

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

of the **WORLD**  
**LABOR**  
**MOVEMENT**



**E. W. CAMPBELL**

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**Historical Background  
of the World Labor  
Movement**

A MARX HOUSE STUDY COURSE

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## Introduction

Experience at Marx House has shown that many students are handicapped in their studies of the basic theoretical works of Marxism-Leninism owing to a deficiency of general historical knowledge.

To acquire this knowledge a great deal of hard study, as well as access to books, which, unfortunately, are not readily available, is necessary.

The aim of this Course is to help bridge the gap by providing a brief, connected, picture of the past development of the labor movement, and the major historical events which directly preceded its rise.

It is not a complete answer to the problem by any means, but it does at least furnish the student with a minimum knowledge of the main happenings in their sequence. It does provide some background into which the theoretical works can be fitted to the better understanding of both the work in question and the period with which it deals. Viewed against this background, the contemporary world labor movement can also be better understood.

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# The Downfall of Feudalism in Britain

## ECONOMIC CHANGES

**A**BOUT the beginning of the 14th Century in England important economic changes set in which produced the decline of feudalism and the beginning of capitalism.

**First:** With the growth of trade and the need to have money for purposes of trade, the feudal lords began to lease part of their land to tenant farmers, and to allow their serfs to commute the customary feudal services for a money payment, or rent.

**Second:** Some of the feudal lords themselves began to take part in trade in the towns, and to live on money rents and profits from trade instead of on the services of their serfs as before; while at the same time merchants from the towns bought or rented land from the feudal lords, evicted the former peasant holders and "enclosed" the land to form a large capitalist farm worked by hired labor.

**Third:** In the towns an upper class of richer craftsmen, who had given up handicrafts and engaged solely in wholesale trading, began to form. This class began to organise mercantile guilds or trading associations (Mercers, Drapers, Grocers, etc.) to secure charters from the Crown, giving them a monopoly of their particular line of trade. In the case of commodities which were traded abroad, the merchants of various towns joined in powerful national trading guilds (Merchants of the Staple—wool merchants, Merchant Adventurers—cloth merchants, and later the Africa Company, the Levant Company, East India Company, and so on). These National Guilds also secured monopoly rights from the Crown.

**Fourth:** At the bottom of the social scale in the towns was a growing mass of persons with no means of getting a livelihood except by hiring themselves out as "journeymen", or day laborers. Their number was constantly swelled by former serfs or peasants who had been evicted by the Enclosures, or had fled from the villages.

## PRE-REQUISITES FOR CAPITALISM

By the end of the 16th Century three important pre-conditions for capitalism existed.



1. The development of trade and the widening of the market for commodities.

2. The growth of a monied class which, by virtue of its position of monopoly and advantage, was able to reap large profits and accumulate capital.

3. The growth of a proletariat, without land or capital, dependent for a living on working for a master.

### RISE OF NEW CLASS

The Tudor period in England (from Henry VII, 1485, to Queen Elizabeth, 1603) marked the rise of this new merchant and money lending class towards power. Under the Tudor monarchs, this new class came to occupy positions formerly held by the old feudal nobility, now weakened, impoverished and almost exterminated by the wars of the Roses (1455-1485). A new centralised State apparatus, pursuing a national commercial policy, was created with a largely bourgeois personnel. With the profits of trade, this new class bought land and titles, often Church land which had been seized by the Crown during the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation itself expressed the revolutionary changes which were taking place in society.

"In the Middle Ages, in the same measure as feudalism developed, it (Christianity) grew into the religious counterpart to it, with a corresponding feudal hierarchy. As the bourgeoisie arose, there developed within it, in opposition to feudal Catholicism, the Protestant heresy . . . . The Middle Ages had attached to theology all the other forms of ideology—philosophy, politics, jurisprudence—and made them sub-divisions of theology. It thereby constrained every social and political movement to take on a theological form . . . .

"The ineradicability of the Protestant heresy corresponded to the invincibility of the rising bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie had become sufficiently strengthened, its struggle against the feudal nobility, which till then had been predominantly local, began to assume national dimensions. The first great action occurred in Germany—the so-called Reformation. The bourgeoisie was neither powerful enough nor sufficiently developed to be able to unite under its banner the rest of the rebellious estates . . . . thus the revolution succumbed to the armies of the secular princes. . . . But besides the German Luther, appeared the Frenchman Calvin. With true French acumen he put the bourgeoisie character of the reformation in the forefront, republicanised and democratised the church. While the Lutheran Reformation in Germany degenerated and reduced the country to wrack and ruin, the Calvinist Reformation served as a banner for the republicans in Geneva, in Holland and in Scotland, freed Holland from Spain and from the German Empire, and provided

the ideological costume for the second act of the bourgeois revolution which took place in England. Here Calvinism justified itself as the true religious disguise of the interests of the bourgeoisie of that time, and on that account did not reach full acceptance, as the revolution was completed in 1689 by a compromise between one part of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. The English State Church was re-established; but not in its earlier form of a Catholicism which had the king for its pope, being, instead, strongly Calvinised. The old State Church had celebrated the merry Catholic sabbath, and had fought against the dull Calvinist one. The new bourgeois church introduced the latter, which adorns England to this day". (Engels: Ludwig Feuerbach.)

### DOMESTIC SYSTEM

Production more and more acquired a capitalist form, although it was still tied to the Domestic System, i.e., it was still based on handicrafts, hand-loom spinning and weaving, metal working with hand tools, etc. Production was not concentrated, but scattered in small workshops in the villages and provincial towns. In the 17th Century an important new group of capitalists appeared on the scene, who began to apply their capital to organising Domestic Industry, as Merchant Manufacturers, giving out work to poorer craftsmen, paying them a price for it and marketing the finished products themselves. They also formed Associations (Silkweavers, Glovers, Pinmakers, etc.)

### PARLIAMENTARY MOVEMENT

It was this new group of capitalists, those not interested primarily in the export trade, but in organising domestic industry, which lay behind the Parliamentary movement of the 17th Century, which culminated in the bourgeois revolution led by Oliver Cromwell. The revolution was necessary to sweep away the remnants of feudalism, and to place the State power in the hands of the bourgeoisie so that the new economic forces could have full sway, and industry and commerce flourish unhampered.

"The institutions and privileges of guilds and corporations, the regulatory regime of the Middle Ages, were social relations corresponding only to the acquired productive forces and to the social conditions which had previously existed, and from which these institutions had arisen. Under the protection of this regime of corporations and regulations capital was accumulated, overseas trade was developed, colonies were founded. But the fruits of this would themselves have been forfeited if men had tried to retain the forms under whose shelter these fruits had ripened. Hence came two thunderclaps—the revolutions of 1640 and 1688. All the old economic forms, the social relations corres-



ponding to them, the political conditions which were the official expression of the old civil society, were destroyed in England".

(Marx, Engels, Selected Correspondence, Letter 2, 28th December, 1846.)

"In this revolution, as Marx says, 'the bourgeoisie was allied with the new nobility against the monarchy, the feudal nobility and the ruling church.' Oliver Cromwell was the greatest leader of these new classes that were struggling for power. In the course of the revolution he established the dictatorship of these classes—the Protectorate". (Explanatory note to 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: Marx.)

### CIVIL WAR: FIRST PHASE

Civil war broke out in 1642, when King Charles I attempted to arrest the Parliamentary leaders Pym, Hampden and others. Bourgeois London rallied to the defence of its Parliament. The King fled to Oxford and raised a Royalist Army to fight Parliament. Parliament in its turn organised armies under the leadership of the Earl of Essex and the Earl of Manchester. These early leaders were what might be described as "moderates" who sought a compromise rather than decisive victory over the King's forces. Under their leadership, for the first two years, the Parliamentary cause languished. A turning point was reached in July, 1644, when Cromwell's Ironsides put Prince Rupert's Royalist Cavalry to rout in the battle of Marston Moor. In 1645 Essex and Manchester were removed from the leadership of the Parliamentary forces, and a New Model Army won a decisive victory at Naseby. The first phase of the Civil War ended in favor of Parliament.

### SECOND PHASE

Two years were spent in fruitless efforts to exact terms of settlement from Charles I, who used the interval to prepare for a fresh attempt to assert his authority over Parliament. Civil war was renewed in November, 1647, when the King again fled to the Isle of Wight, and gained the support of the Scots. This new attempt was suppressed by Cromwell; the King was captured and, on January 30th, 1649, was executed. The rule of the Commonwealth was proclaimed.

### THE COMMONWEALTH

The period of the Commonwealth (1649-1660) was marked by a conflict among the various sections of the new ruling class as to what form should be taken by the new State power, and to decide what section should predominate. This struggle, like the whole civil war, was often cloaked in a religious guise. The extreme left wing of the bourgeoisie was represented by the

Levellers in Cromwell's New Model Army, who wanted all men to be equal, annual parliaments and universal suffrage, etc. They were too advanced for Cromwell, who said: "We must cut them to pieces or they will cut us to pieces", and suited the action to the word by suppressing with force a mutiny of the Levellers at Burford. Cromwell also acted with no less vigor against the moderate, or right wing, element who, by procrastination, were frittering away the gains of the revolution in Parliament. He more than once dissolved parliament and ruled alone, relying on the support of the Army.

### THE RESTORATION

The Commonwealth came to an end two years after the death of Cromwell (1658).

In one of his letters to Doctor Kugelmann, Marx says: "As a matter of fact, the English republic under Cromwell met shipwreck in Ireland." In 1641 an insurrection broke out in Ireland, which led to the greater part of this island severing itself completely from England. Cromwell did not succeed in crushing the rising until 1649. The "pacification" of Ireland was effected with unprecedented cruelty; it ended with the enormous expropriation of the lands of the Irish population. The soldiers and officers of Cromwell's army were rewarded, and the supplies of the army paid, with the land seized from the Irish. All this converted the Irish into opponents of the English republic, into an active power struggling against the English revolution.

In 1660 the right wing gained the ascendancy, and Charles II was restored to the throne. A period of reaction ensued, which reached its height under James II. James, however, tried to carry this reaction too far, and was deposed in 1689, to make way for William of Orange, who undertook to rule as a constitutional monarch, subject to the will of the bourgeoisie, as represented by Parliament.

To effect the so-called "Glorious Revolution" of 1689, the bourgeoisie entered into an agreement with a section of the landed nobility. The bourgeois revolution in Britain therefore ended in a compromise. Feudal trappings, Monarchy, aristocracy, House of Lords, etc., were retained, but real political power was now concentrated in the hands of the new class—the bourgeoisie.

### THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The political revolution of the 17th Century paved the way to the Industrial Revolution which followed in the 18th Century. The vigorous commercial policy pursued under the new State power rapidly enlarged the market for British products. Industry, however, remained based on the Domestic System, and exper-



ience growing difficulties in keeping pace with increasing demands. Consequently great attention was focussed on *methods* of production, and ways and means of improving them. A series of inventions was the outcome, inventions which revolutionised industrial technique and brought about a transition from the Domestic System to the Factory System of production.

### THE FACTORY SYSTEM

The Factory System differs from the Domestic System in the following respects:—

1. The factory, the machinery and raw material are owned by the capitalist; and the production process and the sale of the finished product are organised by the capitalist.

2. Hence the capitalist is no longer merely a merchant, interested in **trade**; he is a manufacturer, owning machinery and hiring labor power direct, and is now interested in **production**.

3. The worker no longer owns the instruments with which he works. The former class of small craftsman has largely disappeared. As new inventions take place, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to save and buy machines of his own: he is no longer independent, but increasingly dependent on the capitalist for a livelihood.

4. The capitalist no longer requires Royal Charters and monopolies to secure his privileged position. This is now secured to him, thanks to prior historical developments, by his accumulated capital and to the existence of a dispossessed proletariat forced to work for him. He can now grow rich on the surplus value produced by the working class.

### THE NEW MANUFACTURING CLASS

In the early period of the factory system, when textiles were the leading industry, there was no large-scale capitalism in the modern sense. Mills and factories were quite small; a mill employing 200 hands was considered large. There was still some opportunity for the small capitalist to climb on the backs of others and become a prosperous and wealthy cotton magnate. Many of the new Lancashire capitalists had been formerly yeoman farmers or small tradesmen. Many of the new ironmasters came from middle class Quaker families, like the Lloyds and Attwoods of Birmingham, who later, from the profits of iron, founded banking houses.

### THE REFORM BILL

The new capitalists owning cotton or woollen mills, though largely a new class, were not rigidly separated from the class that had hitherto held power. Consequently, while the new manufacturing interests demanded a change in policy, and came

into conflict with certain conservative sections of landed and merchant capital, this conflict did not give rise to another revolution; the differences could quite easily be resolved within the framework of the existing State structure.

The important change in policy which the new manufacturers desired was the abolition of the numerous restrictions of the Mercantilist period, which hampered expansion, narrowed the market, and prevented a mobile supply of cheap labor in the new factory towns. They favored the policy of *Laissez-faire*—of leaving the capitalists free from State regulations and restrictions.

