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Program For Revolution By Rosa Luxemburg

The Transitional Program

By Pierre Frank

Theories of History

By George Novack

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The Transitional Program

By Pierre Frank

The first Marxist transitional program appeared in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848, at the end of the chapter "Proletarians and Communists." Formulated in ten points, it presents both a program for mobilizing the workers in the struggle for the conquest of power, and a program to be instituted in the period following the seizure of power by the workers. The programs of the big working-class parties that arose during the second half of the nineteenth century, the most famous of which was the Erfurt program of 1891, consisted of two parts having no dialectical relationship to each other whatever: There was a *maximum* program calling for a socialist society in the indefinite future, and a *minimum* program which the working-class party defended in the immediate period within the framework of capitalist society; for this was the era of the development and worldwide expansion of capitalism and the problem of the seizure of power by the proletariat could not be posed as an immediate objective.

With the advent of the imperialist phase of capitalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, the struggle for power was again on the agenda; the Russian Revolution of 1905 was its first and most striking manifestation. In 1917, the Bolshevik Party advanced what was a transitional program in fact even though it did not use the name (it is to be found in the "April Theses" as well as in Lenin's pamphlet *The Threatening Catastrophe and How to Fight It*). In 1918, Rosa Luxemburg, who was first in sensing the danger of dividing the program into two parts (see footnote two below), called attention in her programmatic speech at the founding congress of the Ger-

This article is an introduction to the forthcoming French edition of the Transitional Program. It includes a discussion of Rosa Luxemburg's speech printed below. Pierre Frank is a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

man Communist Party to precisely those passages in the *Communist Manifesto* which we mentioned above, as well as to the Erfurt program. Declaring that it was necessary to return to the ideas of the *Manifesto*, she went on to assert:

"[Our program] is in conscious opposition to the point of view on which the Erfurt program was based, in conscious opposition to the separation of immediate demands, called minimum, in the economic and political struggle from the final socialist goal as the maximum program. In our conscious opposition to this, we draw a balance on the results of the past seventy years of development and especially their direct consequence, the world war, by stating: For us there is no such thing as a minimum program and a maximum program; socialism is one; socialism is the minimum which we must achieve today."

Having established itself organizationally and taken measures to shut its doors to reformist and centrist currents at its first two world congresses, the Communist International, at its third and fourth world congresses (1921 and 1922) advanced the idea of a transitional program in these terms:

"In place of the minimum program of the reformists and centrists, the Communist International mounts a struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for a system of demands which taken together will disintegrate the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat and constitute stages in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and in which each particular demand will express a need of the great masses, even if these masses are not yet consciously in favor of a dictatorship of the proletariat." (Third Congress, 1921, Thesis on Tactics).

"3. The programs of the national sections must clearly and decisively establish the necessity of the struggle for transitional demands, making the necessary reservations about the dependence of these demands on the concrete circumstances of time and place.

"4. The theoretical basis for all transitional and partial demands must be clearly stated in the general program, and the fourth congress likewise decisively condemns the attempt to depict the inclusion of transitional demands in the program as opportunism, as well as all attempts to gloss over or replace the fundamental revolutionary tasks by partial demands.

"5. The general program must clearly explain the basic historical types of the transitional demands of the national section, in accordance with the basic differences in the economic and political structure of the different countries, for example England on the one hand, and India on the other." (Fourth Congress, 1922, Resolution on the Program of the Communist International.)

As the gangrene of Stalinism set in, the Communist International abandoned the idea of a transitional program. After some ultraleft convulsions, its main orientation became opportunist (Popular Front, National Fronts, etc.), and collaboration followed with various wings of the bourgeoisie or was sought after within the framework of the capitalist system. The Communist parties returned *de facto* to the concept of a minimum program. For them the question no longer existed of a system of demands so interrelated as to develop and raise the class struggle from the level of a struggle for partial and transitional goals to that of the struggle for a workers' government.

Trotskyist Contribution

It was the Fourth International which, in the transitional program as well as all other fields, continued and enriched the work of the first four congresses of the Communist International. After a number of initial efforts by national sections (Action Program of 1934 of the Communist League of France, Action Program of the Belgian section, etc.), the Founding Congress of the Fourth International adopted, in 1938, the document which has entered the history of the Trotskyist movement under the name of the *Transitional Program*. It is this document which we are reprinting here, along with the preface to the French edition of 1946.

The work should not be thought of as the fundamental program of the Fourth International, for the latter consists of the totality of lessons drawn from the struggle for socialism since the beginning of the working-class movement. A program of that kind cannot be drafted in the form of a single document. It is based on the teachings of the Marxist classics, the first four congresses of the Communist International, the fundamental documents of the Russian and International Left

Opposition and the documents of the congresses of the Fourth International. Within this historical context, the *Transitional Program* of 1938 constitutes a part of the fundamental program of the Fourth International. It is its most important part politically in the sense that on the basis of the totality of teachings contained in the fundamental program, it formulates a political program aimed at mobilizing the masses into actions which correspond to their level of consciousness at a given moment, in order to lead them, through the education they receive in the course of these actions, to the highest level of consciousness, which will carry them to the conquest of power.

Key Elements of Program

The *Transitional Program* is therefore based upon two essential elements: (1) the condition of a capitalist society that has lost its stability on the historical scale (not necessarily at every moment and in any and all countries) and where the struggle for the conquest of power has become the major task for this historical period; (2) a series of slogans linked to national and international conjunctural conditions which in combination have the objective of raising the masses to the highest political level during the process of their struggles.

With the validity of each slogan being determined by its correspondence with the internal logic of the mass movement, the key piece in the program is precisely the culminating slogan of the whole chain—the slogan for a *workers' and farmers' government* or for a workers' government. Here again the Fourth International has both revived and enriched the teachings of the third and fourth congresses of the Communist International by using the slogan as a transitional governmental formula corresponding to the organizational conditions and consciousness of the masses at a given moment, and not as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. A program without the perspective of a government of the working masses to carry out anticapitalist measures, is not a transitional program.

Another enrichment contained in the 1938 program, in comparison with the teachings of the Communist Interna-

tional: Stalinist degeneration in the Soviet Union posed the question of a *political revolution* against the bureaucratic power, and the *Transitional Program* of 1938 contains a section dealing with this struggle, with slogans having a conjunctural character which Trotsky explained in this way in *The Revolution Betrayed*:

"The program of the new revolution depends to a great extent upon the moment when it breaks out, upon the level which the country has then attained, and to a great degree upon the international situation."

Written on the eve of the second world war, the *Transitional Program* received its most striking verification a few years later, right after the war. All the great struggles in Europe in the immediate postwar period developed along lines corresponding with the internal logic and slogans of the *Transitional Program*, but the struggles were most frequently under Stalinist leadership, operating under directives from the Kremlin, which in turn was committed to the imperialists under its Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam agreements. Since these leaders had no desire to overthrow the capitalist regime, they never conducted the struggles toward the objective of installing a government of the laboring masses, and the struggles ended up in failure. The colonial revolution subsequently verified that part of the *Program* relating to colonial uprisings against their imperialist mother countries. The uprisings of the Polish and Hungarian masses in 1956 brought their verification of the document's guidelines for the Soviet state, which was the only workers' state in existence at the time the *Transitional Program* was written.¹

This threefold verification should be enough to emphasize the importance and value of this document. It remains just as valid today, provided, of course, we make certain necessary changes corresponding to developments which have taken place during the years since it was drafted.

But before we turn to that, it is necessary to deal with another question which does not have a purely conjunctural character. There are people who have brought the fundamental meaning of a transitional program into question by their very use of the term. In fact, the expression "transitional program" has now been used for several years in a completely opposite sense from that which it had in the Communist

International originally and then in the Fourth International. The leadership of the Italian Communist Party has been its most eminent exponent. It advances the following point of view: The Italian constitution contains articles which make it possible to shift over from capitalist society to a society that could presumably construct socialism; the world is now in the period of the transition from capitalism to socialism; all that is necessary, therefore, according to Togliatti and his disciples, is to advance a program, utilizing the provisions in the present Italian constitution, the realization of which would signify a transition from one mode of production to the other.

A Peaceful Transition?

This point of view, as is immediately apparent, raises a fundamental question with regard to the Marxist conception of the state, which Lenin reaffirms so strongly in *The State and Revolution* (the leaders of the Italian Communist Party do not deny this moreover). In the transition from capitalist to socialist society, this viewpoint disregards—one could say conjures away—what Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky considered to be the essential turning point, the moment when the working class conquers power and destroys the bourgeois state. The "transitional program" advanced by the leaders of the Italian Communist Party does nothing more than bring back the type of program envisaged by Eduard Bernstein at the beginning of the century, predicated on a gradual evolution of society through a series of reforms, with the question of power being posed only on the parliamentary road, and, as an inescapable extension, socialist participation in bourgeois governments. This sort of "transitional program" is therefore no novelty; it takes us right back to the debates on revisionism which took place in the Second International in the early years of the twentieth century.²

The ultraconservative leadership of the French Communist Party has long opposed this "Italian" notion of a "transitional program," but not from the revolutionary direction. Its opposition is more in the Kautsky style, "theory" being preserved as a dogma having no relevance to daily practice, which is just as parliamentary and opportunist in France as it is in

Italy with the Italian Communist party. In France, it is inside the *Parti Socialiste Unifié* that partisans of the Italian-style "transitional program" are to be found. They hold the following point of view: Present-day capitalism, or "neocapitalism," to use that rather vague expression for it,³ is a phase in the transition from capitalism to socialism; this transition is not taking place along the lines of the old schemes of political struggle; the question of governmental power has become of secondary importance; social power is now lodged in the great economic organizations, and socialism can advance precisely by means of men, animated by socialist convictions, attaining leadership in these economic organizations, in these "centers of decision" (in the plural).

As in the case of the Italian Communist Party, the question of power has been eliminated from their concerns and struggles. *That* decisive center of decision represented by governmental power within the state is conjured away and replaced with multiple centers of decision. Instead of making mass struggles converge toward the question of power, their tendency is to disperse these struggles in space and in time over multiple objectives. Ideas like these become associated with others which are already widely diffused, reaching even into certain bourgeois circles, ideas which are derived from a superficial evaluation of the Liberman reforms in the workers states on the one hand and of planning in the capitalist states on the other. On the basis of this, it is concluded that the question of the differences between capitalism and socialism has become outmoded and the problem of the conquest of power is now *passé*. Of course the capitalists themselves do not share these ideas when it comes to their daily practice. The most authoritative voice in the City of London, where the wealth of yesteryear has been lost but not the solid notion of capitalist interests, puts the matter in a way which, while not being put in Marxist terms, reveals a most lively capitalist class consciousness on these questions:

Capitalism Speaks

"Indeed the more one looks at the effort of the eastern and western economies to move closer to each other—the communists by turning towards 'market relations,' the capitalists

by experimenting with planning—the more they seem to resemble two tethered goats trying to get together but checked by the length of the leash that ties them to its own particular stake. The stake is *where the basic power of economic decision rests*, with the state or with private men." (*The Economist*, November 28, 1964, p. 955; our emphasis.)

In capitalist society, despite all the changes which may have occurred, the state remains the center of decision serving the capitalists. Only by attacking it, by attacking governmental power, is it possible to go over to the building of socialism. Ignoring it and working surreptitiously for the accession of well-intentioned men to the leadership of multiple centers of decision will not achieve this. The theory of "centers of decision" no doubt offers some advantages . . . particularly to those who get the jobs. Here, too, the matter is not altogether new. When Jouhaux became a regent of the Bank of France (one of these centers of decision, and hardly the least important), his reply to revolutionary critics was that he was doing it for the cause of workers' emancipation, and he made out that he was making more sacrifices for the cause than anyone else.

For our part we absolutely reject such a conception of the "transitional program"; we unreservedly support the conception that governed the elaboration of the program of 1938, not out of any simple attachment to the past and feelings of respect for it, but because this conception continues to be more valid than ever for every portion of the globe.

In the countries which previously had a colonial or semi-colonial status, the conquest of formal political independence has yielded no solution whatever to the major problems of underdevelopment. On all the continents which experienced colonialization, the necessity imposes itself with ever increasing force for the colonial revolution to pass over into the socialist revolution. Parallel with this the need for a transitional program becomes more imperative.

In the workers states, "de-Stalinization" did not challenge the political power of the bureaucracy, and because of the continuation of this bureaucratic power, none of the demands formulated in the 1938 program or in *The Revolution Betrayed* has been completely satisfied. The events in Poland and Hungary in 1956, among others, have demonstrated the need for a political revolution, in the sense which Trotsky

gave to this term, and consequently, the need for a transitional program for that part of the world as well.

