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This magazine, published by the Groups of Council Communists, consciously opposes all forms of sectarianism. The sectarian confuses the interest of his group, whether it is a party or a union, with the interest of the class. It is our purpose to discover the actual proletarian tendencies in their backward organizational and theoretical forms; to effect a discussion of them beyond the boundaries of their organizations and the current dogmatics; to facilitate their fusion into unified action; and thus to help them achieve real significance.

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## THE WORLD WAR IN THE MAKING

The cessation of capital growth means depression conditions. Capitalism must expand to avoid stagnation and decline. The expansion process becomes increasingly more imperialistic as the national possibilities become more restricted. Imperialism means additional profits through the exploitation of a greater number of workers by fewer capitalists. It means, if successful, better positions in the international scramble for the largest part of the profits created by world production; it means the concentration of capital on an international scale; it means the coordination of all phases of production and distribution to the profit interests of the most powerful of the capitalist nations and combines. Capitalistic reorganizations toward greater profitability cannot always be achieved "peacefully". Not even on a national scale, and less so internationally, because this "reorganization" process implies the destruction of many capitalistic interests. Wars break out in defense of those interests. Like any other capitalism, German capitalism continuously conflicts with other imperialistic interests in its attempts at capital expansion. The precarious condition of world capitalism, not a particular kind of "German aggressiveness," now intensifies the vigorous attempts of the German capitalist system to increase by political—military means its economic strength.

### Czechoslovakia — the Stepping Stone

Czechoslovakia derived its existence as a state from the Versailles treaty and its basic imperialistic setup. The fascist concentration of all economic and political powers in Germany led to new imperialistic action by "extraordinary" means. As regards the "ordinary" means, Germany had in the last six years managed to influence the Danube countries and the Balkan nations

economically and politically to a considerable extent.\* Its competition in these areas had defeated countries like France, England and America. However, to allow for further advances, capital investments, control over raw materials, markets, must be safeguarded by military means, especially when an existing economic weakness prevents the maintainance of advantageous positions in the long run. An independent Czechoslovakia was a hindrance to German expansion in the Balkans and to the East. After the *Anschluss*\*\* of Austria it was only a question of time till the carefully prepared attack upon Czechoslovakia would be made.

The Czechoslovakian internal situation made it possible for Germany to begin her attack under advantageous conditions which were further improved by the diplomatic assistance of England. Czechoslovakia was not a unified national state. It was inhabited by Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Magyars, Ukrainians, and Poles. The existing "national antagonism," especially between the Germans and the Czechs, was fundamentally nothing but the conflict between more or less independent capitalist groups for a share in state control, as well as over internal and foreign markets. The larger part of the proletariat, as well as the petty bourgeoisie, was dragged into this conflict.

The old Austrian industry had been centered chiefly in the Sudeten (mountain-chain) districts. After the breakup of the Austrian empire, Czechoslovakian industry retained but a fourth of the former markets, as the other offshoots of the empire immediately raised tariff walls under whose protection they started their own industries. A relative over-industrialization of Czechoslovakia determined economic policies and influenced the relations between the different bourgeois factions. In contrast to the largely German border territories, the inner area of Czechoslovakia was relatively little industrialized. Such industry as exists is mainly for domestic consumption. It was less affected by the depression than the export industries in the Sudeten regions. Furthermore, the agricultural Czech interior belongs to the European east which experienced a period of industrialization after the war. This state-fostered industrial development moderated the effects of the crisis on this section of Czechoslovakia. Also, the munitions industry located in the Czech districts and operating at high capacity for years reduced unemploy-

\*German trade with the Danubian countries is continuously increasing. Hungary's economic life, for instance, is now almost entirely dominated by the "Third Reich." In the other countries the increase in trade is hardly less striking, as is shown by the following table:

	Imports		Exports	
	1933	1937	1933	1937
Bulgaria	38.2%	55.0%	36.0%	40.0%
Rumania	18.6%	30.8%	10.6%	20.2%
Turkey	25.5%	41.6%	18.9%	35.4%
Yugoslavia	13.2%	32.6%	13.9%	21.7%

(L'Europe Nouvelle, July 16; p. 762 — July 23; p. 785)

\*\*Compare: "German Fascism on the Offensive" in Living Marxism No. 3 (May 1938.)

ment of the Czech workers. Besides the frictions between new and old industries the powerful agricultural interests influenced the government towards an agricultural orientation. Sudeten industry could not find sufficient governmental representation or support and developed opposition to the ruling nationalistic groups.

The Nazi victory in Germany had far reaching consequences for the internal and external politics of Czechoslovakia. It now found itself bordering to a state from whose imperialist urge for expansion it had everything to fear. Its immediate reaction to provocative advances of Germany was a closer support of French imperialism and, consequently, of Russia (diplomatic recognition, nonaggression, and military assistance pact), as well as a closer connection with the states of the little entente. A further effect on foreign policy was the clouding of diplomatic relations with Poland, which had established friendly relations with German imperialism.