In 1832 the new manufacturing class secured the passage of the famous Reform Bill, which extended Parliamentary franchise, hitherto confined to the wealthy landowners, to the middle classes generally. In the decade which followed, Free Trade became the watchword and soon, under Gladstone, Liberalism became the dominant trend in politics.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the economic changes which produced the decline of feudalism in Britain?
2. What was the character of Cromwell's revolution, and what were its results?
3. What was the Industrial Revolution and what changes did it bring about?
4. What is the difference between the Domestic System and the Factory System?
5. What was the alignment of class forces prior to and after the passing of the Reform Bill?

### RECOMMENDED FOR ADDITIONAL READING

People's History of England, by A. L. Morton—Chs. VII-XII.  
Political Economy—A Beginner's Course by Leontiev—  
Ch. II.

Capital—Vol. I. Section on Primitive Accumulation

There are also references to Cromwell's revolution in Marx "18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (Explanatory Notes), and Engels "Ludwig Feuerbach."

Engels: On Historical Materialism. (Published in the Marx House pamphlet Dialectical & Historical Materialism.)



## The Bourgeois Revolution in Europe

THE Bourgeois Revolution on the Continent was ushered in by the Great French Revolution of 1789, which marked the passing of the old feudal order. Feudalism in France now constituted a "fetter on production", it was strangling those developments which in England were producing the vast changes of the Industrial Revolution.

By 1789 the power of the Crown in France had become absolute. The noble class was now merely parasitic. The French peasant was no longer a serf, he was becoming more like a tenant farmer. But while feudal facts had ceased to exist, feudal theory still dominated the law. One third of the peasants were subject to feudal regulations, which forbade them to sell or let their land. Many lords still practised "sosome rights" which forced the peasants to use the Lord's mill, smithy, etc., at prices decreed by him. Certain of the dues, such as corvee labor or forced work on the roads, were personally humiliating.

The nobles and the clergy—the "first" and the "second estates"—were untaxed, consequently all public expenditure, the wild extravagance of the Versailles Court, was met directly by the peasant and town industrial classes—the "third estate".

### THE ESTATES GENERAL

French finances had become terribly embarrassed in 1789, and the Court was faced with bankruptcy. In the hope of securing new funds, the King (Louis XVI) summoned the Estates General—Nobles, Clergy and Commons—to meet in May. This let loose the whole flood of hopes of the French people. The King merely wanted a financial vote; the people wanted political liberty.

The demand for reforms was centred in the Third Estate, which was upper middle class in composition (365 of its 595 members were lawyers). Some members of the First Estate, the nobility, had sympathies with the reform movement, as did many members of the Second Estate, especially the poorer parish priests. If a joint sitting took place the reform policy would command a majority.

### THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Third Estate invited the other Orders to sit with it. The King forbade this. The Commons replied by assuming the title

National Assembly, and took an oath not to disperse until they had given France a new Constitution. This was the first act in the Revolution. Soon some members of the clergy began to sneak across and join the Commons. The King was compelled to give way, and permitted the other Estates to also join them.

### THE STORMING OF THE BASTILLE

In the meantime the King was plotting to bring Marshal Broglie and a force of loyal troops to Paris to discipline the three estates. The now reunited Assembly grew worried at these preparations, and voted flattering addresses to placate the King. Interpreting this as a sign of weakness, Louis XVI dismissed his finance minister Necker, whom the people of Paris regarded as an ally. On July 14, the Paris masses took the initiative into their own hands. A partly armed crowd stormed and captured the prison fortress of the Bastille.

From Paris the movement spread to the countryside. Everywhere the peasants refused to pay feudal dues. They burst into the Lord's chateaux and burnt the records of their obligations. Over the whole of France the feudal apparatus was cast down.

### DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN

The Assembly continued its deliberations, and produced the famous Declaration of Rights of Man, setting out the principles of the revolution and forming the basis of the new constitution. In this document the progressive bourgeois character of the revolution is clearly revealed. It is sufficient to take but four of its seventeen clauses to illustrate this.

I. "Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.

II. "The end of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are Liberty, Property, Security and Resistance to Oppression."

III. "The Nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any individual, or any body of men, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it."

XVII. "The right to property being inviolable and sacred, no one ought to be deprived of it, except in cases of evident public necessity, legally ascertained and on condition of previous just indemnity."

In these four clauses we see how, on the one hand, all the hereditary rights and privileges of the feudal landed nobility are wiped out. The absolute power of the King is superseded by the sovereignty of the "Nation". While on the other hand, the right to property itself is affirmed to be "sacred and inviolable".



The old forms of feudal property and all the rights and privileges pertaining to it are swept away, but only to be replaced by the new forms of bourgeois property, and new rights and privileges based on same. These new bourgeois rights, however, are represented as the "natural rights of man".

### THE MARCH ON VERSAILLES

The King at Versailles refused to sign the Declaration. Once more the Paris masses intervened. Led by a lawyer, Danton, they marched on Versailles in October, and brought the King back to Paris, and forced him to attach his signature to the document. The Assembly thought the revolution had now ended and that its objects were realised in a limited monarchy and a constitution. It attempted to suppress further outbreaks and, in pursuance of Clause XVII's principle of "just indemnity", to compel the peasants to buy their liberty from the landlords.

### THE REPUBLICANS

Everything now hinged on the capacity of the King to play his part as a constitutional monarch, as had William of Orange in England in 1689. Louis XVI, however, was neither willing nor able to break with his feudal supporters; he fled from Paris to put himself at the head of a counter-revolutionary army which these emigre nobles at Coblenz had assembled. He was captured and brought back. In the elections to the new Assembly in October, 1791, a moderate Republican majority gained control. This party became known as the Gironde, because most of their leaders came from that province. There also took shape at the same time a left wing opposition, the Jacobins. The Gironde ignored the demands of the people, which it fell to the Jacobins to defend. The chief immediate demands were: the definite, final and legal abolition of the feudal system and dues; recognition of the rights of the peasants to the common lands which they had retaken from the lords; and the fixing of maximum food prices for the towns.

### WAR WITH PRUSSIA

In April, 1792, the Gironde declared war on Austria and Prussia, whose rulers were threatening to intervene on behalf of Louis XVI. By June the French armies were defeated, and it seemed only a matter of time before the invaders would be at the gates of Paris itself. Once again, the Paris masses saved the situation. Under the leadership of Danton, and Marat and other Jacobins, they formed a new organisation, the Commune, and attacked and captured the Royal Palace of the Tuileries on August 10. . . The Assembly hastily deposed Louis, confiscated the estates of the refugee nobles, wiped out feudal dues, and restored universal suffrage. On September 20 a new Assembly,

which called itself the Convention, took the place of the old and proclaimed the Republic. The enemy was halted at Valmy and retreated across the border.

### THE ENRAGES

Outside the Convention, in the Paris sections, a new party was forming, the "Enrages" or Wild Men of the most extreme left. The ranks of the latter were mainly artisans, they maintained a link with the Jacobins through Marat, and were constantly demanding always more relentless action against the Royalists or against profiteers and cheating contractors. Like the Levellers in Cromwell's army, the Enrages and the Jacobins forced the pace of the Revolution; they carried it to advanced positions which could not be permanently held, but having been achieved, protected the main lines of approach, and safeguarded the chief gains against subsequent reaction. In January, 1793, King Louis was tried and executed.

### THE TRIUMPH OF THE JACOBINS

The Gironde, which was now based on the wealthier classes, again wanted to end the revolution. In March, 1793, it formed the Revolutionary Tribunal, ostensibly to defend the Republic against counter revolution, in reality a weapon against the Left. The death penalty was proclaimed for "any socialistic talk". The war with Austria continued, and again began to go against the Republic. A Girondist general deserted to the enemy, and the Jacobins seized the opportunity to overthrow the Girondist government. The revolution, which had remained half-finished, was suddenly completed by a series of decrees and its defence undertaken by a vigorous executive.

The feudal system was finally eradicated and the land given to the peasants. A maximum price for necessities was fixed, and taxation revised to press more heavily on the rich. An elaborate constitution of an extremely democratic character was passed. Cheating contractors and profiteers, as well as Royalist plotters, were put to the guillotine. A new calendar, dating from the year 1 of Liberty, with new months, was adopted.

### THE REACTION OF THERMIDOR

Robespierre now dominated the Committee of Public Safety, the executive organ of the revolution, and wielded this power with the utmost vigor. But he was assailed from within his own party. From the right Danton and others were demanding that the Terror cease. From the Left, Hebert, the leader of the Enrages, demanded that it increase. The Enrages had no conscious plans, only a strong instinctive desire to see the rich put down in favor of the poor. Hebert, for his extremist agitation, was sent to the guillotine in March, 1794, to be followed in



April by Danton for his "Right Wing opposition". Modern Soviet historians assert that Danton turned "Quisling".

By now, however, the war had once again swung in favor of the Republic, and the demand for a relaxation of the terror increased, as more wealthy and moderate sections of the bourgeoisie felt secure and were able to exert greater pressure. Robespierre began to vacillate and was himself put on trial, sentenced to the guillotine on Thermidor 9, year 11 (that is, July 27, 1794). The dictatorship of the petty bourgeois was overthrown.

The Gironde swept back into power, the "Thermidor Reaction" set in. The Terror continued, but it was now a White, counter-revolutionary terror. The Jacobins and Robespierrists were hunted down and killed throughout France. Piece by piece the lower middle class legislation of the Jacobins was destroyed until the new Constitution of the Year III gave back to the big bourgeoisie the exclusive privilege of franchise.

### **BABEUF'S SOCIALIST REVOLT**

Before the period ended Francois Noel Babeuf, in 1796, headed a Socialist revolt in Paris (The "Conspiracy of the Equals"). The uprising was premature in time, but extremely significant. It represented the first serious attempt to achieve Socialism by a movement of the laboring masses. Babeuf and his followers placed a socialist construction on the Declaration of the Rights of Man. His proposal was to make the vast confiscated and nationalised possessions the nucleus of a Socialist community. The revolt was suppressed and Babeuf executed.

Babeuf's utopia—equalitarian Communism—arises in the period of the overthrow of feudalism, and it is the result "of the undeveloped stature of the proletariat itself and of the lack of the material conditions for its liberation" (Marx.)

### **NAPOLEON BONAPARTE**

In 1799 the bourgeoisie, for the sake of added security, handed political power over to the strong military rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. The main gains of the Revolution were carried into neighboring feudal countries. Wherever the invading armies of the French Republic penetrated, they carried with them the new bourgeois gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and the Code Napoleon, the new legal system of bourgeois property rights.

Between 1799 and 1815 bourgeois France dominated the Continent of Europe. North Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and Central Germany were brought practically under French control. In Spain, South Italy and Dalmatia the hold was not so strong; while Austria, Prussia and Poland were made to serve

as oppressed and unwilling allies. Napoleon over-reached himself, however, in 1812, when he invaded Russia and was turned back from Moscow, losing the majority of his army in the catastrophic retreat. Napoleon was finally defeated and his power destroyed in the Battle of Waterloo, in June, 1815.

### **THE TREATY OF VIENNA**

The Treaties of Vienna and Paris, which concluded the war after Napoleon's defeat, were intended to stabilise the old semi-feudal Europe against the "dangerous revolutionary influence" which had spread from France. Kings and princes were restored to the thrones from whence they had been toppled by Napoleon. In France a Bourbon, Louis XVIII, was restored to the throne. The new King, however, had to accept most of the changes of the revolution, just like Charles II in England. While granting the right of a Parliament with advisory and critical powers, Louis kept the executive entirely in his own hands, and governed through a body of Royal nominees called a Council of State. But the Napoleonic code of law and many other reforms were retained.

### **THE "JULY DAYS" OF 1830**

In 1824 Louis was succeeded by Charles X, who, like James II in England, showed a desire to revert to pre-revolutionary conditions. The influence of the nobility and the Church was restored and severe repressive measures taken against liberals. When the Liberals in Parliament protested against the appointment of an emigre landlord and nobleman to the Ministry, Charles responded by restricting the franchise. Even the most moderate sections of the bourgeoisie declared the need for some changes and proposed to replace Charles by his cousin Louis Phillipe of Orleans.

Finally, in 1830, a year of trade depression, the masses of Paris revolted and established a revolutionary government at the Hotel de Ville. The Liberals took advantage of the situation to effect a "palace coup" and set Louis Phillipe as "the Bourgeois Monarch" on the throne.

### **THE REVOLT OF 1848**

1830 represented a victory for the big bourgeoisie, the wealthy merchants and financiers, who grew richer under Louis Phillipe's regime. But the smaller traders and employers and the new sections of industrial capitalists who were appearing were excluded from any say in the government. Like their counterparts in Britain who were behind the agitation for the Reform Bill of 1832, these elements in France began to insist that their voice be heard.



France experienced a more drastic solution to the problem than England, thanks again to the revolutionary ardour of the Paris masses. In February, 1848, the Government forbade the holding of an opposition political banquet. The Liberals threatened to appeal to the people. The people took them at their word and demonstrated on the streets. Clashes with the police and troops led to barricades being erected. Louis Phillipe fled to England and a Republican Government was again set up.

### LOUIS BLANC AND SOCIALISM

When the new Provisional Government settled down it was found to include two representatives of the insurgent Parisian masses who called themselves socialists, the journalist, Louis Blanc and his follower, the gasworker Albert.

