

What is Class Consciousness?

by

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Preface

The central idea running through this essay may be described, as follows:

Because of the exhausting struggle that revolutionaries the world over have had to wage on many fronts, they tend to see the lives of human beings only from the standpoint of their ideology, or to pay attention only to those facts of social life which are somehow, whether closely or remotely, related to their thinking and struggle. Yet the majority of the world's population, whose liberation from the yoke of capitalism is the object of that struggle, know little or nothing of their efforts, sufferings or intentions. They lead their subjugated existences, more and more unconsciously, and in that way, serve as props for the rule of capital. Ask

yourself how many of the forty million adult German citizens really care about the executions of the German revolutionaries that they read about in the newspapers, and how many of them remain more or less unmoved, and you will then grasp what this essay is trying to achieve: *a joining of the consciousness of the revolutionary avant-garde with the consciousness of the average citizen.*

We can only indicate a few possible starting points and throw up a few questions, which until now have been ignored by the working-class movement. Some of what we have to say may be incorrectly framed. Some may be actually wrong. Yet it is an undeniable fact that, psychologically speaking, the real life of human beings takes place on a different level from what the champions of the social revolution believe -- and yet their mistaken belief is based, precisely, upon their most profound insights into social existence. In this lies one of the reasons for the failure to date of the working-class movement.

This essay should be read as an appeal by average, nonpolitical men to the future leaders of the revolution -- an appeal for a better understanding, with a little less insistence on a grasp of the "historical process"; for a more adequate articulation of their real problems and desires; for a less theoretical grasp of the "subjective factor" in history; and for a better practical understanding of what this factor represents in *the life at the masses.*

Ernst Parell [Wilhelm Reich]
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1. Two Kinds of Class Consciousness

Exposition

The following attempt to expose and clarify, from the standpoint of mass psychology, some of the difficulties that arise in connection with the reforming of the working-class movement suffers from many inherent faults. The practical circumstances and the living conditions in which we German refugees have to do our work are not easy. In the first place, our close contact with the masses has been lost, or is only partially established. The newspapers supply us with distorted information, contradict one another, and ignore questions of mass psychology, which in itself is a source of error. Libraries are not available, or only insufficiently accessible to exiles. The hard struggle for existence, and persecution by the authorities of the host countries, also leave their mark. The current splintering of organizations and of the discussions within the working-class movement makes the task still harder. Add to this the novelty of the whole subject of political psychology and you have reasons enough to exclude any possibility of producing a one hundred percent accurate, perfect study that might be translated directly into practical politics. We shall be glad if we succeed in pinpointing some important questions which have received no attention hitherto and in answering a few of them. Apart from that, we do not hope to do more than outline certain directions for our fellow fighters' initiative and for a critical reexamination of the intellectual methods and techniques at present employed by the revolutionary front.

The essay presented here is also a response to some questions that have been raised since the appearance of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and, in part, to certain criticisms that, in my opinion, suffer from the lack of a grasp of psychological problems such as is typical of many political economists.

Discussions with a variety of political groups have shown that any reply to the question *What is class consciousness?* must be preceded by a brief definition of the fundamental problems of the political situation as it is at this moment.

The severe defeat of the socialist movement in Germany is already exercising an adverse effect in other countries, and fascism is today rapidly gaining ground on the revolutionary movement everywhere.

Both the Second and Third Internationals have shown their inability to master the situation even theoretically, to say nothing of the practical side: the Second International, by its fundamentally bourgeois politics; the Third by its lack of self-criticism, the incorrigibility of its mistaken attitudes, and above all by its inability -- due in part to lack of will -- to eradicate bureaucracy in its own camp.

The Socialist Workers' Party and the International Communists want a "new International". Serious differences have arisen regarding the manner in which the new party is to be founded. Trotsky has already called for the founding of the Fourth International. The Socialist Workers' Party agrees in principle, but wants the new International to be the *result* of the workers' rallying together instead of, as Trotsky wants, creating the Fourth International first and rallying the workers around it.

The question we in the Sex-Pol movement are asking is this: Should an organization be founded at once, and should recruitment to it be based upon its declared program? Or should the program and the ideology be allowed time to penetrate the masses, and organizational steps be taken only later on a broader base? We have opted for the second method -- believing that a "looser" preparatory organization offers many advantages, in that it avoids any premature setting of limits and the danger of sectarianism, gives better opportunities for permeating other organizations, and much else besides.

Our considered view of the prospects for further political development also supports this choice. The Sex-Pol working community believes that there are three main possibilities. First, there is the possibility of an unpredictable uprising in Germany in the near future. Since none of the existing organizations is even remotely prepared for this eventuality, none of them could control such a movement or lead it consciously to a conclusion. This possibility, however, is the least likely. Should it happen, the situation would be chaotic and the outcome extremely uncertain, but it would nevertheless be the best solution, and we should support and promote it in every way from the very start. Second, the working-class movement may need a few years before it rallies once more in terms of theory and organization. It will then form an *integrated* movement under good, highly trained, purposeful and determined leadership, will struggle for power in Germany, and will seize it within, say, the next *two* decades. This prospect is the most probable, but it requires energetic, unswerving and tireless preparation beginning today. Third, the last major possibility is that the rallying of the working-class movement under new, good and reliable leadership will not occur quickly enough or will fail to occur altogether; that international fascism will establish itself and consolidate its positions everywhere, especially by reason of its immanent skill in attracting children and youth; that it will acquire a permanent mass base, and will be helped by economic conjunctures, however marginal. In such a case the socialist movement must reckon with a long -- a very long period of economic, political and cultural barbarism lasting many decades. Its task then will be to *prove* that it was not mistaken in *principle* and that, in the last analysis, it was right after all.

This prospect reveals the full extent of the responsibility we bear.

We propose, so far as conditions permit, to allow for the *first* possibility; to make the *second* the real target of our work, because it is the more likely one, and to concentrate all our efforts on bringing it about while doing everything within human power to avoid the *third*.

If, then, our aim is to create unity and striking power in the working class, and to bring about an alliance of all strata of the working population, we must begin by drawing a sharp dividing line between ourselves and those who talk a great deal about "unity" but, in practice, promote nothing but discord even though this may not be their real intention. Why is it that even now, after the German catastrophe, the forming of sectarian cliques continues undeterred? Why do things look so bleak in responsible circles both inside and outside Germany? Why do the old methods of sterile scholastic discussion and useless reciprocal recrimination refuse to disappear, refuse to yield to livelier, more effective methods better adapted to the reality of today?

We believe that this unhappy state of affairs is due to our clinging to old, worn-out, ossified dogmas, words, schemas and methods of discussion, and that this clinging is in turn due to the lack of *new* ways of posing problems, *new* ways of thinking and of seeing things with a completely fresh, uncorrupted eye. We are convinced that just one good new idea, just one effective new slogan would rally everyone except the completely hopeless addicts of debate, and would put an end to sterile talk. Anyone who feels "insulted" can take it that we mean him. The next task is to turn living Marxism into reality -- first of all, in the way we see reality and discuss it.

This brings us to the question of the founding of a new international organization. If the congress convened for this purpose produced nothing but the old methods, slogans and ways of thinking and discussion, the organization would be stillborn. The expropriation of capital, the socialization of the means of production, the establishment of workers', peasants', soldiers' and employees' rule over the capitalists -- these are old concepts and we know all this; we also know that we want true democracy for the working people and that the power is not seized in the voting booth but with arms. We know all this and much else. To proclaim it all once more and lay it down in a program would be of little value, for it has all been done before. The great question is why the people did not listen to us, why our organization fell victim to arteriosclerosis, why we allowed ourselves to be suffocated by our bureaucracy, why the masses indeed acted against their own interest in carrying Hitler to power. If we had the masses behind us today, we should not have to spend such an infinite amount of energy on the question of strategy and tactics, important as it may be.

Various groups in the movement today are using strategy and tactics *against one another*. What we must do above all, if we mean to achieve success, is to face these fundamental problems with completely new ideas, completely new methods of influencing the masses, with a completely new structure of both ideology and personnel.

We hardly need to supply detailed arguments to prove that we failed to speak the language of the broad masses -- the nonpolitical or ideologically oppressed broad masses -- who in the end assured the triumph of reaction. The masses did not understand our resolutions, or what we meant by socialism; they did not and still do not trust us. They read our papers out of a sense of duty, or not at all. Those who joined the movement had an inarticulate socialist feeling. But we were incapable of turning this feeling to advantage, and in the end it carried Hitler to

power. The fact that we suffered our greatest defeat in getting hold of the broad masses, in inspiring the masses, is the fundamental cause of the many shortcomings, great and small, of the working-class movement: the rigid party loyalty of the Social Democrats, the resentment and sense of injury felt by many proletarian leaders, our addiction to empty debate and of the scholastic Marxism we practiced.

One element in the fundamental cause of the failure of socialism -- only an element, but an important one, no longer to be ignored, no longer to be regarded as secondary -- is the absence of an effective Marxist doctrine of political psychology. This does not merely mean that such a doctrine still remains to be created: it also means that the working class as a whole is extremely wary of psychological examination, of conscious practical psychology. This shortcoming of ours has become the greatest advantage of the class enemy, the mightiest weapon of fascism.

While we presented the masses with superb historical analyses and economic treatises on the contradictions of imperialism, Hitler stirred the deepest roots of their emotional being. As Marx would have put it, we left the praxis of the subjective factor to the idealists; we acted like mechanistic, economic materialists. Am I exaggerating? Am I seeing the problem through the perspective of a narrow specialization?

Let us try to answer this question with the help of concrete examples, both important and apparently less important ones. We do not propose a panacea but only a small contribution which may be a start.

An effective policy, whose ultimate goal is the achievement of socialism and the establishment of the rule of labor over capital, must not only be based on a recognition of those movements and changes which occur objectively and independently of our will as a result of the development of the productive forces. This policy must also, simultaneously and on the same level, take account of what happens "in people's heads", i.e., in the psychical structures of the human beings who are subjected to these processes and who actually carry them out -- people from different countries and cities, people of different occupations, ages and sexes.

The concept of class consciousness occupies a central place in the socialist movement and its politics. Great stress is placed upon the oppressed strata of the populations of all countries "becoming class-conscious" as the most urgent precondition of the revolutionary overthrow of the present social system. By this we obviously mean that human beings must undergo a certain change under the effect of economic and social processes so as to become capable of performing the social act of revolution. We know, too, that Lenin created the political vanguard and the revolutionary party in order to encourage this transformation in ordinary men and women -- to accelerate and concentrate it, and mold it into a political force. In the vanguard, made up of the finest and most conscious fighters for socialism, the consciousness of the social situation -- of the means necessary for mastering it, of the way forward to socialism -- was to be concentrated at the approximate level to which the working masses would have to be raised if the task of revolution was to be successfully accomplished. This is no more and no less than a definition of the policy summed in the term "united front".

Two examples should in themselves suffice to show that we are far removed from a concrete understanding of what class consciousness actually is.

In a recently published brochure entitled *Neu Beginner* (Starting Afresh), the demand is very rightly made for a "revolutionary party", for a leadership which is revolutionary in the full sense of the word; yet the existence of class consciousness in the proletariat is denied.

"The basis of all their [the Second and Third Internationals'] insights and actions is the belief in a revolutionary spontaneity immanent within the proletariat. . . But what if such revolutionary spontaneity exists only in the imagination of the Socialist Party leaders and not in reality? What if the proletariat is not at all driven toward the 'final socialist struggle from within itself', that is to say by natural social forces? . . . Incapable of thinking otherwise than in terms of their dogmas and theories, they [the leaders] believe with truly religious fervor in spontaneous revolutionary forces. . ." (p. 6)

The unparalleled heroism shown by the Austrian workers on February 12-16, 1934 proves that revolutionary spontaneity can very well exist without a consciousness of the "final socialist struggle". Revolutionary spontaneity and consciousness of the "final struggle" are two quite separate things.

We are told that the leadership must carry revolutionary consciousness into the masses. Undoubtedly it must. But -- it is our turn to ask -- what if we do not yet clearly know what we mean by revolutionary consciousness? In Germany there were, at the end, some thirty million *anticapitalist* workers, more than enough *in number* to make a social revolution; yet it was precisely with the help of the staunchest *anticapitalist* mentality that fascism came into power. Does an anticapitalist mentality qualify as class consciousness, or is it just the beginning of class consciousness, just a precondition for the birth of class consciousness? What is class consciousness, anyway?