The ideological result of Hitler-German activity was an intensified nationalism by the Czechoslovakian bourgeoisie, operating under the mask of anti-fascism. The organized labor movement already supported the nationalistic policies of the Czech government. As the Czech Social Democracy and trade unions identified themselves with the national interests of their bourgeoisie, so the German Social Democracy in the Sudeten region, at first hesitantly, but in the end openly, defended the interests of the German bourgeoisie and strengthened the nationalistic movement. They became objectively fascists for the same reason that the Czechs became anti-fascists. When the diplomatic bonds between Russia and Czechoslovakia were tightened, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia declared itself ready to cooperate with the bourgeoisie in defense of capitalism and Czech independence. The positions of the diverse labor organizations in Czechoslovakia thus excluded any attempt at solving the German-Czechoslovak contradictions in a socialistic — revolutionary manner.

The reasons for the swift growth of fascism in the Sudeten region are found in its peculiar economic conditions. The crisis manifested itself here in an extraordinary impoverishment of the masses. The decline of the highly developed export industry of the border districts struck down the whole economy and social life. Important production centers of finished goods, textiles, and glass became veritable industrial cemeteries. Even better situated districts such as the soft coal mines and connected industries showed a severe decline and unemployment problem. Wages already low before the crisis (among the lowest in Europe) were further reduced. However, the chief strength of the fascist movement consisted of the mass of impoverished petty bourgeois and peasantry. The decline of the export industries, partly of a petty bourgeois nature, reduced the purchasing power of the masses; taxation brought small tradesmen, merchants and craftsmen to the verge of ruin. The young intelligentsia found no room in the declining economy. The German small farmers in the less fertile border districts were injured by the governmental agrarian measures designed to favor the large landholders. The

Germans in Czechoslovakia saw the solution of their troubles in fascism. Hitler's re-employment program won the masses. Large parts of the working class, tired of the unsuccessful reform policy of the Social Democrats and the idiotic phrase-mongering of the Communists set their hopes on the new rising movement, whose spirit and far-reaching demands promised a decided improvement in their lot. Once this movement had attained sufficient proportions, it was carried on by its own momentum, till the fascist party became the strongest in Sudetenland. That this movement was employed to the fullest extent by German fascism is nothing to be wondered at, and that it was strengthened in return is also obvious.

### The Future of the Danube

Czechoslovakia, the stumbling block in Hitler's march to the Southeast, is now removed. Even though it continues to exist, it can no longer refuse Germany's behest. If not continuously supported by English loans, it has no alternative but to coordinate its economy and therewith its policies to those of Germany. If necessary, Germany will annex the whole of the country, repeating the performance recently given on the world stage. Czechoslovakia was sacrificed, according to Chamberlain, in the interest of maintaining world peace, as the issue of its independence was not important enough to justify a general conflagration. This, however, is not true. The Czechoslovakian issue is only one aspect of a much larger issue, which again is only a fragment in the mosaic of world policy. The "solution" found in the interest of "world peace" is only temporary and has nothing to do with pacifistic trends in the leading capitalistic powers, but has something to do with their preparations for war. Neither the Godesberg nor the Munich conference dealt with problems of Czech independence; those questions were settled long before. They dealt with problems arising after Germany's desires were satisfied. Though the coordination of German and English imperialism is not possible in the long run, at present the English support of Hitler's actions serves certain interests of English imperialism. And only insofar as those interests are fostered through Germany's advance, will the latter find British support. This support, at the moment, helps Germany in its policies on the Danube, but even here this support is simultaneously counteracted by diplomatic and financial measures on the part of England and France.

The London Times of August 26 quoted the following from the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on German-Hungarian relations:

"Hungary is the first partner with whom Germany has begun her new trade policy, based on mutual exchange and trade without the use of gold. This is the foundation stone of a new economic zone in Central Europe, which will correspond to the natural unity of the Danube area. The old liberal system of world trade is broken once and for all and will be superseded by the new system, and there should be no doubt that Central Europe forms a natural economic area of which a free and strong Hungary is a cornerstone."

As in Hungary, so elsewhere, Germany quite successfully employed several "unorthodox" methods to gain economic control over the small southeastern European states. With exchange clearing arrangements it managed to get

herself into the debt of those countries, which condition forced them then to buy German goods. Germany buys goods from these countries without loss of foreign exchange, and then resells them abroad to obtain foreign exchange. It employs a number of long-term-credit tricks, and other complicated arrangements to involve her own economic affairs deeply with those of other countries. Politically it supports the national demands of countries like Hungary and Poland to obtain their more or less willing support for her own territorial designs. There can be no doubt that Germany is extremely serious about this southeast expansion, and that she thinks in terms of a German-controlled Central Europe, which would make her the most powerful country on the continent. Though this kind of "imperialistic planning" is, in the long run, not more but less sound than her "national planning" attempts, yet Germany cannot help but continue to look at Central Europe as a "natural", i. e., a German area. However, there is a strong feeling in the Danubian and Balkan nations against this growing German control, a "sentiment" more than ever fostered by Britain and France. Huge English loans to Turkey, French loans to Bulgaria, new loans to Czechoslovakia by both countries, new economic deals between Britain and Rumania are the means of counteracting the German influence. The "harmony" between Germany and countries like Hungary and Poland turns into new frictions on the question of the division of the spoils. And in the background, only apparently undisturbed, lies watchful Italy, not to be left out from the game in the Danube countries and in the Balkans. The struggle for dominance in these territories is by no means at its end, it only begins to enter a serious stage. England and France, not to speak of the smaller directly affected nations, not only will continue to show interest but will increase their interests in the Southeast and continuously face Germany as a merciless adversary. The future of the Danube and the Balkans does not spell peace but new frictions and eventually war.