In the economically developed capitalist countries, years of economic prosperity which no one expected, not even the most optimistic capitalists, have engendered a reformist euphoria and a setback for revolutionary currents. The opportunists and reformists find no need to be vindicated by theory: For them, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and besides, aren't the conditions pre-eminently favorable for a minimum program?⁴

Imperialist Decline

But economic prosperity has not eliminated the essential characteristics of capitalism in its imperialist phase; it has not brought capitalism back to its period of full bloom, such as existed in the last third of the nineteenth century, which was likewise the period of the *minimum program*. Behind the facade of extraordinary economic prosperity, we find a capitalism which has lost control over a third of the land surface and a third of the population of the globe, a capitalism which is under continuous attack from the majority of mankind, a capitalism which sees that the material might of the United States is unable to break the will of the Vietnamese people, a capitalism whose economic system is visibly inferior to that of the workers states despite the fact that the latter is not yet beyond the preliminary stage, started from an extremely low level and is operating under a bureaucratic leadership characterized by its wastefulness.

The boasts about capitalism's capacity for adaptation, about its superiority over socialism, certainly do not deceive the capitalists themselves or their most responsible and clear-sighted servants in maintaining the system. Despite all the accumulated economic wealth and an unquestionable improvement in the living conditions of the working class within the economically developed countries, we are not witnessing any parallel flowering of bourgeois democracy as was the case during the expansion of capitalism in the last century. On the contrary, the tendency in all these countries is toward installation of a "strong state" at the expense of democratic forms, a strengthening of the "executive" at the expense of national

parliaments and local institutions, and this is happening even in that model country of bourgeois democracy, Great Britain, and even under a Labour government. This tendency is not the result of some mental aberration but of capitalist necessity. It requires only some relatively limited event, whether it be the Belgian general strike of 1960-1961, the Greek crisis of the summer of 1965, or some similar episode, to demonstrate the social fragility of the European countries. Even in the United States, society has been shaken to its depths by the aspirations of the Negroes. In the most economically developed countries, the need for a transitional program has no more vanished than in the other parts of the world.

The present dialectics of the world revolution ⁵ will only sharpen the need for a transitional program to mobilize the greatest masses around slogans engaging them in struggle with the existing order and with the aim of establishing a government that will begin to implement the demands of the program, and by so doing begin the process of putting society on the road toward construction of socialism.

A few words remain to be said to complete our earlier remarks regarding the necessity for working out the slogans of the transitional program and linking them up on the basis of conditions existing in a given place at a given time. Compared with 1938, certain slogans have become, if not outdated, at least of secondary importance relative to others. Their justification, in particular, becomes quite different in the context of a different reality. The need for changes is greatest in the case of the economically developed countries, since the 1938 program was formulated in a period when they were in the throes of a prolonged chronic crisis, with massive unemployment which was altogether different from the limited kind now appearing after a long period of full employment. The transitional slogans such as workers' control, opening the books, reducing the work week, etc., no longer coincide with the conditions of a chronic crisis and massive unemployment but are now juxtaposed even to conditions of temporary prosperity and the need for maintaining or defending full employment. Defense of the organized working-class movement is not being posed in the face of a direct threat from fascism, but against the far more complicated and insidious threat or establishment of the strong state. The struggle against the danger of nuclear war poses problems and consequently

slogans (unilateral nuclear disarmament, for instance) which would make no sense whatever for so-called conventional weapons, in view of the fact that it is generally easy to set up a conventional armament industry starting with normal industrial tooling, whereas the same cannot be done for nuclear weapons. The increase in leisure time poses new problems which must find a place in a program of action, etc., etc. But on all these points and in all these cases, it is merely a matter of adjustment to present conditions and in no case one of repudiating the principles which lie at the foundation of the *Transitional Program*.

This new edition of the *Transitional Program* of 1938 will become, we are sure, a multi-purpose tool for youth who are now turning toward Trotskyism. In it they will find a document showing how the Fourth International after years of struggle by the Trotskyist movement in defense of the theoretical and political teachings of revolutionary Marxism, established itself and translated its will to fight for the leadership of the working class movement into a programmatic application of these lessons to the conditions of our era; a document whose spirit can only continue to inspire the activities of revolutionary Marxists inside the mass movement; a document whose content still remains very largely valid almost thirty years after it was written, despite the substantial upheavals which have taken place in that span of time.

Notes

1. See in particular the resolution adopted on November 12, 1956, by the Workers Councils in the eleventh district of Budapest, reproduced in our introduction to *The Revolution Betrayed*, (1961 edition), and the program advanced by K. Modzelewsky and J. Kuron in their "Open Letter" to the Polish Workers Party, in which the lessons of the Polish October in 1956 are drawn.

2. In *Reform or Revolution* Rosa Luxemburg insistently emphasizes the dialectic of the two terms, minimum program and maximum program, in her arguments against the opportunists who were abandoning revolution. "The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers

within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers . . . the only means of engaging in the proletarian class war and working in the direction of the final goal," she writes on the first page of this book. She cogently points out where separation of these two terms must lead: "As soon as 'immediate results' become the principal aim of our activity, the clear-cut, irreconcilable point of view, which has meaning only in so far as it proposes to win power, will be found more and more inconvenient. The direct consequence of this will be the adoption by the party of a 'policy of compensation,' a policy of political trading, and an attitude of diffident, diplomatic conciliation."

3. The term "neocapitalism" was introduced by various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois reformists, without any real attempt at a definition, in order to spread the notion of a capitalism which had presumably found the way to overcome its objective laws, its crises, its contradictions. What they were really doing was idealizing the unexpected period of capitalist prosperity which followed the second world war. Since the term has spread widely and found acceptance, provisionally at any rate, we must understand its real meaning, which is not one of a miraculously transformed capitalism, but only a period in the imperialist stage of capitalism characterized by a prolonged boom, the causes of which can be grasped without having to question the Marxist analysis of capitalism.

4. The bad luck of the socialist leaders lies in the fact that the bourgeois parties are the only ones to profit from good times whereas the socialist leaders are only called on to enter governments (Wilson in Great Britain, Brandt in Germany) when things get bad. The job given to them is to plead poverty in order to impose restraints on the working class and in that way restore capitalism to health.

5. See the document "Dynamics of World Revolution Today" adopted by the Reunification Congress of the Fourth International in June 1963.

Program For Revolution

By Rosa Luxemburg

Introduction by the Editors

Rosa Luxemburg's speech on the party program was delivered at the founding congress of the German Communist Party which was formally constituted as the first act of a national conference convened on December 30, 1918 by the Spartacus League. Two weeks later, on January 15, 1919, Rosa Luxemburg was foully murdered by counterrevolutionary army officers operating in collusion with the right-wing social democrats to behead the revolutionary movement that threatened to topple the German capitalist order. Murdered also on that accursed day was Karl Liebknecht, co-leader with Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacus League, which comprised the revolutionary wing of the German social democracy.

Red Rosa, as she was affectionately known to the worker militants of Germany, had spent practically the entire period of the war in prison for her outspoken and uncompromising opposition to the imperialist war. Her frail physique housed an indomitable spirit which sparked a sustained political activity while in prison. Her articles and essays, smuggled out of prison, flayed the treachery and betrayal of the renegade leaders of the German social democracy who on August 4, 1914 capitulated to the imperialist government and voted in the Reichstag under fraction discipline in favor of the war credits. She viewed the war as an abomination, the inevitable outgrowth of the cancerous degeneration of the decaying capitalist system, and called for the socialist revolution as the only means to preserve human civilization.

In addition to her political intervention in the stormy developments of the day, the isolation of prison life afforded her the "leisure" time in which to reassess the experiences of a lifetime of active participation in the revolutionary socialist movement. Rosa Luxemburg was freed from prison by the revolutionary storm which toppled the German imperial regime

on November 9, 1918 and established the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils patterned after the Soviets which had taken the power in Russia under the leadership of Lenin's Bolshevik Party.

She immediately plunged into the feverish work of trying to carve out a leadership capable of leading the German working class to victory over capitalist reaction. At long last the leaders of Spartacus League decided to sever all organization connection with the reformist and centrist tendencies of German social democracy, adopt their own program and build their own revolutionary socialist organization.

At the time, Spartacus was still affiliated to the Independent Social Democratic Party which had split off from the right wing social democrats on April 6, 1917 but later joined with them in a coalition government to share the responsibility of beheading the socialist revolution. In his biography of Rosa Luxemburg, Paul Frolich, because of this ambiguous relation is led to comment that: "The Left Wing of the German working-class movement was thus not organizationally prepared for the great tasks of the revolutionary period, and therefore amalgamation and the formation of a centrally-organized political party became urgently necessary as the only means of giving the spontaneous revolutionary movement throughout the country a strong organizational backbone and a common marching route."

It was against this background that Rosa Luxemburg and her co-thinkers undertook the enormously difficult task of launching a new party of the Bolshevik type, (Lenin's unique contribution to the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism,) to carry out the program for which she spoke at the founding convention of the German Communist Party. But it was too late! The counterrevolution unleashed a White Terror which struck down the leaders before the revolutionary workers could be rallied to their cause. The revolution was defeated.

In recent years an unholy assortment of reformists, liberals, renegades and outright scoundrels have seized upon some fugitive bits and pieces written by Rosa Luxemburg in "criticism" of Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolshevik Party, to claim her as their own. What they laud are the weak points in her theory and practice and what they commend for emu-

lation are the errors made largely as a result of misunderstanding the course of development due to her isolation in prison. In the interest of necessary political therapy we publish her last major speech, the product of her most mature thought.

The inexorable choices she posed to humanity then, either socialism or barbarism, require only a minor amendment today: either socialism or atomic annihilation. There speaks the authentic Luxemburg.

April 12, 1967

* * *

Comrades! Our task today is to discuss and adopt a program. In undertaking this task we are not actuated solely by the consideration that yesterday we founded a new party and that a new party must formulate a program. Great historical movements have been the determining causes of today's deliberations. The time has arrived when the entire Socialist program of the proletariat has to be established upon a new foundation. We are faced with a position similar to that which was faced by Marx and Engels when they wrote the *Communist Manifesto* seventy years ago. As you all know, the *Communist Manifesto* dealt with socialism, with the realization of the aims of socialism, as the immediate task of the proletarian revolution. This was the idea represented by Marx and Engels in the revolution of 1848; it was thus, likewise, that they conceived the basis for proletarian action in the international field. In common with all the leading spirits in the working-class movement, both Marx and Engels then believed that the immediate introduction of socialism was at hand. All that was necessary was to bring about a political revolution, to seize the political power of the state, and socialism would then immediately pass from the realm of thought to the realm of flesh and blood.

Subsequently, as you are aware, Marx and Engels undertook a thoroughgoing revision of this outlook. In the joint preface to the reissue of the *Communist Manifesto* in the year 1872, we find the following passage: "No special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of section two. That passage would, in many respects, be differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of modern industry during the last twenty-five years and of the accom-

panying improved and extended organization of the working class, in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, this program has in some details become antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that the 'working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.'"

What is the actual wording of the passage thus declared to be out of date? It runs as follows:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy: to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie; to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

"Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

"The measures will, of course, be different in different countries.

"Nevertheless, in the most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable:

"1. Abolition of property in land and application of all land rents to public purposes.

"2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

"3. Abolition of the right of inheritance.

"4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.

"5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.

"6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.

"7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state: the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally, in accordance with a concerted plan.

"8. Equal obligation upon all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

"9. Coordination of agriculture with manufacturing industries: gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population throughout the rural areas.

"10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc., etc."

With a few trifling variations, these, as you know, are the tasks that confront us today. It is by such measures that we shall have to realize socialism. Between the day when the above program was formulated, and the present hour, there have intervened seventy years of capitalist development, and the historical evolutionary process has brought us back to the standpoint which Marx and Engels had in 1872 abandoned as erroneous. At that time there were excellent reasons for believing that their earlier views had been wrong. The further evolution of capital has, however, resulted in this, that what was error in 1872 has become truth today, so that it is our immediate objective to fulfill what Marx and Engels thought they would have to fulfill in the year 1848. But between that point of development, that beginning in the year 1848, and our own views and our immediate task, there lies the whole evolution, not only of capitalism, but in addition of the socialist labor movement. Above all, there have intervened the previously mentioned developments in Germany as the leading land of the modern proletariat.