Louis Blanc's program, which was acclaimed by the workers as the "Social Republic" was a confused petty bourgeois variety of socialism which called for national workshops under worker control and subsidised by the State.

The bourgeois representatives in the Government, to get rid of Blanc and silence his supporters, told him to collect together a Commission and report on Social reorganisation to the Constituent Assembly when it met.

Blanc summoned the Commission from the workers of Paris by trades. Every craft sent accredited delegates to Luxembourg where the Commission sat and they adopted Louis Blanc's proposals. Instead of the agitation for the "Social Republic" being sidetracked it became more insistent.

To split the workers the government established its own "National Workshops." It had two objects in mind, firstly that the scheme should fail for lack of finance and so discredit Louis Blanc's "Socialism" and secondly, that the workers enrolled in the "National Workshops" should become a political army attached to the bourgeoisie and in opposition to the Luxembourg Commission.

### THE WORKERS ARE CRUSHED

On April 23 elections were held for the National Assembly. The scene of the revolution till then had been confined to Paris. Now the provinces were brought in and the voice of the peasants was decisive. The needs of the peasantry had been satisfied; they were now in possession of the land, and in consequence had become conservative. The Socialists were routed and the Moderates returned with a huge majority. The "National Workshops" had served their turn and could now be liquidated. A decree was issued drafting the men in the workshops into the army. In face of this threat the workshop employees united with

the followers of the Luxembourg Commission and issued a common program. But the workers were not yet conscious of what they were fighting for.

The program referred in vague terms to the "Social Republic", but no one had a clear picture of what this meant or how it was to be achieved. The only thing the workers were clear about was who they were fighting against. Once more they manned the barricades, and for four days, from June 23 to June 26, fought against the combined forces of capitalist society. Finally the Army and the National Guard, under General Cavaignac, succeeded in crushing the insurrection with terrific slaughter.

### 1848 IN GERMANY

In February 1848 news of the French uprising and the abdication of Louis Phillipe reached South Germany and gave impetus to the democratic movement there.

Germany at this time consisted of a Federation of 36 petty states, chief of which were Austria and Prussia. The Federal Diet, in which only the ruling Princes were represented, was dominated by the Austrian Minister Metternich (who is mentioned at the beginning of the Manifesto of the Communist Party). Austria was still the political leader of Germany, but the rival Prussia had gathered round her into a customs union (the Zollverein) practically all central and north Germany.

Compared with Britain and France, Germany was still in a backward condition. Economic development was retarded by political dismemberment, and one of the chief tasks of the revolution was to create a unified democratic State.

This task was put forward by Marx and Engels. Through the columns of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx carried out a vigorous campaign around the demand for a single, indivisible, democratic German republic; for the unification of Germany into a nation. Marx and Engels opposed both the North German petty bourgeois democrats, who were prepared to suffer a "democratic Prussian emperor," and the South Germans, who wanted a federated republic on the Swiss model. They supported the most extreme bourgeois democrats, and at the same time brought to the forefront and emphasised the specific demands of the proletariat.

On February 24, 1848, Louis Phillipe was driven out of Paris and the French Republic proclaimed. On March 13 the people of Vienna rose in revolt, and caused Prince Metternich to flee from the capital. Five days later, on March 18, the people of Berlin took up arms and compelled the surrender of the king. Constitutional governments were set up. In Prussia the liberal bourgeoisie directly seized upon the reins of power.



In Austria, where the bourgeoisie was less well educated politically, the more liberal members of the old State bureaucracy walked into office.

But the bourgeoisie in Prussia and Austria did not possess sufficient strength to maintain their power and to adapt the institutions of the country to their own wants and ideas. The feudal nobility and the old bureaucracy were overthrown, but not destroyed. The liberal bourgeoisie were afraid of the masses and turned against their allies, choosing instead to conclude an alliance with the conquered feudal and bureaucratic interests.

After the popular victories of Vienna and Berlin, a German National Assembly was elected for all Germany. This representative body was expected by the people to settle every matter in dispute and to act as the highest legislative authority for the whole of the German confederation. But instead of acting energetically by dissolving the old Federative Diet and declaring itself the only legal expression of the sovereign will of the German people, and securing to itself an organised and armed force capable of upholding its authority, the Assembly frittered its time away in abstract constitutional debates.

This gave the counter-revolution full opportunity to regroup its forces and to recapture the lost positions. By the beginning of August, 1849, the Glorious German Revolution had fizzled out, a complete fiasco, thanks to the cowardice of the liberal bourgeoisie and their great fear of the masses.

### 1848 IN HUNGARY

By comparison, the Hungarian revolution was a more dashing affair. Hungary was then a kingdom under the Austrian Emperor, and was still in a semi-feudal condition. It was mainly a country of nobles and peasants, with only a small trading class and practically no proletariat.

In the wave of Liberal enthusiasm which followed the news from France, the Hungarian Diet adopted a democratic constitution and abolished feudal dues. The Austrian Government was tied up with the revolution in Vienna, and could offer no resistance.

But while the Hungarians desired freedom for themselves, they were not so ready to grant the same privileges to the Croats and Slavs under their control. Revolts broke out among the latter peoples, which were encouraged by the Austrian Government to further its own ends. When the Vienna uprising had been crushed, Austria was able to turn all its forces towards quelling the Hungarian revolt. In January, 1849, Pesth, the capital, was taken after the Hungarians had put up a magnificent resistance. The Austrians were compelled to call on the Tsar of Russia for assistance before the revolution was finally crushed.

### 1848 IN ITALY

Italy was another country to be shaken by revolution in 1848. It was still in the position it had been left at the time of the Treaty of Vienna, and consisted of a number of separate and scattered small States. Lombardy and Venice were ruled by Austria, while the remaining six or seven were divided among a number of potentates, including the Pope.

This political disunity was retarding economic development. Soon after the revolution in Paris, Milan rose and expelled the Austrians. Venice followed suit. The King of Piedmont, one of the more advanced States, put himself at the head of the national movement. Lombardy and Venice accepted fusion with Piedmont, but the King, Charles Albert, was defeated by the Austrians at Custoza, and compelled to sign a truce.

In February the Pope was expelled by the masses from Rome, and the Grand Duke from Florence, and republics were set up in these two places. The Roman Republic particularly, under the military leadership of Garibaldi, showed stubborn resistance to the attempts of the Austrians and the French (who had been called in to restore the Pope) to suppress it. By the end of 1849 the Italian Revolution was also over for the time being, reaction having triumphed.

Compared with 1640 and 1789, bourgeois revolutions of 1848 were half-hearted affairs. The rising bourgeoisie in the European States were certainly anxious to acquire more political power to advance their class interests in the same way as their counterparts in Britain and France, but in 1848 a new force had appeared on the scene—the workers, and the bourgeoisie were afraid to push the revolution to its logical conclusion in case the struggle should result in power passing to the workers and not to themselves.

### UNIFICATION FROM ABOVE

The failure of the German bourgeoisie to achieve national unification by revolutionary action from below, left the way clear for the Prussian Junkers to bring it about by reactionary means from above.

Acting through Bismarck, the Prussian Junkers undertook the unification of Germany in their own interests, employing a mixture of base diplomacy and dynastic wars against German as well as foreign States. This had far reaching and extremely harmful consequences for the German people, which have not been outlived to this day.

Prussia's victory over the Austrians at Sadowa in 1866 started the process of subjugating all Germany to Prussian hegemony. The victorious Prussian Junkers eliminated Austria



from German affairs, and forced the petty German States to join the North German Confederation. Marx described this regime as a peculiar mixture of Prussian reaction and the methods of the Bonapartist Second Empire: "While carefully preserving all the native beauties of her old system she (Prussia) superadded all the tricks of the Second Empire, its real despotism and its mock democracy, its political shams and its financial jobbery, its high flown talk and its low legerdemains".

From the moment the Prusso-German Empire came into existence Marx and Engels vigorously assailed it as "a State which is nothing but a police guarded despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms alloyed with a feudal admixture, bureaucratically constructed and already influenced by the bourgeoisie".

The Prusso-German Empire became the most militaristic country in Europe, a source of constant war danger. Armed to the teeth, it compelled the other nations to follow suit. The Prussian Junkers made war between France and Germany inevitable, and it was on their provocation that Napoleon III commenced hostilities, in 1870.

To Germany this war was objectively defensive in character, as a victory for Napoleon III would have hampered the national unification of the country. But the aims of the Junkers were not defensive; they wanted to rivet the yoke of the Hohenzollern dynasty upon the whole of Germany and to wrest Alsace-Lorraine from France. This became clear when they persisted with the war after the Emperor had been deposed and a republic proclaimed in France. Prussia capped her predatory war on France by her intervention in the Paris Commune in 1871, when she came to the assistance of the counter-revolutionary Versailles government, against the French workers.

The association of the agrarian Junkers, bankers and big industrialists became particularly close in the period of imperialism. The coalescence of interests of these social groups gave to German imperialism a special character which Lenin defined as "Junker-bourgeois imperialism".

Germany's defeat in World War I, and the November, 1918, revolution, which abolished the monarchy and proclaimed the republic, dislodged the Junkers from their dominant positions in the State apparatus. But it did not altogether change the special character of German imperialism. As a result of the November revolution the German capitalist class acquired full power, that is, it formally subjected the State to its rule, whereas previously it had left the government in the hands of the Junker caste, knowing that on the whole its interests would be served.

The alliance between the Junkers and the bourgeoisie was not completely severed in 1918. What happened was that the bourgeoisie, and in the first place the big bourgeoisie, the financial

oligarchy, asserted its supremacy and the Junkers were relegated to a subordinate position.

Dislodged from their positions by the republic, the military clique commenced to organise secret military and semi-military bodies, which aimed at the restoration of their lost power. These reactionary organisations were not only tolerated by the bourgeois republican governments, but were employed to crush the revolutionary workers.

Krupp, Thyssen, Stinnes and other leading lights of German imperialism financed these fascist bands, and built them up against the day when they could eliminate the democratic republic and set up the unrestricted dictatorship of finance capital. This took place in 1933, when the old Junker, Hindenburg, as President, carried out the instructions of the financial oligarchy and made Hitler Chancellor, thus raising fascism to power. Fascism is "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital" (Dimitrov).

The Hitlerite regime restored the Junkers as a force, but as a force subservient to the interests of finance capital, which now controlled the State through the Nazi Party.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What was the character of the Great French Revolution?
2. What class interest did the Gironde represent, and what part did it play in the Revolution?
3. Who did the Jacobins represent, and what was their role in the Revolution?
4. What caused the downfall of the Jacobin dictatorship, and why was it inevitable at that time?
5. What were the nature and significance of the revolts of 1848?

### ADDITIONAL READING

Any standard history of the French Revolution.  
The Rights of Man, by Thomas Paine.  
Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany: Marx.  
18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: Marx.  
Marx and Engels on Reactionary Prussianism.  
The Class Struggles in France, 1848-50: Marx.



## Rise of the Working Class Movement

### BOURGEOIS INFLUENCES.

IN the period of liberal democratic revolt against semi-feudal and aristocratic influences which blocked the path of progress, the workers had generally followed behind their employers in advancing revolutionary demands. This was particularly the case in Germany, France and Italy. Even in England, where capitalist exploitation was much more developed, the middle class were able to rally politically the working class behind the bourgeois movement. Much of the discontent of the workers against the conditions of the Industrial Revolution, expressed in strikes and Luddite riots, was canalised politically in the Reform agitation for the extension of the franchise. It was not until the British workers realised that they had been fooled by the Reform Act of 1832 that the seeds of a separate class movement took root among them.

Marx and Engels, when they appeared on the scene, made it one of their chief tasks to facilitate this separation of the working class from the bourgeoisie, and to imbue the workers' movement with a consciousness of its independent Socialist aims.

### ROBERT OWEN

Robert Owen, the "father of co-operation," was a wealthy cotton manufacturer with advanced humanitarian views. He believed that environment and not "shiftlessness" was responsible for the degradation of the workers. He experimented in his own New Lanarkshire Mills in 1800 by improving the wages, housing and working conditions of his employees, and installing educational facilities, and noted a marked all-round improvement in the health and demeanour of the workers.

From 1812, Owen became an ardent advocate for reform. He attributed all the ills of capitalist society to competition, and agitated for the universal substitute of co-operation. After some unsuccessful attempts to found Communist colonies in America, he returned to Britain to organise Labor Exchanges. These were not employment agencies, but bazaars where products were exchanged directly by the producers on the basis of the labor-time spent on production. These plans also failed, but they brought Owen into contact with the workers, and he conceived

the idea of using the growing trade unions for the immediate achievement of his ideal "Co-operative Commonwealth."

### THE GRAND NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED T.U.

The Combination Acts of 1799-1800 forbade the workers to organise legally into trade unions. Secret and semi-secret societies carried on the struggle until 1824-5, when the Acts were repealed. Then followed one of the most revolutionary periods in the history of English trade unionism. In 1829 the Lancashire Cotton Spinners launched a scheme of national organisation known as the Grand General Union of the United Kingdom. This was followed almost immediately by another society, the National Association for the Protection of Labor. This federation enrolled about 150 different unions, with 100,000 members in textile and metal industries, and published its own sevenpenny weekly journal, "The Voice of the People."