### "They Dress Like Mourners, Yet Rejoice"

It is long known that England's sanctions policy during the Ethiopian conflict was merely an election trick and not a real opposition to Italy's conquest. It is obvious, too, that England's policy in Spain helped rather than hindered the German-Italian invasion. It was long known that the British government favored ceding the Sudeten area to Germany; that Hitler could rely on Chamberlain to the fullest extent. But why? Apparently, all these affairs, threaten England's influence in Europe. England's policy of "retreat" found much opposition and was excused with an existing weakness in armaments. This led to a real "Peoples Front" for more armaments, and to an increase of nationalism useful for internal purposes. England's unpreparedness, however, is nonsense. All countries arm, there is no chance to "out-arm" particular countries. No one can wait for such a day. England does not refuse to act because it is weak, it can afford to delay action because it still is strong. And it gets daily stronger by harping upon a non-existing weakness. It did not find a war against Germany advisable from the viewpoint of her own interests. It had to indicate her readiness for war,

however, to make Germany understand that the latitude given to it is limited, and is permitted only under certain conditions. It had to engage in this simulation of "resistance" for "home consumption".

The English empire is continually threatened on many frontiers. The defense of this empire takes all the strength England can muster, and determines all its policies. If England, in the face of the world situation, can maintain what it has, it has already scored a huge success. It takes more for England to be a non-aggressor than it takes for others to be aggressors. Europe proper is in some ways the least important to England, it is of determining importance to her only insofar as she cannot allow the rise of a European power capable of challenging English supremacy in Europe and therewith the empire as well. After the German defeat in the last world war, France seemed to become the leading power on the European continent. However, in the course of time, England managed to reduce it again to nothing but a vassal state of England. England's "friendliness" towards Germany was designed largely to stop the French advance. However, the Franco-Russian alliance, for which Czechoslovakia served as a bridge for operations, allowed France to maintain a degree of independence, and even offered possibility of a successful opposition to English policies. The Franco-Russian alliance also supported the Russian position; it diminished the danger to be expected from Germany and, consequently, increased Russia's importance as a power in Asia. Russia might very well become a greater danger to England than Germany. Its imperialism always had opposed British imperialism. Russia in China and Persia; her ability to threaten British influence in India and Egypt; her strategic position in Asia, not to be destroyed by a sea power — all these moments have to be feared once more by Britain, especially since the scramble for imperialistic rule in Asia was opened again with the Japanese war against China. Germany's advance might be not only "a lesser evil", but the "solution" of England's imperialistic problems. A combination Russia-China, as well as a combination Russia-America, might do away with the Japanese menace, but not in the interest of England. Russia must not be too strong; a powerful Germany would minimize the Russian menace in Asia. Then again, a Germany too strong, in preference to a strong Russia, will eventually march toward the Dardanelles, i. e., against far-reaching British interests; will eventually blackmail England into surrendering the old and additional new colonies for the "*Volk ohne Raum*". However, Germany is only marching; the goal is still far away, and for some time to come Germany might well serve England's interests not only by abstaining from alliances against England, but by allying its interests with those of England to allow the latter a more successful policy in Asia. And, anyway, international policy is determined by more powers than England. The German rise simply had to be taken into consideration, and attempts had to be made to utilize it. France had to be weakened to satisfy Italy and to loosen the latter's bonds with Germany. Germany had to be given concessions to prepare the stage for new German-Italian rivalries, forcing Italy back into an alliance with England. Time will break the Rome-Berlin axis; it will break precisely because of its success. The German advance broke the

Franco-Russian pact, and Russia has now to restrict its Asiatic ambitions; it cannot function in Asia against both England and Japan with Germany in its rear. It loses importance as an ally of America, and strengthens the position of England toward the U. S. A. Though Japan is still on the scene, it is quite isolated and can be dealt with at a more opportune moment. It might even be forced to come to terms with England if the war in China lasts long enough; a long tradition of Japanese-English friendship is not forgotten. There exists also the paradoxical situation that the U. S. with its trade helps Japan to continue its war, to increase its opposition to England; a circumstance that may force England into a Russian alliance, so that, when it comes to a division of the Asiatic spoils, America can demand its proper share on the basis of the Russian bayonets. An American-Russian alliance considerably weakens the English position in Asia, which also accounts for the lax attitude of England toward Japanese aggression. The isolation of the Japanese-Chinese war is explainable only on the basis of the rivalries among America, Russia and England. The far-seeing policy of England, not inconsistent with her noted pragmatic attitude, comes clearly to light in the present refusal to support Russia by eliminating the German danger. However, the future may still force England into line with Russia and America and this will lead to a reshifting of the European imperialistic setup, to a new war crisis, and possibly even to actual war.