Lenin created the concept of the vanguard, of the revolutionary party, as well as the organization itself whose purpose was to do what the masses themselves could not spontaneously achieve. "We have already said", wrote Lenin, "that the workers cannot, in fact, have a social-democratic consciousness. Such consciousness can only be brought in from outside. The history of all countries shows that the working class if left to itself is capable only of attaining a trade-unionist consciousness, i.e., of realizing the necessity for banding together in trade unions, waging a struggle against the entrepreneurs, demanding various forms of labor legislation from the government, etc."

In other words, the working class does derive a "consciousness" from its class situation -- a consciousness, it is true, which is not sufficient to shake off the rule of capital (a tightly organized party is needed for this); but can it not be said that preliminary forms or elements of what is called class consciousness, or revolutionary consciousness, do, perhaps, exist after all?

What is this consciousness? How can we define it? What does it look like in practice?

The denial of what might be called class consciousness or its elements, or of the preconditions for class consciousness, as a *spontaneous* formation within the oppressed class, is based on the fact that in this concrete form *it is not recognized*. This is what puts the leadership into a hopeless position, for however courageous, well trained and otherwise excellent the leaders may be, if the proletariat possesses nothing that might be called class consciousness, why then, no leadership on earth will succeed in giving it one. Anyway, what is this thing that is supposed to be carried into the masses? Highly specialized understanding of the social process and its contradictions? Complete knowledge of the laws of capitalist exploitation? Did the partisans in revolutionary Russia have such knowledge when they fought so splendidly, or did they, perhaps, not need it at all? Were they "class-conscious" workers and peasants or mere

rebels? We raise these questions only to show that they lead nowhere.

Let us try to proceed from simple practice and experience.

A short while ago a great deal was being said within a certain political group about class consciousness and the need to "raise class consciousness on a mass scale". The listener was forced to ask himself, perhaps for the first time: What exactly are they talking about? What do they mean by what they call class consciousness? One of the people present, who had kept very quiet the whole time, asked a leading party official who had insisted with particular fervor on the need for developing class consciousness among the German proletariat whether he could name five concrete features of class consciousness and perhaps also five factors which impede its development. If one wanted to develop class consciousness it was surely necessary to know what it was that one wanted to develop and why it did not develop of its own accord under the pressures of material poverty. The question seemed logical. The party official was at first a little surprised, hesitated for an instant, and then declared confidently, "Why, hunger, of course!" "Is a hungry storm trooper class-conscious?" was the prompt counter-question. Is a hungry thief class-conscious when he steals a sausage? Or an unemployed worker who accepts two marks for joining a reactionary demonstration? Or an adolescent who throws stones at the police? But if hunger, on which the CP had based its whole mass psychology, is not in itself an element of class consciousness, then what is? What is freedom? What are its concrete features? Wherein does socialist freedom differ from the national freedom which Hitler promises?

The answers until now have been extremely unsatisfactory. Has the left-wing press ever raised or answered questions of this kind? It has not. The notion that the oppressed class can carry a revolution through to a triumphant conclusion without leadership, and out of a spontaneously generated revolutionary will, is certainly false; but it is just as wrong to believe the opposite that all that matters is the leadership because it has to *create* class consciousness.

No leadership could ever do so unless the beginnings of class consciousness were already present, unless class consciousness were already being formed spontaneously. But if a certain psychical situation in the masses exists, and has to be brought into harmony with the highly developed consciousness of the revolutionary leadership in order to create the subjective preconditions for a social revolution, then it is all the more essential to find an answer to the question: What is class consciousness? Should anyone object that the question is superfluous because our policy has always consisted in satisfying the workers' day-to-day demands, then we shall ask: Are We developing class consciousness if we insist on electric fans being installed on a shop floor? What if the Nazi shop steward does the same, and is perhaps a better speaker than our men? Will he have the workers on his side? Yes, he will. Where is the difference between the socialist and the fascist defense of "day-to-day interests", between our freedom slogans and the Nazi slogan of *Strength Through Joy*?

Do we mean the same thing when we speak of the class consciousness of a proletarian apprentice and that of a proletarian youth leader? It is said that the consciousness of the masses must be raised to the level of revolutionary class consciousness; if by this we mean the sophisticated understanding of historical processes which a revolutionary leader must possess, then Our aim is utopian. Under capitalism it will never be possible, whatever propaganda methods we use, to instill such highly specialized knowledge in the broad masses who have to do the actual work of insurrection and revolution. When, at electoral meetings, we used simply to shout slogans, or if, as often happened at the Sports Palace in Berlin, a party official

spent hours spouting learnedly about the finance politics of the bourgeoisie or the contradictions between the United States and Japan, the spontaneous enthusiasm of the masses was killed every time. By assuming that the masses were interested in objective economic analyses and had the intellectual equipment to follow them, we indeed killed what is rightly called the "class feeling" of the thousands-strong audience.

Revolutionary Marxist policy to date has presupposed the existence of a ready-made class consciousness in the proletariat without being able to define it in concrete detail. It has projected its own, often incorrect idea of sociological processes into the consciousness of the oppressed class, thus making itself guilty, as someone recently pointed out, of "subjective idealism". And yet one could unambiguously sense the mass class consciousness at every Communist meeting, and its atmosphere could be clearly distinguished from that of other political meetings. In other words, there must be something like a class consciousness in the broad masses, and this consciousness is fundamentally different from that of the revolutionary leadership. To put it concretely, there are *two kinds* of class consciousness, *that of the leadership and that of the masses*, and the two have to be brought into harmony with one another. The leadership has no task more urgent, besides that of acquiring a precise understanding of the objective historical process, than to understand: (a) what are the progressive desires, ideas and thoughts which are latent in people of different social strata, occupations, age groups and sexes, and (b) what are the desires, fears, thoughts and ideas ("traditional bonds") which prevent the progressive desires, ideas, etc., from developing.

The class consciousness of the masses is neither ready-formed, as the CP leadership believed, nor is it completely absent or structured in a totally different way, as the Socialist Party leadership believed. It is present as a number of concrete elements, which in themselves do not yet constitute class consciousness (e.g., simple hunger), but which, *in conjunction with one another*, could become class consciousness. These elements are not present in pure form, but are permeated, mixed and interwoven with opposing psychical meanings and forces. A Hitler can go on being successful with his formula that the masses can be influenced like little children -- that they simply give back to you what you put into them -- only so long as the revolutionary party fails to fulfill its most important task, that of developing and distilling mass class consciousness from its present level to a higher one. There was no question of this being done in Germany.

The content of the revolutionary leader's class consciousness is not of a personal kind -- when personal interests (ambition, etc.) are present, they inhibit his activity. The class consciousness of the masses, on the other hand (we are not speaking of the negligibly small minority of consciously revolutionary workers), is entirely personal.

The former is filled with the knowledge of the contradictions of the capitalist economic system, the immense possibilities of a socialist planned economy, the need for social revolution to establish a balance between the form of appropriation and the form of production, the progressive and retrograde forces of history, etc. The latter has no such far-reaching perspectives -- it is concerned with the trivial problems of everyday life. The former covers the objective historical and socio-economic process, the outward conditions, both economic and social, to which men are subject in society. This process must be understood, it must be grasped and mastered if one wishes to become its master rather than its slave. For example, a planned economy is necessary in order to abolish the disastrous crises of capitalism and thus create a firm foundation for the lives of all working people. And creating such an economy requires, *inter alia*, a precise knowledge of U.S.-Japanese contradictions.

But the latter type of consciousness lacks *all* interest in the U.S.-Japanese or British-American contradictions, or even in the development of productive forces; it is guided solely by the subjective reflections and effects of these objective facts in and upon an immense variety of trivial everyday matters; its content is an interest in food, clothing, fashion, family relations, the possibility of sexual satisfaction in the narrowest sense, in sexual play and entertainment in a wider sense, such as the cinema, the theater, amusement arcades, parks and dance halls, and also in such questions as the bringing up of children, the arrangement of living space, leisure activities, etc.

Being and the conditions of being are reflected, anchored and reproduced in the psychical structure of men and women at the same time that they form that structure. The objective process and the ways of inhibiting or encouraging and controlling it are accessible to us only through this psychical structure. We make and change the world only through the mind of man, through his will for work, his longing for happiness -- in brief, through his psychical existence. The "Marxists" who have degenerated into "Economists" forgot this a long time ago. A global economic and political policy, if it means to create and secure international socialism (not National Socialism!), must find a point of contact with trivial, banal, primitive, simple everyday life, with the desires of the *broadest* masses of all countries and at all levels. *Only in this way can the objective sociological process become one with the subjective consciousness of men and women, abolishing the contradiction and the distance between the two.* The workers, who create wealth and the material basis of culture, must be shown the stage which culture and education have reached "at the top" and be taught to contrast it with the way *they themselves* live; they must be shown how *modest* they are and how they *make a virtue of their modesty*, even if this has sometimes actually been called a revolutionary virtue! Only when we succeed in merging these two kinds of consciousness, and only then, shall we leave behind us the philosophical inner-party debates on tactics, etc.; only then shall we break through to the living tactics of a living mass movement, to a political activity truly linked with life. We are not exaggerating when we assert that the working-class movement could have saved itself an endless succession of sectarian and scholastic struggles, of factions and splinter groups -- that it could have shortened the hard road toward that most *self-evident* of things, which is socialism -- if it had drawn the material for its propaganda and tactics and policies not only from books, but, in the first place, from the life of the masses. One aspect of the situation today is that young people are, on the average, far ahead of their "leaders" on a number of questions; for example, it is necessary to speak "tactically" or "tactfully" with the leaders about things like sex, which the young understand as a matter of course. It ought to be the other way about: the leader should be the epitome of class consciousness of the first kind and should work toward developing the second kind.

Anyone familiar with the ideological struggles of the working-class movement will perhaps have followed us more or less readily thus far, and will probably have thought: "But this is nothing new -- why the long discourse?" He will soon see that when we get down to brass tacks, many of those who are in general agreement with us will nevertheless hesitate, raise objections, have second thoughts, and invoke Marx and Lenin to oppose us. Before anyone so inclined reads any further, we recommend once more, as a test, that he should try to clarify in his own mind just five concrete elements of class consciousness and five obstacles to it.

The following statement will meet with a great deal of resistance on the part of those who regard class consciousness as a matter of ethics. Political reaction, with fascism and the church at its head, demands that the masses should renounce happiness here on earth; it demands chastity, obedience, self-denial, sacrifice for the nation, the people, the fatherland.

The problem is not that the reactionaries demand this, but that the masses, by complying with these demands, are supporting the reactionaries and allowing them to enrich themselves and extend their power. The reactionaries take advantage of the guilt feelings of mass individuals, of their ingrained modesty, their tendency to suffer privation silently and willingly, sometimes even happily, and they take advantage of their identification with the glorious Führer, whose "love of the people" is for them a substitute for any real satisfaction of their needs. The revolutionary vanguard, through the conditions of their existence and the aims they pursue, are themselves subject to a similar ideology. But what is true of, shall we say, the youth leaders is in no way applicable to the youth they are supposed to lead. If one wants to lead the mass of the population into battle against capital, to develop their class consciousness, to bring them to the point of revolt, then one must recognize the principle of self-denial as harmful, lifeless, stupid and reactionary.

Socialism affirms that the productive forces of society are sufficiently developed to ensure a life corresponding to the average cultural level of society for the broadest masses of all countries. *Against the principle of self-denial preached by political reaction, we must set the principle of happiness and abundance on earth.* We need hardly point out that by this we do not mean bowling tournaments and beer drinking. The modesty of the "man in the street", which is his cardinal virtue in the eyes of fascism and the church, is his greatest fault from the socialist point of view and one of the many factors which impede his class consciousness. Any socialist political economist can prove that sufficient wealth exists in the world to provide a happy life for all workers. But we must prove this more thoroughly, more consistently, in greater detail than we generally do; we must bring all the meticulous care of scientific scholarship to bear upon demonstrating it.

The average worker in Germany or elsewhere was not interested in the Soviet Five-Year Plan as a revolutionary economic achievement in itself but only insofar as it meant increased satisfaction of the needs of workers. His thoughts went more or less like this: If socialism isn't going to mean anything but sacrifice, self-denial, poverty and privation for us, then we don't care whether such misery is called socialism or capitalism. Let socialist economy prove its excellence by satisfying our needs and keeping pace with their growth.