By 1831, however, these two bodies were overshadowed in importance by the Operative Builders' Union, which united the craft unions in the building industry on a national basis. After the Reform Act of 1832 had extended the franchise to the middle class and excluded the working class, the O.B.U. increased its membership by hundreds of thousands. Owen addressed the Manchester Conference of the Union in 1833, and it adopted his scheme of organisation and aims.

Besides the O.B.U., a large number of new unions had sprung up, largely under Owenite influence. The employers retaliated against this growth of unionism by locking out their workmen until they had signed a document pledging themselves not to join a union.

The new unions were brought together in conference by Owen in January, 1834, for the formation of a general union, which assumed the title Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

### PROGRAM OF THE G.N.C.T.U.

The program of Owenism adopted by the G.N.C.T.U. was, in effect, a kind of syndicalism, with the various trades organised in associations and united at the same time through delegates to a Grand National Council. Every Trade Union or Company was to be an independent unit, controlling its own industry, excluding commercial competition, and destined finally to supersede the State as well as the capitalist.

Owen had no understanding of the class struggle and did not contemplate violence. He thought the owning class could be won over by argument, more especially when confronted with ready-made machinery for the new co-operate society, in the shape of the G.N.C.T.U.



The agitation for a general strike as the chief weapon to be employed by the G.N.C.T.U. came from one of Owen's followers, a shoemaker, William Benbow, who later became prominent in the Chartist movement. When they became sufficiently organised the whole working class would proclaim a "holiday month," and lay down its tools. Capitalism would become bankrupt and the G.N.C.T.U. would take control.

### DECLINE OF THE G.N.C.T.U.

For the first month it looked as though nothing could resist the onward march of the G.N.C.T.U. Membership increased by leaps and bounds, and passed half a million in less than a month. But in March, 1834, it received a heavy blow by the conviction of the "Six Dorchester Laborers," who were sentenced to seven years transportation on a framed up charge of administering unlawful oaths. Their real crime was to combine in an attempt to raise their wages from 7/- to 10/- a week. More severe blows came from within the organisation itself, by the sectional strikes, which were resorted to on the least, and at times without any, provocation. These numerous petty, and unsuccessful, local stoppages soon depleted the Union's coffers and sapped its strength. Dissension broke out among the Executive and in August, 1834, the G.N.C.T.U. was formally dissolved.

### ORIGINS OF CHARTISM

The collapse of the G.N.C.T.U. left the way open for a political revival among the workers. There were many radical clubs scattered throughout the country which had survived the Reform Bill of 1832. During the height of the Owenite agitation these had sunk into insignificance, but by 1836 there were marked signs of renewed activity.

One of the revived organisations was the London Workingmen's Association. This was a purely working class body of skilled craftsmen, led by a cabinet maker, William Lovett. In 1837, the Association drew up a petition containing six points, which were next year embodied in a Bill, called the People's Charter, and circulated throughout the country for approval.

The six points of the famous Charter were: Universal male suffrage; equal electoral districts; vote by secret ballot; payment of members; annual parliament, and no property qualification for members of parliament.

Few Chartists regarded these six points as an end in themselves, and considered that these provisions would mean the victory of the working class, just as 1832 had meant the victory of the middle class. Most Chartists believed that the workers would then go forward to achieve "economic equality," or

Socialism, although there were differences of opinion as to how.

### THE FIRST PETITION

Strangely enough it was a Birmingham banker, Thomas Attwood, who contributed much to the early rapid growth of Chartism. Attwood was a M.P., with a private scheme of currency reform to push, and sought to use the mass movement for his own ends. His proposal, however, that all supporters of the Charter elect a sort of anti-parliament, to be called a Convention, caught on. This Convention would present a Petition for the Charter to be passed, and if Parliament refused, a general strike would be called.

Attwood could hardly have foreseen the enthusiastic response his plan would meet. All over England tremendous mass meetings and demonstrations took place, especially in the industrial north. Signatures were collected by the thousand and delegates elected to the Convention.

Two major trends revealed themselves within the movement at this time. The so-called "physical force" section, headed by Feargus O'Connor, which, despite its theoretical shortcomings represented the proletarian, socialist element in the movement. And the so-called "Moral Force," section, headed by Lovett and Attwood, which represented the petty bourgeois, reformist, trend.

The Convention met in London in February, 1839, and the "Moral Force" adherents were in the ascendency. After some debate the sitting was transferred to Birmingham. Here the Convention clashed with the police, and Lovett was arrested. It returned to London, slowly losing prestige as it procrastinated in delivering the Petition. When the latter was delivered over to Parliament, it was found to contain 1,245,000 names (double the membership of the G.N.C.T.U.).

In July the House of Commons rejected the Petition, and the Convention called for a "sacred month," i.e., a month's general strike, as originally advocated by Robert Owen's disciple William Benbow. Ten days later it withdrew this instruction on the grounds that "the masses are not prepared."

Conscious of its helplessness in face of the Government's repressive measures, the Convention dissolved on September 14.

The first phase of the great Chartist movement closed with an unsuccessful attempt at insurrection at Newport, South Wales, in November, 1839. Frost and other leaders of the Newport rebellion were transported to Australia. O'Connor and other Chartist leaders were gaoled.

### SECOND PETITION

Chartism entered upon its second phase of development in 1841, when O'Connor came out of prison and reorganised the



National Charter Association. Lovett and most of the "Moral Force" men were now outside the movement, and were co-operating with the middle class Free Traders.

A fresh Petition was drawn up, demanding the six points of the original Charter. It was more arrogant in tone than the first Petition, and more clearly expressed the economic as well as the political needs of the workers. It even ventured to compare the wage of Queen Victoria with an ordinary laborer's.

The National Charter Association was also more in the nature of a political party, with a centralised Executive and local branches. It also had closer ties with the existing economic organisations of the workers. A Doctor M'Doull had been instrumental in bringing many trade unions into the Chartist movement.

The Second Petition secured 3,300,000 signatures, which was far more than the number of electors of the "Reformed" Parliament. But once again it was rejected by Parliament. The Association waited on a word from O'Connor as to the next move, but O'Connor had nothing to say. However, the workers took the initiative into their own hands. A local strike which broke out in Acton in August, 1842, was turned into a strike for the Charter. The time had come, the workers reckoned to apply the "sacred month." A general strike was called and industry throughout Lancashire, Yorkshire and most of the midlands was completely paralysed. The strike coincided with a cycle of trade depression, the workers had no resources, the employers could afford to wait, and the sacred month collapsed. O'Connor turned his attention to land settlement schemes and Chartism again declined.

### 1848 REVIVAL OF CHARTISM

News of the Continental revolutions of February and March, 1848, revived Chartism in Britain. Drilling began again, a Convention was called and a new petition sent up and down the country for signatures. Conflicts with the police became frequent and regular. At one big meeting the Chartists chased the police out of Trafalgar Square. O'Connor and his chief lieutenant, Ernest Jones, went around the country whipping up their followers to enormous enthusiasm by the most extravagant promises.

O'Connor claimed that the new Petition had 6,000,000 signatures, and made speeches which led his followers to believe that April 10, the day selected for its presentation to Parliament, would be the day of revolution. But no serious preparations were made by O'Connor or his supporters to organise for revolution.

Nevertheless the Government disposed its police and military forces around London as though such serious preparations had

been made, and when the day dawned and O'Connor saw this display of strength, he wisely abandoned the mass procession to the House of Commons and had the Petition conveyed there in a cab. It was found to contain two million and not six million names, as he had claimed.

This third failure marked the final eclipse of Chartism, the first great movement of the British working class for self emancipation. In an article published in the "London Commonwealth," in 1885, Engels wrote: "Forty years ago England stood face to face with a crisis solvable, to all appearances, by force only . . . The working masses of the towns demanded their share of political power—the People's Charter; they were supported by the majority of the small trading class, and the only difference between the two was whether the Charter should be carried by physical or by moral force. Then came the commercial crash of 1847 and the Irish famine, and with both, the prospect of revolution.

The French revolution of 1848 saved the English middle class. The Socialist pronunciamientos of the victorious French workmen frightened the small middle class of England, and disorganised the narrower, but more matter of fact, movement of the English working class. At the very moment when Chartism was bound to assert itself in its full strength, it collapsed internally before even it collapsed externally on April 10, 1848.

The action of the working class was thrust into the background. The capitalist class triumphed along the whole line. (Preface to Engels, "Conditions of the British Working Class.")

For a time Ernest Jones tried to keep the movement alive, and received considerable advice and assistance from Marx and Engels. But certain economic changes were now taking place, leading to an improvement in the conditions of the organised upper section of British workers. Jones himself reflected these changes, becoming more and more bourgeois in outlook and opportunist in politics, until finally in 1859 Marx broke with him completely. About the same time Engels expressed the opinion that the English proletarian movement in its old traditional Chartist form would have to completely perish before the British workers would find the true path to Socialism.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What role did the workers play in the period of liberal democratic revolt against feudalism?
2. What kind of Socialism did Robert Owen advocate, and what influence did it have on the early British labor movement?
3. What was the G.N.C.T.U., what was its program, how was it organised, what factors brought about its collapse?



4. What was the People's Charter, how did it originate?
5. What was the significance of the Chartist movement, what were its positive and negative aspects, and what was the combination of circumstances which brought about its decline?

**Additional Reading:** "Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844", F. Engels.

"From Chartism to Laborism", T. Rothstein.

"A New View of Society," Robert Owen.

## Marx, Engels and First International

### MARX AND ENGELS

IN the 1840's, when Marx and Engels were growing to manhood, the bourgeois democratic revolution in Europe was reaching its climax. At the same time the proletariat was beginning to come forward and assert itself as an independent force.

After rapidly passing through a phase of bourgeois radicalism, Marx and Engels arrived at their scientific socialist convictions. Engels, in the History of the Communist League, writes: "When I visited Marx in Paris in the summer of 1844, our complete agreement in all theoretical fields became evident, and from that time our joint work dates. . . . When, in the spring of 1845, we met again in Brussels, Marx had already fully developed his materialistic theory of history in its main features . . . and we now applied ourselves to working out in detail, in the most varied directions, the newly won mode of outlook". (Karl Marx, Selected Works, Vol. 2.)

In 1847 Marx and Engels were invited to join the League of the Just, a secret propaganda society of German origin, which espoused a vague utopian socialism. Under their influence the League was rapidly transformed. At a Congress in London, in the summer of 1847, the old mystical name was dropped and the title Communist League adopted. The League was re-organised into local sections, circles, leading circles, Central Committee and Congress. It became in fact the model of a workers' revolutionary political Party.

A second Congress was held in November/December of the same year, which unanimously adopted the basic principles of scientific Socialism advanced by Marx and Engels, who were commissioned to draw up the famous Manifesto of the Communist Party, which appeared in February, 1848.

"With the clarity and brilliance of genius, this work outlines a new conception of the world; it represents consistent materialism extended also to the realm of social life; it proclaims dialectics as the most comprehensive and profound doctrine of development; it advances the theory of the class struggle and of the world-historic revolutionary role of the proletariat as the creator of the new Communist Society". (Lenin: Teachings of Karl Marx.)



The victory of the counter revolution in Germany, which was followed by "a new unprecedented period of industrial prosperity," put an end to the activities of the Communist League. In 1849 Marx was banished from Germany to Paris, and from there to London, where he continued to develop his materialist doctrine in a number of historical works, but gave most of his time to the study of political economy. This science was revolutionised by his discovery of surplus value.

The period of the revival of democratic movements, at the end of the 'fifties and the beginning of the 'sixties, again called Marx to political activity. He became the chief inspiration and organiser of the famous First International when it was formed in London on September 28, 1864.

### ECONOMIC CHANGES AFTER 1848

The defeat of the 1848 revolutions on the Continent was followed by a prolonged period of political stagnation, in which reaction exercised almost unbounded sway. At the same time economic development proceeded most vigorously. Capitalism began to extend from Britain and France into the more backward countries, and to break through and destroy pre-capitalist forms of production. The peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie were more and more reduced to ruin, creating an ever-growing property-less working class, and with it the conditions for capitalist industry. The national unification of Germany and Italy, which was carried out from above, facilitated the growth of capitalism. This development was not confined to Western Europe. Capitalism became a world system, drawing both North America and Russia into its sphere.

The working class movement, which had stagnated for a while after the defeats of 1848, began to slowly recover in the middle 50's. Workers' organisations made their appearance in various countries.

### THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

The British working class was still suffering from the after effect of the Chartist defeat, and was relatively inactive politically. The industrial advance of the country, which by this time had become "the workshop of the world," was also beginning to take effect on the labor movement. The "labor aristocrats" were admitted by the bourgeoisie to a small share in the prosperity flowing from Britain's industrial and colonial monopoly. The comparatively high wages and infrequency of unemployment among skilled tradesmen did not favour a revival in the English labor movement. Consequently at this time the distinguishing features were disunity and craft narrowness in the unions, fear of political action, and concentration on the mutual benefit side

of activities. In politics the workers were content to follow the "Radical" wing of the British Liberals.