There are many other combinations. It would take books to deal with all the imperialistic probabilities, and all these books would not lead to one decisive statement as to the actual line up of powers in the coming world war. Hitler might be forced, by internal as well as external developments, to ally Germany to Russia and turn once more against the West, and to attempt to break down the English empire. What is predictable, on the basis of the present situation and through a knowledge of the character of capitalist production, is that the war is inevitable, unless the social revolution does away on an international scale with crisis conditions which under capitalism can be solved only temporarily. All we are concerned with here is to show that, whatever moves are made on the international scene, they have nothing to do with ideological considerations, or forms of government, but with the immediate and resulting future interests of the various imperialistic nations. Roosevelt's appeal for peace, for instance, did not result from his navy-favored pacifist attitude, nor, as is often assumed, from his pro-English position, but from a consideration of American capitalism directed against Germany in the interest of Russia, its probable ally in American Asiatic policy.

As a side issue, though of no small importance, England's pro-German policy, directed against French and Italian interests, has secured for it the possibility of maintaining sufficient influence in Spain. In short, in every respect and for the near future, English policy, directed at avoiding a war at this moment, was exclusively dictated by Britain's own imperialistic interests. From the viewpoint of realities the international policy of England has again met with success. Though England has to share its triumph with Germany and Italy, nevertheless it lost nothing of itself, and succeeded in improving its Asiatic position considerably, trusting that the future will not

serve the present European lineup too much, and will prevent both Germany and Italy from asking more than England is willing to grant. However, it pays for England to appear the victim instead of the victor; to maintain the attitude of mourner and yet rejoice. For instance, it creates another "paradoxical" but nevertheless useful situation in England itself. Not Herbert Morrison, the labor leader, hypocritically clamoring for war against "fascism" — that is, asking for English fascism — but the "fascist" Neville Chamberlain, by postponing the war, remains for the time being the best defender of English "democracy." In the meantime, armaments will increase unopposed; nationalism, especially fostered by the labor leaders, will grow; the economic and political scene in the "democratic countries" will become less distinguishable from those in the "fascist countries." The struggle for "democracy" against "fascism" leads, before it starts, to the fascization of the "democratic countries," and the actual struggle will, in all probability, be fought as that which it really is: a struggle of one set of capitalists against another.

### American "Isolation"

Lately, especially during the European war crisis, the question of American isolation was again most heatedly discussed. Isolationists proclaimed that those fostering "collective security" were working in the interest of either England or Russia, that peace and prosperity can be maintained only by avoiding all European entanglements. However, America never was and never will be so isolated. Though America at times can forego aggression in its imperialistic designs, its imperialistic needs do not disappear. In the propaganda for "collective security" and the "peace of the world" imperialism found more attractive names. Like any other government now, the American government is war-minded. However, wars are always advocated and fought in the interests of peace, which some neighbor, often thousands of miles away, never fails to disturb. Hitler, too, wants peace — naturally, a German peace. Roosevelt maintained in his famous Chicago speech that "aggressors should be quarantined by the concerted action of all peace-loving nations." And Mr. Hull, Secretary of State, pointed out in a recent speech on international relations over the radio (August 16) and to the dismay of the isolationists that "in the circumstances which prevail in the world today, no nation and no government can avoid participation in determining which course shall be taken... Each day's development makes increasingly clear that our own situation is profoundly affected by what happens elsewhere in the world."

In accordance with the recognition of "America's duties," armaments are increased at an ever swifter tempo. The navy brings its fighting ships up to 336, including 22 super-dreadnoughts, 69 cruisers, 149 destroyers, and 116 submarines. "The technical nature of the President's naval message and of the naval bill," said a report by a group of isolationists, including Senators Nye, Borah, Vandenberg and Hiram Johnson,

"shows that the bill may be used to implement the quarantine and the policy of intervention in Asia; and if this bill is passed (it was), the President will have a blanket authorization, after Congress adjourns, to apply the universal quarantine policy and the Asiatic interventionist policy."

As for the army, Secretary of War Woodring recently pointed out that plans are perfected to mobilize one and one-quarter millions of men within four months. Industrial mobilization plans are ready for immediate use; the munitions works are booming. However, the general attitude, carefully fostered by the propaganda machine, maintains that America is only interested in another war to stop once and for all the "lawlessness" of the aggressor nations; to make the world really safe for "democracy". And such intentions are demonstrated by Mr. Ickes' refusal to sell helium to Germany, and by the discovery of German spies in America; however, not by stopping the shipments of scrap iron for Japanese munition works. Though the "American heart" is on the side of Loyalist Spain, still nothing essential was done to help the country, for it never was clear that such a help would foster American interests. The naval program is supposedly conceived as a support to the English fleet when the latter goes out to establish "order" in the world. And it might very well act in such a capacity, if England succeeds in drawing America to her side or if America should find it convenient to line up with England. If such a combination, or the one previously mentioned, should become a reality, the Americans would not arm for the sake of others, but for their own imperialistic interests.