What I mean is that *heroism, which is a virtue in the leadership, is not transferable to the broad masses.* If the masses suffer privations in a period of revolution, they are entitled to demand definite proof that these privations are only a *passing phase* and thus differ from the privations suffered under capitalism.

This is one of the many difficulties which arise from the theory of "socialism in one country". We fully expect that this statement will meet with indignant denials; we shall doubtless be called "petty-bourgeois" and "epicurean". Yet Lenin promised the peasants that the landowners' lands would be distributed among them, although he was very well aware that land distribution encourages a "petty-bourgeois mentality". It was essentially on the strength of this slogan that he carried the revolution through, *with* the peasants and not *against* them. And in doing so he undoubtedly violated a lofty principle of socialist political theory, the principle of collectivism. The Hungarian revolutionaries of 1919, on the other hand, had lofty principles but no understanding of the subjective factor. *They knew the demands of history but not of the peasants.* They socialized the land at once and -- they lost the revolution. Let this example suffice to prove, in place of many others, that the ultimate aims of socialism can only be achieved by fulfilling the immediate aims of mass individuals, by ensuring a much greater degree of satisfaction of their needs. Only then can revolutionary heroism occur in the *broad*

masses.

Few errors are as far-reaching as the view that "class consciousness" is an ethical concept. The ascetic view of revolution has led only to complications and defeats.

We can easily test whether class consciousness is an ethical or a non-ethical, rational phenomenon by considering a few examples.

If two human beings, A and B, are starving, one of them may accept his fate, refuse to steal, and take to begging or die of hunger, while the other may take the law into his own hands in order to obtain food. A large part of the proletariat, often called *Lumpenproletariat*, live according to the principles of B. We must be clear about this, although we certainly do not share the romantic admiration of the criminal underworld. Which of the two types has more elements of class consciousness in him? Stealing is *not yet* a sign of class consciousness; but a brief moment of reflection shows, despite our inner moral resistance, that the man who refuses to submit to law and steals when he is hungry, that is to say, the man who manifests a will to live, has more energy and fight in him than the one who lies down unprotesting on the butcher's slab. We persist in believing that the fundamental problem of a correct psychological doctrine is not why a hungry man steals but the exact opposite: Why doesn't he steal?

We have said that stealing is *not yet* class consciousness, and we stick to that. A brick is not yet a house; but you use bricks to build houses with -- besides planks, mortar, glass and (here I am thinking of the role of the party) engineers, stonemasons, carpenters, etc.

We shall get nowhere if we regard class consciousness as an ethical imperative, and if, in consequence, we try to outdo the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie in condemning the sexuality of youth, the wickedness of prostitutes and criminals and the immorality of thieves. But, you may ask, if we adopt the opposite view, shall we not be harming the interests of the revolution? Couldn't political reaction turn our amoral conception of class consciousness into propaganda against us? Certainly it could and it will, but it does so anyway, however much we try to prove our unimpeachable morality -- it does us no good, for it only drives the victims of capitalism into the arms of political reaction because they do not feel we understand them. Yet in the eyes of political reaction we are no better for all our morality. In its eyes we are thieves because we want to abolish private ownership of the means of production. Do we therefore want to abandon or conceal this fundamental intention? And is it not cited against us?

Everything, without exception, which today bears the name of morality and ethics serves the oppressors of working humanity. We can prove both in theory and in practice that our new order of social life, *just because* it will be an amoral one, is capable of replacing the chaos of today by real order. Lenin's attitude to the question of proletarian ethics was unambiguously connected with the interests of the proletarian revolution. Whatever serves the revolution is ethical, whatever harms it is unethical. Let us try to formulate the question in another way. *Everything that contradicts the bourgeois order, everything that contains a germ of rebellion, can be regarded as an element of class consciousness; everything that creates or maintains a bond with the bourgeois order, that supports and reinforces it, is an impediment to class consciousness.*

When, during the November 1919 revolution, the masses were demonstrating in the

Tiergarten in Berlin, most of the demonstrators took great care not to walk on the grass. This story, whether it is true or merely well invented, sums up an important aspect of the tragedy of the revolutionary movement: *the bourgeoisification of those who are to make the revolution.*

2. Some Concrete Elements of Class Consciousness and Some Elements Inhibiting It

We shall now try, without going very deeply into theoretical explanations, to describe certain ways of the behavior of average human beings, some of which work in favor of revolutionary consciousness, while others impede its development, i.e., are reactionary psychological attitudes. We are concerned here only with those psychological facts which are oriented either to the left or to the right, not with those which are politically indifferent and could benefit any political orientation -- e.g., oratorical talent, critical ability, love of nature, etc. The examples which follow could be multiplied at will; these particular ones were established by me with the help of two young people.

In Juveniles (During and After Puberty)

Political parties of all hues have always struggled for possession of the young, not only because the young have a future before them (unlike most adults, who, as the witticism goes, "have a future behind them"). We are entitled, therefore, to begin by speaking of youth. Its capacity for enthusiasm and its readiness to take action, which, in turn, is the result of sexual maturation, make youth the most active age group. These qualities are not yet, in themselves, specifically oriented toward the right or left. The church, for example, has a larger number of juvenile followers than the left-wing parties. Yet it is not difficult to discern elements within the life experience of young people which drive them politically toward the left or right.

In every juvenile there is a tendency toward rebellion against authoritarian oppression, especially against the parents, who are usually the executors of the authority of the state. It is this rebellion, first and foremost, which usually draws the young into politically left-wing movements. It is always connected with a more or less conscious and more or less urgent desire for the realization of their sexual life. The more clearly developed the natural heterosexual inclinations of a juvenile are, the more open he will be to revolutionary ideas; the stronger the homosexual tendency within him and also the more repressed his awareness of sexuality in general, the more easily he will be drawn toward the right. Sexual inhibitions, fear of sexual activity and the guilt feelings which go with it, are always factors which push the young toward the political right, or, at the least, inhibit their revolutionary thinking.

Bondage to parents and the parental home is a grave, irreversible inhibiting element. (We shall call irreversible those psychological facts which can never become positive elements of class consciousness, and can therefore never be used by the revolutionary party in the interests of social revolution.) The only exceptions to this rule are the children of parents who already think in a revolutionary way. Parental bondage may have a positive effect in such a case; but in practice, it often leads to a reactionary mentality as a protest against the parents.

There is one particular need that moves young people more than any other, a need whose

satisfaction would mean more than anything else to them, and yet which is not to be found in any manifesto or program for youth: the need for a place of their own to live. This need may be bracketed with anti-parent rebellion as a positive element of class consciousness. Moreover, it is a desire which can never be satisfied by the kind of order that political reaction wants to establish or maintain. It is not opposed by any inhibiting factor; it is strong even among the most reactionary girls. The desire for life in a youth collective is a further positive element, but this is generally opposed by family bonds, "love of a home life", etc., which can be removed if the collective takes the place of home. The attraction of the dance hall operates powerfully in almost all juveniles. Unlike parental bondage, this is a reversible element, i.e., while it inhibits revolutionary consciousness under ordinary circumstances, it may strongly encourage it if the problem of the relationship between politics and private life is solved in a revolutionary way. A few exceptionally talented youth organizers in Germany have occasionally been successful in this respect.

Today, both the collective instinct and the attraction of the dance hall are of considerable advantage to the political reaction in Germany, which has *organized* these elements -- the Christians in the form of *Kränzchen* (social gatherings), the Nazis, without doubt, in their collective youth associations.

The following report has been received from Germany:

I talked recently with a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl from Berlin who was spending her holidays here. She attends school at Wilmersdorf and a few things which came out casually in our conversation will surely strike you as interesting.

The boys and girls of the Hitler Youth (H.J.) and of the League of German Girls (B.d.M.) enjoy unheard-of freedom at school and at home, which naturally manifests itself, *inter alia*, in sexual activity and friendships.

In the past, no girl of school grade would have dared to be seen with a boyfriend picking her up after classes. Today, boys (especially H.J. boys) wait outside the school in a crowd, and everybody accepts this as a matter of course. Everybody says that B.d.M. stands for *Bubi-drück-mich* (I-wanna-be-hugged). The Dahlem group of the B.d.M. had to be dissolved because six girls (under eighteen) became pregnant.

Isn't it interesting to see how an attempt to organize the young can loosen the fetters of the parental home? These examples are certainly symptomatic, as has been confirmed to me in the meantime.

It is not correct to say that these boys and girls "enjoy unheard-of freedom". Whoever says so cannot see the real relations, contradictions and needs involved. Even in the past, boys would come to the school door to fetch their girlfriends, if not, perhaps, at that particular school. Getting pregnant, having yourself picked up at school by a boyfriend, etc., appears as "sexual freedom" only in the light of petty-bourgeois morality. The freedom that the young people of Dahlem [a middle-class residential area of Berlin] are acquiring today has been taken for granted for a long, long time in Neukölin [a working-class area]. If we want to get an overall view, we must first see the deeply contradictory situation of the Hitler Youth: on the one hand, an extremely severe, authoritarian military training and segregation of the sexes, and on the other hand, destruction of family bondage through the collectivization of youth; the violent perturbation of family morality along with the insistence on rigid fascist family ideology. German revolutionaries must follow closely the development of these contradictions and explain them to the persons concerned.

In this specific case we must welcome the separation of the young from their homes; yet we must clearly analyze the contradiction between this separation and the official ideology of *Führer* and family. We must also realize that the young, who long to escape from the bonds of the parental home *into freedom and self-determination*, are in reality merely entering *another authoritarian relationship* -- that of the labor service camp or the fascist organization -- where they once again have to keep their mouths shut. It is precisely in the area of sexuality that these contradictions are most clearly revealed. To the extent that it is, however subjectively and inarticulately, revolutionary, the "freer behavior" described in the report corresponds to progressive tendencies in the Hitler Youth; but no really revolutionary social leadership would ever close down a group because a few of the girls happened to get pregnant. This means, as our correspondent naively fails to see, that the forms of behavior which he describes are not at all pleasing to the Nazi Party indeed, are unacceptable to it. We must make it completely clear to these Hitler youths and girls that they are entitled to complete self-determination, and that it is the duty of society to provide for their needs, including first and foremost their sexual needs. If we regard what is happening today as sexual freedom, we are overlooking two things. First, that even this small degree of freedom is enough to make the state apparatus feel obliged to intervene; and secondly, that these are no more than mere glimmerings of freedom. There can be no question of freedom so long as the entire state and social ideology is against it; so long as girls and youths have nowhere to go when they wish to be left undisturbed, no contraceptives, and no understanding of the necessities and difficulties of sex life in general; so long as they are brought up in such a way that conflict is bound to accompany the start of their sexual life; so long as they cannot decide, together with their teachers, on the nature of their schooling and the manner of their preparation for the tasks of social life; so long as they have to study the dates of the births and deaths of the kings of Prussia, and not the history of the poor in the suburbs of Berlin and Hamburg, in Jüterbog and in the remotest country village.

It cannot be the ideal of youth to serve a *Führer* without ever uttering a word of criticism, or to die for capitalist interests disguised as the interests of the Fatherland. Their ideal would be to take possession of their own lives and make of them what they want. Youth must be responsible only to itself. Then, and only then, will the gulf between society and its youth disappear.

If youth understands the nature of the gulf which separates it from society today, it must by that token recognize itself as being oppressed: thus it becomes ripe for social revolution. If it can do away with the gulf, make social reality fit its own needs, and clear a path for its real, concrete, objective urge toward freedom, it becomes the executor of social revolution.

We cannot theoretically prove the necessity for social revolution to the youth of all countries and continents; we can only demonstrate this necessity by drawing attention to the needs and contradictions of youth. At the center of these needs and contradictions stands the immense problem of the sexual life of youth.

In a way that is contrary to the ideas usually held by political parties, our youth work teaches us that the average juvenile's insight into the class situation is very superficial and uncertain. Genuine insight is very rare, and is found only among intellectually precocious juveniles or those from revolutionary homes where they have never suffered oppression. Being an industrial apprentice tends to produce dull indifference rather than a revolutionary mentality. The apprentice mentality could become positive only in conjunction with other, more specific

elements of class consciousness, e.g., the demand for satisfactory leisure activities. Hunger, too, contrary to the vulgar view, is in itself a demoralizing factor, leading to gangs, etc., rather than to class consciousness. You meet people who suffer hunger and other privations just as often, or even more often, in the Christian organizations or among the young storm troopers than in the YCL. Privation can become a powerful positive force if it is related to the desire for romantic experience, to sexual needs and to the child-parent relationship. But we must clearly realize that hunger by itself, when it does not demoralize, often drives young people into the arms of various bourgeois welfare organizations. Our experience shows that hunger has a far more revolutionizing effect on young people if it is accompanied by, for instance, the fear of being put in a home, which is easily recognizable as a class institution.