This working-class evolution has taken a peculiar form. When, after the disillusionments of 1848, Marx and Engels had given up the idea that the proletariat could immediately realize socialism, there came into existence in all countries socialist parties inspired with very different aims. The immediate objective of these parties was declared to be detail work, the petty daily struggle in the political and industrial fields. Thus, by degrees, would proletarian armies be formed, and these armies would be ready to realize socialism when capitalist development had matured. The socialist program was thereby established upon an utterly different foundation, and in Germany the change took a peculiarly typical form. Down to the collapse of August 4, 1914, the German social democracy took its stand upon the Erfurt program, and by this

program the so-called immediate minimal aims were placed in the foreground, while socialism was no more than a distant guiding star.

Far more important, however, than what is written in a program, is the way in which that program is interpreted in action. From this point of view, great importance must be attached to one of the historical documents of the German labor movement, to the preface written by Friedrich Engels for the 1895 reissue of Marx's *Class Struggles in France*. It is not merely upon historical grounds that I now reopen this question. The matter is one of extreme actuality. It has become our urgent duty today to replace our program upon the foundations laid by Marx and Engels in 1848. In view of the changes effected since then by the historical process of development, it is incumbent upon us to undertake a deliberate revision of the views that guided the German social democracy down to the collapse of August 4th. Upon such a revision we are officially engaged today.

Engels' Viewpoint

How did Engels envisage the question in that celebrated preface to the *Class Struggles in France*, composed by him in 1895, twelve years after the death of Marx? First of all, looking back upon the year 1848, he showed that the belief that the socialist revolution was imminent had become obsolete. He continued as follows:

"History has shown that we were all mistaken in holding such a belief. It has shown that the state of economic evolution upon the continent was then far from being ripe for the abolition of capitalist production. This has been proved by the economic revolution which since 1848 has taken place all over the continent. Large-scale industry has been established in France, Austria-Hungary, Poland, and of late Russia. Germany has become a manufacturing country of the first rank. All these changes have taken place upon a capitalist foundation, a foundation which in the year 1848 still had to undergo an enormous extension."

After summing up the changes which had occurred in the intervening period, Engels turned to consider the immediate tasks of the German Social Democratic Party. "As Marx had

predicted," he wrote, "the war of 1870-71 and the fall of the Commune shifted the center of gravity of the European labor movement from France to Germany. Many years had naturally to elapse before France could recover from the blood-letting of May, 1871. In Germany, on the other hand, manufacturing industry was developing by leaps and bounds, in the forcing-house atmosphere produced by the influx of the French billions. Even more rapid and more enduring was the growth of social democracy. Thanks to the agreement in virtue of which the German workers have been able to avail themselves of the universal [male] suffrage introduced in 1866, the astounding growth of the party has been demonstrated to all the world by the testimony of figures whose significance no one can deny."

Thereupon followed the famous enumeration, showing the growth of the party vote in election after election until the figures swelled to millions. From this progress Engels drew the following conclusion: "The successful employment of the parliamentary vote entailed the acceptance of an entirely new tactic by the proletariat, and this new method has undergone rapid development. It has been realized that the political institutions in which the dominion of the bourgeoisie is incorporated offer a fulcrum whereby the proletariat can work for the overthrow of these very political institutions. The social democrats have participated in the elections to the various diets, to municipal councils, and to industrial courts. Wherever the proletariat could secure an effective voice, the occupation of these electoral strongholds by the bourgeoisie has been contested. Consequently, the bourgeoisie and the government have become much more alarmed at the constitutional than at the unconstitutional activities of the workers, dreading the results of elections far more than they dread the results of rebellion."

Engels appends a detailed criticism of the illusion that under modern capitalist conditions the proletariat can possibly expect to effect anything for the revolution by street fighting. It seems to me, however, seeing that today we are in the midst of a revolution, a revolution characterized by street fighting and all that this entails, that it is time to shake ourselves free of the views which have guided the official policy of the German social democracy down to our own day, of the views

which share responsibility for what happened on August 4th, 1914. [*Hear! Hear!*]

I do not mean to imply that, on account of these utterances, Engels must share personal responsibility for the whole course of socialist evolution in Germany. I merely draw your attention to one of the classical pieces of evidence of the opinions prevailing in the German social democracy—opinions which proved fatal to the movement. In this preface Engels demonstrated, as an expert in military science, that it was a pure illusion to believe that the workers could, in the existing state of military technique and of industry, and in view of the characteristics of the great towns of today, successfully bring about a revolution by street fighting. Two important conclusions were drawn from this reasoning. In the first place, the parliamentary struggle was counterposed to direct revolutionary action by the proletariat, and the former was indicated as the only practical way of carrying on the class struggle. Parliamentarism, and nothing but parliamentarism, was the logical sequel of this criticism.

Attitude Toward the Military

Secondly, the whole military machine, the most powerful organization in the class state, the entire body of proletarians in military uniform, was declared on a priori grounds to be absolutely inaccessible to socialist influences. When Engels' preface declares that, owing to the modern development of gigantic armies, it is positively insane to suppose that proletarians can ever stand up against soldiers armed with machine guns and equipped with all the other latest technical devices, the assertion is obviously based upon the assumption that anyone who becomes a soldier, becomes thereby once and for all one of the props of the ruling class.

It would be absolutely incomprehensible, in the light of contemporary experience, that so noted a leader as Engels could have committed such a blunder, did we not know the circumstances in which this historical document was composed. For the credit of our two great masters, and especially for the credit of Engels, who died twelve years later than Marx, and was always a faithful champion of his great collaborator's theories and reputation, I must remind you of the well-known fact that

the preface in question was written by Engels under strong pressure on the part of the parliamentary group. At that date in Germany, during the early 'nineties after the anti-socialist law had been annulled, there was a strong movement towards the left, the movement of those who wished to save the party from becoming completely absorbed in the parliamentary struggle. Bebel and his associates wished for convincing arguments, backed up by Engels' great authority; they wished for an utterance which would help them to keep a tight hand upon the revolutionary elements.

It was characteristic of party conditions at the time that the socialist parliamentarians should have the decisive word alike in theory and in practice. They assured Engels, who lived abroad and naturally accepted the assurance at its face value, that it was absolutely essential to safe-guard the German labor movement from a lapse into anarchism, and in this way they constrained him to write in the tone they wished. Thenceforward the tactics expounded by Engels in 1895 guided the German social democrats in everything they did and in everything they left undone, down to the appropriate finish of August 4th, 1914. The preface was the formal proclamation of the nothing-but-parliamentarism tactic. Engels died the same year, and had therefore no opportunity for studying the practical consequences of his theory. Those who know

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the works of Marx and Engels, those who are familiarly acquainted with the genuinely revolutionary spirit that inspired all their teachings and all their writings, will feel positively certain that Engels would have been one of the first to protest against the debauch of parliamentarism, against the frittering away of the energies of the labor movement, which was characteristic of Germany during the decades before the war.

The fourth of August did not come like thunder out of a clear sky; what happened on the fourth of August was not a chance turn of affairs, but was the logical outcome of all that the German socialists had been doing day after day for many years. [*Hear! hear!*] Engels and Marx, had it been possible for them to live on into our own time, would, I am convinced, have protested with the utmost energy, and would have used all the forces at their disposal to keep the party from hurling itself into the abyss. But after Engels' death in 1895, in the theoretical field the leadership of the party passed into the hands of Kautsky. The upshot of this change was that at every annual congress the energetic protests of the left wing against a purely parliamentarist policy, its urgent warnings against the sterility and the danger of such a policy, were stigmatized as anarchism, anarchising socialism, or at least anti-Marxism. What passed officially for Marxism became a cloak for all possible kinds of opportunism, for persistent shirking of the revolutionary class struggle, for every conceivable half-measure. Thus the German social democracy, and the labor movement, the trade union movement as well, were condemned to pine away within the framework of capitalist society. No longer did German socialists and trade unionists make any serious attempt to overthrow capitalist institutions or to put the capitalist machine out of gear.

But we have now reached the point, comrades, when we are able to say that we have rejoined Marx, that we are once more advancing under his flag. If today we declare that the immediate task of the proletariat is to make socialism a living reality and to destroy capitalism root and branch, in saying this we take our stand upon the ground occupied by Marx and Engels in 1848; we adopt a position from which in principle they never moved. It has at length become plain what true Marxism is, and what substitute-Marxism has been. [*Ap-*

plause]. I mean the substitute-Marxism which has so long been the official Marxism of the social democracy. You see what Marxism of this sort leads to, the Marxism of those who are the henchmen of Ebert, David, and the rest of them. These are the official representatives of the doctrine which has been trumpeted for decades as Marxism undefiled. But in reality Marxism could not lead in this direction, could not lead Marxists to engage in counter-revolutionary activities side by side with such as Scheidemann. Genuine Marxism turns its weapons against those also who seek to falsify it. Burrowing like a mole beneath the foundations of capitalist society, it has worked so well that the larger half of the German proletariat is marching today under our banner, the storm-riding standard of revolution. Even in the opposite camp, even where the counter-revolution still seems to rule, we have adherents and future comrades-in-arms.

Seventy Years since 1848

Let me repeat, then, that the course of historical evolution has led us back to the point at which Marx and Engels stood in 1848 when they first hoisted the flag of international socialism. We stand where they stood, but with the advantage that seventy additional years of capitalist development lie behind us. Seventy years ago, to those who reviewed the errors and illusions of 1848, it seemed as if the proletariat had still an interminable distance to traverse before it could hope to realize socialism. I need hardly say that no serious thinker has ever been inclined to fix upon a definite date for the collapse of capitalism; but after the failures of 1848, the day for that collapse seemed to lie in the distant future. Such a belief, too, can be read in every line of the preface which Engels wrote in 1895. We are now in a position to cast up the account, and we are able to see that the time has really been short in comparison with that occupied by the sequence of class struggles throughout history. The progress of large-scale capitalist development during seventy years has brought us so far that today we can seriously set about destroying capitalism once for all. Nay more, not merely are we today in a position to perform this task, not merely is its performance a duty towards the proletariat, but our solution offers the

only means of saving human society from destruction. [*Loud applause*].

What has the war left of bourgeois society beyond a gigantic rubbish-heap? Formally, of course, all the means of production and most of the instruments of power, practically all the decisive instruments of power, are still in the hands of the dominant classes. We are under no illusions here. But what our rulers will be able to achieve with the powers they possess, over and above frantic attempts to re-establish their system of spoliation through blood and slaughter, will be nothing more than chaos. Matters have reached such a pitch that today mankind is faced with two alternatives: It may perish amid chaos; or it may find salvation in socialism. As the outcome of the great war it is impossible for the capitalist classes to find any issue from their difficulties while they maintain class rule. We now realize the absolute truth of the statement formulated for the first time by Marx and Engels as the scientific basis of socialism in the great charter of our movement, in the *Communist Manifesto*. Socialism, they said, will become a historical necessity. Socialism is inevitable, not merely because proletarians are no longer willing to live under the conditions imposed by the capitalist class, but further because, if the proletariat fails to fulfill its duties as a class, if it fails to realize socialism, we shall crash down together to a common doom. [*Prolonged applause*].

Here you have the general foundation of the program we are officially adopting today, a draft of which you have all read in the pamphlet *Was will der Spartakusbund?* Our program is deliberately opposed to the leading principle of the Erfurt program; it is deliberately opposed to the separation of the immediate and so-called minimal demands formulated for the political and economic struggle, from the socialist goal regarded as a maximal program. It is in deliberate opposition to the Erfurt program that we liquidate the results of seventy years' evolution, that we liquidate, above all, the primary results of the war, saying we know nothing of minimal and maximal programs; we know only one thing, socialism; this is the minimum we are going to secure. [*Hear! hear!*]

I do not propose to discuss the details of our program. This would take too long, and you will form your own opinions upon matters of detail. The task that devolves upon me is merely to sketch the broad lines in which our program is

distinguished from what has hitherto been the official program of the German social democracy. I regard it, however, as of the utmost importance that we should come to an understanding in our estimate of the concrete circumstances of the hour, of the tactics we have to adopt, of the practical measures which must be undertaken, in view of the course of the revolution down to the present time, and in view of the probable lines of further development. We have to judge the political situation from the outlook I have just characterized, from the outlook of those who aim at the immediate realization of socialism, of those who are determined to subordinate everything else to that end.

First Act of Revolution

Our congress, the congress of what I may proudly call the only revolutionary socialist party of the German proletariat, happens to coincide in point of time with a crisis in the development of the German revolution. "Happens to coincide," I say; but in truth the coincidence is no chance matter. We may assert that after the occurrences of the last few days the curtain has gone down upon the first act of the German revolution. We are now in the opening of the second act, and it is our common duty to undertake self-examination and self-criticism. We shall be guided more wisely in the future, and we shall gain additional impetus for further advances, if we study all that we have done and all that we have left undone. Let us, then, carefully scrutinize the events of the first act in the revolution.