### We Are All Marxists Now

After the last war many important statesmen turned Leninist. Wilson proclaimed the right of self-determination of the small nations. France and England practiced the principle by creating a number of little states to hinder a German comeback. In their excitement they overlooked that the new countries on their part, oppressed a considerable number of minorities. But things were settled. The reconstruction of world capitalism guaranteed peace for a considerable time. Then the depression of 1929 set the stage for new imperialistic movements. Things began to happen. Japan took Manchuria and penetrated into China. Italy went to Africa and Spain; Germany to Spain and the Southeast. The slogan of "self-determination," once raised against Germany, was now used by the Germans in their own interests. The slogan conceived by Lenin, because it would bother England through unrest in her colonial possessions, now helped to bring Austria and the Sudeten region to fascist Germany. The Wilson-Lenin slogan no longer served the Allies nor Russia, nor did it serve the reformist and nationally bound labor movement. "No longer can we use," said Otto Bauer, shortly before his death, "the slogan of the self-determination of nations, for it is now used by Hitler for imperialistic purposes; instead, we have to raise the slogan of Frederick Engels from the year 1848: "An alliance of all revolutionary nations against the counter-revolutionary nations."\* From such a "Marxist" point of view one has to look upon Russia, America, England and France as "revolutionary" and support them in their "revolutionary Marxist struggle" against "counter-revolutionary" fascism. However, such a "return

\*O. Bauer, "Self-determination for the Sudeten Germans?" *Der Sozialistische Kampf*. June 16, 1937, p. 27.

to Marx and Engels" indicates only that the old labor movement, as yesterday so today, is not concerned with a struggle against capitalism, but only with a struggle for a capitalism granting the right to "organize labor." Its fight against fascism really is a bread-and-butter fight of labor organizers. However, their struggle is lost forever; one cannot fight fascism without fighting capitalism. The old labor movement tries to sell its shabby remnants once more to capitalistic and imperialistic purposes, and creates already in peace time what was the most disgusting aspect of the last war: a chauvinism much greater than the bourgeoisie is able to develop itself. Under such conditions, it seems utterly fantastic to assume that the coming war, which was postponed, but merely postponed, could be prevented by actions on the part of the organized working class. With the exception of a few voices in the wilderness, the workers hear nothing, from right to left, but of the need for war. They must, to stop the war, oppose not only the whole of international capitalism in all its forms and expressions, but also the whole international organized labor movement in all its forms and expressions; a task which, it seems to us, is too large to be expected to be accomplished without the "education," the force, and the help of gigantic crisis and war, and the coming war may yet serve the working class as a basis for new attempts at a world-revolutionary solution of its most urgent needs.

## LENIN'S PHILOSOPHY

*Some additional remarks to J. Harper's recent criticism of Lenin's book "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism."*

### Leninism Goes West

There is a striking contrast between the impression produced in the minds of West-European revolutionaries by those short pamphlets of Lenin and Trotsky which appeared in poorly translated and poorly printed editions during the final stage and the aftermath of the war, and the response called forth in Europe and U. S. A. by the belated appearance, in 1927, of the first extra-Russian versions of Lenin's philosophical work of 1908, on "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism."

Those earlier pamphlets on "The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletarian Revolution" and on "The Next Tasks of the Soviet-Power" were eagerly studied by the European radicals as the first reliable news from a victorious proletarian revolution and as practical guides for their own impending revo-

lutionary uprisings. They were, at the same time, ignored, falsified, calumniated, despised, and — frightfully feared by the bourgeoisie and its reformist and Kautskyan-centrist backers within the Marxist camp. When Lenin's philosophical work appeared the whole scene had changed. Lenin was dead. The Russia of the Soviets had been gradually transformed into just another state immersed in the competitive struggles between the various "blocks" of powers which had been formed in a Europe apparently quickly recovering from the war and from the deep but transitory economic crisis resulting from the war. Marxism had been replaced by Leninism or, more recently, by Stalinism which was now no more regarded primarily as a theory of the proletarian class struggle but rather as the ruling

philosophy of a state, different but not entirely different from such other state philosophies as fascism in Italy and democracy in the U. S. A. Even the last remnants of the proletarian "unrest" following the war had flickered out with the crushing defeat of the English general strike and miners' strike in 1926 and the bloody termination of the first and so-called "communist" phase of the Chinese revolution. Thus, the European intelligentsia was quite ready to accept, along with the hitherto unknown earliest philosophical writings of Marx which were now published in a princely fashion by the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Institute in Moscow, the equally "piquant" philosophical revelations of his great Russian disciple who, after all, had swept the empire of the Czar and until his death maintained an unchallenged dictatorship there.

But those strata of the West-European proletariat who had been the first and the most serious and persistent readers of Lenin's revolutionary pamphlets of 1917-1920 had apparently disappeared from the scene. They had been replaced in the public eye either by those all-adaptable careerists of Stalinism who form the only stable sector of the rapidly shifting membership of all extra-Russian Communist parties today, or as typical of recent English C. P. development, by progressive members of the ruling class itself and its natural supporters within the better educated, most cultured, and well-to-do strata of the old and new intelligentsia who have practically replaced the former proletarian membership. Revolutionary proletarian communism seemed to survive only in isolated individual thinkers and in such small groups as the Dutch Council Communists from which the pamphlet under discussion originated.

