of the Communist Party in Holland have refused to protest against the Peace of Versailles, only in order not to offend the Entente capitalists. This peace brings immense suffering to the entire European proletariat. It renders the Continent of Europe impotent, uniting the entire world capital, under the leadership of England and the United States, against the world proletariat. And yet the Communist Party refused to join in the protest!

Again the same tactics: Everything against Germany, nothing against Anglo-American Imperialism. So much where foreign politics are concerned.

It goes without saying that to carry on these tactics, and to obtain that end, the gaining and retaining of seats in Parliament, the greatest opportunism became inevitable also in internal politics.

Holland has a Social-Patriotic Trade Union movement of some 250,000 men; a Syndicalist movement of some 60,000. Wynkoop and van Ravestejn wanted the votes of these latter. To that end the criticism on Syndicalism had either to cease completely, or to become totally insignificant (just as in England, when one needs the votes of the Labour Party, the sharp criticism of it will have to disappear). And thus it happened. The Syndicalists are constantly praised. And also the Anarchists. An article of mine, containing a sharp attack on the Syndicalists, was refused. There is a constant endeavour to win the good graces of these voters. Further, the old party gave money for the famished people of Vienna and Budapest. Wynkoop and van Ravestejn consequently proposed to send one hundred thousand guilders out of the Amsterdam and Rotterdam municipal funds! This was actually done!

## Only on the Programme.

The Social-Patriotic Party has on its programme the socialisation of industry. To compete with these in the eyes of the voters Wynkoop and van Ravestejn claimed in Parliament the nationalisation of the soil. No revolution, therefore, but socialisation by means of Parliament!

It likewise goes without saying that in order to carry on these tactics the leaders had to become ~~the~~ almighty leaders, usurping all the power.

\* Holland had more brown bread than any of the countries at war had.

(Continued next page, column 3.)

## BOOKS REVIEWED.

### \*CREATIVE REVOLUTION.

A Review. By HUGH HOPE.

The authors of this book tell us that *Creative Revolution* is an endeavour to clear much prevalent confusionism away from the path of Socialist theory; but it is likewise a call to arms, and so on.

It would seem that the work was chiefly written for revolutionary leaders and propagandists, especially those of the artistic temperament. The writers think that "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" should be superseded by a newly-coined word, "Ergatocracy," and the first chapter is a definition of it and its underlying principles. "Ergates," it is explained, "is the Greek word for worker." The term seems so unfortunate; it savours of autocracy, and suggests a smile when one thinks of "ergo." But it might go into the language like ochlocracy—mob rule—without ever becoming popular like democracy.

The chapter on *Social Solidarity* is primarily addressed to bourgeois intellectuals. It deals principally with Bertrand Russell (who, by the way, puts Ethel Snowden in the shade in his polite attack on the Russian Communists in the *Nation* of the 10th inst.), Ramsay MacDonald, and the Fabians. One gathers from it that while this gang would endeavour to capture Parliament, and institute a reformist rule of labour, the workers should concentrate on the destruction of Parliament and the substitution of the "regional and occupational soviets."

In *The Class Struggle* the work of the Plebs League and Labour Colleges, the Syndicalists and the I.W.W. is lightly touched upon. Towards the end of the chapter we find this pronouncement: "We do not build too much on the possibilities of 'corrupting' the armed forces of the Crown." There are other methods for ensuring the victory of the workers when the decisive moment comes." But somewhere else the authors hint at the perils and hardships that a revolution in England might bring to the workers from her utter dependence on foreign countries for food. Such suffering would become unbearable, if a loyalist Navy controlled the trade routes and America and the great Colonies remained reactionary, and would inevitably result in an abortive revolution which might lead to a subsequent period of inaction and reaction. It seems that, as was done in Russia, some efficient means must be devised to disseminate propaganda among the most highly-organised and trustworthy fighting forces of the world, unless the "other methods for ensuring the victory of the workers" are made known, tried, and deemed feasible by the revolutionary Communists.

In appraising the Shop Stewards' movement, the authors declare that "we have no Lenin here, nor need of one"; a rather odd thing to say when, as Communists and revolutionaries, we are always slating our official leaders for betrayal of the cause. Personally, I do not care from what class the English Lenin comes, but I am sure it will require an iron will to mould the efficient minority that must carry on the work of the revolution during the transition stage.

The book is well prepared, and it runs the gamut of modernist literature from Whitman, Marx and Morris to Freud, Jung and Trotsky.

The quotations are copious. This, from Rosa Luxemburg's *Revolutionary Socialism in Action* is very fine:—

"To-day we can seriously set about destroying Capitalism once for all. . . If the proletariat fails to fulfil its duty as a class, we shall crash down together in the common doom."