The movement began on November 9th. The revolution of November 9th was characterized by inadequacy and weakness. This need not surprise us. The revolution followed four years of war, four years during which, schooled by the social democracy and the trade unions, the German proletariat had behaved with intolerable ignominy and had repudiated its socialist obligations to an extent unparalleled in any other land. We Marxists, whose guiding principle is a recognition of historical evolution, could hardly expect that in the Germany which had known the terrible spectacle of August 4th, and which during more than four years had reaped the harvest sown on that day, there should suddenly occur on No-

vember 9th, 1918, a glorious revolution, inspired with definite class-consciousness, and directed towards a clearly conceived aim. What happened on November 9th was to a very small extent the victory of a new principle; it was little more than a collapse of the extant system of imperialism. [*Hear! hear!*]

The Russian Bolsheviks

The moment had come for the collapse of imperialism, a colossus with feet of clay, crumbling from within. The sequel of this collapse was a more or less chaotic movement, one practically devoid of reasoned plan. The only source of union, the only persistent and saving principle, was the watchword, "Form workers' and soldiers' councils." Such was the slogan of the revolution, whereby, in spite of the inadequacy and weakness of the opening phases, it immediately established its claim to be numbered among proletarian socialist revolutions. To those who participated in the revolution of November 9th, and who none the less shower calumnies upon the Russian Bolsheviks, we should never cease to reply with the question: "Where did you learn the alphabet of your revolution? Was it not from the Russians that you learned to ask for workers' and soldiers' councils?" [*Applause*].

Those pygmies who today make it one of their chief tasks, as heads of what they falsely term a socialist government, to join with the imperialists of Britain in a murderous attack upon the Bolsheviks, were then taking their seats as deputies upon the workers' and soldiers' councils, thereby formally admitting that the Russian revolution created the first watchwords for the world revolution. A study of the existing situation enables us to predict with certainty that in whatever country, after Germany, the proletarian revolution may next break out, the first step will be the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils. [*Murmurs of assent*].

Herein is to be found the tie that unites our movement internationally. This is the motto which distinguishes our revolution utterly from all earlier revolutions, bourgeois revolutions. On November 9th, the first cry of the revolution, as instinctive as the cry of a new-born child, was for workers' and soldiers' councils. This was our common rallying-cry, and it is through the councils that we can alone hope to re-

alize socialism. But it is characteristic of the contradictory aspects of our revolution, characteristic of the contradictions which attend every revolution, that at the very time when this great, stirring, and instinctive cry was being uttered, the revolution was so inadequate, so feeble, so devoid of initiative, so lacking in clearness as to its own aims, that on November 10th our revolutionists allowed to slip from their grasp nearly half the instruments of power they had seized on November 9th. We learn from this, on the one hand, that our revolution is subject to the prepotent law of historical determinism, a law which guarantees that, despite all difficulties and complications, notwithstanding all our own errors, we shall nevertheless advance step by step towards our goal. On the other hand, we have to recognize, comparing this splendid battle-cry with the paucity of the results practically achieved, we have to recognize that these were no more than the first childish and faltering footsteps of the revolution, which has many arduous tasks to perform and a long road to travel before the promise of the first watchwords can be fully realized.

The weeks that have elapsed between November 9th and the present day have been weeks filled with multiform illusions. The primary illusion of the workers and soldiers who made the revolution was their belief in the possibility of unity under the banner of what passes by the name of socialism. What could be more characteristic of the internal weakness of the revolution of November 9th than the fact that at the very outset the leadership passed in no small part into the hands of persons who a few hours before the revolution broke out had regarded it as their chief duty to issue warnings against revolution—[hear! hear!]¹—to attempt to make revolution impossible—into the hands of such as Ebert, Scheidemann, and Haase. One of the leading ideas of the revolution of November 9th was that of uniting the various socialist trends. The union was to be effected by acclamation. This was an illusion which had to be bloodily avenged, and the events of the last few days have brought a bitter awakening from our dreams; but the self-deception was universal, affecting the Ebert and Scheidemann groups and affecting the bourgeoisie no less than ourselves.

Another illusion was that affecting the bourgeoisie during this opening act of the revolution. They believed that by

means of the Ebert-Haase combination, by means of the so-called socialist government, they would really be able to bridle the proletarian masses and to strangle the socialist revolution. Yet another illusion was that from which the members of the Ebert-Scheidemann government suffered when they believed that with the aid of the soldiers returned from the front they would be able to hold down the workers and to curb all manifestations of the socialist class struggle. Such were the multifarious illusions which explain recent occurrences. One and all, they have now been dissipated. It has been plainly proved that the union between Haase and Ebert-Scheidemann under the banner of "socialism" serves merely as a fig-leaf for the decent veiling of a counterrevolutionary policy. We ourselves, as always happens in revolutions, have been cured of our self-deceptions.

There is a definite revolutionary procedure whereby the popular mind can be freed from illusion, but, unfortunately, the cure involves that the people must be blooded. In revolutionary Germany, events have followed the course characteristic of all revolutions. The bloodshed in Chaussee Street on December 6th, the massacre of December 24th, brought the truth home to the broad masses of the people. Through these occurrences they came to realize that what passes by the name of a socialist government is a government representing the counterrevolution. They came to realize that anyone who continues to tolerate such a state of affairs is working against the proletariat and against socialism. [*Applause*].

Vanished, likewise, is the illusion cherished by Messrs. Ebert, Scheidemann & Co., that with the aid of soldiers from the front they will be able forever to keep the workers in subjection. What has been the effect of the experiences of December 6th and 24th? There has been obvious of late a profound disillusionment among the soldiery. The men begin to look with a critical eye upon those who have used them as cannon-fodder against the socialist proletariat. Herein we see once more the working of the law that the socialist revolution undergoes a determined objective development, a law in accordance with which the battalions of the labor movement gradually learn through bitter experience to recognize the true path of revolution. Fresh bodies of soldiers have been brought to Berlin, new detachments of cannon-fodder, additional forces for the subjection of socialist proletarians—with the result

that, from barrack after barrack, there comes a demand for the pamphlets and leaflets of the Spartacus Group.

This marks the close of the first act. The hopes of Ebert and Scheidemann that they would be able to rule the proletariat with the aid of reactionary elements among the soldiery, have already to a large extent been frustrated. What they have to expect within the very near future is an increasing development of definite revolutionary trends within the barracks. Thereby the army of the fighting proletariat will be augmented, and correspondingly the forces of the counter-revolutionists will dwindle. In consequence of these changes, yet another illusion will have to go, the illusion that animates the bourgeoisie, the dominant class. If you read the newspapers of the last few days, the newspapers issued since the incidents of December 24th, you cannot fail to perceive plain manifestations of disillusionment conjoined with indignation, both due to the fact that the henchmen of the bourgeoisie, those who sit in the seats of the mighty, have proved inefficient. [*Hear! hear!*]

Ebert and Scheidemann Revealed

It had been expected of Ebert and Scheidemann that they would prove themselves strong men, successful lion tamers. But what have they achieved? They have suppressed a couple of trifling disturbances, and as a sequel the hydra of revolution has raised its head more resolutely than ever. Thus disillusionment is mutual, nay universal. The workers have completely lost the illusion which had led them to believe that a union between Haase and Ebert-Scheidemann would amount to a socialist government. Ebert and Scheidemann have lost the illusion which had led them to imagine that with the aid of proletarians in military uniform they could permanently keep down proletarians in civilian dress. The members of the middle class have lost the illusion that, through the instrumentality of Ebert, Scheidemann and Haase, they can humbug the entire socialist revolution of Germany as to the ends it desires. All these things have a merely negative force, and there remains from them nothing but the rags and tatters of destroyed illusions. But it is in truth a great gain for the proletariat that naught beyond these rags and tatters remains

from the first phase of the revolution, for there is nothing so destructive as illusion, whereas nothing can be of greater use to the revolution than naked truth.

I may appropriately recall the words of one of our classical writers, a man who was no proletarian revolutionary, but a revolutionary spirit nurtured in the middle class. I refer to Lessing, and quote a passage which has always aroused my sympathetic interest: "I do not know whether it be a duty to sacrifice happiness and life to truth. . . . But this much I know, that it is our duty, if we desire to teach truth, to teach it wholly or not at all, to teach it clearly and bluntly, unenigmatically, unreservedly, inspired with full confidence in its powers. . . . The cruder an error, the shorter and more direct is the path leading to truth. But a highly refined error is likely to keep us permanently estranged from truth, and will do so all the more readily in proportion as we find it difficult to realize that it is an error. . . . One who thinks of conveying to mankind truth masked and rouged, may be truth's pimp, but has never been truth's lover." Comrades, Messrs. Haase, Dittmann, etc., have wished to bring us the revolution, to introduce socialism, covered with a mask, smeared with rouge; they have thus shown themselves to be the pimps of the counterrevolution. Today these concealments have been discarded, and what was offered is disclosed in the brutal and sturdy lineaments of Messrs. Ebert and Scheidemann. Today the dullest among us can make no mistake. What is offered is the counterrevolution in all its repulsive nudity.

The first act is over. What are the subsequent possibilities? There is, of course, no question of prophecy. We can only hope to deduce the logical consequences of what has already happened, and thus to draw conclusions as to the probabilities of the future, in order that we may adapt our tactics to these probabilities. Whither does the road seem to lead? Some indications are given by the latest utterances of the Ebert-Scheidemann government, utterances free from ambiguity. What is likely to be done by this so-called socialist government now that, as I have shown, all illusions have been dispelled? Day by day the government loses increasingly the support of the broad masses of the proletariat. In addition to the petty bourgeoisie there stand behind it no more than poor remnants from among the workers, and as regards

these last it is extremely dubious whether they will long continue to lend any aid to Ebert and Scheidemann.

More and more, too, the government is losing the support of the army, for the soldiers have entered upon the path of self-examination and self-criticism. The effects of this process may seem slow at first, but it will lead irresistibly to their acquiring a thoroughgoing socialist mentality. As for the bourgeoisie, Ebert and Scheidemann have lost credit in this quarter too, for they have not shown themselves strong enough. What can they do? They will soon make an end of the comedy of socialist policy. When you read these gentlemen's new program you will see that they are steaming under forced draught into the second phase, that of the declared counterrevolution, or, as I may even say, the restoration of pre-existent, pre-revolutionary conditions.

The "New" Government

What is the program of the new government? It proposes the election of a president, who is to have a position intermediate between that of the king of England and that of the president of the United States. [*Hear! hear!*] He is to be, as it were, King Ebert. In the second place they propose to re-establish the federal council. You may read today the independently formulated demands of the South German governments, demands which emphasize the federal character of the German realm. The re-establishment of the good old federal council, in conjunction, naturally, with that of its appendage, the German Reichstag, is new a question of a few weeks only. Comrades, Ebert and Scheidemann are moving in this way towards the simple restoration of the conditions that obtained prior to November 9th. But therewith they have entered upon a steep declivity, and are likely before long to find themselves lying with broken limbs at the bottom of the abyss. For by the ninth of November the re-establishment of the conditions that had existed prior to the ninth of November had already become out of date, and today Germany is miles from such a possibility.

In order to secure support from the only class whose class interests the government really represents, in order to secure support from the bourgeoisie—a support which has in

fact been withdrawn owing to recent occurrences — Ebert and Scheidemann will be compelled to pursue an increasingly counterrevolutionary policy. The demands of the South German states, as published today in the Berlin newspapers, gave frank expression to the wish to secure "enhanced safety" for the German realm. In plain language, this means that they desire the declaration of a state of siege against "anarchist, disorderly, and Bolshevist" elements; that is to say, against socialists. By the pressure of circumstances. Ebert and Scheidemann will be constrained to the expedient of dictatorship, with or without the declaration of a state of siege. Thus, as an outcome of the previous course of development, by the mere logic of events and through the operation of the forces which control Ebert and Scheidemann, there will ensue during the second act of the revolution a much more pronounced opposition of tendencies and a greatly accentuated class struggle. [*Hear! hear!*] This intensification of conflict will arise, not merely because the political influences I have already enumerated, dispelling all illusions, will lead to a declared hand-to-hand fight between the revolution and the counter-revolution; but in addition because the flames of a new fire are spreading upward from the depths, the flames of the economic struggle.