We might expect that Lenin's book when it was finally made available to the West-European and American public for the express purpose of spreading there those philosophical principles of Marxism which form the basis of the present Russian state and of its ruling Communist party would have met with almost universal applause. Nothing of the

kind has happened. No doubt the philosophy of Lenin as expressed in that book is infinitely superior, even from a strictly theoretical viewpoint, to those scattered crumbs from the systems of bygone counterrevolutionary philosophers and sociologists that have been formed into the semblance of a philosophical system of fascism by Mussolini, with the help of the former Hegelian philosopher, Gentile, and other intellectual aides-de-camp. It is incomparably superior to that huge mass of trite every-day talk and senseless trash which figure as a politico-philosophical *Weltanschauung* in the "theoretical" work of Adolf Hitler. Thus the people who could find novelty and wisdom in the ideas of Mussolini and discover sense in the vaporings of the German leader, certainly should not have felt any difficulty in swallowing also that considerable amount of misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and general backwardness which mar the theoretical value of Lenin's philosophical attempt. Even those few who today are acquainted with the works of the philosophers and scientists discussed by Lenin in 1908 and with the developments of modern science generally might have been able to dig out of this work of Lenin (to speak in the favorite style of its author) that "gem" of clear and persistent revolutionary thought which is "hidden in the rubbish" of unqualified acceptance of the obsolete "materialist" concepts of a past historical epoch and equally unqualified abuse of some of the most genuine attempts of modern scientists to promote the theory of materialism. Nevertheless, the response of the progressive bourgeois intelligentsia at large to the belated propaganda of Lenin's materialist philosophy must have proved disappointing to the Russians, who had shown on several occasions that they were by no means above desiring some applause for their pet achievements in matters of theory even from such Marxistically "unholy" quarters as the philosophical and scientific circles of Western Europe and America. There was not so much open hostility as indifference and, even more awkward, just among those whose applause would have

been most cherished, a kind of polite embarrassment.

Nor was this embarrassing silence disturbed, for a long time, by any vigorous attack from that left radical Marxist minority which formerly had so violently assailed every attempt of Lenin and his successors to transform the political and tactical principles successfully applied by the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution into universally valid principles of the proletarian world revolution. The remaining representatives of that leftist tendency were very slow to raise an equally fierce attack against the analogous attempt of a world-wide application of Lenin's philosophical principles as the only true philosophical doctrine of revolutionary Marxism. Here at last, thirty years after the first (Russian) publication of Lenin's book and eleven years after the appearance of its first German and English translations: — is the first critical re-examination of Lenin's contribution to the materialist philosophy of Marxism, written by one who undoubtedly and for many reasons is better qualified for this particular task than any other contemporary Marxist.\* Even so there is little hope that this first important criticism of Lenin's philosophy will reach even that relatively small minority of revolutionary

### Leninism Versus Machism

It is impossible to discuss in a single article the many important results of this masterly pamphlet. After a short and luminous account of the historical development of Marxism since the days of Marx and of early bourgeois materialism, Harper goes on to restate in an irreproachable manner the true theoretical contents of the attempts by Joseph Dietzgen on the one hand and by the bourgeois scientists, Mach and Avenarius, on the other, to improve upon their predecessors by completing their materialistic representation of the objective world by

\*J. Harper, *Lenin als Philosoph. Kritische Betrachtung der philosophischen Grundlagen des Leninismus.* Bibliothek der "Rätekorrespondenz" No. 1. Ausgabe der Gruppe Internationaler Kommunisten in Holland. (112 pp.; 30 cents). Distribution in U.S.A. through Council Correspondence, P. O. Box 5343, Chicago, Ill.

Marxists to whom it is mainly addressed. It is published under an almost impenetrable pseudonym and, most characteristically, up to now in the shape of a stenciled manuscript only.

There was, then, a considerable lag of time on both sides of that world-wide struggle between Western European Marxist left radicalism on the one hand and Russian Bolshevism on the other, before the opposed camps discovered that their political, tactical and organizational contrasts depended, in the last instance, on those deeper principles which had hitherto been neglected in the heat of the practical fight and thus could not be thoroughly elucidated without going back to those underlying philosophical principles. It seems as if even here old Hegel was right when he said that "the bird of Minerva begins its flight when the day is gone." It does not follow, however, that this last, "philosophical phase" of the social movement going on in a given epoch should be, at the same time, the highest and most important phase. The philosophical fight of ideas is, from a proletarian point of view, not the basis but just a transitory ideological form of the revolutionary class struggle determining the historical development of our time.

an equally materialistic representation of the process of knowledge itself. He shows conclusively the incredible distortions those later theories have suffered in Lenin's utterly biased account. There does not exist, so far as we know, an equally masterly report of the main scientific contents of the work of Mach and Avenarius as is contained in the 25 pages devoted to their theories in this pamphlet. Nor is there an equally powerful refutation of the theoretical blunders committed by Lenin and his followers in their naive criticism of the modern scientific definitions of such terms as "matter", "energy", "laws of nature", "necessity", "space", "time", etc., from the standpoint of so-called "common-sense" which is, in fact, in most cases nothing else but a rehash of the physics theories

of bygone epochs of scientific development. (It was for this reason, by the way, that Frederick Engels already had described so-called commonsense as "the worst of all metaphysicians.")