This situation changed a little towards the end of the 1850's, when the crisis of 1857 sharpened the struggle. A wave of strikes took place in 1859 and 1861, mainly among building workers, out of which was born the first London Trades Council, forerunner of the Trade Union Congress.

### LABOR MOVEMENT IN FRANCE

In France the reaction which followed 1848 dealt a heavy blow to the militant workers' organisations and the peaceful, petty bourgeois theories of Proudhon gained ground.

Proudhon was hostile to capitalism; but instead of seeing that the origin of poverty in capitalist society was to be found in the sphere of production, he thought it existed in the realm of exchange. From this basis he concluded that the methods of struggle against capitalism should be the organisation of mutual credit associations, co-operatives, etc.

Proudhon was not a socialist. He regarded social ownership of the means of production as a form of "crude tyranny," and looked on communist society as "a society of slaves". His social ideal was a society of small proprietors acting as independent producers of commodities. He was opposed to the political struggle of the working class; even strikes were condemned by him as "objectionable and immoral weapons of struggle."

Proudhonism represented the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, the artisan, the small producer, ruined by capitalism, and trying to regain his economic independence—to drag history back, as it were. The popularity achieved by this thoroughly middle class, reactionary theory among the French workers at this time can only be explained by the fact that large-scale capitalist production had not yet developed to any great extent, and no clear-cut line of demarcation existed between wage workers and handicraftsmen.

### THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

The German working class had also been profoundly affected by the defeat of 1848. Up to the 'sixties the workers generally tailed behind the liberal bourgeoisie. But the rapid growth of capitalism in Germany in the 'sixties and 'seventies transformed it into a highly developed industrial country and brought about some advance in the workers' movement.

In 1862, on the initiative of the workers of Saxony, a Committee was set up at Leipzig to convene a National Labor Conference. The Committee contacted Lassalle, a radical politician who had spoken in favour of the workers, requesting his opinion



on the tasks of the working class. In reply Lassalle emphasised the necessity of breaking away from the Progressives, the party of the liberal bourgeoisie, and forming an independent working class organisation. On May 23, 1863, at Leipzig, the Union of German Workers was formed with Lassalle as the first President.

Lassalle rendered the German Labor movement a great service in helping to arouse the class consciousness of the proletariat and organise them independently. But Lassalle was also the father of opportunism, and in this respect exercised a most pernicious influence on the German Labor movement.

Lassalle was by no means a Marxist, although he plagiarised many of the teachings of Marx. In the struggle against the liberal bourgeoisie, Lassalle tried to retain the goodwill of the Junkers, and in return for supporting Bismarck, he hoped to gain concessions for the workers. These tactics of Lassalle were condemned by Marx as treachery to the proletarian cause; they were turning the workers' movement into a pillar of Prussian absolutism.

Lassalle shared Proudhon's dislike for strikes. These were useless if aimed at bringing about higher wages because the latter were regulated by an "iron law" which was fixed and unalterable by struggle. The State was to be the medium through which the working class would achieve its emancipation, according to Lassalle.

Whereas the anarchists held that the State was the root cause of all evil in society, and set out to abolish it at one stroke, Lassalle held precisely the opposite to be true. According to his bourgeois idealist conception "the real function of the State from earliest times has been the training and development of mankind towards freedom." With this as his starting point, Lassalle attached far too much importance to universal suffrage, and believed that it alone could "guarantee adequate representation of the interests of the German workers and really abolish class differences." Lassalle's ideas on the State, as well as those of the anarchists, were proved by Marx and Engels to be false. Documents discovered some years afterwards revealed that Lassalle was paid by Bismarck.

A second organisation of the German proletariat was the Social Democratic Labor Party, formed at a Congress in Eisenach in 1859, under the leadership of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel. This subsequently became the leading Party of the German working class, and came closer than any other existing organisation to being a real Marxist Party. The leaders remained in close contact with Marx and Engels and often, though not invariably, accepted their advice. A sharp criticism of Liebknecht and Co. is contained in the Critique of the Gotha Program, written by Marx in 1875.

## FOUNDATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

During the 1860's a revival of the workers' movement occurred in Britain and France. The American Civil War (1861-65) brought about a crisis in the textile industry. Unemployment was rife in Britain and France, and Committees were set up by the Trades Unions in London and Paris to organise relief. The two Committees entered into communication, and the first contact between the workers of the two countries established.

In 1863 there was a Polish insurrection against Russia, and an international meeting was held in London to declare sympathy with the Poles. Working class representatives present exchanged views on the necessity for maintaining closer contact between English and continental workers.

British trade unionists at this time were alarmed at the prospects of continental labor being introduced into the country to break strikes and force down wages, and addressed an appeal to the French workers to make common cause with them against this threat. In September, 1864, a French delegation came to England with their answer. On the 28th of the same month there took place that historic meeting which decided to form an International Workingmen's Association.

## THE COMMITTEE

A Committee was set up to draw up the program and statutes of the new organisation. It consisted of representatives of the English and French workers, and German and Italian emigrants living in London. Among those elected was Karl Marx.

The Committee was extremely heterogeneous in composition and reflected the variety of organisational forms and ideological tendencies in the working class movement. Represented on the Committee were trade unionists, Owenites, Chartists, Proudhonists, Blanquists, German Communists, as well as Polish and Italian National revolutionaries—men with the most varied and, at times, most conflicting ideas on all the fundamental questions relating to the working class movement.

It devolved on Marx to draw up the Program which was to unite all these widely differing parts into a functioning whole. In this he was confronted with an extremely difficult task; without in any way watering down his own scientific revolutionary ideas, he had to write in a way that would be acceptable to all the tendencies represented in the Committee. This task was brilliantly fulfilled, as the Inaugural Address to the International Workingmen's Association still bears witness.



## PROGRAM AND ORGANISATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL

The Inaugural Address, written by Marx as an introduction to the Program of the International, sketched the position of the working class. It pointed out that the growth of industry and trade had not alleviated the distress of the workers, and that their conditions could not be radically improved so long as capitalism existed. It mentioned two great victories gained by the workers in the past two years—the Ten Hour Bill and the development of the Co-operatives. But these things in themselves could not change the conditions of exploitation, and too great importance should not, therefore, be attached to them. To gain its emancipation the working class requires the seizure of political power, and it was towards this end it should organise its activities. The workers' struggle demands the international unification of all their forces. This was proclaimed as the task of the International Workingmen's Association.

In every country the members of the International united into a Section, led by a National Federative Council. International Congresses were convened periodically to discuss policy and elect the chief committee for the whole International—the General Council. Although the General Council was given wide powers, it could not become the practical organisational centre, and in the main its function consisted in providing ideological leadership to the world Labor movement as it existed in the late 1860's.

### THE FIRST PERIOD. STRUGGLE AGAINST PROUDHONISM

The First Congress of the International was held in Geneva in September, 1866. The majority consisted of Proudhonists from France and Switzerland. Opposed to them were the English, who had come prepared with material provided by Marx.

The Proudhonists put forward their petty bourgeois program of opposition to strikes and support for mutual aid societies. Most of their proposals were rejected by Congress. The resolution on trade unions prepared by Marx was adopted. This treated trade unions as vital centres of working class organisations which could be used not only in the daily economic struggles, but also as a means towards the more important end of abolishing capitalist exploitation.

The Second Congress took place at Lausanne in 1867. The Proudhonists succeeded in passing a resolution recommending that the trade unions create a "national credit system." They opposed another resolution "that land should be made common property." This was deferred to the next Congress.

The Third Congress, held in Brussels, 1868, marked the decline of Proudhonism. Not only did the Congress recognise strikes as an essential weapon in the class struggle; it also carried

a resolution upholding the socialisation of the land and basic means of production. This meant that the International frankly declared its adherence to Communist principles.

The first three Congresses of the International devoted serious attention to the war danger. In 1866 the war between Austria and Prussia had just come to an end, and the Franco-German war loomed clearly ahead. The International called upon the workers to intervene in the foreign policy of their respective bourgeois governments, and to protest against reactionary war.

### SECOND PERIOD. STRUGGLE AGAINST BAKUNINISM

Although the Brussels Congress marked the triumph of Marxism over Proudhonism, there was still not ideological unity in the ranks of the International. The place of Proudhon was taken by the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, against whose ideas a still more vigorous and bitter struggle had to be fought.

Bakunin considered that the most important task of the social revolution was to destroy the State. With the abolition of the State he thought capitalism would automatically go to pieces, and on its ruins the new Stateless order of society would grow up. Consequently, Bakunin regarded all participation in the day to day economic and political struggle as rank opportunism. Added to this, Bakunin had no idea of the leading part the proletariat must play in the revolution. He considered that those whose sufferings were greatest—the pauperised peasantry, the lumpen proletariat and the declassed intellectuals—were the driving force of the revolution.

Bakunin did not represent the industrial proletariat. He expressed the feelings and aspirations of the "petty bourgeois driven wild" by the horrors of capitalism. Consequently his influence was particularly strong in such countries as Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Belgium, which at the time were still in the early stages of capitalist development. The workers of Italy and Spain particularly have paid a heavy price for succumbing to the influences of anarchism; just as the German proletariat have for falling under the domination of opportunism—Social Democracy.

In 1868 Bakunin founded an international Alliance of Socialist Democracy based on his anarchist ideas, and applied for its acceptance into the First International as a separate organisation. The General Council refused. Thereupon Bakunin's Alliance was formally dissolved, and its sections accepted into the International. In secret, however, the Alliance continued to exist as a faction which set out to capture the International for Bakunin.

### THE END OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

The highest point reached in the development of the First International coincided with the Fourth Congress in Basle, in



1869. Its influence was still growing in England, France, Belgium and Germany, and for the first time delegates from Spain and North America were present.

Recognising this growth, the Congress extended the powers of the General Council and gave it the right to expel sections which deviated from the general line.

Bakunin put forward a demand that abolition of the right of inheritance be made a foremost plank in the International's platform. This was decisively rejected, whereupon Bakunin carried the struggle against the General Council into the Sections of the organisation, provoking disruption.

In July, 1870, the Franco-Prussian war broke out, and prevented the Congress of the International which was due in Germany. Marx, on behalf of the General Council, issued a protest against the war, placing the responsibility for it on the policy of the ruling classes of Bonapartist France and Junker Prussia.

When there arose out of this war the insurrection of March 18, 1871, which gave birth to the Paris Commune, the International declared wholeheartedly for its defence and proclaimed this as the sacred cause of the world proletariat.

The defeat of the Commune, however, profoundly affected the subsequent development of the International. The French working class movement was savagely attacked and persecuted for many years to come. The German movement also entered an era of government persecution. So that in two important Sections, the International was weakened.

In Britain, also, the influence of the International began to decline when the trade unions had wrung a few political concessions from the ruling class, which removed a number of legal limitations on their activities. The continued economic advance of England during the 'seventies, and the opportunity this provided the ruling class to use part of their super profits to corrupt the upper strata of the working class, temporarily transformed the trade unions into reliable supports for the existing order of society.

The struggle between the Marxists and the Bakuninists became sharper than ever following the defeat of the Commune. To Marx the greatest significance of the Commune lay in its being a government of the working class . . . "The political form at last discovered in which the economic emancipation of the working class could be consummated." Whereas for Bakunin the Commune was, above all, the denial of the State. He considered the great mistake of the Commune lay in its endeavor to establish a revolutionary dictatorship in Paris.

Bakunin's ideas were decisively rejected at a Conference of the International in September, 1871, which carried a resolution

pointing out that the organisation of the proletariat in a political party is essential to secure the triumph of the social revolution and its main object the abolition of classes.

This was re-affirmed at the Fifth Congress at Hague in 1872, which declared that the working class needed an independent political party, under whose leadership it could take part in political life and fight to win political power. The Congress also emphasised the need for centralisation and discipline, and gave the General Council all the powers necessary to control the Sections.

A special commission was set up to investigate the factional activities of the Bakuninists. The Commission reported that Bakunin had only dissolved his Alliance in form and still maintained it in secret to conduct the struggle against the General Council. Bakunin was therefore expelled from the International.

At the suggestion of Marx and Engels the Congress transferred the seat of the General Council to New York to remove it from the influence of the Bakunists and the opportunist English trade unionists.

But it was impossible to arrest the decay which had set in. The Sixth Congress in 1873 was a failure, and finally, in July, 1876, a Conference at Philadelphia decided to dissolve the organisation.

### ENGEL'S SUMMING UP

In 1874, ten years after the foundation of the International, Engels wrote in one of his letters to Sorge—

"From one point of view—from the point of view of the future—the International has for ten years dominated European history, and may look back upon its work with pride.

"But in its old form it has outlived itself . . . I think that the next International—after Marx's works have had some years to exert their influence—will be directly Communist and will spread our principles."

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What distinguished Marx and Engels from the socialists who preceded them?
2. In what state of development did Marx and Engels find the Labor movement in Britain, France and Germany in the 1850's/1860's?
3. How was the First International formed; what was its program; how was it organised; what were its tasks; and what part did Marx play?



4. What was the nature of "Proudhonism" and how did Marx wage a struggle against this tendency within the International?
5. What was "Bakuninism" and why was it necessary for Marx to lead a struggle against this trend?
6. What were the positive achievements of the First International and what were the factors which caused it to go out of existence?