Necessity of Socialist Revolution

It was typical of the first period of the revolution down to December 24th, that the revolution remained exclusively political. Hence the infantile character, the inadequacy, the half-heartedness, the aimlessness, of this revolution. Such was the first stage of a revolutionary transformation whose main objective lies in the economic field, whose main purpose it is to secure a fundamental change in economic conditions. Its steps were as uncertain as those of a child groping its way without knowing where it is going; for at this stage, I repeat, the revolution had a purely political stamp. But within the last two or three weeks a number of strikes have broken out quite spontaneously. Now, I regard it as the very essence of this revolution that strikes will become more and more extensive, until they constitute at last the focus of the revolution. [*Applause*]. Thus we shall have an economic revolution, and

therewith a socialist revolution. The struggle for socialism has to be fought out by the masses, by the masses alone, breast to breast against capitalism; it has to be fought out by those in every occupation, by every proletarian against his employer. Thus only can it be a socialist revolution.

The thoughtless had a very different picture of the course of affairs. They imagined it would merely be necessary to overthrow the old government, to set up a socialist government at the head of affairs, and then to inaugurate socialism by decree. Another illusion? Socialism will not be and cannot be inaugurated by decrees; it cannot be established by any government, however admirably socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, must be made by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there must the chains be broken. That only is socialism, and thus only can socialism be brought into being.

What is the external form of struggle for socialism? The strike, and that is why the economic phase of development has come to the front in the second act of the revolution. This is something on which we may pride ourselves, for no one will dispute with us the honor. We of the Spartacus Group, we of the Communist Party of Germany, are the only ones in all Germany who are on the side of the striking and fighting workers. [*Hear! hear!*] You have read and witnessed again and again the attitude of the Independent Socialists towards strikes. There was no difference between the outlook of *Vorwaerts* and the outlook of *Freiheit*. Both journals sang the same tune: Be diligent, socialism means hard work. Such was their utterance while capitalism was still in control! Socialism cannot be established in that way, but only by carrying on an unremitting struggle against capitalism. Yet we see the claims of the capitalists defended, not only by the most outrageous profit-snatchers, but also by the Independent Socialists and by their organ, *Freiheit*; we find that our Communist Party stands alone in supporting the workers against the exactions of capital. This suffices to show that all are today persistent and unsparing enemies of the strike, except only those who have taken their stand with us upon the platform of revolutionary communism.

The conclusion to be drawn is, not only that during the second act of the revolution, strikes will become increasingly prevalent; but, further, that strikes will become the central

feature and the decisive factors of the revolution, thrusting purely political questions into the background. The inevitable consequence of this will be that the struggle in the economic field will be enormously intensified. The revolution will therewith assume aspects that will be no joke to the bourgeoisie. The members of the capitalist class are quite agreeable to mystifications in the political domain, where masquerades are still possible, where such creatures as Ebert and Scheidemann can pose as socialists; but they are horror-stricken directly profits are touched.

To the Ebert-Scheidemann government, therefore, the capitalists will present these alternatives. Either, they will say, you must put an end to the strikes, you must stop this strike movement which threatens to destroy us; or else, we have no more use for you. I believe, indeed, that the government has already damned itself pretty thoroughly by its political measures. Ebert and Scheidemann are distressed to find that the bourgeoisie no longer reposes confidence in them. The capitalists will think twice before they decide to cloak in ermine the rough upstart, Ebert. If matters go so far that a monarch is needed, they will say: "It does not suffice a king to have blood upon his hand; he must also have blue blood in his veins." [*Hear! hear!*] Should matters reach this pass, they will say: "If we needs must have a king, we will not have a parvenu who does not know how to comport himself in kingly fashion." [*Laughter*].

It is impossible to speak positively as to details. But we are not concerned with matters of detail, with the question precisely what will happen, or precisely when it will happen. Enough that we know the broad lines of coming developments. Enough that we know that, to the first act of the revolution, to the phase in which the political struggle has been the leading feature, there will succeed a phase predominantly characterized by an intensification of the economic struggle, and that sooner or later the government of Ebert and Scheidemann will take its place among the shades.

It is far from easy to say what will happen to the National Assembly during the second act of the revolution. Perhaps, should the assembly come into existence, it may prove a new school of education for the working class. But it seems just as likely that the National Assembly will never come into

existence. Let me say parenthetically, to help you to understand the grounds upon which we were defending our position yesterday, that our only objection was to limiting our tactics to a single alternative. I will not reopen the whole discussion, but will merely say a word or two lest any of you should falsely imagine that I am blowing hot and cold with the same breath. Our position today is precisely that of yesterday. We do not propose to base our tactics in relation to the National Assembly upon what is a possibility but not a certainty. We refuse to stake everything upon the belief that the National Assembly will never come into existence. *We wish to be prepared for all possibilities, including the possibility of utilizing the National Assembly for revolutionary purposes should the assembly ever come into being.* Whether it comes into being or not is a matter of indifference, for whatever happens the success of the revolution is assured.

What fragments will then remain of the Ebert-Scheidemann government or of any other alleged social democratic government which may happen to be in charge when the revolution takes place? I have said that the masses of the workers are already alienated from them, and that the soldiers are no longer to be counted upon as counterrevolutionary cannonfodder. What on earth will the poor pygmies be able to do? How can they hope to save the situation? They will still have one last chance. Those of you who have read today's newspapers will have seen where the ultimate reserves are, will have learned whom it is that the German counterrevolution proposes to lead against us should the worst come to the worst. You will all have read how the German troops in Riga are already marching shoulder to shoulder with the English against the Russian Bolsheviks.

Comrades, I have documents in my hands which throw an interesting light upon what is now going on in Riga. The whole thing comes from the headquarters' staff of the eighth army, which is collaborating with Herr August Winnig, the German social democrat and trade-union leader. We have always been told that the unfortunate Ebert and Scheidemann are victims of the Allies. But for weeks past, since the very beginning of our revolution, it has been the policy of *Vorwaerts* to suggest that the suppression of the Russian revolution is the earnest desire of the Allies. We have here documen-

tary evidence how all this was arranged to the detriment of the Russian proletariat and of the German revolution. In a telegram dated December 26th, Lieutenant-Colonel Buerkner, chief of general staff of the eighth army, conveys information concerning the negotiations which led to this agreement at Riga. The telegram runs as follows:

"On December 23rd there was a conversation between the German plenipotentiary Winnig, and the British plenipotentiary Monsanquet, formerly consul-general at Riga. The interview took place on board H. M. S. "Princess Margaret," and the commanding officer of the German troops was invited to be present. I was appointed to represent the army command. The purpose of the conversation was to assist in the carrying out of the armistice conditions. The conversation took the following course:

"From the English side: The British ships at Riga will supervise the carrying out of the armistice conditions. Upon these conditions are based the following demands:

"(1) The Germans are to maintain a sufficient force in this region to hold the Bolsheviks in check and to prevent them from extending the area now occupied. . . .

"(3) A statement of the present disposition of the troops fighting the Bolsheviks, including both the German and the Lettish soldiers, shall be sent to the British staff officer, so that the information may be available for the senior naval officer. All future dispositions of the troops carrying on the fight against the Bolsheviks must in like manner be communicated through the same officer.

"(4) A sufficient fighting force must be kept under arms at the following points in order to prevent their being seized by the Bolsheviks, and in order to prevent the Bolsheviks from passing beyond a line connecting the places named: Walk, Wolmar, Wenden, Friedrichstadt, Pensk, Mitau.

"(5) The railway from Riga to Libau must be safeguarded against Bolshevik attack, and all British supplies and communications passing along this line shall receive preferential treatment."

A number of additional demands follow.

Let us now turn to the answer of Herr Winnig, German plenipotentiary and trade-union leader:

"Though it is unusual that a desire should be expressed to

compel a government to retain occupation of a foreign state, in this case it would be our own wish to do so, since the question is one of protecting German blood." [The Baltic Barons!] "Moreover, we regard it as a moral duty to assist the country which we have liberated from its former state of dependence. Our endeavors would, however, be likely to be frustrated, in the first place, by the condition of the troops, for our soldiers in this region are mostly men of considerable age and comparatively unfit for service, and owing to the armistice keen on returning home and possessed of little will to fight; in the second place, owing to the attitude of the Baltic governments, by which the Germans are regarded as oppressors. But we will endeavor to provide volunteer troops, consisting of men with a fighting spirit, and indeed this has already in part been done."

Collaboration with Imperialism

Here we see the counterrevolution at work. You will have read not long ago of the formation of the Iron Division expressly intended to fight the Bolsheviks in the Baltic provinces. At that time there was some doubt as to the attitude of the Ebert-Scheidemann government. You will now realize that the initiative in the creation of such a force actually came from the government.

One word more concerning Winnig. It is no chance matter that a trade-union leader should perform such political services. We can say, without hesitation, that the German trade-union leaders and the German social democrats are the most infamous scoundrels the world has ever known. [*Vociferous applause*]. Do you know where these fellows, Winnig, Ebert, and Scheidemann ought by right to be? By the German penal code, which they tell us is still in force, and which continues to be the basis of their own legal system, they ought to be in jail! [*Vociferous applause.*] For by the German penal code it is an offense punishable by imprisonment to enlist German soldiers for foreign service. Today there stand at the head of the "socialist" government of Germany, men who are not merely the Judases of the socialist movement and traitors to

the proletarian revolution, but who are jail-birds, unfit to mix with decent society. [*Loud applause*].

To resume the thread of my discourse, it is clear that all these machinations, the formation of Iron Divisions and, above all, the before-mentioned agreement with British imperialists, must be regarded as the ultimate reserves, to be called up in case of need in order to throttle the German socialist movement. Moreover, the cardinal question, the question of the prospects of peace, is intimately associated with the affair. What can such negotiations lead to but a fresh lighting-up of the war? While these rascals are playing a comedy in Germany, trying to make us believe that they are working overtime in order to arrange conditions of peace, and declaring that we Spartacists are the disturbers of the peace whose doings are making the Allies uneasy and retarding the peace settlement, they are themselves kindling the war afresh, a war in the East to which a war on German soil will soon succeed.

Consequences of "Peace"

Once more we meet with a situation the sequel of which cannot fail to be a period of fierce contention. It devolves upon us to defend, not socialism alone, not revolution alone, but likewise the interests of world peace. Herein we find a justification for the tactics which we of the Spartacus Group have consistently and at every opportunity pursued throughout the four years of the war. Peace means the world-wide revolution of the proletariat. In one way only can peace be established and peace be safeguarded—by the victory of the socialist proletariat! [*Prolonged applause*].

What general tactical considerations must we deduce from this? How can we best deal with the situation with which we are likely to be confronted in the immediate future? Your first conclusion will doubtless be a hope that the fall of the Ebert-Scheidemann government is at hand, and that its place will be taken by a declared socialist proletarian revolutionary government. For my part, I would ask you to direct your attention, not on the apex, but to the base. We must not again fall into the illusion of the first phase of the revolution, that of November 9th; we must not think that when we wish to

bring about a socialist revolution it will suffice to overthrow the capitalist government and to set up another in its place. There is only one way of achieving the victory of the proletarian revolution.

We must begin by undermining the Ebert-Scheidemann government by destroying its foundations through a revolutionary mass struggle on the part of the proletariat. Moreover, let me remind you of some of the inadequacies of the German revolution, inadequacies which have not been overcome with the close of the first act of the revolution. We are far from having reached a point when the overthrow of the government can ensure the victory of socialism. I have endeavored to show you that the revolution of November 9th was, before all, a political revolution; whereas the revolution which is to fulfill our aims, must, in addition, and mainly, be an economic revolution. But further, the revolutionary movement was confined to the towns, and even up to the present date the rural districts remain practically untouched. Socialism would prove illusory if it were to leave our present agricultural system unchanged. From the broad outlook of socialist economics, manufacturing industry cannot be remodelled unless it be quickened through a socialist transformation of agriculture. The leading idea of the economic transformation that will realize socialism, is an abolition of the contrast and the division between town and country. This separation, this conflict, this contradiction, is a purely capitalist phenomenon, and it must disappear as soon as we place ourselves upon the socialist standpoint.

If socialist reconstruction is to be undertaken in real earnest, we must direct attention just as much to the open country as to the industrial centers, and yet as regards the former we have not even taken the first steps. This is essential, not merely because we cannot bring about socialism without socializing agriculture; but also because, while we may think we have reckoned up the last reserves of the counterrevolution against us and our endeavors, there remains another important reserve which has not yet been taken into account. I refer to the peasantry. Precisely because the peasants are still untouched by socialism, they constitute an additional reserve for the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie. The first thing our enemies will do when the flames of the socialist strikes begin to scorch their heels, will be to mobilize the peasants, who are

fanatical devotees of private property. There is only one way of making headway against this threatening counterrevolutionary power. We must carry the class struggle into the country districts; we must mobilize the landless proletariat and the poorer peasants against the richer peasants. [*Loud applause*].