Nevertheless, this is only one, and perhaps not the most important, aspect of Harper's critical revision of Lenin's work. The main weakness of Lenin's attack on Machism is not its general unfairness, outright misrepresentation of the essentially materialistic approach underlying the new positivistic philosophy, and complete unawareness of the real achievements made since the days of Marx and Engels in the field of modern physical science. The main weakness of Lenin's "materialistic" criticism of what he called an idealistic (solipsistic, mystical and, in the last instance, plainly religious and reactionary) tendency hidden in the pseudo materialistic and scientific theories of Mach and his followers, is his own inability to go beyond the intrinsic limitations of bourgeois materialism. Much as he talks of the superiority of "modern" Marxist materialism over the abstract philosophical and mainly naturalistic approach of the early bourgeois materialists, he still conceived this difference between the old and new materialism as a difference not in kind but in degree. At the utmost he described "modern materialism" as founded by Marx, as a materialism "immeasurably richer in content, and incomparably better grounded than all previous forms of materialism."\*\* He never conceived of the difference between the "historical materialism" of Marx and the "previous forms of materialism" as an unbreachable opposition arising from a real conflict of classes. He conceived it rather as a more or less radical expression of one continuous revolutionary movement. Thus Lenin's "materialistic" criticism of Mach and the Machians, according to Harper, failed even in its purely theoretical purpose mainly because Lenin attacked the later attempts of bourgeois naturalistic

\*\*See: Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII. International Publishers. New York 1927; p. 291.

materialism not from the viewpoint of the historical materialism of the fully developed proletarian class, but from a preceding and scientifically less developed phase of bourgeois materialism.

This judgment of Lenin's materialist philosophy of 1908 is corroborated by the later developments of Lenin's philosophical theory which are not dealt with in this pamphlet.

The recent publication by the Marx - Engels - Lenin - Institute of Lenin's philosophical papers dated from 1914 et seq. shows the first germs of that particular significance which during the last phases of Lenin's activity and after his death the philosophical thought of Hegel assumed in Lenin's "materialistic philosophy." A belated revival of the whole of the formerly disowned idealistic dialectics of Hegel served to reconcile the acceptance by the Leninists of old bourgeois materialism with the formal demands of an apparently anti bourgeois and proletarian revolutionary tendency. Whilst in the preceding phases "historical materialism" still had been conceived, though not with sufficient clearness, as different from the "previous forms of materialism" the emphasis was now shifted from "historical" materialism to "dialectical materialism" or, as Lenin said in his latest contribution to the subject, to "a materialistic application of Hegelian (idealistic) dialectics." Thus the whole circle not only of bourgeois materialistic thought but of all bourgeois philosophical thought from Holbach to Hegel was actually repeated by the Russian dominated phase of the Marxist movement, which passed from the adoption of 18th century and Feuerbachian materialism by Plechanov and Lenin in the pre-war period to Lenin's appreciation of the "intelligent idealism" of Hegel and other bourgeois philosophers of the 19th century as against the "unintelligent materialism" of the earlier 18th century philosophers.\*\*\*

\*\*\*See: Lenin. *Aus dem Philosophischen Nachlass. Exzerpte und Randglossen.* German ed. Berlin 1932; p. 212.

## Present Impact of Lenin's Materialistic Philosophy

In the last parts of the pamphlet Harper deals with the historical and practical significance of the peculiar theoretical aspects of Lenin's materialist philosophy as discussed in the preceding chapters. He fully acknowledges the tactical necessity, under the conditions in pre-revolutionary czarist Russia, of Lenin's relentless fight against the left bolshevik, Bogdanov, and other more or less outspoken followers of Mach's ideas who in spite of their good revolutionary intentions actually jeopardized the unity and weakened the proven revolutionary energy of the Marxist party by a revision of its "monolithic" materialistic ideology. In fact, Harper goes somewhat further in his positive appreciation of Lenin's philosophical tactics of 1908 than seems justified to this writer even in a retrospective analysis of the past. If he had investigated, in his critical revision of Lenin's anti-Machist fight, the tendencies represented by the Russian Machists as well as those of their German masters he might have been warned against the unimpeachable correctness of Lenin's attitude in the ideological struggles of 1908 by a later occurrence. When Lenin, after 1908, was through with the Machist opposition which had arisen within the central committee of the Bolshevik party itself, he regarded that whole incident as closed. In the preface to the second Russian edition of his book, in 1920, he mentioned the fact that he had "no opportunity to examine Bogdanov's latest works," but was quite convinced, by what he had been told by others, that "under the guise of 'proletarian culture' Bogdanov is introducing bourgeois and reactionary views." Yet he did not deliver him to the GPU to be instantly shot for this horrible crime. He was quite content, in those pre-Stalinist days, to leave the spiritual execution to the good and reliable party-worker whose article he annexed to his book. Thus we learn from the faithful Leninist, V. I. Nevsky, that Bogdanov had not only unrepentantly persisted in his former Machist errors, but even had added