The juvenile tendency toward bondage to leaders and ideas is politically nonspecific; it can be exploited either way, and therefore easily becomes a harmful element unless the revolutionary party comes in first and channels it in the right direction.

Love of sport, the attraction of men in military uniforms (which please the girls, and vice versa), marching songs, etc., are generally, under the conditions obtaining in the proletarian movement today, anti-revolutionary factors because the political reaction has far greater possibilities of satisfying the demands they create. Football, in particular, has a directly depoliticizing effect and encourages the reactionary tendencies of youth. Yet these tendencies are, in principle, reversible, i.e., they can be used to the advantage of the left, provided we drop the economistic view of the all-powerful nature of pure hunger. The extraordinarily high membership turnover of the revolutionary youth organizations proves that the contradictions which I have been describing have not been resolved. Revolutionary tendencies have not been properly developed, and the inhibiting factors have not been adequately dealt with by the revolutionary organizations, not so much because of absence of class feeling in the young as because of the psychological shortcomings of our party work. Only a tiny minority stay in the organization, and even they only for a few years. I have no figures at my disposal, but experience has shown that juveniles as well as adult men and women in the millions from every walk of life have, over the last decade, passed through the revolutionary organizations without forming any lasting loyalty or bond to the revolutionary cause. What drove them into our organizations? Not uniforms, not material benefits, but solely their own inarticulate socialist convictions, their class feeling. Why did they not stay? Because the organization failed to develop this feeling. Why did they drift off into indifference or political reaction? Because inside them they also had an anti-revolutionary bourgeois structure which we failed to destroy. Why did we fail to destroy it or fail to develop and encourage the positive elements? Because we did not know what to destroy and what to encourage.

Simple "discipline" was not enough; neither were music and marching, for the others were much better at these than we. Slogans were useless, too, unless we could make them concrete, for the others are better than we at political shouting. The only thing that the revolutionary organization might have offered the masses -- and which, in reality, it failed to offer them -- the only thing that might have held the masses who came streaming to us, and might have attracted the others, would have been to understand what these ignorant, oppressed coolies of capitalism, longing for freedom and for authoritarian protection at the same time, really desire without realizing it -- to understand it, to put it into words, to put it into their own language *for them*, to think it out *for them*. But an organization that rejects all psychology as counter-revolutionary could not be equal to such a task.

In Women

Let us now try to give an approximate description of class consciousness in women.

Mere phrases, on the order of "integration into the production process" and "an end to dependence on men" and "winning control over one's own body" (and not much more was done than to repeat the phrases) have not gained much.

It is nonetheless perfectly true that the wish for economic independence, for independence from the male, and above all for sexual independence are the most important components of the class consciousness of women.

On the other hand, women's strong tendency toward bondage is reinforced by some characteristic fears; a fear of Soviet-style marriage legislation that would entail the loss of the husband as the provider; a fear of having no legally sanctioned sexual partner; and a fear of a free life in general. These are at least equally powerful inhibiting elements on the negative side.

In particular, a fear that the proposed collective upbringing of the children might "take them away" from their mothers has acted as a powerful brake on clear political thinking, even among Communist women -- not at the party meetings, where they often speak in support of such proposals, but in private conflicts with their husbands at home. The same, of course, is true to a still greater extent of petty-bourgeois women.

We should have realized that rebellion against marriage as an economic bondage and a sexual restriction can become a valuable asset of the revolutionary movement only if we supply objective and truthful expositions of these thorny problems, which are at the very center of a woman's concerns.

Instead of which, our propagandists, none too clear about these things themselves, confused the issue by praising the Soviet marriage system on the one hand, and on the other, by welcoming the fact that marriages in the Soviet Union were again becoming more solid. The average woman's reaction to this could only be to say, "While you're making propaganda for the abolition of marriage and the family, women over there are still dependent on their husbands", or, conversely, "You just want to deliver us powerless into the hands of men".

Such contradictions require the most detailed scientific investigation by groups of professional psychologists and the most careful handling by the political organizations. After all, we were dealing not only with women workers in industry, who are more politically mature and more definitely left-wing by the very nature of their work (and whom, by the way, we also have totally failed to understand), but mostly with an overwhelming majority of housewives, domestic servants and homeworkers, small shopkeepers, shop assistants, etc. Experience teaches us that, for example, extramarital sex or the desire for it is a factor that could prove extremely effective in the struggle against reactionary influences. But it always goes hand in hand with a desire for security in marriage. Accordingly, we cannot develop it in the proper direction just by telling' women that in the Soviet Union the traditional distinction between marital and extramarital sex has been abolished. Many women are revolutionary at work but reactionary at home. This is principally because their moral and cultural attitudes still outweigh their critical faculty and their economic and sexual interests.

The "women's rights" activities of various bourgeois organizations are founded on strong

revolutionary impulses -- some conscious (toward economic independence), some usually unconscious (toward sexual independence), but all directed toward changing the existing order of things. Only socialism can provide a practical answer to their questions. Yet the socialists do nothing to bring clarity into the ideological confusion of women. They do not explain to them that the things they want are mutually contradictory, that their aims are really socialist, though they cannot formulate them and so they have resorted to a form of sentimental revolt of the Pankhurst type. By talking about innumerable problems of everyday private life in the context of social life we could at least liven things up. Discussions would begin, and these discussions would be won by those with something to say -- i.e., the socialists -- if only they were not addicted to party debates on the orthodox pattern. The reactionaries would be completely defeated in any really objective argument.

At the end of 1933 a very curious and instructive movement occurred among some German women, which was a better example of this dialectic at work than anything that can be found in books. These women protested against their domestic bondage -- a protest that could be revolutionary -- yet they wanted to replace it by becoming "German fighters like Brunhilde", which in this particular form is a reactionary demand. We must clearly recognize that the ideology of motherhood, so energetically promoted by the Nazis, has an anti-sexual core which should be exposed. Being a mother is presented as the opposite of being a lover. Women want to be both. But they cannot find the way out of the contradiction created in them by capitalist morality. As a result, under the influence of political reaction, they deny themselves as sexual beings.

The women's rights movement, reactionary in its present form because it is directed against class feeling, is easily reversible because it militates for social change. In the case of women we find, once again, that actual hunger and an anxiety about feeding one's children only rarely lead to a revolutionary mentality. Far more often, this leads to a fear of politics in general, to opposition to the husband's or grown-up children's political activities, to dull-wittedness and prostitution. Such worries and fears could be turned into an effective driving force of class consciousness if combined in the right way with the other forces and counter-forces involved.

It is very hard to say, for example, whether love of pretty clothes, make-up, etc., which today is a serious impediment to revolutionary thinking and feeling in women, might not have a reverse role to play. It is unlikely that a revolutionary organization will ever succeed in persuading the mass of women to adopt the austere appearance of Communist women. A way has to be found between bourgeois glamour and Communist asceticism, satisfying both the demands of the class struggle and the natural healthy vanity of women. Our political leaders should not dismiss such matters as being unworthy of their attention. We advise them to study the program whereby the political reaction manages to attract and hold German women.

The principal question confronting the women's movement is undoubtedly that of the future of the family and the raising of children. In the Sex-Pol movement in Germany we succeeded in winning over many women by explaining that socialism only proposes new forms for the continuation of a communal life of men, women and children, and that the so-called abolition of the family under Bolshevism means no more than the disengagement of the sexual interests from the economic ones.

The development of family ideology in Germany today deserves the closest attention, e.g., the contradiction between family life and service in the storm troops. Our future policy *vis-a-vis*

women must derive from a close understanding of this ideology. And since prostitution will inevitably increase under the sexual and moral tendencies of fascism, proletarian policy must also include the winning of prostitutes to our cause.

A variety of events taking place in Germany can indicate whether class consciousness or the beginnings of class consciousness exists among the population, and in which way they tend. They supply hints of what the revolutionary leadership might usefully do. We have already mentioned the "Be Like Brunhilde" movement, that inarticulate rebellion of women against the servitude of marriage and to the kitchen stove.

A little while ago, Goebbels was forced to speak out about a related question which is extremely embarrassing for the Nazis. After seizing power, they considerably tightened up existing laws on abortion and contraception, handed over the education of children to religious and military organizations, proclaimed the family as *the* basis of the nation and the state, launched the motto "A German woman doesn't smoke", condemned bobbed hair, reopened the brothels, excluded women from industry, restored various antediluvian privileges for men, etc. Thus the Nazis, consistent with their historical function, set off a process of extreme cultural reaction. It was only natural that many Nazi Party officials should carry out these measures exactly in the spirit in which they were meant. In one small town a soap company issued a poster showing a pretty girl with a packet of soap powder in her hand. The local Nazi boss promptly banned the poster because it offended the "moral sense" of the population. This and similar occurrences compelled Goebbels to launch an attack on "unauthorized moral judges and hypocritical apostles of chastity". He condemned "moral snooping" and those "whose dearest wish it is to set up vigilance committees in town and country". Such a system, he said, could only encourage informers and blackmailers. Women, he said, were already afraid to go out or enter a restaurant alone, spend an evening with a young man without a chaperone, wear jewelry or make-up; ". . . if they smoke a cigarette at home or at a party, that doesn't necessarily make them moral outlaws". National Socialism, he said, was not a pietist movement; the people should not be robbed of their *joie de vivre*; the aim was to achieve more life affirmation and less hypocrisy, more morality and fewer moralistic attitudes.

How are we to understand such statements? What is the lesson of this speech?

First: the average German woman must have reacted with lively indignation to the Nazi cultural policy, or else Goebbels would not have spoken as he did.

Second: the indignation must have been great, or else Goebbels, like Roehm on an earlier occasion, would not have had to intervene in a spirit contrary to the ideology of Nazism. The Nazi leaders are extremely skilled in mass psychology and would rather drop a part of their philosophy than risk the very basis of their power.

Third: in reality, Goebbels has nothing to say on this matter because he can neither understand nor surmount the contradiction between Nazism, which is intrinsically reactionary, and its supporters, who are intrinsically revolutionary -- a contradiction which is evident in all spheres.

Fourth: we have here, in an impure and inarticulate form, an element of socialist class

consciousness which we could develop if we were ourselves completely clear about the problem. We could reinforce the Nazi supporter's revolutionary mentality by making him aware of the reactionary consequences of Nazism; we could make the Socialist Party member aware of his petty-bourgeois inhibitions by the right kind of propaganda. As a general rule, we must relentlessly emphasize all contradictions, instead of treating the storm trooper *purely* as a reactionary and the Socialist Party member *purely* as a revolutionary who hasn't yet "seen the light".

Fifth: such a speech, pronounced by a Goebbels, must immediately reassure those Nazi supporters who had recently begun to doubt; it must gain new adherents and shake the confidence of opponents unless the insoluble nature of the whole problem of women's sexuality in the Third Reich is *concretely* demonstrated.

Why is the problem insoluble?

To reinforce the power of the family and to tie the woman to the kitchen stove, repressive measures such as those applied by some overzealous Nazi officials are necessary. But such measures completely contradict the "life affirmation" Goebbels preaches in his attempt to reduce the resulting dissatisfaction. Further: the very core and center of Nazi ideology is its morality (honor, purity, etc.). If an ordinary thinking man got up at a meeting and asked what the difference was between "morality" and "moralistic attitudes", the question would be bound to cause profound embarrassment (provided always that it was concretely phrased). If you stop a woman from going out with a young man, that's a moralistic attitude but not morality as demanded by National Socialism. Very well. But what if the young man kisses the woman? Or, worse still, what if he wants to have sexual intercourse with her? Is that part of *joie de vivre* or isn't it? If the Nazi functionary in the chair makes a concession at this point and actually allows the possibility of free love (which wouldn't surprise us in the least), the next question might well be: Wouldn't it weaken the role of marriage and the family if such things were openly allowed? And what would become of any children that might be born as a result? If our Nazi chairman now says that a child is a child just so long as the parents are Aryans, one might well ask whether there has to be a pregnancy every time people have sexual intercourse, and if not, what measures may be taken against it, etc. Such questions would start a lively public debate in a completely unpolitical form which would embarrass the Nazis a great deal more than a thousand illegal leaflets, for the simple reason that they would, without realizing it, be making propaganda on *our* behalf. No such thing as class consciousness? Why, it's to be found in every nook and cranny of everyday life. No use trying to develop the class consciousness of the masses -- you'd land in jail? Just ask some of the questions that bother every Nazi, questions that the reaction can never answer, and you can stop worrying about class consciousness. The role of the vanguard in conditions of illegality? Why, this is it, right here! These are the concrete contents of proletarian democracy, not mere words or slogans about proletarian democracy which mean nothing to ninety out of every hundred people. Thousands of examples could be produced from all spheres of life to show that there isn't a single question which the Nazis could answer if it were well thought out and posed in a concrete and consistent manner -- about religion, about trade unions, about relations between workers and employers, about the future of the bourgeoisie, etc.