From this consideration we may deduce what we have to do to ensure the success of the revolution. First and foremost, we have to extend in all directions the system of workers' councils. What we have taken over from November 9th are mere weak beginnings, and we have not wholly taken over even these. During the first phase of the revolution we actually lost extensive forces that were acquired at the very outset. You are aware that the counterrevolution has been engaged in the systematic destruction of the system of workers' and soldiers' councils. In Hesse, these councils have been definitely abolished by the counterrevolutionary government; elsewhere, power has been wrenched from their hands. Not merely, then, have we to develop the system of workers' and soldiers' councils, but we have to induce the agricultural laborers and the poorer peasants to adopt this system. We have to seize power, and the problem of the seizure of power assumes this aspect; what, throughout Germany, can each workers' and soldiers' council achieve? [*Bravo!*] There lies the source of power. We must mine the bourgeois state, and we must do so by putting an end everywhere to the cleavage in public powers, to the cleavage between legislative and executive powers. These powers must be united in the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils.

Comrades, we have here an extensive field to till. We must build from below upwards, until the workers' and soldiers' councils gather so much strength that the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann or any similar government will be merely the final act in the drama. For us the conquest of power will not be effected at one blow. It will be a progressive act, for we shall progressively occupy all the positions of the capitalist state, defending tooth and nail each one that we seize. Moreover, in my view and in that of my most intimate associates in the party, the economic struggle, likewise, will be carried on by the workers' councils. The settlement of economic affairs, and the continued expansion of the area of this settlement, must be in the hands of the workers' councils. The councils

must have all power in the state. To these ends must we direct our activities in the immediate future, and it is obvious that, if we pursue this line, there cannot fail to be an enormous and immediate intensification of the struggle. For step by step, by hand-to-hand fighting, in every province, in every town, in every village, in every commune, all the powers of the state have to be transferred bit by bit from the bourgeoisie to the workers' and soldiers' councils.

But before these steps can be taken, the members of our own party and the proletarians in general must be schooled and disciplined. Even where workers' and soldiers' councils already exist, these councils are as yet far from understanding the purposes for which they exist. [*Hear! hear!*] We must make the masses realize that the workers' and soldiers' council has to be the central feature of the machinery of state, that it must concentrate all power within itself, and must utilize all powers for the one great purpose of bringing about the socialist revolution. Those workers who are already organized to form workers' and soldiers' councils are still very far from having adopted such an outlook, and only isolated proletarian minorities are as yet clear as to the tasks that devolve upon them. But there is no reason to complain of this, for it is a normal state of affairs. The masses must learn how to use power, by using power. There is no other way. We have, happily, advanced since the days when it was proposed to "educate" the proletariat socialistically. Marxists of Kautsky's school are, it would seem, still living in those vanished days. To educate the proletarian masses socialistically meant, to deliver lectures to them, to circulate leaflets and pamphlets among them. But it is not by such means that the proletarians will be schooled. The workers, today, will learn in the school of action. [*Hear! hear!*]

Our scripture reads: In the beginning was the deed. Action for us means that the workers' and soldiers' councils must realize their mission and must learn how to become the sole public authorities throughout the realm. Thus only can we mine the ground so effectively as to make everything ready for the revolution which will crown our work. Quite deliberately, and with a clear sense of the significance of our words, did some of us say to you yesterday, did I in particular say to you, "Do not imagine that you are going to have an easy time in the future!" Some of the comrades have falsely im-

agined me to assume that we can boycott the National Assembly and then simply fold our arms. It is impossible, in the time that remains, to discuss this matter fully, but let me say that I never dreamed of anything of the kind. My meaning was that history is not going to make our revolution an easy matter like the bourgeois revolutions. In those revolutions it sufficed to overthrow the official power at the center, and to replace a dozen or so persons in authority. But we have to work from beneath. Therein is displayed the mass character of our revolution, one which aims at transforming the whole structure of society. It is thus characteristic of the modern proletarian revolution, that we must effect the conquest of political power, not from above, but from beneath.

The ninth of November was an attempt, a weakly, half-hearted, half-conscious, and chaotic attempt, to overthrow the existing public authority and to put an end to ownership rule. What is now incumbent upon us is that we should deliberately concentrate all the forces of the proletariat for an attack upon the very foundations of capitalist society. There, at the root, where the individual employer confronts his wage slaves; at the root, where all the executive organs of ownership rule confront the objects of this rule, confront the masses; there, step by step, we must seize the means of power from the rulers, must take them into our own hands. Working by such methods, it may seem that the process will be a rather more tedious one than we had imagined in our first enthusiasm. It is well, I think, that we should be perfectly clear as to all the difficulties and complications in the way of revolution. For I hope that, as in my own case, so in yours also, the description of the great difficulties we have to encounter, of the augmenting tasks we have to undertake, will neither abate zeal nor paralyze energy. Far from it, the greater the task, the more fervently will you gather up your forces. Nor must we forget that the revolution is able to do its work with extraordinary speed. I shall make no attempt to foretell how much time will be required. Who among us cares about the time, so long only as our lives suffice to bring it to pass? Enough for us to know clearly the work we have to do; and to the best of my ability I have endeavored to sketch, in broad outline, the work that lies before us. [*Tumultuous applause*].

Theories of History

By George Novack

Historical materialists would be untrue to their own principles if they failed to regard their method of interpreting history as the result of a prolonged, complex and contradictory process. Mankind has been making history for a million years or more as it advanced from the primate condition to the atomic age. But a science of history capable of ascertaining the laws governing man's collective activities over the ages is a relatively recent acquisition.

The first attempts to survey the long march of human history, study its causes, and set forth its successive stages along scientific lines were made only about twenty-five hundred years ago. This task, like so many others in the domain of theory, was originally undertaken by the Greeks.

The sense of history is a precondition for a science of history. This is not an inborn but a cultivated, historically generated capacity. The discrimination of the passage of time into a well-defined past, present and future is rooted in the evolution of the organization of labor. Man's awareness of life as made up of consecutive and changing events has acquired breadth and depth along with the development and diversification of social production. The calendar first appears, not among food gatherers, but in agricultural communities.

Primitive peoples from savagery to the upper stages of barbarism have as little concern for the past as for the future. What they experience and do forms part of an objective universal history. But they remain unaware of the particular place they occupy or the part they play in the progression of mankind.

The very idea of historical advancement from one stage to the next is unknown. They have no need to inquire into the motive forces of history or to mark off the phases of social development. Their collective consciousness has not reached

the point of an historical outlook or a sociological insight. The low level of their productive powers, the immaturity of their economic forms, the narrowness of their activities and the meagerness of their culture and connections are evidenced in their extremely restricted views of the course of events.

The amount of historical knowledge possessed by extremely primitive minds may be gauged from the following observations made by the Jesuit father Jacob Baegert in his *Account of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the California Peninsula* written two hundred years ago. "No Californian is acquainted with the events that occurred in the country prior to his birth, nor does he even know who his parents were if he should happen to have lost them during his infancy . . . The Californians . . . believed that California constituted the whole world, and they themselves its sole inhabitants; for they went to nobody, and nobody came to see them, each little people remaining within the limits of its small district."

Primitive Time Concepts

In pre-Spanish times they marked only one repetitive event, the pitahaya fruit harvest. Thus a space of three years is called three pitahayas. "Yet they seldom make use of such phrases, because they hardly ever speak among themselves of years, but merely say, 'long ago,' or 'not long ago,' being utterly indifferent whether two or twenty years have elapsed since the occurrence of a certain event."

Until several thousand years ago, peoples took their own particular organization of social relations for granted. It appeared to them as fixed and final as the heavens and earth and as natural as their eyes and ears. The earliest men did not even distinguish themselves from the rest of nature or draw a sharp line of demarcation between themselves and other living creatures in their habitat. It took a far longer time for them to learn to distinguish between what belonged to nature and what belonged to society.

So long as social relations remain simple and stable, changing extremely slowly and almost imperceptibly over vast stretches of time, society melts into the background of nature and does not stand out in sharp contrast from it. Nor do the experiences of one generation differ much from another.

If the familiar organization with its traditional routine is disrupted, it either vanishes or is rebuilt on the old pattern. Moreover, surrounding communities, so far as they are known, (and acquaintance does not extend very far either in space or time) are much the same. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the North American Indian could travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific, or the Australian native thousands of miles, without encountering radically different types of human societies.

Under such circumstances, neither society in general nor one's own special mode of living is looked upon as a peculiar object which is worth special attention and study. The need for theorizing about history or the nature of society does not arise until civilization is well advanced and sudden, violent, and far-reaching upheavals in social relations take place during the lifetime of individuals or within the memories of their elders.

When swift strides are taken from one form of social structure to another, the old days and ways stand out in startling contrast, and even conflict, with the new. Through trade, travel and war, the representatives of the expanding social system undergoing construction or reconstruction come into contact with peoples of quite different customs on lower levels of culture.

More immediately, glaring differences in the conditions of life within their own communities and bitter conflicts between antagonistic classes induce thoughtful men who have the means for such pursuits to speculate on the origins of such oppositions, to compare the various kinds of societies and governments, and to try and arrange them in an order of succession or worth.

The English historian M. I. Finley makes a similar point in reviewing three recent books on the ancient East in the August 20, 1965, *New Statesman*: "The presence or absence of a 'historical sense' is nothing less than an intellectual reflection of the very wide differences in the historical process itself."

He cites the Marxist scholar, Professor D. D. Kosambi, who attributes "the total lack of historical sense" in ancient India to the narrow outlook of village life bound up with its mode of agricultural production. "The succession of seasons is all-important, while there is little cumulative change to be noted

in the village from year to year. This gives the general feeling of 'the Timeless East' to foreign observers."

The other civilized peoples of the ancient Near and Middle East likewise lacked a sense of history. There is nothing, notes Professor Leo Oppenheim, "that would attest the awareness of the scribes of the existence of a historical continuum in the Mesopotamian civilization." This is confirmed by the fact that "the longest and most explicit Assyrian royal inscriptions . . . were imbedded in the substructure of a temple or a palace, safe from human eyes and only to be read by the deity to whom they were addressed."

Evolution of Historical Outlook

The main preconditions for an historical outlook upon history in the West were brought into being from about 1,100 to 700 B. C. by the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age in the Middle East and Aegean civilizations. The comparatively self-sufficient agricultural kingdoms and settlements were supplemented or supplanted by bustling commercial centers, especially in the Phoenician and Ionian ports of Asia Minor. There new classes—merchants, shipowners, manufacturers, artisans, seafarers—came to the fore and challenged the institutions, ideas and power of the old landed gentry. Patriarchal slavery became transformed into chattel slavery. Commodity relations, metal money, mortgage debt corroded the archaic social structures. The first democratic revolutions and oligarchic counterrevolutions were hatched in the city states.

The Ionian Greeks, who set down the first true written histories, were associates of traders, engineers, craftsmen and voyagers. The pioneer of Western historians, Hecataeus, lived in the same commercial city of Miletus as the first philosophers and scientists and belonged to the same materialist trend of thought.

The writing of history soon engendered interest in the science of history. Once the habit of viewing events in their sequence of change was established, the questions arose: How did history unfold? Was there any discernible pattern in its flux? If so, what was it? And what were its causes?

The first really rational explanation of the historical process as a whole was given by the outstanding Greek historians from Herodotus to Polybius. This was the cyclical conception of historical movement. According to this view, society, like nature, passed through identical patterns of development in periodically repeated rounds.

Thucydides, the pre-eminent Greek historian, declared that he had written his record of the Peloponnesian wars to teach men its lessons since identical events were bound to happen again. Plato taught the doctrine of the Great Year at the end of which the planets would occupy the same positions as before and all sublunary events would be reduplicated. This conception was expressed as a popular axiom in *Ecclesiastes*: "There is no new thing under the sun."

The cyclical character of human affairs was closely affiliated with the conception of an all-powerful, inscrutable, inflexible Destiny which came to replace the gods as the sovereign of history. This was mythologized in the persons of the Three Fates and further rationalized by learned men as the ultimate law of life. This notion of cosmic tragic fate from which human appeal or escape is impossible not only became the major theme of the classic Greek dramatists but is also embedded in the historical works of Herodotus.