There is another, exceedingly good, from *Direct Action*, by Willie Gallacher and J. R. Campbell:—

"The workers have to create organisations to counter the State organisation of capitalism. The joint industrial and social committee should be the nucleus of working-class political power. As the industrial and social organisation grows strong enough it will be forced to fight the Capitalist State, not to take possession of, but to smash it."

But there are also strangely-involved passages like this which is apparently meant to explain a principle:—

"As Communist ergatocracy realises itself in practice; as the Socialist mentality becomes generalised under Socialist institutions; when the ownership rule, which is the essential characteristic of bourgeois democracy, has been destroyed beyond all possibility of revival; when the government of men has been replaced by the administration of things—then, with the passing of the phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the connotation of the 'cracy' element in the term ergatocracy, will suffer a sea-change."

### THE WORLD OF THE LIVING DEAD.

The prison world is one little explored by those who are able to describe it, and such a work as that of Mr. Vance Marshall, "The World of the Living Dead," is a valuable addition to modern literature. He has contrived to enter the hearts of the inhabitants of that ghostly region and express for us their thoughts and feelings, their hopes and fears. Very wisely he has not dwelt much upon his own part in the tragedy of prison, for the

\* *Creative Revolution: A Study in Communist Ergatocracy.* By Eden and Cedar Paul. (4s. 6d. net.) George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

political prisoner undergoing a sentence of a few months is, properly speaking, only a traveller in those regions and not an inhabitant. Upheld by a sense of personal dignity, conscious that outside are warm friends and a kindly welcome, and a happy and prosperous life, the discomforts of the goal are to such a person nothing but temporary inconveniences.

The value of Mr. Marshall's book is that he makes us live with the ordinary law-breaker under the torture of the prison system. There are around us overwhelming evidences of the strength of the social instinct in man which brought him from the isolation of the wilderness to found cities and nations and institutions that seem as stable as the universe. It is because our penal system outrages this strong and fundamental instinct that it is so cruel; more cruel probably than the tortures of older civilisations, where physical pain was inflicted or life taken, but where human companionship, love and pity, were not denied to the unhappy victims.

Take the case of the respectable man who falls under the penalty of the law: the terror that precedes his arrest, the shock of its occurrence, the agony of shame and terror through which he must go into the court, the torture of anxiety about loved ones on whom undesired misery has fallen; for whose sake, in nine cases out of ten, the transgressor committed his offence; the loss of friends, the coldness of relatives; these are the elements of a terrible human tragedy. Mr. Marshall tells of the Mother, spectator, stricken with paralysis in the court, when her son was sentenced to a flogging. There is no exaggeration, and it is evident that he had in his mind's eye cases which he could not but have witnessed of the overwhelming pain which the harsh sentences upon young lads inflict upon their mothers. After the torture of the court, our penal system hands its victims over to a refinement of cruelty which could have been devised only by a class which regards its "inferiors" as mere insensate beasts. I remember seeing a dramatised version of Tolstoj's "Resurrection," and being struck with the mercifulness of the prison system which permits to its victims the solace of companionship, however serious has been the crime, and comparing it with the harshness of Holloway Gaol, where I had just spent some weeks. Here, as in England, the man with his spirit wounded beyond all healing, bearing not only his own pain, but that of wife and children, father and mother, all whose happiness is involved in his disgrace, broken with personal shame and remorse, burdened with carking anxiety for those outside, is shut up in a narrow cell with his griefs and guarded by those whose business it is to treat him as a creature without human feelings.

Even if the prison diet were not insufficient, and semi-starvation, overwork and cold, were not added to the miseries of the prisoners (and in spite of his proven statements, we are told that in making these assertions in his previous book, Mr. Marshall overstates his case), how wearily must the months and years drag by, in utter loneliness, without a friend, without one hour's human companionship or kindness—alone night and day with the wounded spirit, the angry, clouded mind. It is neither life with its passions, its hopes, its joys, nor death with its peace—but a place of torture—not of swift pain and the hope of its ending, but a hopeless, endless purgatory.

And behind all the horror of the ordinary prison discipline there lies the punishment of bread and water, dark cells and chains, floggings and hangings. It is almost incredible that in the Twentieth Century a man should be kept three or four weeks under sentence of death in a condemned cell, watched night and day, lost in his agony of hopeless fear he should cheat the gallows and spoil the solemnity of the hanging ceremony. Yet it happens! Who has not seen a mouse in a trap, the little fluttering heart beating so painfully as to be visible in the tiny breast, the pleading, terrified eyes. Think of a man in a trap—a man with a heart, with imagination and a deadly fear of death—who knows of the grim business of hanging—the rope round his neck—the opening of the earth beneath his feet—the sickening drop! A man to whom the hours fly by like lightning—and yet are leaden slow and full of agony. Think of that man lying at night with such a fear in his soul—and think again of those who stand with him at the fatal moment—the men who rush upon him, helpless and trapped, and pinion him—the Governor who murders in cold blood for a living—the Chaplain who watches and assists in God's name—the Hangman whose sole occupation is this: to slay his fellow-men—the Doctor who sees it is a proper job. What must be the degradation of all these human souls involved in the horrible business with the victim?