The revolutionary leadership's most important task today is to point out the weaknesses of Nazism, and then to guide discussion among the masses so that it continues indefinitely without danger for anyone. The revolution can only develop out of the contradictions of life as

lived today, not out of debates on the contradictions between the United States and Japan, or out of strike calls that cannot be implemented. Nor will it develop if we go on regarding every Nazi as a criminal and a sadist. What we have to do is to show up the contrast between their subjective aspirations and their inability to solve any objective problem.

We should not attach too much importance to proving that our views are one hundred percent correct and realizable. The Correctness of a view is proved by practice. What matters is that we should see what is really happening and what the broad masses are interested in, and pinpoint the contradictions, etc. A theory cannot exist ready-made at the beginning of an action. It can only develop and shed its mistakes in the process of carrying out the action. This applies as well to the following sketch of the concrete elements which encourage or impede class consciousness in adult working men.

In Adult Working Men

Collective industrial work is undoubtedly the most important source of class feeling. Being a proletarian and working in a factory does not yet mean, however, that one is class-conscious. Nor does being a trade union member mean this, although both are essential preconditions of class consciousness. Proof of this is the fact that many German workers who previously belonged to a free trade union subscribe mechanically today to the Nazi trade union organization. When being organized has become part of the worker's flesh and blood, as is the case in Germany, consciousness of the *kind* of organization one joins is often reduced.

Nazi propaganda about the "honor" of work, the "equality" of worker and employer, the unity of the factory and of the nation, etc., can easily blind the average worker, especially if he has absorbed the Social Democratic doctrine of "industrial peace". Such a man is psychically so deformed that simply being told he is a "fully valid member of society" will make him feel better, especially if he is also given some kind of uniform to wear.

Any revolutionary who underestimates the material power of ideas is certain to fail. In our period of history it has proved stronger than the power of material poverty. Were this not so, the working class, not Hitler and Thyssen, would be in power today. The Nazis are very well aware how much they stand to gain when they woo the industrial workers. They know the precise amount of ideological poison they have to inject into the workers before labor legislation, such as that of January 1934, can become law. They are intelligent enough to know that they cannot pass such a law without virtually committing suicide, unless they have first made sure that the workers are ideologically subjugated to their own philosophy. Months of preliminary ideological work were necessary before Ley could produce his new labor law. If we do nothing but gaze in astonishment at the utter brutality of this law, which robs the workers of their last recourse, if we forget that we see it differently and feel about it differently from the worker who has been ideologically softened up, then in talking to him we shall express only our own thoughts and contradictions and not his. Our trade union work must also be preceded by ideological work -- slow, carefully thought-out work -- based on a precise knowledge of the areas in which the workers have been ideologically deformed. After all, a worker clearly senses when things are done against his interests -- he has enough class consciousness for that -- but he can also immediately summon up a whole range of thoughts and feelings to keep himself from realizing the full horror of the situation, which he knows he cannot control; and at that point he becomes the dupe of illusions. Hitler's gift of a sack of potatoes to every worker was ninety-nine percent ideology and only one percent practical value. The same is true of the recent tram-fare reductions, etc. A worker trained in the class

struggle is not often deceived, but many, very many, have been ideologically softened up. Only a minority are trained. The majority, thanks to the free trade unions, have never known a strike. There is hardly a "dangerous" worker left in the factories. And so the average worker may have a correct sense of what is happening, but he is without leadership and is forced to fall back upon the hope that Hitler means well, after all, and that "he's doing something for us workers". He accepts the pittance without realizing that he is really the master and nobody has any presents to give him. Only a man who hasn't been crushed into complete submission by the thought that "a sack of potatoes is better than a kick in the pants" can feel angry because his employer, who is supposed to be his equal as a member of the nation, has an income a thousand times higher than his own.

If we ask what actually stops a worker from being roused to anger by the humiliating gift of a sack of potatoes, we shall find that the most important element is his *family responsibility*. We shall never develop class-conscious thinking in a worker if we simply invite him to strike (only the really stupid ones who don't know what goes on inside a worker's head do this), nor by urging him to join clandestine, heavily threatened trade unions he doesn't trust anyway. A revolutionary worker must first of all be a member of the Nazi trade union himself. He must show his workmates that he understands their deep, unexpressed worries, that, for example, he understands that they suppress their anger and refuse even to admit it to themselves because they are worried for their families. Millions of workers have problems like this, of which they are scarcely aware. Just as the major problem, besides wages, for the average young worker is the question of sex and of separate living quarters, so the question of family responsibilities (which we must not equate with the bourgeois ideology of the family) is the second major problem for the adult worker. If you tell such a man to go on strike, he won't understand what you want from him, and it's quite likely that he'll simply turn his back on you. But if you explain (we can only provide a rough schema of such an explanation here) that the reason why he refuses to give free rein to his anger at the insulting offer of a sack of potatoes is partly that he isn't quite sure whether Hitler is just a stooge of the employers or a real national leader who wants to do right by everyone, partly that he can't help being somewhat impressed by all the speeches and parades, but most of all because he has a family to support and it's safer to do as you are told, if you explain this and similar things, then you have understood the worker and he'll know it at once. And then you've proved yourself a true revolutionary because you've gained a supporter, if not for an immediate strike, then surely for a future one. If such isolated insights into mass psychology begin to multiply and to cover larger areas, the workers will soon realize that there are people who understand what worries them and what makes them angry, what holds them back and what drives them forward. That's the kind of thing we should put into our illegal leaflets! We'd have no trouble in distributing them, people would snatch them out of our hands, and those who produce the leaflets would lose the sense of futility which gnaws at them because they are obliged to repeat the same old *clichés* over and over again. They would acquire a sense of direct contact with reality. The propaganda of illusions would be replaced by reality, and the useless political shouting by an objective mastery of the situation.

Small occurrences often reveal more than great events. Let me quote such an occurrence to illustrate what I mean by class feeling and the factors which interfere with it. It will be seen that in this instance, as so often, bourgeois sexual ideology represents the inhibiting element. Some workers and peasants traveling in a slow train in Austria were chatting about work, politics, women, etc. A young worker, clearly a married man, was saying that a]] the laws were made for the rich and were rigged against the poor. I pricked up my ears to hear what

else this class-conscious worker might have to say. He went on: "Take the marriage laws, for example. They say a man's entitled to beat his wife. Well, I tell you, only a rich man can beat his wife. If you're poor, you always get pulled in for it". Whether what he was saying is correct or not isn't the point. It is highly indicative of what goes on inside an average worker's head. As a poor man, he contrasts himself with a rich one and he senses the inequality: so far as that goes, he has the beginnings of a class-conscious mentality. But at the same time he would dearly love to be able to beat his wife *within the law!* And his class sense makes him feel at a disadvantage in this particular respect. Bourgeois sexual morality fights class consciousness in his mind. The right of sexual ownership which men enjoy in a class society, the power they wield over their wives and children, is one of the worst obstacles to the development of class consciousness in all members of a family. Everyone is demoralized by it, and the man, in particular, is securely tied by it to the bourgeois order, with the result that he secretly or openly fears the Soviet marriage system, daren't engage in political activities, etc.

This is not an ethical but a political problem and must be treated as a major issue of revolutionary propaganda and not, as hitherto, relegated to the back room of politics. We have here the most important and politically most effective area of a man's private life. It plays the same reactionary role for the proletariat as, say, the ideal of owning a bungalow or drawing a stipend plays for the petty bourgeoisie.

Other elements that work against the development of class consciousness are all-male clubs and the drinking-haunts habit, again comparable to the cult of small private property among the petty bourgeoisie. Only very few small owners are aware that the revolution would not, in the first instance, take their property from them. Career ambitions, identification with the enterprise (e.g., pride in the growth of a capitalist firm), the desire for permanent economic security and the prospect of a pension always act as impediments to class consciousness. The revolutionary party must offer a concrete answer to all these questions as they affect all social strata: What will the revolution do to my bungalow, my allotment, my evenings at the tavern, my bowling club, my position as lord and master of my wife and children, my pension rights, my firm that I'm so proud of?

We see now how wrong it is to try to delimit and determine in advance the place occupied, for instance, by sexual politics. Sexual politics isn't the only weapon against the political reaction, as some of us are wrongly accused of believing, nor is it a question of mere sexual reform. Rather, it enters into many concrete aspects of life, now as a positive element of class consciousness (e.g., in the young), now as an obstacle to its development (e.g., in married women). It is part and parcel of revolutionary work, where it must be closely linked with nonsexual issues related to economics or culture. It cannot be separated from those issues in political work any more than it is separate from them in life.

In Children

What are the elements of class consciousness and its impediments in children?

The organizing of a revolutionary children's movement has always been one of our party's weakest points. We are far from believing, as we are sometimes accused, that we know every thing and can solve every problem all at once. But we have observed or discovered certain facts which require further attention, and all we ask of our comrades is that they refrain from purely destructive criticism, and instead of talking about Leninism, actually practice it by

"always learning, learning and learning", by looking at everything and trying to see everything in a new light. I have already said that the proletarian party's policy for children has been too dry and rationalistic and therefore unsuitable for children, mostly because, apart from some individual children's group leaders of exceptional ability, the party has lacked any real knowledge of what children think and feel. Here again we can only provide an outline sketch, not a detailed schema; the whole question awaits objective study by qualified organizations.

Hunger, the condition of being physically undernourished, is a childhood experience which creates an unbridgeable gulf between poor and rich children, but is not in itself revolutionizing. It arouses hatred of property owners far less often than it provokes envy, servility and stealing, as, for instance, in the case of gangs of destitute children. If we tried to base our work among children simply upon hunger, we should find that such a basis was too narrow, for we want to reach many more children than those who are actually starving; moreover, poverty is never absolute but relative to whoever owns more. What matters, therefore, is how we handle the envy and submissiveness which develop out of constant privation and act as a brake on revolutionary feeling. Observations have shown that identification with older, class-conscious siblings or with parents is the strongest stimulus to revolutionary feeling in children, but this occurs only rarely. Just one revolutionary child brought up without religion can stir up an entire school, but unless this effect is properly organized, it will remain merely accidental. The texts which the party distributed to children in Germany had little effect because they put more emphasis on slogans that had to be learned by heart than on arousing the children's interest in real revolutionary problems and issues.

Anticipating objections from children's organization leaders on a local and national scale (objections that are never substantiated or based on practical experience), I must insist that the way to make children react most readily and actively to political questions is to discuss sexual problems, especially if one also succeeds in establishing a certain comradely relationship with the children. Sexual repression in the life of children is so directly felt by every child, while problems of class are, initially at least, so difficult for him to grasp, that the question of choice hardly arises here. Early information on sex, provided it is truthful, not only creates a very close bond with the person supplying it, not only removes the distrust that children generally feel for adults, but also provides the soundest basis for non-religious thinking and consequently for a class sense.

Here again, the difficulty lies not so much in children as in the adults who work with them. Starting with sexual information it is easy to go on to teach facts about capital and the church which a child would otherwise find difficult or impossible to assimilate. But in order to achieve success in this positive aspect of the work it is necessary to have a precise understanding of the child's inhibitions, which, later on in his life, will turn into reactionary bondage. You enter a peasant's cottage in the mountains; the parents are socialist sympathizers, yet as soon as a child is introduced to the stranger he is told, "Say good day to the gentleman", "Say thank you", etc., and so the child cringes and creeps and becomes "good".