Comparisons with other peoples, or between Greek states

THE ORIGINS OF MATERIALISM

BY GEORGE NOVACK

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in different stages of social, economic, and political development, produced a comparative history along with the first inklings of historical progression. As early as the eighth century B. C. the poet Hesiod talked about the copper age that had preceded the iron one. Several centuries later Herodotus, the first anthropologist as well as the father of history, gathered valuable information on the customs of the Mediterranean peoples living in savagery, barbarism and civilization. Thucydides pointed out that the Greeks once lived as the barbarians did in his own time. Plato in his *Republic*, *Laws* and other writings, and Aristotle in his *Politics*, collected specimens of different forms of state rule. They named, classified and criticized them. They sought to ascertain not only the best mode of government for the city state but also the order of their forms of development and the causes of political variation and revolution.

Polybius, the Greek historian of the rise of the Roman empire, viewed it as the prize example of the natural laws which regulated the cyclical transformation of one governmental form into another. He believed, like Plato, that all states inevitably passed through the phases of kingship, aristocracy and democracy which degenerated into their allied forms of despotism, oligarchy and mob rule. The generation and degeneration of these successive stages of rulership was due to natural causes. "This is the regular cycle of constitutional revolutions, and the natural order in which institutions change, are transformed, and return to their original stage," he wrote.

Just as they knew and named the major kinds of political organization from monarchy to democracy, so did the Greek thinkers of both the idealist and materialist schools originate the basic types of historical interpretation which have endured to the present day.

They were the first to try to explain the evolution of society along materialist lines, however crude and awkward were their initial efforts. The Atomists, the Sophists and the Hippocratic school of medicine put forward the idea that the natural environment was the decisive factor in the molding of mankind. In its extreme expressions this trend of thought reduced social-historical changes to the effects of the geographical theater and its climatic conditioning. Thus Polybius wrote: "We mortals have an irresistible tendency to yield to climatic influences; and to this cause, and no other, may

be traced the great distinctions which prevail among us in character, physical formation and complexion, as well as in most of our habits, varying with nationality and wide local separation."

These earliest sociologists taught that mankind had climbed from savagery to civilization by imitating nature and improving upon her operations. The finest exponent of this materialist view in Graeco-Roman culture was Lucretius who gave a brilliant sketch of the steps in the development of society in his poem *On The Nature of Things*.

Main Historical Theories

Predominant among the Greek thinkers, however, were the sorts of explanation which have ever since been the stock in trade of the historical idealists. There were five of these.

1. *The Great God Theory*. The most primitive attempts to explain the origin and development of the world and man are the creation myths to be found among preliterate peoples. We are best acquainted with the one in *Genesis* which ascribes the making of heaven and earth with all its features and creatures to a Lord God who worked on a six-day schedule. These fanciful stories do not have any scientific validity.

The raw materials for genuine history-writing were first collected in the annals of the reigns and chronicles of kings in the river valley civilizations of the Near East, India and China. The first synthetic conception of history arose from the fusion of elements taken over from the old creation myths with a review of these records. This was the Great God, or theological version of history which asserted that divine beings directed human affairs together with the rest of the cosmos.

Just as the royal despots dominated the city states and their empires, so the will, passions, plans and needs of the gods were the ultimate causes of events. The king is the agent who maintains the world in being by means of an annual contest with the powers of chaos. This theological theory was elaborated by the Sumerians, Babylonians and Egyptians before it came down to the Greeks and Romans. It was expounded in the Israelite Scriptures whence it was taken over and re-shaped by the Christian and Mohammedan religions and their states.

Under the theocratic monarchies of the East the divine guidance of human affairs was wrapped up with the godlike nature of the priest-king. In Babylon, Egypt, the Alexandrian Empire and Rome the supreme ruling force of the universe and the forceful ruler of the realm were regarded as equally divine. The Great God and the Great Man were one and the same.

2. *The Great Man Theory.* The straightforward theological view of history is too crude and naive, too close to primitive animism, too much in conflict with civilized enlightenment to persist without criticism or change except among the most ignorant and devout. It has been supplanted by more refined versions of the same type of thinking.

The Great Man theory emerged from a dissociation of the dual components of the Great God theory. The immense powers attributed to the gods become transferred to and concentrated in some figure at the head of the state, the church or other key institution or movement. This exceptionally placed personage was supposedly endowed with the capacity for molding events as he willed. This is the pristine source of the tenacious belief that unusually influential and able individuals determine the main direction of history.

Fetishistic worship of the Great Man has come down through the ages from the god-kings of Mesopotamia to the adoration of a Hitler. It has had numerous incarnations according to the values attached at different times by different people to the various domains of social activity. In antiquity these ranged from the divine monarch, the tyrant, the lawgiver (Solon), the military conqueror (Alexander), the dictator (Caesar), the hero-emancipator (David), and the religious leader (Christ, Buddha, Mohammed). All these were put in the place of the Almighty as the prime mover and shaper of human history.

The most celebrated latter-day expounder of this viewpoint was Carlyle who wrote: "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here."

3. *The Great Mind Theory.* A more sophisticated and philosophical variant of the Great God-Man line of thought is the notion that history is drawn forward or driven ahead by some ideal force in order to realize its preconceived ends. The Greek Anaxagoras said: "Reason (*Nous*) governs the

world." Aristotle held that the prime mover of the universe and thereby the ultimate animator of everything within it was God, who was defined as pure mind engaged in thinking about itself.

Hegel was the foremost modern exponent of this theory that the progress of mankind consisted in the working out and consummation of an idea. He wrote: "Spirit, or Mind, is the only motive principle of history." The underlying goal of the World Spirit and the outcome of its laborious development was the realization of the idea of freedom.

Role of the "Great Mind"

The Great Mind Theory easily slides into the notion that some set of brilliant intellects, or even one mental genius, supplies the mainspring of human advancement. Plato taught that there are "some natures who ought to study philosophy and to be leaders in the State; and others who are not born to be philosophers, and are meant to be followers rather than leaders."

Thus some eighteenth century rationalists who believed that "opinion governs mankind" looked toward an enlightened monarch to introduce the necessary progressive reconstruction of the state and society. A more widespread manifestation of this approach contrasts to the unthinking mob some upper stratum of the population as the exemplar of reason which alone can be entrusted with political leadership and power.

4. *The Best People Theory.* All such interpretations contain infusions of the prejudice that some elite, the Best Race, the favored nation, the ruling class alone make history. The Old Testament assumed that the Israelites were God's chosen people. The Greeks regarded themselves as the acme of culture, better in all respects than the barbarians. Plato and Aristotle looked upon the slave-holding aristocracy as naturally superior to the lower orders.

5. *The Human Nature Theory.* Most persistent is the view that history in the last analysis has been determined by the qualities of human nature, good or bad. Human nature, like nature itself, was regarded as rigid and unchanging from one generation to another. The historian's task was to demonstrate what these invariant traits of the human constitution

and character were, how the course of history exemplified them, and how the social structure was molded or had to be remodeled in accordance with them. Such a definition of essential human nature was the starting point for the social theorizing of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and other great idealists.

But it will also be found at the bottom of the social and political philosophy of the most diverse schools. Thus the empiricist David Hume flatly asserts in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature."

Many of the 19th century pathfinders in the social sciences clung to this old standby of "the constant and universal principles of human nature." For example, E. B. Tylor, the founder of British anthropology, wrote in 1889: "Human institutions, like stratified rocks, succeed each other in series substantially uniform over the Globe, independent of what seems the comparatively superficial differences of race and language, but shaped by similar human nature."

Fixed Human Nature

Although they may have held different opinions of what the essential qualities of humanity were, idealist and materialist thinkers alike have appealed in the last resort to permanent principles of human nature to explain social and historical phenomena. Thus the materialist-minded Thucydides, as M. I. Finley tells us in his introduction to *The Greek Historians*, believed that "human nature and human behavior were . . . essentially fixed qualities, the same in one century as another."

For many centuries after the Greeks, scientific insight into the workings of history made little progress. Under Christianity and feudalism the theological conception that history was the manifestation of God's plan monopolized social philosophy. In contrast to the stagnation of science in Western Europe, the Moslems and Jews carried forward the social as well as the natural sciences. The most original and unsurpassed student of social processes between the ancients and

moderns was the fourteenth century thinker of the Mahgreb, Ibn Khaldun who analyzed the stages of development of the Mohammedan countries and cultures and the causes of their typical institutions and features in the most materialist manner of his epoch.

This eminent Moslem statesman was very likely the first scholar to formulate a clear conception of sociology, the science of social development. He did so under the name of the study of culture.

He wrote: "History is the record of human society, or world civilization; of the changes that take place in the nature of that society, such as savagery, sociability, and group solidarity; of revolutions and uprisings by one set of people against another with the resulting kingdoms and states, with their various ranks; of the different activities and occupations of men, whether for gaining their livelihood or in the various sciences and crafts; and, in general, of all the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature."

The next big advance in scientific understanding of history came with the rise of bourgeois society and the discovery of other regions of the globe associated with its commercial and naval expansion. In their conflicts with the ruling feudal hierarchy and the Church the intellectual spokesmen for progressive bourgeois forces rediscovered and reasserted the ideas of class struggle first noted by the Greeks and instituted historical comparisons with antiquity to bolster their claims. Their new revolutionary views demanded not only a wider outlook upon the world but a deeper probing into the mechanism of social change.

Such bold representatives of bourgeois thought as Machiavelli and Vico in Italy, Hobbes, Harrington, Locke and the classical economists in England, the Scottish school of Adam Ferguson, Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, D'Holbach and others in France helped accumulate the materials and clear the site for a more realistic picture of society and a more rigorous understanding of its modes and stages of development.

On a much higher level of social and scientific development, historical thought from the 17th to the 19th centuries tended to become polarized, as in Greece, between idealist and materialist modes of explanation. Both schools of thought were animated by a common aim. They believed that history had

an intelligible character and that the nature and sources of its laws could be ascertained.

Theological interpreters like Bishop Bossuet continued to see God as the director of the historical procession. While most other thinkers did not dispute that divine providence ultimately shaped the course of events, they were far more concerned with the mundane ways and means through which history operated.

Giambattista Vico

Giambattista Vico of Naples was the great pioneer among these thinkers. He asserted at the beginning of the 18th century that since history, or "the world of nations," had been created by men, it could be understood by its makers. He emphasized that social and cultural phenomena passed through a regular sequence of stages which was cyclical in character.

He insisted that "the order of ideas must follow the order of things" and that the "order of human things" was "first the forests, after that the huts, thence the village, next the cities and finally the academies." His "New Science" of history sought to discover and apply "the universal and eternal principles . . . on which all nations were founded, and still preserve themselves." Vico brings forward the class struggle in his interpretation of history, especially in the heroic age represented by the conflict between the plebians and patriarchs of ancient Rome.

The materialistic theorists who came after Vico in Western Europe looked for these "universal and eternal principles" which determined history in very different quarters than the idealists. But neither school doubted that history, like nature, was subject to general laws which the philosopher of history was obligated to find.

The key thought of the English and French materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries was that men were the products of their natural and social environments. As Charles Brockden Brown, an American novelist of the early 19th century, put it: "Human beings are molded by the circumstances in which they are placed." In accord with this principle, they

turned to the objective realities of nature and society to explain the historical process.

Montesquieu, for example, regarded geography and government as the twin principal determinants of history and society. The physical factor was most influential in the earlier and more primitive stages of human existence, although its operation never ceased; the political factor became more dominant as civilization advanced.

He and his contemporary materialists largely ignored the economic conditions which stood between nature and the political institutions. The economic basis and background of political systems and the struggles of contending classes which issued from economic contradictions were beyond their field of vision.

The French historians of the early 19th century acquired a deeper insight into the economic conditioning of the historical process through their studies of the English and French revolutions. They had watched the French revolution go through a complete cycle. This started with the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, passed through the revolutionary regime of Robespierre and the bourgeois-military dictatorship of Napoleon and ended in the Bourbon Restoration. In the light of these vicissitudes they learned the crucial role of class

UNEVEN AND COMBINED DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORY

By GEORGE NOVACK

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struggles in pushing history forward and pointed to sweeping shifts in property ownership as the prime cause of social overturns. But they remained unable to uncover the fundamental determinants which led to the reconstruction and replacement of property relations as well as political forms.

Many leading philosophers of the bourgeois era had a materialist view of nature and man's relations with the world around him. But none of them succeeded in working out a consistent or comprehensive conception of society and history along materialist lines. At a certain point in their analyses they departed from materialist premises and procedures, attributing the ultimate causal agencies of human affairs to an invariant human nature, a far-seeing human reason, or a great individual.