to them a new and more glaring crime of omission. It is a "curious circumstance," reports Nevsky, that in all his writings on theoretical topics and on the problems of proletarian culture published during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Bogdanov never mentioned a single word about "production and the system of its management during the dictatorship of the proletariat, just as there is not mentioned a word about the dictatorship itself." The fact proves, indeed, the unreformed and unreformable character of that "idealistic" sinner against the very principles underlying the materialist philosophy of Lenin and his followers. We do not want to imply here that Bogdanov's definitions of the physical world as "socially organized experience," of **matter** as "nothing else than resistance to collective labor efforts," and **nature** as the "unfolding panorama of work-experience," contain a really materialistic and proletarian solution of the problem raised by Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845 when he said that "the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism was that the given world, reality, sensuousness, was conceived only in the form of the **object** or of **contemplation**, but not subjectively as **human sensuous activity**" or as "**revolutionary practice**." The real point is that we should not under any conditions, either today or even retrospectively, make the slightest concession to that basic fallacy inherent in Lenin's philosophical fight against Machism and faithfully repeated by his minor followers in their struggle against the materialistic attempts of scientific positivism today.

This fallacy is that the militant character of a revolutionary materialist theory can and must be maintained against the weakening influences of other apparently hostile theoretical tendencies by any means to the exclusion of modifications made imperative by further scientific criticism and research. This fallacious conception caused Lenin to evade discussion on their merits of such new scientific concepts and

theories that in his judgment jeopardized the proved fighting value of that revolutionary (though not necessarily proletarian revolutionary) materialist philosophy that his Marxist party had adopted, less from Marx and Engels than from their philosophical teachers, the bourgeois materialists from Holbach to Feuerbach and their idealistic antagonist, the dialectical philosopher Hegel. Rather he stuck to his guns, preferring the immediate practical utility of a given ideology to its theoretical truth in a changing world. This doctrinaire attitude, by the way, runs parallel to Lenin's political practice. It corresponds to his unshakable jacobinic belief in a given **political form** (of a party, a dictatorship, or a state) which has been found useful to the aims of the bourgeois revolution of the past and can therefore be trusted as useful to the aims of the proletarian revolution as well. Both in his revolutionary materialist philosophy and in his revolutionary jacobinic politics. Lenin hid from himself the historical truth that his Russian revolution, in spite of a temporary attempt to break through its particular limitations in connection with the simultaneous revolutionary movement of the proletarian class in the West, was bound to remain in fact a belated successor of the great bourgeois revolutions of the past.

It is a long way from Lenin's violent philosophical attack on Mach and Avenarius' "idealistic" positivism and empirio-criticism to that refined scientific criticism of the latest developments within the positivist camp which was published in 1938 in the extremely cultured periodical of the English Communist party.\* Yet there is underlying this critical attack on the most progressive form of modern positivistic thought the same old Leninist fallacy. The critic carefully avoids committing himself to any school of philosophical thought. He would most likely agree with Ludwig Wittgenstein who in his final phase dealt with all philosophy as a curable

\*See: M. Black, *The Evolution of Positivism*. The Modern Quarterly, vol. I, No. 1, London 1938.

disease rather than a series of problems. Yet he bases his whole argument against modern positivism on the assumption that the vigorous fight waged by the old militant positivism against all philosophy was founded on the very fact that this old positivism had started from a distinctly philosophical creed itself. When therefore the latest and in some respects most scientific school of the modern "Logical Positivists" as represented by R. Carnap recently withdrew temporarily from the "philosophical" attempt of constructing "one homogeneous system of laws for the whole of science," and instead concentrated on the more modest task of establishing a "unity of the language of all science\*\*" it would follow from the argument brought forward by their pseudo-Leninist critic that by the same process by which they abandon their former philosophical basis they must necessarily weaken also the crusading ardor of their former antiphilosophical fight. "The positivist who disturbed every philosophical backwater with rude cries of nonsense," says the critic, "is now reduced to saying, in the mildest and most inoffensive manner, 'nonsense is my language'". It is easy to see that this argument can be used in a twofold manner, as a theoretical attack against the confusion between philosophy and science underlying the earlier phases of positivism, and as a practical justification for keeping up that philosophical basis in spite of the belated discovery of its scientific unsoundness. However, the whole argument is not founded on any sound logical or empirical reasoning. There is no need either for the modern bourgeois scientist or for the Marxist to stick to an obsolete (positivistic or materialistic) "philosophy" for the purpose of preserving his full and unbroken "militancy" in the fight against that necessarily in all its forms "idealistic" system of ideas which during the last century under the name of "philosophy" has widely (though not completely) replaced medieval religious faith in the ideology of modern society.

\*\*See: R. Carnap, *Logical Foundations of the Unity of Science*, 1938.