Ideological struggle against what is known as "being good" should be one of the important tasks of the proletarian front. Unfortunately, a serious obstacle is created by the proletarian educators' own bourgeois deformation. Old wives' tales, bogeys and intimidations ("Wait till I fetch the policeman") are among the most powerful weapons of political reaction. Every proletarian father (with only rare exceptions) coming home from a day's coolie work at the

factory takes out his frustration on his child. Here at least he wants to be the master; and being a master implies having someone to bully, if not the dog, then the child. Child-beating, of course, is part and parcel of this attitude. But it isn't enough to understand this, not enough to refrain from beating one's own children; what is needed is propaganda on the broadest international scale. Any mother seen beating her child in the street should be publicly challenged; such a measure, if carried out in an organized fashion, would soon engage every body in a struggle for the child as a member of society, against the treatment of children as family chattels.

Some people would no doubt be in favor of "owning" children and, consequently, of having the right to beat them; but others, the overwhelming majority of whom know nothing whatsoever about communism, would be against the notion, and this would draw them directly into the class struggle, i.e., it would engage and activate them a thousand times more effectively and usefully than leaflets pushed under the door which would only be thrown unread into the wastepaper basket. Of course we cannot give all the details here, or issue precise instructions. Socialists in the capitalist countries must not wait to be told what to do; they must act out of their innermost sense of what is right and useful to our cause and of what is wrong and harmful to it. We should talk less about the need for initiative in the junior organizations and do more to pinpoint those areas of social life where such initiative could be applied. To do this we must thoroughly revise all our propaganda methods. We must replace paper wisdom with live issues; we must not be afraid of making mistakes -- such fears lead to apathy -- but must be prepared to make mistakes, if need be, and then correct them.

To return to the child. Sexual-economic research shows that an early and strict toilet training leads to the gravest character inhibitions in terms of activity. If we work on the cultural-political front under capitalism, if we concern ourselves with politics for children, we must -- among other things -- make the harmfulness of early toilet training widely known and discuss it in an objective way. The path that leads from such a subject to politics is shorter than some people care to think. Political reaction, in its role of defender of morals and discipline, will be quick to oppose us. But that is precisely what we want: we want to start discussions in which the population at large will participate with interest because the questions raised are difficult issues of everyday life. It will be the task of socialist psychoanalysis to assist the political organizations, guide the discussions, etc.

Another concrete example. Masturbation in young children and the threats of parents, teachers and clergymen on this subject have formed the subject of lively public debate for a long time. The CP leaders have failed to do anything about it partly because they themselves are caught up in bourgeois prejudices and partly because they are against so-called Freudianism, although this has nothing to do with the case, as Freud never adopted any position on this subject. Yet the crux of the matter is here, and nowhere so much as here. Should a child be brought up to be obedient or should it be lively and independent? These are class questions, not "individual" problems. The church is very well aware of this, for it does not balk at these "embarrassing" issues. For the church, infantile masturbation is *politics*. Of course we don't for one moment believe that the whole problem can be solved in one fell swoop, but we can at least open it up, we can start discussions on it, we can put a little life into our work.

Should anyone object that we are treading on dangerous ground and that some people may be put off by such a subject, we would suggest leaving that worry to experts well qualified to deal with it. No one can judge better than those of us who specialize in the problems of childhood how delicate, how disturbing, how urgent these problems are. They preoccupy all

mothers, regardless of political affiliation, and all children. And the same is true of all other aspects of the party's policy for children -- which we should view in terms of modern pedagogy applied to everyday practice. At the present moment, of course, our action has to be restricted to political discussion and ideological struggle. Let me say once more that I am fully aware how unwelcome the raising of these questions will be; but only by opening up these central problems of our existence can we hope to avoid early death from political arteriosclerosis.

We have mentioned only a few examples here. Should some pundit object that problems concerning the upbringing of children are still a matter of scientific controversy, I would reply: That is true, but solutions to these problems will not come out of the studies of learned men but only out of living, active struggle. We may be mistaken in some details; but remember that there is no controversy among the reactionaries about masturbation in young children: that they repress it is a *fact*. And it is likewise a fact that it is dangerous to interfere with infantile sexuality. Everything else remains to be seen.

I don't know whether the example which follows points to any direct practical conclusions. But I am sure that it teaches us to pay attention to the smallest details, to look for important things among all the unimportant ones and to distinguish typical, universal facts from untypical, individual ones. German children, like their parents, are going over en masse to Hitler; his principal method of wooing them is that of offering them war games and war stories. Our task therefore is to understand why such methods are successful and what it is that they do for the children. This isn't a matter of profound investigations but rather of simple observation and understanding of children. A group of little boys, six to ten years old, are playing at war in a city court yard. One little boy is running round with a sword strapped to his side and a wooden gun in his hand, shooting at his playmates. I ask him whether he wants to kill his friends. He stops in his tracks, stares at me in astonishment and asks, "Kill them?" I say, "Why yes, of course, if you shoot you kill, didn't you know that?" "Well, I don't want to kill them at all." "Why do you run about with a sword and a gun, then?" "Because the sword is so shiny and long", he replies. I wasn't going to talk to him about pacifism and the complicated distinction between war and civil war; but I know from other experiences that although children have an unconscious desire to kill, they derive their enjoyment of war games not only from this desire but also from purely motor satisfaction, increased self-confidence due to holding a weapon, the rhythm of marching, etc. Should not such insights be used in our proletarian children's policy? Or is that utopian? I do not know; but these are certainly facts of life -- children's life -- and if we have not been successful with children it is surely because we failed to take the trouble to study such facts in all their multiplicity and to turn to advantage those that could be. These are extremely difficult problems, which defy immediate solution. But if we do not ventilate them, we shall never solve them in practice.

3. Bourgeois and Revolutionary Politics

"Politics" as Fetish

The Sex-Pol movement has to fight on many fronts. One of these concerns the tangled web of ideas in people's minds, ideas that are apparently quite meaningless if one asks the simplest questions about them. For example: "What is politics?"

Here is an occasion when one might ask it. We are trying to explain the fundamental principles of mass psychology as revealed by sexual economy, and somebody makes the following objection: "What you say may be very true and very useful, but aren't politics and the economic factor more important?" The audience, which has been listening to the report or lecture on mass psychology with great interest and approval, suddenly begins to doubt its own opinion, simply because of the curiously mesmerizing effect of the word "politics".

Often it happens that at this word even the speaker, who is meant to be putting the case for mass psychology, will retreat and say something to the effect that the relationship between politics and the practice of mass psychology "still remains to be examined. "

The pundits of high politics and of the "economic factor" (who always think that this factor is being neglected, although in the newspapers and reviews you read about nothing else and never a word about mass psychology) are generally at a loss to explain what exactly "politics" is -- a word that nevertheless works like a fetish on ordinary mortals. We must always turn the most blinding searchlight on anything that smacks of fetishism. We must bombard such things with the most naive questions, which, as we all know, are the most embarrassing ones and generally yield the most interesting results.

The political layman understands "politics" to mean, in the first place, diplomatic negotiations between representatives of great or small powers in which destinies of mankind are decided; of these he rightly says he understands nothing. Or else he sees politics as parliamentary deals concluded between friends and enemies alike, reciprocal swindling, spying, bestowing of favors, and decision-making in accordance with "the established rules of procedure". Of this, too, he understands nothing, but he is often repelled by it, and so he decides, with great relief, that "he wants to have nothing to do with politics". He fails to see the contradiction in the fact that the transactions he so rightly despises affect his own life, and that he is, in effect, leaving his life in the hands of people he considers to be a gang of crooks.

Politics may also mean wanting to win the masses of the population over to one's side. Anyone trained as a Marxist will realize at once that bourgeois politics must always be demagogical because it can only make promises which it cannot keep. Not so revolutionary politics, which can fulfill all the promises it makes to the masses and is therefore in principle undemagogical. Whenever it is or appears to be demagogical we may safely conclude that revolutionary principles have been abandoned.

Let us consider a typical passage of "political" writing of the kind which, in our experience, is thought of by the masses as "high politics". That is to say, it is not understood but regarded with great timidity and awe; if it produces a reaction, it is a passive one.

If one prefers the legalization of armaments to the armaments race, as England does, one has to admit that, together with such legalization, guarantees against any renewed breach of agreements must be provided. Such guarantees for the carrying out of a convention on disarmament should be discussed at the so-called disarmament conference in Geneva. But Germany does not accept the condition imposed by France. It remains silent on this subject in its official communications and, in the Berlin talks with Eden, the British Lord Privy Seal, it has so far refused to come to Geneva. As a result, the Franco-British negotiations, as already stated, have lost their object. The diplomatic exchange of views outside the Geneva disarmament conference has come to an end without yielding any result. It is now for the disarmament conference to create, without Germany, the required guarantees for peace. In this, France is counting upon the co-operation of Great Britain.

This is the content and meaning of the long French note of April 17, which is a reply to the British note of March 28 and to Sir John Simon's *aide-mémoire* of April 10.

I have deliberately quoted this passage without reference to its source so as not to hurt anyone's feelings. Anyone whom the cap fits should wear it. Isn't that the only way to deal with the tender sensibilities of politicians?

Who is "Germany", who is "France"? What is a "diplomatic exchange of views"? Is that really the content and meaning of the French note? What relation does this "political note" bear to the needs of the masses, their thoughts and feelings, the way they live or merely vegetate? Why, none at all! Compare it with Lenin's politics at the time of Brest-Litovsk. The smallest famine-stricken child could understand the slogan "End the war" but the adherents of "high politics" were against it.

The broad masses, whose wishes and whose future are to be guaranteed by revolutionary politics, think and talk differently. Anyone who goes on speaking of Barthou's travels today without explaining -- simply, clearly, intelligibly to everyone -- the reactionary swindle which is the real purpose of these trips, becomes an involuntary accomplice.

If we look for the effect of high politics on the broad masses, we shall see that, at the very most, it is aped in the form of beer hall politics by a few individuals. The vast majority tend always to react passively, without interest, playing the role of mere extras in the fairground show of "high politics". We must clearly realize that this fairground show would come to a sudden end -- a very disagreeable one for the diplomats -- if the extras were to take up a more active attitude, if, in brief, they stopped being nonpolitical.

If we forget even for a moment to ask ourselves the question: "What is happening among the masses?" -- a question absolutely fundamental to revolutionary politics -- then we are bound, whether we want to be or not, to get enmeshed in the web of bourgeois politics or else to become nonpolitical. The nonpolitical attitude of the broad masses is one of the political reaction's main strengths. Another is the smoke screen with which it surrounds its politics, so that even socialists are often confused.

One of the revolutionary politician's most important tasks is to sense and to discover the effect of backstage politics on the masses. When in the summer of 1932 Hitler approached Hindenburg for the first time with the demand to appoint him Reich chancellor, and when that demand was rejected following a number of backstage intrigues, of which the people knew little or nothing, Hitler appealed to his supporters with a fervent profession of faith in the "will of the people". The occasion for this was provided by the Potempa case. Some storm troopers had brutally murdered a Polish worker and had been sentenced to death. Hitler interceded for them vociferously. The real motive for this gesture was the snub he had received from Hindenburg. In other words, when his feudal connections failed him, he played the trump card of his mass base.

The masses had absolutely no idea of the game that was being played with them. Rather, they felt themselves "under stood" by Hitler in an upsurge of nationalistic identification. Hitler's open support of the men who, out of a "sense of national honor", had shot down a "Marxist dog", and his stand against the hated government that had sentenced the murderers to death, outweighed by far the effect of *erroneous* Communist propaganda whose famous policy of

"unmasking" consisted only in calling the murderers murderers. An explanation, offered on a mass scale, of the connection between Hindenburg's refusal and Hitler's appeal to mass feeling would have been effective. But the CP merely insisted that all reactionary parties are the same; it failed to grasp the real contradictions within the bourgeoisie; it had never learned to study and interpret the reactions of the masses on their own or the enemy's side. By doing nothing except to say that the murderers were indeed murderers, it placed itself, in the eyes both of the convinced followers of the Nazis and of those who, at that time, were only mildly sympathetic to them, on the side of the government which the masses loathed.

Why Didn't Litvinov Speak to the Masses?

Revolutionary politics, in its content and the language it uses, is either an expression of the primitive, uneducated, life-centered character of the broad masses, or it is politics that merely calls itself revolutionary and is in effect reactionary and barren. Even where its position is correct in principle, it will not be understood by the masses and it will, therefore, objectively speaking, work against the revolution.