### ADDITIONAL READING

- Communist Manifesto: Marx and Engels.  
 Inaugural Address to International Workingmen's Association: Marx.  
 Criticism of Gotha Program: Marx.

## The Paris Commune

### THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

IN July, 1870, Napoleon III went to war against Prussia in the hope of consolidating the waning prestige of the Second Empire and checking the growing opposition to his regime. Bismarck was no less eager for war, since a victory over France promised to complete German unification under Prussian domination.

The war soon revealed the inner rottenness of the Napoleonic regime. Within two months the main French army was defeated and compelled to surrender at Sedan. The Prussians advanced towards Paris itself.

The old Government collapsed and the Republic was again proclaimed in Paris, but the Prussians were standing at the gates. In this critical situation the people allowed the Paris deputies to the former legislative body to constitute themselves in a "Government of National Defence." They were the more ready to allow this because, for the purpose of defence, all Parisians capable of bearing arms had enrolled in the National Guard and were armed, so that now the workers constituted a great majority.

Almost immediately the antagonism between the bourgeois government and the armed workers broke into open conflict. The Government refused to meet the workers' demands for the requisitioning of all food supplies and their distribution by rationing. On October 31 workers' battalions stormed the Town Hall and captured some members of the Government. Treachery, the Government's breach of its undertakings and the intervention of some petty bourgeois battalions set them free again. To avoid civil war while the city was threatened by the Prussians, the workers were satisfied to leave the former government in office.

The bourgeoisie had no intention of organising a real national defence. Fearing the workers more than it did the Prussians, it planned to surrender Paris to the enemy.

At last, on January 28, 1871, Paris, on the verge of starvation, capitulated, but with honors unprecedented in the history of war. The forts were surrendered and the weapons of the regular troops handed over, but the National Guard retained their arms and only entered into an armistice with the victors. The Prussians dared not enter Paris in triumph as they had planned, and were



confined to a small corner in the outer suburbs, under close observation of the armed workers.

## THE COMMUNE

During the war the Paris workers had confined themselves to demanding the vigorous prosecution of the combat. But, now, when peace had come with the capitulation of Paris, Thiers, the head of the new government, was compelled to realise that the supremacy of the propertied classes was in constant danger so long as the workers had arms in their hands. His first action, therefore, was to attempt to disarm them.

On March 18 troops of the line were sent into Paris with orders to deprive the National Guard of its artillery, which had been constructed during the siege of Paris and purchased by subscription. The National Guard resisted this theft, and Paris rose against the Government, which fled to Versailles. The Central Committee of the National Guard took control of the City, and at once ordered the election of a Commune, a body to which all power was to be transferred. The entire population, including the bourgeoisie, was to take part in these elections, so that the new power might be "really democratic." This was the first mistake of the revolution. The seventeen bourgeois representatives who were elected at once revealed their hostility by boycotting the Commune.

The elections took place on March 26, and the Commune took office on the 28th. The members were divided into a majority of Blanquists and a minority of members of the International Workingmen's Association, chiefly followers of Proudhon. The great majority of Blanquists at that time were Socialists only by revolutionary and proletarian instinct, and only a very few had attained any degree of clarity on the essential principles of scientific Socialism.

It is therefore comprehensible, Engels says in the introduction to "The Civil War in France," that in the economic sphere much was neglected which should have been done. Failure to seize the Bank of France was, in particular, a very serious political mistake. But what is more astonishing than the omissions, according to Engels, is the correctness of so much that was actually done by the Commune.

On March 30 it abolished conscription and the standing army, and declared that the National Guard, in which all citizens capable of bearing arms were to be enrolled, was to be the sole armed force.

The Commune released the citizens from all payments of rent for dwelling houses from October, 1870, to April, 1871, and stopped the sale of articles pledged in the municipal pawnshops. On the same day foreigners elected to the Commune were con-

firmed in office because "The flag of the Commune is the flag of the World Republic."

On April 1 it was decreed that the highest salary received by any servant of the Commune, and therefore also by its members, might not exceed 6000 francs. On the following day the Commune decreed the separation of the Church from the State, and the abolition of all State payments for religious purposes. On the 6th, the guillotine was brought out and publicly burnt. On the 12th the Column of Victory in the Place Vendome was demolished as a symbol of chauvinism and incitement to national hatred. On April 16 the Commune ordered a statistical summary of all factories which had been closed down by the manufacturers, and the working out of plans for the carrying on of these factories by the workers formerly employed in them.

Thus from March 18 onwards, says Engels, the class character of the Paris movement emerged sharply and clearly. As almost without exception workers, or recognised representatives of the workers, sat in the Commune, its decisions bore a decidedly proletarian character. Either they decreed reforms which the republican bourgeoisie had failed to pass only out of cowardice, or they promulgated decrees which were in the direct interests of the working class, and to some extent cut at the foundations of the old order of society.

The Commune was compelled to recognise from the outset that the working class, once come to power, could not carry on business with the old State machine. It set out to smash this machine and to replace it by a new and really democratic State—the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

However, in a beleaguered city such as Paris was in 1871, it was possible to do no more than make a start in the realisation of Socialist measures. From the beginning of May onward all the energies of the Commune were required for the fight against the counter-revolutionary armies assembled by the Versailles Government.

The Commune made a mistake in not pursuing the government to Versailles on March 18 and administering a decisive defeat. The breathing space was utilised by Thiers to mobilise the forces of reaction and conclude a deal with Bismarck whereby French war prisoners were released for use against revolutionary Paris. With these forces the Versailles Government advanced upon the capital. Aided by treachery and carelessness on the part of some of the petty bourgeois sections of the National Guard, and assisted by the Prussians, who allowed them to pass over territory supposedly closed by the armistice, they burst into Paris on May 11.

The break through in this quarter, the western or luxury districts, was not anticipated by the defenders, and only weak resist-



ance was met with by the Versailles forces. This grew stronger and more tenacious the nearer the attacking troops came to the eastern half, the real working class quarter of Paris. It was only after eight days bitter street fighting that the last brave defenders of the Commune were overwhelmed on the heights of Belleville. The massacre of defenceless men, women and children reached its zenith. The breach loader could not kill fast enough, and the vanquished workers were shot down in hundreds by mitrailleuse fire. Then came mass arrests, and when the slaughter of all the prisoners proved to be impossible, there was the shooting of victims arbitrarily selected. The rest were herded into great concentration camps to be dealt with by court martial.

### LESSONS OF THE COMMUNE

"With all its errors," Lenin says, "the Commune is the greatest example of the greatest proletarian movement of the nineteenth century. Marx valued very highly the historical importance of the Commune . . . Great as were the sacrifices of the Commune, they are redeemed by its importance for the general proletarian struggle; it stirred up the Socialist movement throughout Europe, it dispersed patriotic illusions and shattered the naive faith in the national aspirations of the bourgeoisie. The Commune has taught the European proletariat to deal concretely with the problems of socialist revolution."

It is well known how the Commune taught Lenin and the Bolsheviks to deal concretely with the Socialist Revolution in Russia.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the main events which precipitated the collapse of the Napoleonic regime and led to the proclamation of the Commune in Paris?
2. What class interests were represented by the Commune; what was its political composition?
3. What were the economic, social and political measures carried out or attempted by the Commune; what serious omissions were there?
4. What was the historical significance of the Paris Commune; what were its chief lessons; what amendment did it cause Marx and Engels to insert in the Communist Manifesto?

### ADDITIONAL READING

The Civil War in France: Marx.

The Paris Commune: Lenin.

## The Second International and Growth of the World Labor Movement

### NEW STAGE OF CAPITALISM

THE period 1860/70 marked the apex of the development of free competition. After the crisis of 1873 the newer forms of capitalist organisation, cartels, syndicates and trusts, began to develop rapidly, leading to the substitution of monopoly for free competition and the transformation to imperialism by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The small scale family-owned enterprises of the mid-19th Century gave way to the large scale mass production industries operated by joint stock companies. Industrial capital began to merge with money capital, leading to the growth of finance capital. In the USA big financial undertakings like J. P. Morgan's, began to make huge investments in industry, promoting and controlling, for example, the United States Steel Corporation. In Germany special "commercial banks" like the Darmstadter, Deutsche and Dresdner, etc., made it their prime function to promote, finance, and control industrial enterprises.

The economic expansion of Germany proceeded apace. From 1873 the British capitalists began for the first time to complain seriously of "foreign competition." The search for markets, sources of raw materials and profitable avenues for the export of capital also led to a new colonial scramble which completed the division of the world by the end of the nineteenth century.

### INFLUENCE ON LABOR MOVEMENT

The beginnings of this new stage of capitalism had an important effect on the further development of the Labor movement. In the first place the development of large scale industries brought the workers together in larger masses, and facilitated their organisation on a wider class basis.

Formerly the workers had to deal only with small local employers and labor questions tended as a result to be mainly local issues. Consequently in Owenite and Chartist times, the development of a national movement in Britain was held back by a localist and sectional spirit.

Now, however, the workers had to deal with large impersonal companies, which were national in scope, and only trade union



organisation on a national scale could adequately protect the workers' interests.

In the second place, as imperialism developed, the trusts and combines often spread their tentacles across national boundaries, and a corresponding need arose for the workers to organise across national boundaries as well.

### FORMATION OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

By 1889, six years after the death of Marx, and 13 years after the winding up of the First International, the world Labor movement had advanced to the stage which made the establishment of a new International possible.

At an international workers' Congress in Paris in 1889, the Labor and Socialist, or as it is more commonly known, the Second International, was formed. Twenty countries were represented. William Morris, the poet, represented the only Marxist organisation in Britain at that time, the Social Democratic Federation, while Keir Hardie represented 50,000 Scottish mine workers.

However, the anticipations of Engels that the new International would be "directly Communist" were to be realised only in part. The Second International was Communist insofar as it based itself formally on Marx's teachings. But from the very beginning there were opportunist trends within the organisation which, in the end, led to its shameful collapse.

### OPPORTUNISM

"Opportunism is the sacrifice of the fundamental interests of the masses to the temporary interests of an insignificant minority of the workers or, in other words, the alliance of a section of the workers with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the proletariat." (Lenin.)

The appearance of this trend in Britain as early as 1848 has already been commented upon in dealing with the decline of the Chartist movement. Engels remarks on it in a letter to Marx dated October 7, 1858. ". . . The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeoisie aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world, this is of course to a certain extent justifiable."

England in the middle of the nineteenth century occupied an exceptional position, and displayed at least two of the distinguishing features of imperialism—colonial monopoly and monopoly profits flowing from her domination of the world market. Out of these super profits the British bourgeoisie were able to bribe an insignificant minority of the workers, who entered into an

alliance with them against the less well-off masses and against Socialism.

The older trade unions, embracing mainly skilled craftsmen, succumbed to this tendency when they broke with the First International. Socialism was divorced from the mass movement and became almost entirely a middle class dilettante movement of the Fabian intellectuals like the Webbs, Wells and Shaw.

When the "New Unionism" arose (this was the name given to the uprising of unions of unskilled workers, especially after the great London dockers' strike of 1889) it seemed for a time that the domination of opportunism was going to be seriously challenged. But the resources of British imperialism were not yet exhausted. The workers could still press for improvements without their demands involving any serious challenge to the existing order. So the new unionism in its turn, as concessions were gained, became reformist in its aims.

When the British Labor Party was formed in 1906, as an alliance between the Socialist parties (Fabians and ILP) and the Trade Unions, it became as liberal as the Liberal Party. It acted as a political adjunct of the Trade Unions to secure certain specific legal reforms required by the Unions; for the rest it supported, or tailed behind, the Liberals in Old Age Pensions, Workers' Compensation and attacks on the House of Lords.

### CONTINENTAL LABOR MOVEMENT

Other countries had not enjoyed a period of national monopoly in the mid-19th Century and had not experienced the characteristic features of the British "Old Unionism." Consequently, when the workers began to move politically, as a class, their policy tended to be not of class collaboration, but of revolutionary class struggle. The Socialism which developed was therefore definitely Marxian.

In Germany a strong Social Democratic Party developed and was the chief instrument in organising the workers into trade unions. In France the workers had accumulated considerable revolutionary experience, and for 72 days in 1871 the workers of Paris had actually held power.

In Russia, where capitalism had been steadily advancing since the Reform of 1861, the first Marxist group was formed by Plekhanov in 1883. In 1895 Lenin united all the Marxist circles in St. Petersburg into a single League, and thus prepared the way for the founding of a Revolutionary Marxist Workers' Party. The Party was formally established in 1898 at the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party held in Minsk, but was not really consolidated until the Second Congress held abroad in 1903.



With the development of imperialism on the Continent, the same tendency towards opportunism developed as in Britain, but with this difference: Reformism on the Continent sought to make headway by "watering down" Marxism, by "revising" Marx's teachings.

### REVISIONISM

This movement to substitute opportunism for Marxism gathered weight and speed in the 'nineties in the international Labor movement, keeping pace with the accelerated speed of capitalist development. It was most pronounced in Germany, where strong imperialist traits were coming to the forefront.