Mr. Marshall's description of the hanging of a poor half-witted lad (after awaiting his trial for months) brings the terrible reality home to the reader. His story of the flogging, too, shows up the cruelty of the official soul—the governor, the senior warden and the guard, the wretched half-naked man strapped to the triangle, the doctor holding his pulse throughout to make certain that the victim is not insensible and the blows wasted.

I think the presence of the doctor during the flogging, holding the flogged man's pulse, marks, more than anything, the hideousness of the punishments which are inflicted upon our fellow creatures—this prostitution of medical knowledge should not be tolerated by the profession. A doctor who lays

his hand upon a human wrist to feel the beating of the pulse should have but one motive, to assuage pain and restore health, not to aid in the infliction of suffering.

To my mind the prison Chaplain is not so far degraded, for at least the Church in the prison has nothing to do with its punishments; my experience has been that the Chaplains rarely even speak to the prisoners of their offences, but bring into that ghostly place the only breath of human kindness which ever enters it. Mr. Marshall, in his sketch, "Chapel Iron Barred," shows the prison church, with its music, as the only prison blessing. It points the road to prison reformation, if prisons have to be, where men and women, under some restraint for their own protection, can be brought under ameliorating influences through intercourse with one another and with the noblest minds educated and civilised in pleasant surroundings, with every attempt made to fill their lives with interest.

I have not dealt with Mr. Marshall's sketches in detail. They are all good, and present to the reader many types of humanity and many touching stories which bear the stamp of truth. The book breathes forth the longing of these prisoned souls for liberty, comfort and human companionship; it gives a vivid impression of the cruelty and stupidity of official doings on the bench and in the goals—iron-soled and wooden-headed. It is a great text-book.

ADELA PANKHURST WALSH.

N.S.W., Australia.

### NEW FORMS OF ACTIVITY.

(1) *Activity on the Industrial Field.*—The Branch should endeavour to form revolutionary groups within every Trade Union Branch in their area. It should endeavour to attract to the Party the most advanced and class-conscious workers in every Trade Union Branch, so as to have a small nucleus largely dominating and moulding opinion therein. It is not necessary that the bulk of the members of the Unions know of these groups, which should ceaselessly work for Communist ideals within their branches, striving to alter the rules and structure of their Unions to serve revolutionary ends. They should always endeavour to weaken the power of the permanent Trade Union officials, and strengthen rank and file movements, so as to make the power to decide strikes rest with the workers themselves and not with official elements; stand out for democratic control of the Unions by the membership, and, more than these, prepare the way for the formation of revolutionary workers' councils for decisive action by the rank and file of the workers.

It cannot be too strongly impressed by Communists upon all workers that Trade Union officials, both by their secure position and their enhanced salaries, serve the maintenance of capitalism much more than they serve the cause of the emancipation of the workers. Only by controlling forces in the key industries will the weapon be forged that will give the death-blow to capitalism. Branches should place this first in their activities.

(2) The Council recommends that each branch endeavour to arrange for one of their number to have possession of a typewriter, to assist in Communist work. These can be got on hire purchase, usually 5s. per week or £1 per month, and is of the utmost assistance in organising rank and file movements with the Unions, establishing Social Soviets, working with the Shop Steward movement, and other fields where Communists will be busy. Anybody can learn to punch a typewriter by practice, and a branch becomes much more articulate and powerful by having one in its service. Whenever the crisis comes and the workers take over control, the presence of rapid, trusted, and efficient correspondents would enormously facilitate the thorough inter-relationship of groups necessary for uniform action.—E. T. WHITEHEAD, Secretary.

### DOGMATISM AND OPPORTUNISM. — Continued.

The opposition had to be crushed, and to that end the most infamous means were used. Just as in the old parties of the Second International. Once more the workers were betrayed, and left in ignorance of the real aims of the leaders.

This is what has become of our splendid party, of the Bolsheviks of Western Europe.

In the place of a party that was as clear as crystal, and as hard as steel, we have a turbid mass. In the place of a united, harmonious party, conscious in its every deed, we have a few leaders, who, on many questions, use the workers as their tools. In the place of a party that in the interior fights all parties alike, Anarchists as well as Syndicalists and Social-Patriots, we have a party that bends before the two former, and in many questions compromises with the latter for the good graces of the voters, and that is not very far off, consequently, from a compromise with either. In the place of a party fighting against world imperialism, we have a party that favours one form of imperialism—English Imperialism.

When the revolution comes, this party of ours will not be strong; it will stand powerless.

And what is the cause of all this? The use of Parliamentary action.

The English reader sees clearly that in countries where the revolution has not yet broken out, the use of Parliament involves a great risk. He sees it not only in theory, it has likewise been proved by us by daily experience.