The world is on the threshold of a new murderous war. In Geneva, Barthou and Litvinov were thought of by their respective governments as champions of peace, with Germany as their opponent. A correct critique of Litvinov's statement from the international revolutionary standpoint has appeared so far only in Trotsky's paper *Nashe Slovo* (in the second week of June 1934). All other organizations of the proletariat seem to lack the faintest idea of what happened in Geneva. Not even this critique, however, asks itself the fundamental mass-psychological question: What do the speeches of the two statesmen mean to the average nonpolitical worker, employee or peasant in Germany, France, England or even in the Soviet Union? Does he feel that the power behind Litvinov is a workers' state? Does he detect any difference between Barthou's idea of peace and Litvinov's? Does he understand the fine distinction the Soviet government draws when it speaks of "imperialism as a whole" and of "special war parties"? Does the Russian worker realize that under the present set of alliances he is supposed to make common cause with French workers against German and English workers, and kill them if war breaks out?

How is an ordinary mortal to make sense of the following commentary by Bela Kun? We often oppose war in *general*. Communist editors sometimes find themselves in a difficulty over this point. "How can this be?" they ask, "the imperialists are plotting for war, yet here is Herriot visiting the Soviet Union and getting a good reception. How are we to explain this?" I have read some very bad articles about Herriot's visit. And in no article have we read what now, after Comrade Stalin's speech at the Seventeenth Party Congress, is completely clear -- namely, that under imperialism there are always war parties. Imperialism as a whole, as an epoch, is in favor of war; but there are various war parties which are more active in promoting war. The present task is to concentrate our fire on that group of the bourgeoisie which represents the war parties and is most active in promoting war.

Of course we must always emphasize that the groups of the bourgeoisie who today have donned a pacifist cloak or those who think that the time for war has not yet come will also be in favor of the war at the appropriate moment -- will be just as much in favor of war against the Soviet Union as is the dominant war party. We must always emphasize this, but we must concentrate our fire principally on the war parties: in Japan, on the militarist-fascist clique of generals, feudal lords and industrial trust magnates, in Germany on the Hitler fascists, in

Great Britain on the diehards, etc. (Bela Kun; "The Tasks of the Communist Press"; *Rundschau* 33/1934; page 1259).

And what of the *French* armaments industry?

A man who understands nothing about alliances and high politics might ask why Litvinov in Geneva didn't address the broad masses in every country who do not want war at any price? Why does he make alliances with imperialist governments, who do want war, but not with the masses? Why does he lend his support to the illusion-nourished precisely by the imperialist powers -- that the League of Nations, which has long been dead, can actually prevent a war? Why doesn't he say straight out, in terms intelligible to everyone, that no League of Nations, no bourgeois government in the world can ever really prevent the war, but that only the concerted action of munitions and transport workers in all the capitalist countries can do it? Non-political workers do not understand the foreign policy of the Soviet Union any better than they understand that of France. Yet this, of all things, would be the most important touchstone of a truly proletarian policy!

To be strict about it, we should not attempt to answer the question why the representative of a proletarian state has so completely forgotten the language of revolutionary diplomacy before we hear what the "only true leaders of the revolution" have to say about it. One thing is clear, however: a single word from Litvinov on the League of Nations rostrum, a word that flouted custom, diplomatic usage and League of Nations protocol, ignored all alliances and agreements, and was spoken directly to the munitions and transport workers, to mothers of future soldiers everywhere, would have done more to prevent war than twenty paper pacts. Does Litvinov really believe that he can prevent war by his policy? Wasn't Karl Liebknecht's refusal of credits in 1914 a thousand times more of a bulwark against war chauvinism than all the high-flown political arguments of the Social Democrats? But our proletarian revolutionary leaders are so much in awe of a diplomat, especially a Soviet one, that they no longer understand the language of the men and women they are meant to lead and they say that we are mad. And yet we say it again and again: the support of five or ten million future war victims is worth more than five hundred thousand bayonets, even Soviet ones! These words, which today are dismissed as madness, will be written in blood by the catastrophe to come.

There is only one salvation for the Soviet Union as a proletarian revolutionary state: to pit its own army, in alliance with the workers of the war and transport industries and the simple soldiers of all countries, against the capitalist governments and general staffs. If today the Soviet Union concludes alliances with the general staffs and the diplomats of capitalist countries, it does so only because of the collapse of the international revolutionary movement. Lenin always addressed the broad masses in his speeches and writings. This supplies the answer to our question: Can revolutionary politics ever beat bourgeois politics at its own game, by using its language, its tactics, its strategy, in short, by adopting *bourgeois* methods? No, never. It can only lose itself in the maze of politics, follow lamely in the wake of events, play the game *less well* than the bourgeois politicians. There is only one possibility: to cut through the Gordian knot of bourgeois politics, not by aping it but by attacking it with the fundamental principle of revolutionary politics: the principle of addressing the masses, ceaselessly, tirelessly, simply and clearly, of expressing the ideas of the masses, whether these have been thought out or not, of destroying the awe of the masses in the face of high politics, of refusing to take the swindle of high politics seriously, of mercilessly and relentlessly exposing it, of speaking the language of the masses, of adapting politics to the masses instead of *vice-versa*, thereby democratizing it, simplifying it, making it accessible to everyone. Lenin's dictum that every cook ought to be capable of governing the state contains implicitly

the fundamental thought of social democracy. "High politics" can exist only because the form, language and thought processes of revolutionary politics, for all their revolutionary contents, have adapted themselves to those of high politics because, instead of addressing the masses, revolutionary politicians treat them like children. But the children must finally realize (and are actually recognizing it more and more) that they are being led by the nose. [1](#)

A Schema of Revolutionary Politics

If the social revolution is right in asserting that it can really solve the social problems of economics and culture in the spirit of social democracy, the following political questions and principles must be posed:

1. What are the tactics used by bourgeois parties to win over the masses or to take them from other parties?
2. What are the motives that lead the masses to follow political groups or parties which can never fulfill their promises?
3. What are the needs of the masses at all levels?
4. Which of these needs are socially practicable and justified? Which are vitally essential?
5. Is the state of the world economy such that these needs can be satisfied by the overthrow of capitalist rule and the substitution of a planned economy for economic anarchy?
6. Do the masses know which social institutions impede the satisfaction of their needs, and why these obstructive institutions exist?
7. How can these institutions be removed and what should replace them?
8. What are the economic, social and mass-psychological preconditions necessary for the satisfaction of the needs of the broad masses?

Each of these questions points to the inexorable necessity for social revolution -- each, without exception, in every single sphere of human life. In other words, mass-psychological work must not remain in the shadow of economic policy; quite on the contrary, economic policy must enter the service of a mass psychology which understands and guides the masses. The needs of men and women do not exist to serve economic policy -- economic policy exists to satisfy these needs.

The Bourgeois Politics of the German Communist Party

The experience of life in the German Communist Party shows that the only possible form of revolutionary politics, as outlined above, was lacking in Germany. When Communist leaders spoke for hours at the Sports Palace about the conflicting interests of the Great Powers and the economic background of the impending war, they were, without wanting to, imitating bourgeois politics. Our revolutionary politicians are too zealous in emulating the Paul Boncours. What makes them do this, and so lose any chance of success, is a question of the psychical structure of our revolutionary leaders. They will again feel sorely insulted when they read this. They will call it "Trotskyite counter-revolutionism". Nor is there any hope of convincing them that the politics they conduct are bourgeois in form and, consequently, also in objective reality. To anticipate their protests, we shall quote just one of many concrete examples to show that the German Communist Party has exchanged the revolutionary

principle of politics for a bourgeois one.

In December 1932, the Social Democratic Party organized a demonstration in the Lustgarten. Communist organizations, in particular the *Kampfbünde* (Fighting Unions), joined the demonstration. They mingled with the mass of the Social Democratic demonstrators, and without any talk about U.S.-Japanese contradictions, they formed a united front. That was the will and language of the masses. The Communist Party leaders, who wanted a united front "only under Communist leadership", later reprimanded the party members concerned. The party orders had only been to line the streets and to "cheer" the demonstration. At the same time Torgler was secretly negotiating with the Social Democratic leaders about forming a united front. The masses knew nothing about these negotiations; the official line was that a united front led by the Social Democrats would be "counter-revolutionary". I personally took part at the time in a secret meeting on the forming of a united front between leading Communist and Social Democrat functionaries. No one in the party cells was supposed to know anything about it. *That is bourgeois politics*. The exact opposite would have been proletarian-revolutionary politics: the party should have instructed the Communists to support the Social Democrat demonstration and should have told the masses in the Lustgarten over loud speakers that negotiations were in progress with the Social Democrats on the forming of a united front. That is what is properly called developing the ideology of the masses and giving expression to their wishes. Instead of this the party engaged in "high politics", "strategy" and "tactics" -- without the masses, sometimes against the masses, keeping out everyone who wanted and practiced revolutionary politics.

The abolition of secret diplomacy is an old revolutionary principle. It is a self-evident one, for, if social revolution is the execution of the people's will against the owners of the means of production under the leadership of the industrial proletariat, there can be nothing left to keep secret. There should be nothing left that the masses ought not to hear: on the contrary, they must be able to know and check everything that happens.

Revolutionary Inner-Party Politics

If we survey the development of the politics of Communist parties since the death of Lenin, we find that the principle of constantly addressing the masses has been gradually lost, and that, with the increasing imitation of the forms of bourgeois politics inside and outside the party, bureaucratization has set in. Inner-party democracy has been replaced by backstage politics, mutual deception and the forming of cliques. This has completely undermined the strength of the revolutionary parties, although they comprised the best revolutionary elements.

When in October 1917 Lenin saw that the moment had come for popular insurrection, and when he met with opposition within the Bolshevik leadership, he remained faithful to his principle of revolutionary politics: he *addressed himself to the mass of party members*. He did not form a clique, he did not start any intrigues, he did not try to win by creating factions. Any exclusion of the masses from political deliberations and decisions is counter-revolutionary, irrespective of the subjective content involved. Revolutionary politics has nothing to conceal from the masses; it should reveal everything. Bourgeois politics cannot afford to reveal anything and so has to conceal everything. Backstage politics, wherever it may occur, is the distinguishing feature of political reaction.

It is immensely to the advantage of revolutionary politics that it is constantly obliged to use the language of the masses and that the bourgeoisie can offer nothing that compares with

it because a positive bourgeois sexual policy cannot exist. The revolutionary sexual politician therefore cannot degenerate into a bourgeois. There can be no such thing as secret diplomacy in the sphere of sexual politics. Sex-Pol must always speak to the masses or it will cease to exist.

4. How to Develop Class Consciousness with the Everyday Life of the Masses as a Starting Point

Leadership, the Party, and the Masses

What I am about to say may be painful to hear. It concerns something that is harmful to the revolutionary movement but is an undeniable fact. Various revolutionary groups outbid one another in claiming to be the "sole", "true" heirs of "genuine Marxism and Leninism"; but if you look closely at the differences that separate them, you will find that in relation to the gigantic tasks to be performed they are very small. One group says the revolutionary party has to be there first; another wants to have the support of the masses before it will help to form a new International; the third proclaims itself constantly as "*the* working class" and the sole leader of the revolution without being even remotely so; the fourth has yet another view of its own on some question of detail, and so on. We have already suggested that such splintering is due to an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the major problems, and that the mutual abuse brings nobody forward a single step.

We look in vain in today's revolutionary debates for the following questions, or the answers to them: Why have all attempts to form a new revolutionary party been unsuccessful? Why has the old revolutionary organization failed to win over the masses despite its existing apparatus? Why, seventeen years after the Russian revolution, does the problem of the relationship between the leadership, the party and the masses still cause so many headaches? Doesn't it look as if somewhere there is an important error in the whole calculation? It is surely quite unconvincing to say that the catastrophe occurred because Stalin encouraged bureaucracy, or because the Social Democratic leadership had for decades suffered bourgeois degeneration, or because Hitler received funds from the industrialists. The fundamental question, again and again, is: Why did the industrial working class *accept* reformism and bureaucratism? It is the fundamental problem of the relationship between leadership, the party and the masses.