At the head of the movement, which came to be called Revisionism, stood Bernstein, one of the leaders and theoreticians of the Social Democratic Party. Briefly, the new theory revised Marxism by dropping everything in it that had a revolutionary implication. It denied (1) that capital was being concentrated in few hands as fast as Marx had prophesied; (2) that industrial crises were getting more acute; (3) that the condition of the workers was growing worse. In short, it argued that capitalism was on an ascending path of progress and that its conflicts were diminishing. Therefore the task of Socialists must be to improve the position of the workers within the confines of capitalism and to gradually introduce Socialism by reformist Parliamentary means.

Bernstein had arrived at exactly the same position as the Fabians in England. The only difference was that he wanted to retain the name of Marx, which was extremely popular with the German workers. Keep the shell but cast out the revolutionary kernel. Such was the essence of Revisionism.

### "ORTHODOX MARXISTS"

The theories of Bernstein were opposed by Karl Kautsky, who defended "orthodox Marxism." But, as Lenin points out again and again, Kautsky defended Marxism in such a way that Revisionism, which was thrown out the front door, was allowed to sneak in again through the back entrance.

Kautsky and the "orthodox" Marxists stood at the head of the Second International in the pre-imperialist war years. Their leadership only helped cover up the fact that the organisation was in reality dominated by opportunism. Stalin describes this in Foundations of Leninism.

Formally the Second International was headed by the "faithful" Marxists, by the "orthodox"—Kautsky and others. Actually, however, the main work of the Second International followed the line of opportunism. The opportunists adapted themselves to the bourgeoisie because of their adaptive petty

bourgeois nature; the "orthodox" in their turn adapted themselves to the opportunists in order to "preserve unity" with them, to preserve "peace within the party." As a result opportunism dominated; for there always proved to be a link between the policy of the bourgeoisie and the policy of the "orthodox."

### CHARACTER OF SECOND INTERNATIONAL

For approximately the first fifteen years of its existence the Second International, in spite of serious shortcomings, played a progressive role. As Lenin says, it "performed historically necessary and useful work when the problem of training the masses within the framework of bourgeois democracy was on the order of the day . . . it marked the epoch in which the soil was prepared for a broad mass widespread movement in a number of countries."

Stalin tells us that this epoch "was the period of relatively peaceful development of capitalism, the pre-war period so to speak, when the catastrophic contradictions of imperialism had not yet become so glaringly evident, when workers' economic strikes and trade unions were developing more or less 'normally,' when election campaigns and parliamentary parties yielded dazzling successes, when legal forms of struggle were lauded to the sky, and when it was thought that capitalism would be 'killed' by legal means . . ."

The Second International carried the indelible imprint of the period in which it arose. It was the "international organisation of the proletarian movement which grew in breadth, and this entailed a temporary drop in the revolutionary level, a temporary increase in the strength of opportunism, which in the end led to the disgraceful collapse of this international." (Lenin.)

The Amsterdam Congress of 1904 probably marked the high water mark for the Second International. Revisionism was soundly defeated on the platform at this Congress. But it turned out later that the revisionists were only stating openly what the majority of professed Marxists were doing in actual fact—departing from revolutionary Marxism.

The only exception being Lenin and the Bolsheviks, whose consistent exposure of opportunism and defence of revolutionary Marxism was a feature, not only of the Russian Labor Movement, but also of the pre-war Congresses of the Second International. It is also due to Lenin that the anti-war thesis, adopted at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907, and endorsed by the special Congress in Basle in 1912, called upon the workers to use the crisis which war would bring to carry out the Socialist Revolution.



## THE 1905 REVOLUTION

Lenin's policy in the 1905 Revolution, viz., "The proletariat must carry to completion the democratic revolution, by allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the resistance of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the Socialist Revolution by allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie," was not only opposed to the opportunist policy of the Mensheviks, but it also confuted the tactical position of the best European Social Democratic parties who were drifting further and further away from Revolutionary Marxism.

Lenin's policy was based on a new theory, the theory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution passing into the Socialist Revolution. The Parties of the Second International took it for granted that after the bourgeois revolution the peasant masses, including the poor peasant, would necessarily desert the revolution, as a result of which there would be a long "lull" lasting fifty to a hundred years, during which the proletariat would be "peacefully" exploited by the bourgeoisie until the time came round for a new revolution, a Socialist Revolution.

Although the 1905 revolution was not victorious, it vindicated Lenin's policy. The lessons learned proved invaluable when a new revolutionary situation arose in 1917.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the economic changes which began in 1870; how did these influence the Labor Movement?
2. What characterised the period of the formation and growth of the Second International?
3. What is Opportunism; what connection exists between this trend and Imperialism?
4. What were the positive achievements of the Second International, and what were its faults?

### ADDITIONAL READING

Lenin: Imperialism and the Split in Socialism.  
Stalin: Foundations of Leninism. Section II, Method.

## The First World War and the Collapse of the Second International

### MAIN CAUSES OF WAR

THE main causes which gave rise to the war of 1914-18 were the struggle for world domination, the struggle for the redivision of the world and for colonies, principally between Great Britain at the head of the Triple Entente, and Germany at the head of the Triple Alliance.

From the beginning of the twentieth century there were signs that the world was moving towards a gigantic armed conflict. Powerful monopolist concerns had arisen which, after the crises of 1900/3, began to dominate the whole economic life of countries.

Britain's industrial supremacy was challenged by the younger, more vigorous German imperialism. German goods began successfully to compete with British goods on the continent of Europe. Great Britain's markets in Europe began to shrink, while for the rapidly expanding German imperialism it was becoming already inadequate. A struggle between British and German imperialism for world domination and for colonies became inevitable.

The war danger sharpened in 1907 when Britain joined the Franco-Russian Alliance to establish the Triple Entente. The French bourgeoisie had long been striving to secure the return of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed by Germany after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71. Moreover, they looked to war to win for them the rich coal and iron resources of the Saar and Ruhr. Tsarist Russia strove for the partition of Turkey, and dreamed of seizing Constantinople and the Dardanelles.

Germany set out to build a powerful navy, but could not hope to bring it to the level of the older British navy until some time had elapsed. A supplementary challenge to the British colonies, India and Egypt, was developed in 1908, when final arrangements were made with Turkey about constructing the Berlin to Baghdad railway.

### THE PERIOD OF CHRONIC CRISIS

The seven years between 1907, when the Anglo-Russian Treaty was signed, and 1914 was a period of armed peace and



recurring international crises. Diplomacy became a succession of manoeuvres for position.

War almost broke out in 1911, when the French sent a military expedition to Morocco and the Germans retaliated by sending the gunboat "Panther" to Agadir. The British Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, began to talk about "Our Treaty obligations to France and our own interests in Morocco." The Germans, not yet ready for war, drew back.

A second danger zone existed in the Balkans. In 1912, a Balkan Alliance was formed under Russian influence, to include Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro. This Alliance became embroiled in war when Montenegro declared war on Turkey at a time when that country was already at war with Italy in Tripoli. The first Balkan war ended in an uneasy peace, and a Conference of the Powers was called in London under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Grey. Hostilities broke out again when Bulgaria attacked Serbia, and Greece and Rumania attacked Bulgaria. The second Balkan war ended in a peace more uneasy than the first.

War preparations among the Great Powers were speeded up. In 1913 Germany introduced sweeping increases in her military estimates. Britain accelerated her naval program, while the Russian Duma voted large sums for military preparations and massed troops on the western frontier.

In this electric atmosphere, little more was needed to set the world aflame with war. The spark which ignited the powder barrel chanced to be the murder of the Austrian Crown Prince in the streets of Sarejevo, the capital of Bosnia. Austria served an ultimatum on Serbia. Russia mobilised to support Serbia. Germany prepared to support Austria. From June 28, when the Archduke was shot, to August 2, when Germany declared war on Russia, a period of frenzied diplomacy among the Great Powers ensued, the aim of which was to throw the blame for what was to follow on to the opposite side. But all were equally to blame.

"The war of 1914 was a war for the redivision of the world and of spheres of influence. All the imperialist States had long been preparing for it. The imperialists of all countries were responsible for the war." (Short History C.P.S.U. Page 161.)

#### **PARTIES OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL SIDE WITH THEIR IMPERIALIST GOVERNMENTS**

Lenin had consistently warned against the opportunism of the Second International and the wavering attitude of its leaders. He maintained that the leaders of the Second International only talked of being opposed to war, and that if war broke out they

would betray the workers. That is just what happened in August, 1914.

At the Copenhagen Congress of the Second International, in 1910, it was decided that Socialists in Parliament should vote against war credits. At the time of the first Balkan war in 1912, the Basle World Congress of the Second International declared that the workers of all countries considered it a crime to shoot one another for the sake of increasing the profits of the capitalists.

But when the imperialist war broke out and the time arrived to put these resolutions into effect, the leaders of the Second International betrayed the working class and deserted to the side of the capitalist class of their own country. They became supporters of the imperialist war.

On August 4, 1914, the German Social Democrats in Parliament voted for the war credits, that is, they voted to support the imperialist war. So did the overwhelming majority of the Socialists in France, Britain and elsewhere.

#### **COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL**

The Second International ceased to exist. Actually it broke up into separate social-chauvinist parties which warred against each other.

What is social-chauvinism? "Social-chauvinism is adherence to the idea of 'defending the fatherland' in the present war. From this idea follows repudiation of the class struggle in war time, voting for military appropriations, etc. In practice, the social chauvinists conduct an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, because in practice they insist not on the 'defence of the fatherland' in the sense of fighting against the oppression of a foreign nation, but upon the 'right' of one or the other of the 'great' nations to rob the colonies and oppress other peoples . . . Social chauvinism, being in practice a defence of the privileges, prerogatives, robberies and violence of 'one's own' (or any other) imperialist bourgeoisie, is a total betrayal of all Socialist convictions and a violation of the decisions of the International Socialist Congress in Basle." (Lenin: Socialism and War.)

Only the Bolshevik Party waged a consistently revolutionary struggle against the imperialist war. In the thesis on the war that Lenin wrote in the autumn of 1914, he pointed out that the collapse of the Second International was not accidental. The parties of the Second International had already been infected by opportunism before the war. The opportunists had openly preached the renunciation of revolutionary struggle and advanced the theory of the "peaceful growing of capitalism into socialism." Instead of combatting opportunism, the Second International pursued a conciliatory policy towards it, and in the end itself became opportunist. When the war broke out the opportunists



became social-chauvinists. "Social-chauvinism is Opportunism brought to completion." (Lenin: Socialism and War.)

Besides the open social-chauvinists, there were the concealed social-chauvinists, the so-called Centrists—Kautsky, Trotsky, Martov and others, who justified and defended the open betrayers of Socialism and masked their own treachery under "Leftist" talk about combatting the war. Whereas the social-chauvinists voted for war credits, the Centrists abstained from voting, that is, they did not come out against war credits. As the Short History of CPSU points out, this really meant supporting the war. Like the social-chauvinists, the Centrists demanded the renunciation of the class struggle during the war so as not to hamper the particular imperialist government in waging the war.

### TOWARDS A NEW INTERNATIONAL

From the outbreak of war Lenin began to muster forces for the creation of a new International, the Third or Communist International. The Manifesto against war issued by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in September, 1914, already called for the formation of a Third International in place of the Second International which had shamefully collapsed.

In February, 1915, a Conference of Socialists of the Entente countries was held in London. Litvinov, on Lenin's instructions, spoke at this conference and demanded that the Socialists should resign from bourgeois governments, completely break with the imperialists and refuse to collaborate with them. He demanded that all Socialists should wage a determined struggle against their imperialist governments. No one supported Litvinov.

At the beginning of September, 1915, the first Conference of Internationalists was held in Zimmerwald. Lenin called this "the first step in the development of an international movement against the war." Under Lenin's leadership the Zimmerwald Left group was formed, consisting of the Bolsheviks and a minority of the Second International who had kept to the internationalist position.

Within the Zimmerwald Left group only the Bolshevik Party maintained a thoroughly consistent stand against the war. The others wavered and vacillated.

In 1916 a second conference was held in Kienthal, in Switzerland. This was known as the second Zimmerwald Conference. By this time groups of internationalists had formed in nearly all countries, and the cleavage between them and the social-chauvinists had become more clearly defined. The masses had also by this time shifted to the left.

The Manifesto of the Kienthal Conference was the result of an agreement between the various conflicting groups represented.

It was an advance on the Zimmerwald Manifesto, but it still did not accept the basic principles of the Bolshevik policy.

In spite of its shortcomings, the Kienthal Conference helped to crystallise the internationalist elements, of whom the Third Communist International was subsequently formed. Lenin criticised the mistakes of the inconsistent internationalists like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, at the same time he helped them towards a correct position.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were the main causes of the first world war?
2. How did the leaders of the Second International betray Socialism?
3. What is Social-Chauvinism? Centrism?
4. What attitude did the Bolsheviks take towards the war; what steps did they take towards a new international?

### ADDITIONAL READING

Short History C.P.S.U. Chapter on Imp. War.

Socialism and War.—Lenin.

Collapse of Second International.—Lenin.