What was generally responsible for their inability to reach bedrock and their deviation into nonmaterialist types of explanation in the fundamental areas of historical and social determination? As bourgeois thinkers, they were hemmed in and held back by the inescapable restrictions of the capitalist horizon. So long as the ascending bourgeoisie was on its way to supremacy, its most enlightened ideologists had a passionate and persistent interest in boring deeply into economic, social and political realities. After the bourgeoisie had consolidated its position as the ruling class, its thinkers shrank from probing to the bottom of social and political processes. They became more and more sluggish and short-sighted in the fields of sociology and history because discovery of the underlying causes of change in these fields could only threaten the continuance of capitalist domination.

One big barrier to the deepening of social science was their tacit assumption that bourgeois society and its main institutions embodied the highest attainable form of social organization. All previous societies led up to that point and stopped there. There was apparently no progressive exit from the capitalist system. That is why the ideologists of the English bourgeoisie from Locke to Ricardo and Spencer tried to fit their conceptions of the meaning of all social phenomena into the categories and relations of that transitory order. This narrowness made it equally difficult for them to decipher the past, get to the bottom of their present, and foresee the future.

Idealistic interpretations of history were promulgated and promoted by numerous theorists from Leibnitz to Fichte. Their

work was consummated by Hegel. In the early decades of the 19th century Hegel revolutionized the understanding of world history, placing it at the widest vantage point of the bourgeois era. His contributions may be summed up in thirteen points.

Hegel

1. Hegel approached all historical phenomena from the standpoint of their evolution, seeing them as moments, elements, phases in a single creative, cumulative, progressive and ceaseless process of becoming.

2. Since the world about him, which he called "Objective Mind," was the work of man, he, like Vico, was convinced that it was intelligible and could be explicated by the inquiring mind.

3. He conceived history as a *universal* process in which all social formations, nations and persons had their appropriate but subordinate place. No single state or people dominated world history; each was to be judged by its role in the development of the totality.

4. He asserted that the historical process was essentially rational. It had an immanent logic which unfolded in a law-governed manner defined by the dialectical process. Each stage of the whole was a necessary product of the circumstances of its time and place.

5. Every essential element of each stage hung together as components of a unified whole which expressed the dominant principle of its age. Each stage makes its own unique contribution to the advancement of mankind.

6. The truth about history is concrete. As the Russian thinker Chernyshevsky wrote: "Every object, every phenomenon has its own significance, and it must be judged according to the circumstances, the environment, in which it exists . . . A definite judgment can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances on which it depends."

7. History changes in a dialectical manner. Each stage of social development has had sufficient reasons for coming into existence. It has a contradictory constitution, arising from three different elements. These are the durable achievements inherited from its predecessors, the special conditions required

for its own maintenance, and the opposing forces at work within itself. The development of its internal antagonisms supplies its dynamism and generates its growth. The sharpening of its contradictions leads to its disintegration and eventual dispossession by a higher and antithetical form which grows out of it by way of a revolutionary leap.

8. Thus all grades of social organization are interlinked in a dialectically determined series from lower to higher.

9. Hegel brought forward the profound truth later developed by historical materialism, that labor is imposed upon man as the consequence of his needs and that man is the historical product of his own labor.

10. History is full of irony. It has an overall objective logic which confounds its most powerful participants and organizations. Although the heads of states apply definite policies, and peoples and individuals consciously pursue their own aims, historical actuality does not fall into line or accord with their plans. The course and outcome of history is determined by overriding internal necessities which are independent of the will and consciousness of any of its institutional or personal agencies. Man proposes . . . the historical necessity of the Idea disposes.

11. The outcome of history, the result of its agonizing labor, is the growth of rational freedom. Man's freedom comes not from arbitrary, willful intervention in events, but from growing insight into the necessities of the objective, universal, contradictory processes of becoming.

12. The necessities of history are not always the same; they change into their opposites as one stage succeeds another. In fact, this conflict of lower and higher necessities is the generator of progress. A greater and growing necessity is at work within the existing order negating the conditions which sustain it. This necessity keeps depriving the present necessity of its reasons for existence, expands at its expense, renders it obsolete and eventually displaces it.

13. Not only do social formations and their specific dominant principles change from one stage to the next but so do the specific laws of development.

This method of interpreting history was far more correct, all-encompassing and profound than any of its predecessors. Yet it suffered from two ineradicable flaws. First, it was in-

curably idealistic. Hegel pictured history as the product of abstract principles which represented differing degrees of the ceaseless contest between servitude and freedom. Man's freedom was gradually realized through this dialectical development of the Absolute Idea.

Such a logic of history was an intellectualized version of the notion that God directs the universe and history is the fulfillment of His design, which in this case is the freedom of humanity. As envisaged by Hegel, this freedom was not realized through the emancipation of mankind from oppressive and servile social conditions but from the overcoming of false, inadequate ideas.

Second, Hegel closed the gates on the further development of history by having it culminate in fact with the German kingdom and the bourgeois society of his own era. The exponent of a universal and never-ending history concluded that its ultimate agent was the national state, a characteristic product of its bourgeois phase. And in its monarchical form, modified by a constitution! He mistook a transient creation of history for its final and perfected embodiment. By thus setting limits upon the process of becoming, he violated the fundamental tenet of his own dialectic.

These defects prevented Hegel from arriving at the true nature of social relations and the principal causes of social change. However, his epoch-making insights have influenced all subsequent thought and writing about history. With the indispensable revisions, they have all been incorporated into the structure of historical materialism.

Hegel, the idealist dialectician, was the foremost theorist of the evolutionary process as a whole. The French social thinkers and historians carried the materialist understanding of history and society as far as it could go in their day. But even within their own provinces both fell short. Hegel could not provide a satisfactory theory of social evolution and the materialists did not penetrate to the most basic moving forces of history.

Not until the truthful elements in these two contrary lines of thought converged and combined in the minds of Marx and Engels in the middle of the 19th century was a rounded conception of history produced that was solidly anchored in the dialectical development of the material conditions of social

existence from the emergence of early man to contemporary life.

All the different types of historical explanation cast up in the evolution of man's thought survive today. Not one has been permanently buried, no matter how outmoded, inadequate or scientifically incorrect they are. The oldest interpretations can be revived and reappear in modern dress to serve some social need or stratum.

What bourgeois nation has not proclaimed in time of war that "God is on our side," guiding its destiny? The Great Man theory strutted about under the swastika in the homage paid to Hitler. Spengler in Germany and Toynbee in England offer their re-editions of the cyclical round of history. The school of geopolitics makes geographical conditions in the shape of the heartland and the outlying regions into the paramount determinant of modern history.

Nazi Germany, Verwoerd's South Africa and the Southern white supremacists exalt the master race into the dictator of history in its crudest form. The conception that human nature must be the basis of social structure is the last-ditch defense of the opponents of socialism as well as the point of departure for the utopian socialism of the American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm and others.

Finally, the notion that reason is the motive force in history is shared by all sorts of savants. The American anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser stated in *Early Civilization*: "Thus the whole of civilization, if followed backward step by step, would ultimately be found resolvable, without residue, into bits of ideas in the minds of individuals." Here ideas and individuals are the creative factors of history.

In describing his philosophy, the Italian thinker Croce wrote: "History is the record of the creations of the human spirit in every field, theoretical as well as practical. And these spiritual creations are always born in the hearts and minds of men of genius, artists, thinkers, men of action, moral and religious reformers." This position combines idealism with elitism, the spirit using geniuses, or the creative minority, as the agency which redeems the masses.

These diverse elements of historical interpretation can appear in the most incongruous combinations in a given country, school of thought or individual mind. Stalinism has provided the most striking example of such an illogical syn-

thesis. The votaries of "the personality cult" sought to fuse the traditions and views of Marxism, the most modern and scientific philosophy, with the archaic Great Man version of the contemporary historical process.

Except in Maoist China, this odd and untenable amalgam of ideas has already crumbled. Yet it demonstrates how generalized thought about the historical process can retrogress after making an immense leap forward. The history of historical science proves in its own way that progress is not even or persistent throughout history. Thucydides, the narrator of the Peloponnesian Wars in the fourth century B. C., had a far more realistic view of history than did St. Augustine, the celebrator of the City of God, in the fourth century A. D.

Marxism has incorporated into its theory of social development not only the verified findings of modern scientific research but all the insights into history of its philosophical predecessors, whether materialist, idealist or eclectic, which have proved valid and viable. To do otherwise would flout the mandate of its own method which teaches that every school of thought, every stage of scientific knowledge, is an outgrowth of the past work of men modified and sometimes revolutionized by the prevailing conditions and concepts of their existence. Scientific inquiry into history and society, like the process of history itself, has given positive, permanent and progressive results.

Marxism vs. Idealism

At the same time Marxism rejects all versions of antiquated theories which have failed to provide an adequate or correct explanation of the origins and evolution of society. It does not deny that historical idealisms contain significant ingredients of truth and can even exhibit a forward march. The main trend of their progression since the Greeks has been from heaven to earth, from God to man, from the imaginary to the real. Individuals, influential or insignificant, and ideas, innovating or traditional, are essential parts of society; their roles in the making of history have to be taken into account.

The idealists rightly pay attention to these factors. Where they go wrong is in claiming decisive importance for them in

the total process of historical determination. Their method confines their analyses to the outer layers of the social structure so that they remain on the surface of events. Science has to delve into the nuclear core of society where the real forces which determine the direction of history are at work.

Historical materialism turns away from the Divine Director, the Great Man, the Universal Mind, the Intellectual Genius, the Elite, and an unchanging and uniformly acting Human Nature for its explanation of history. The formation, reformation and transformation of social structures over the past million years cannot be understood by recourse to any supernatural beings, ideal agencies, petty personal or invariant causes.

God didn't create the world and hasn't superintended the development of mankind. On the contrary, man created the idea of the gods as a fantasy to compensate for lack of real control over the forces of nature and of society.

Man made himself by acting upon nature and changing its elements to satisfy his needs through the labor process. Man has worked his way up in the world. The further development and diversification of the labor process from savagery to our present civilization has continued to transform his capacities and characteristics.

History is not the achievement of outstanding individuals, no matter how powerful, gifted or strategically placed. As early as the French Revolution Condorcet protested against this narrow elitist view which disregarded both what moves the mass of the human race and how the masses rather than the masters make history. "Up to now, the history of politics, like that of philosophy or of science, has been the history of only a few individuals: That which really constitutes the human human race, the vast mass of families living for the most part on the fruits of their labor, has been forgotten, and even of those who follow public professions, and work not for themselves but for society, who are engaged in teaching, ruling, protecting or healing others, it is only the leaders who have held the eye of the historian," he wrote.

Marxism builds on this insight that history is the result of the collective actions of multitudes, of mass effort extending over prolonged periods within the framework of the powers of production they have received and extended and the modes

of production they have created, built up and revolutionized.

It is not elites but the many-membered body of the people who have sustained history, switched it in new directions at critical turning points, and lifted humanity upward step by step.

History has not been generated nor has its course been guided by preconceived ideas in any mind. Social systems have not been constructed by architects with blueprints in hand. History has not proceeded in accord with any prior plan. Socio-economic formations have grown out of the productive forces at hand; its members have fashioned their relations, customs, institutions and ideas in accordance with their organization of labor.

Human nature cannot explain the course of events or the characteristics of social life. It is the changes in the conditions of life and labor which underly the making and remaking of our human nature.

In the introduction to the English edition of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* Engels defined historical materialism as "that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another."

These are the prime principles from which the rest of Marxist theory about the historical process is derived. They have come from two and half millenia of inquiry into the laws of human activity and social development. They represent its most valid conclusions. Historical materialism is itself the synthetic product of historically elaborated facts and ideas which are rooted in the economy and come to fruition in the science of society taken in the full span of its development.

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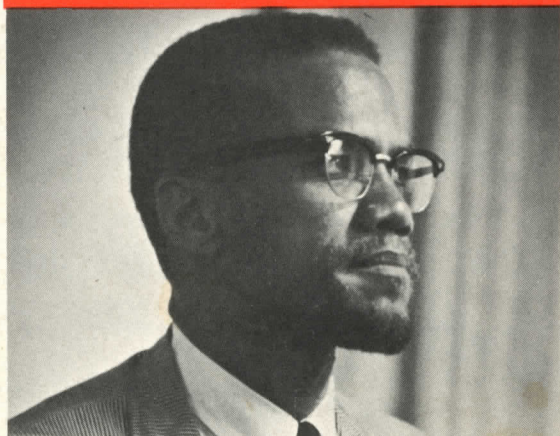
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