## The Russian Revolution and the World Labor Movement since 1917

ON March 10 (February 25 according to the old style Russian calendar) Tsarism was overthrown. The first stage of the Russian revolution was completed. The bourgeois democratic revolution was victorious. It was victorious "because its vanguard was the working class."

The victorious revolution rested on the support of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. But alongside the Soviets the bourgeoisie, by means of a backstairs agreement with the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, set up a Provisional Government.

The result was a "peculiar interlocking of two powers, of two dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, represented by the Provisional Government, and the dictatorship of the workers and peasants, represented by the Soviets."

The Bolsheviks were confronted with the task of explaining to the masses that the complete victory of the revolution was still a long way off, that as long as power was in the hands of the bourgeois Provisional Government, and as long as the Soviets were dominated by the compromisers—the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries—the people would secure neither peace, nor land, nor bread, and that in order to achieve complete victory, one more step had to be taken and the power transferred to the Soviets.

This step was taken on November 7 (October 25 old style calendar) when the Provisional Government was overthrown and State power transferred to the Soviets in which the Bolsheviks now had a majority. The second stage of the revolution was completed. The Socialist Revolution was victorious.

The great October Revolution marked the beginning of the world Socialist Revolution, and ushered in the general crisis of world capitalism. Revolts broke out in a number of countries. Soviets arose spontaneously. Communist Parties were born, not only in the "advanced" countries, but also in the colonial and semi-colonial countries which had entered the path of revolutionary struggle for national liberation.

## FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

On January 24, 1919, eight Communist parties, headed by the Communist Party of Russia, issued an appeal to all revolutionary working class organisations to take part in an International Congress to form a new International.

On March 2, 1919, an International Conference of Communists assembled in Moscow. On March 4, this Conference declared itself to be the First Congress of the Communist International. The Congress adopted Lenin's thesis on "Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," and proclaimed as its basic task the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the world in the form of Soviets.

## THE GERMAN REVOLUTION

In November, 1918, a revolution broke out in Germany, and Kaiser Wilhelm and his government were overthrown. Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies sprang up. The German revolution, like the Russian, was accomplished by the armed masses. But unlike the Russian, it did not go beyond the bourgeois stage. What prevented the revolution from developing into a successful Socialist Revolution was the absence of a strong Communist Party and the treachery of the Social Democrats.

Ebert and Scheidemann, leaders of the Social Democratic Party, headed the Provisional Government which took over when the Kaiser was deposed. Kautsky and Haase, leaders of the Independent Social Democratic Party (Centrists) joined them in a coalition. The Provisional Government announced that elections would be held forthwith to a Constituent Assembly which would furnish Germany with a new "democratic constitution." The Communist Party, which had only been formed out of the Spartacus Bund, on the eve of the revolution, declared that such an assembly would rob the workers of the fruits of victory and urged the transfer of State powers to the Soviets.

The Provisional Government launched a ruthless campaign of suppression against the Left. Revolutionary soldiers were disarmed. The Red Guard was outlawed, and counter-revolutionary detachments of troops concentrated in Berlin. In January they allowed White Guard officers to murder Liebknecht and Luxemburg.

In the elections to the National Assembly the Social Democrats, together with the Independents, had a majority. The Communists refused to take part. In February Ebert became President. Under the flag of the "democratic road to Socialism," as opposed to the Bolshevik path of proletarian dictatorship, the Weimar Constitution and Republic was proclaimed.



German Social Democracy, continuing the policy of betrayal brought to the front during the war, split and disarmed the working class, destroyed the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and handed all power over to the hands of the Bourgeois Republic.

The path of October, the path of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat brought the Soviet Union to Socialism.

The path of bourgeois democracy brought Germany to fascism.

### HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

While the First Congress of the Communist International was meeting in Moscow the wave of proletarian revolution was mounting in Europe. On March 21, 1919, a Soviet Republic was proclaimed in Hungary.

Under the leadership of the Communists, the Hungarian Soviets disarmed the old State forces, created a Red Army and nationalised the banks and large scale industry.

However, after existing about four and a half months, during which time it waged a heroic struggle against the armed forces of the Entente, deflecting to some extent the interventionist forces from Soviet Russia, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was overthrown, betrayed from within by Social Democracy, which entered into agreement with the internal and external forces of counter-revolution.

Serious mistakes were committed by the young Hungarian Communist Party, which failed to retain its independence, and merged with the Social Democrats. It also alienated the peasantry by failing to distribute the land and satisfy their land hunger.

### BAVARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

A Soviet Republic was also proclaimed in Bavaria on April 13, 1919, which under Communist leadership disarmed the bourgeoisie, armed the workers and proceeded to nationalise the banks and big industry. But it, too, was crushed by the White Guards, with the active co-operation of German Social Democracy, after having existed eighteen days.

### SEIZURE OF FACTORIES IN ITALY

In the autumn of 1920 a broad mass movement began in Italy, which rose to a high level of revolutionary class struggle. Strong anarchist tendencies marred the Italian Labor movement, and the outbreak took the form of a seizure of factories by the workers. In many districts the peasants also seized the big landed estates. The bourgeoisie was impotent and was only saved by the reformist leaders of the Italian Socialist Party and the trade unions.

The absence of an independent Communist Party was one of the main causes of the defeat of the Italian working class. The Communist Party of Italy was not formed until January, 1921. The reformists used their dominant influence to get the workers to vacate the factories by means of specious promises of substantial reforms. In the meantime the bourgeoisie was regrouping its forces and preparing to crush the revolt by armed violence. However, it was only after the movement had been betrayed and weakened from within that the terror of fascism was unleashed against the masses. In October, 1922, Mussolini staged his mock "March on Rome" and the fascist dictatorship was established.

### THE END OF THE FIRST POST-WAR PERIOD

The occupation of the Ruhr by the French imperialists in February, 1923, intensified the crisis in Germany and precipitated acute class struggles. In Upper Silesia and the Ruhr particularly there were powerful strikes and mass political demonstrations, which disorganised the bourgeois system of government, and once more brought to the forefront the question of seizure of power by the proletariat.

Unfortunately the German Communist Party was dominated by a Right Wing leadership which capitulated to social democracy and the bourgeoisie.

In 1923, in Saxony and Thuringa, a "Workers' Government" was established, not by an armed uprising, but by means of parliamentary combinations. The Communists entered into a bloc with the "Left" Social Democrats. But instead of using their position in the "Workers' Government" to arm the masses and develop the revolution to a higher stage, the Communists behaved like ordinary parliamentary ministers, they stayed within the framework of bourgeois democracy. This was a right opportunist distortion of the united front tactics, it left the initiative to the Social Democrats and facilitated their task of saving capitalism.

Only the Hamburg Party organisation, led by Ernst Thaelmann, attempted to carry out the necessary armed insurrection. The revolution received no support from the Right Wing leadership of the Party and remained an isolated event which was speedily suppressed.

In Bulgaria a fascist coup d'etat overthrew the peasant government of Stamboliski in 1923. The young Bulgarian Communist Party incorrectly adopted an attitude of "neutrality" towards this event. When it realised its mistake in September, 1923, and tried to carry out an insurrection against the fascist regime, it was too late and the revolt was drowned in blood.

The struggles of 1923 marked the final link in the chain of great class battles of the first period and the starting point of



the second period of the general crisis of capitalism. The struggle of the proletariat in the first period was a direct struggle for power. Due to the treachery of the parties of the Second International and to the weakness of the Communist Parties, the struggle, outside the Soviet Union, ended in victory for the bourgeoisie.

### CAPITALIST STABILISATION

The defeat of the revolution in a number of countries of Western Europe, and the agreement reached among the imperialists concerning the distribution of their military conquests and colonial plunder (The Washington Treaty, 1922, the Dawes Plan, 1924, and Locarno, 1925) became a starting point in the temporary stabilisation of capitalism.

In every capitalist country capitalism succeeded by lowering the standard of living of the working class, by capitalist rationalisation, in consolidating its position.

The imperialists, however, did not succeed in smashing the first workers' State, and this fact became of decisive importance for the subsequent further development of the general crisis of capitalism and the world proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie also proved unable to reach agreement concerning a new military intervention in the USSR, and this created "a certain temporary equilibrium between the two stabilisations." (Stalin.)

Stabilisation of the Soviet power meant the further rapid growth of Socialism. On the other hand capitalist stabilisation, in the course of its development, revealed its temporary and relative development.

### TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

The struggles of the first post-war period revealed that Communism had won over only the vanguard of the revolutionary working class. The task of winning over the broad masses remained.

The years of temporary stabilisation became a period of very persistent struggle on the part of the Communist Parties to master and apply the rich experience of the Bolshevik Party, to rid their ranks of opportunism and link themselves firmly with the masses.

Under the new conditions the parties had to learn to carry on painstaking day-to-day work in a revolutionary manner among the masses, especially in the factories and trade unions; they had to learn how to correctly co-ordinate the immediate with the ultimate demands of the movement, and above all how to apply correctly the tactics of the united front.

### THE END OF STABILISATION AND THE DRIVE TOWARDS FASCISM AND WAR

The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, which met from July to September, 1928, foretold that the end of capitalist stabilisation was approaching and that a new period in the general crisis was in the offing.

This third period was characterised as a period of sharp intensification of all the internal and external contradictions of capitalism which "will inevitably lead to a severe intensification of the general crisis."

The Sixth Congress issued the slogan "Class Against Class."

The whole trend of world development after the Sixth Congress fully confirmed this analysis. The economic crisis which began in the middle of 1929 became the most severe and prolonged world crisis in the history of capitalism.

At the same time the Soviet Union was demonstrating that economic crises are unknown to Socialism, and had embarked on the first of the great five year plans, transforming the economy of the country and bettering the conditions of the people.

The combined effects of the crisis and the influence of Socialism in the Soviet Union led to a tremendous radicalisation of the masses in the capitalist world. Once again big class conflicts became the order of the day. In these battles the Communists more and more played a leading part. However, the influence of reformism was still strong, and was continually thrown into the scales on the side of capitalism.

Thanks to this the German imperialists were able to establish the fascist dictatorship of Hitler in 1933 and intensify their preparations for a new war of conquest.

Japanese imperialism had already taken this path in 1931, when Manchuria was occupied in defiance of the League of Nations, which made no effective protest.

### COMMUNIST OPPOSITION TO FASCISM AND WAR

From 1933, when the danger of fascism and war became acute, the Communist Parties throughout the world concentrated their efforts on developing working class unity to resist these twin evils. In 1935 the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International was held, and Dimitrov, the hero of the Leipzig trial, delivered his world famous report, calling for Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism.

In spite of all efforts on the part of the Communists, however, the reformists stubbornly resisted the creation of a united front of the international working class. This prevented the Labor



movement from exerting its maximum pressure on the course of events and was one of the chief factors which made possible the outbreak of war in 1939.

Unlike the Second International, the Third Communist International did not collapse when faced with the acid test of war. Its sections had been steeled in revolutionary struggle and purged of opportunism. During the imperialist phase of the conflict they acquitted themselves well in the best traditions of Marxism-Leninism.

However, even before the war, it was becoming apparent that the organisational form for uniting the workers, as chosen by the First Congress of the International, and which corresponded to the needs of the initial period of the rebirth of the Labor movement, more and more outlived itself in proportion to the growth of this movement and the increasing complexity of problems in each country.

The Seventh Congress, held in 1935, already showed recognition of this when it instructed the Executive Committee "to proceed from the concrete situation and specific conditions obtaining in each particular country, and as a rule to avoid direct intervention in the internal organisational affairs of the Communist Parties."

The Communist International was dissolved in an organised way in May, 1943, by agreement among the affiliated sections. The fascists and pro-fascists were deprived of one of their main arguments for disrupting anti-fascist unity. Relations between Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States were improved, and the anti-Hitler coalition of nations and peoples immeasurably strengthened. The Right-Wing enemies of unity within the Labor movement were also deprived of their battle-cry that the Communists "take their orders from Moscow."

The disbandment of the Communist International is a clear sign of the growing strength and maturity of the Communist Parties throughout the world. The Communist Parties to-day are fully capable of standing on their own feet and providing the leadership necessary to achieve victory over fascism and to bring the workers eventually to Socialism, proceeding along that path determined by the historical peculiarities of each given country, but guided always by the revolutionary teachings of Marxism-Leninism.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the international significance of the Russian Revolution?
2. What caused the defeat of the German Revolution?

3. What were the three post-war periods in the general crisis of world capitalism; what was the policy of world Communism in each?
4. Why was the Communist International disbanded in 1943?
5. What is the central task facing the Labor Movement and the Communist Party in Australia to-day?

#### ADDITIONAL READING

Short History of C.P.S.U.

Left Wing Communism.

Lenin's Selected Works, Vol. X.

Dimitrov's Report, Seventh World Congress C.I.

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N.B.: The failure to deal at any great length with the development of the labor movement in the colonial countries is not due to any oversight. The importance of this subject is fully realised and it forms the basis for a separate Marx House Course, which we hope may be published some time in the near future. In the meanwhile students who are interested are recommended to study:

**The National and Colonial Question**, by Joseph Stalin.

**India Today**, by Palme Dutt.

**Indian National and Hindu Muslim Unity**, by G. Adhikari.

Articles in "Communist Review" on China and Japan.



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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

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