The founders of the Fourth International adopt the view at least when you listen to their spokesmen and read their papers -- that, first of all, it is necessary to create the revolutionary party, and *then* to win over the proletariat -- only *then* will it be the turn of the petty bourgeoisie. I have no doubt that the actual leaders of the international communists condemn this method of posing the problem. One cannot call oneself a Marxist and separate the leadership, the party and the masses in this way. The relationship is (to use the exalted word just this once) a dialectical one; to put it in a nutshell, a revolutionary party cannot be made out of thin air, it can only form out of the masses and, in the first instance, out of the proletarian section of the masses. This presupposes that the founders of the party must speak

the language of those masses out of which the party is to be formed. Yet the masses understand nothing of fine distinctions between various revolutionary tendencies and have no interest in them. A revolutionary party is formed not only by working out a set of ideas and a practice corresponding to reality, but also, in the first place, by dealing with problems of interest to various strata of the population. Then and only then will the broad masses supply the active members whom the party needs. This again has the reciprocal effect of improving the party's contact with the masses, and *vice-versa* -- party and masses raising one another up. Only through such a close fusion, accompanied simultaneously by a selection of leading cadres out of the mass, can a mass party come into being -- i.e., a party which is not quantitatively but qualitatively determined and which genuinely leads the masses. The German CP organized "join the party" campaigns and accepted members without any selection. It was quantitatively a "mass party", but it collapsed, partly as a result of fluctuations in its membership and partly because of the lack of differentiation between trained party officials and mass members. We shall return to this question later in an article on organizational matters.

The German Sex-Pol group has always been guided by the realization that the leaders of a mass action can never survey all the details of that action but that the masses alone can never grasp the real meaning of a situation, formulate it and translate it into concerted action, and that in consequence, incessant contact is necessary between the leadership and the masses, with theory drawn from the life of the masses and returned to the masses as practice. We had learned from the experience of party life that party officials must not be mere executors of the leadership's decisions but mediators between the life of the masses and the leadership. To create such contact the Sex-Pol instituted so-called instruction evenings, whose purpose was not to instruct the party officials but to seek instruction from them. (We all remember the famous party conferences at which such initiatives were abruptly cut short.) There were no set subjects for discussion; the party officials and rank-and-file members were simply asked to describe the greatest difficulties they were having at that moment. This was in itself a guarantee that the problems discussed would be the most important ones *at that particular point*. We discussed the difficulty together, sometimes finding a solution that would be put to a practical test, sometimes postponing decision until more material was available. Real life *as lived* flowed out of these comradely discussions; we didn't have to rack our brains to invent theories, they suggested themselves of their own accord. Increasing participation and the liveliness of the discussions showed that the instruction evenings were an excellent idea. We learned that life refuses to be tricked; it has to be simply and energetically grasped. All we had to do was to let the ordinary members (many nonmembers were present, too) speak their minds. The only obstacles we met were psychological deformations due to false ideas implanted by bourgeois ideology, but these were disposed of by realistic, straight, undogmatic discussion. Our fourth instruction evening failed to take place; the official party representative refused to convene the members.

The Attitude of Sex-Pol to the "New Party"

The most urgent question facing the working-class movement in the process of reforming its ranks is: Should there be a new party or a revolutionary renewal of the Third International? Sex-Pol cannot fully support either alternative, for two reasons. In the first place we do not know which groups, organizations or circles will be the first to accept our view of the necessity for a revolutionary sexual policy. To judge by the behavior to date of the principal political organizations, the prospect in those organizations that do want a new International is no brighter than elsewhere. Yet this alone cannot be the decisive factor. Sexual politics is only

a part, even if a central and essential one, of the general revolutionary front. It is important to know, therefore, which cadres will form the core of the regenerated workers' movement. So far, this has not been made clear in any sense. If we knew for certain that, say, today's rank-and-file members of the CP will form this core (for today's leadership certainly will not), there would be no sense in founding a new revolutionary party. Yet the revolutionary rank and file would not only have to override the old leadership (which shows not the slightest sign of genuine self-criticism) as it has done on many occasions in the past, but it would also have to actually remove it and replace it little by little with new leaders from its own midst. In the long run it is impossible to flout official decisions of the CP's Executive Committee -- for instance, to refuse to proclaim a "revolutionary upsurge" or call for "mass strikes" and at the same time to continue identifying the EC with the concept of a revolutionary party. Such behavior is politically confusing.

Today, more than ever before, the question as to who and what "the party" is needs to be made unequivocally clear. Is it the membership as a whole, or only the full-time apparatus, or only the EC? We know that even the best forces of social democracy are using the concept of "the party" as a fetish. Whether the unassailable unity of the party is a mighty force or a serious impediment to the revolutionary movement depends on the structure of the party, its policies at any given moment, its *objective* effects.

The hard core of the revolutionary movement -- the industrial and transport workers -- are today "still" not in the CP. The party is still doing all it can to win them over, but will power and subjective courage alone are not enough. You must have successes to show, and in order to achieve success you must know the best way of achieving it. It may be that this hard core will soon form the core of a new revolutionary organization but will not want to join the CP as it is today; they joined it in 1923 but later left it again, and it is necessary to understand why. The question of a new organization would then assume great importance, as it also would if a viable and permanent mass movement began to form, not among the Social Democratic industrial workers, but among the potentially revolutionary proletarian storm troopers. ² Today, with everything in a state of ferment, we cannot foresee exactly what will happen. The question of a new party would never have come up if there had been the necessary opportunities within the CP for raising or discussing such questions and sounding out the chances of development. That was and is not the case. All we can do is follow closely the process of revolutionary concentration and maturation which is taking place in all strata of the German population at present and infer the concrete situation as it is at any given moment.

If today's revolutionary cadres were primarily concerned not with defending their own organizations but with rallying revolutionary energies, the organization would be supple enough to respond promptly and correctly to the masses. Instead of mechanically calling for strikes, it would be able to help the storm trooper, the youth leader, the women's organizer in their acute difficulties by offering explanations and solutions, and so gain their confidence and eventually their allegiance. The dreary, scholastic, inhibiting aspect of *all* the existing organizations, the thing that so repels the masses, is that each of them believes itself to be the God-given leader of the future revolution and for this reason tries to denigrate every other organization as counter-revolutionary. Such vain arrogance and childish conceit cannot be attacked often or energetically enough. Sex-Pol must make quite sure that it does not regard itself, as constituted today, as the leader of the sexual-political wing of the revolution. Ultimate leadership is not a claim and certainly not a right; it is the result of a process. Whoever succeeds best in grasping the world's events, making them intelligible to the broad

masses -- especially the nonpolitical ones -- and advancing the process of revolutionary ferment will eventually assume leadership. To assert leadership in the revolution is not a merit, a quality or a claim; it is a heavy responsibility; *it is a result*, and therefore it cannot be achieved by words or tricks. Today, in a world situation that is so confused and complex, so little understood, and capable of so many different outcomes, he who proclaims himself most loudly as the sole, true, one hundred percent obvious leader of the revolution that is yet to come will be the first to sink silently into oblivion when the moment comes to speak with *justification* of a revolutionary upsurge.

The following are further points of importance for the rebuilding of the revolutionary movement. In the nation as a whole the really class-conscious proletariat forms a small minority. Even if it is the rightful leader, it still needs allies. German comrades are always telling us that there is every reason for optimism because good revolutionaries are finding each other once more, discussing and working together and advising one another. That is doubtless very important, but it is not yet a reason for optimism. What matters in the first place is whether these good revolutionaries are really in touch with the broad, unorganized masses; whether, in order to enter into such contact, they really listen to the language, the thinking, the contradictions of these broad nonpolitical or politically misled masses; whether they can understand that language, translate it into the language of the revolution and give it back in clear, class-conscious form. These cadres will remain a general staff without an army unless they encourage party officials to become part of the broad masses in order to understand *exactly* what the nonpolitical or politically misled masses have on their minds.

Sectarianism becomes impossible if the party members are no longer merely the executors of the leadership and its decisions but a vital mediator between the leadership and the masses. The task of the leadership is not "to carry the Communist program to the masses" or "to make the masses into class-conscious militants"; its most important task, besides studying the objective historical process, consists in *developing* the revolutionary instincts *which are already there*; and in developing these instincts simultaneously in the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

In today's revolutionary press almost nothing but party jargon is to be found. There is hardly ever any sign of comprehension of the contradictions facing the various strata of the population. Yet, such a dialogue with the broad masses -- both in terms of language and of subject matter -- should fill at least three-quarters of every newspaper; the remaining quarter is enough for reiterating the fundamental principles of Marxism.

To put it differently, until we have learned to present difficult theories in simple language intelligible to everyone, until the masses have reached the point where they begin to be interested in these theories, we must constantly say the same thing twice in different ways: in Marxist language and the language of the broad masses, who are the only people that matter. Without their sympathy and active support for the cause of the revolution we shall always remain miserable word-slingers.

When these questions are discussed, we in Sex-Pol are often asked to provide ready-made recipes. This in itself shows how little the fundamental task of a revolutionary Marxist -- that of being capable of independent thought and action -- has been understood. One can only give examples to illustrate specific principles, but something which is correct in one case may be wrong in another. Let me give a few examples to clarify my meaning.

Folk Songs and Folk Dances as Sources of Revolutionary Feeling

Lenin taught, rightly, that the revolutionary must be able to feel at home in every sphere of life. We might add that he must be able to develop the specific revolutionary tendency inherent in every sphere of life.

If we think of proletarian theater and "red cabarets", we are bound to recognize that apart from a few exceptions, it has simply been a case of mechanically transposing political and trade union slogans to the old art form, e.g., superimposing a revolutionary statement on a bourgeois-type song. The revolutionary artist's most important task is to do precisely what SexPol has learned to do in its own sphere -- namely, to develop specific revolutionary tendencies and forms out of the available material *as it exists under capitalism*.

This does not require much "science", but it does require an uninhibited, free, relaxed and, in short, revolutionary view of life. The CP instituted the "red cabarets" in order to attract more people, including nonpoliticals, to its meetings, and the method worked very well. It was found that the more artistic, rhythmical and popular were the numbers presented, the more striking was their effect. This effect was reduced if the numbers were old bourgeois ones with a revolutionary slogan slapped on as an afterthought. Now, it isn't possible to organize enough red cabarets to bring the entire population to party meetings. From this it follows that revolutionary art, revolutionary feeling, revolutionary rhythms, revolutionary melodies have to be carried to the places where the masses live, work, suffer or just wait. This can certainly be done in countries which are still democratic or only semi-fascist, but it can even be achieved in completely fascist countries by using special stratagems. Revolutionary musicians, dancers, singers, etc., need only the simplest means to form groups including youths, girls, older children and even adults; like street singers, they must go into the courtyards, the market places -- in short, wherever the executors of the future revolution habitually gather. By performing good folk music, folk dances and folk songs, which the revolution can take over because they are intrinsically anticapitalist and therefore are, or can be, adapted to the feelings of the oppressed, they can create and spread that atmosphere which we so badly need to turn the broad masses into sympathizers of the revolution.

A bureaucrat will make all kinds of objections to this proposal; he may even say that it creates a "distraction" from the class struggle, which is "the most important thing". I do not know whether the proposal involves concrete problems, or what these problems are; whoever expects ready-made recipes will never accomplish anything. But in principle -- and never mind the form -- what we of the Sex-Pol group say is true: we must attach the masses to us by *feeling*. And attachment by feeling means trust, like the trust a child has in his mother, who protects and guides him; it means being understood down to one's most secret worries and wishes, including, first and foremost, the most secret thing of all: sexuality.

Revolutionary Scientific Work

Working for the masses also covers scientific research and the questioning of bourgeois science in all its branches, not only political economy. Bourgeois science dominates the formation of ideology in our society, and this domination is the more powerful the nearer the particular branch of science approaches life. We need only think of sexual-political literature

(race doctrine). From this it clearly follows that the neglect of revolutionary scientific work in countries with a high level of culture is bound to reduce our opportunities of influencing the masses. It will also increase our difficulties in constructing a new social order after the victory of the social revolution. By solving the problem of revolutionary scientific work we shall at the same time solve a large part of the problem of the intellectuals.

Once more the reconstruction of the revolutionary movement must begin with an honest look at the way in which revolutionary scientific work has been conducted to date. Here we can only deal with broad outlines. Let us consider just a few important facts. Marxism has been treated as a philosophy for its own sake, mostly in the form of endless debates on "accident and necessity" which no ordinary mortal can understand. Kurt Sauerland's well-known book on dialectical materialism was a classic example of this approach, a combination of philosophical formalism and party opportunism. Scientific research in the natural sciences lay fallow, and in the social sciences the situation was hardly better. We were not up to the standard of the bourgeois scholars. Except for a few good contributions, even the review *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, whose purpose was to cultivate and develop Marxist science, was paralyzed by formal language and abstract dialectics. It never stimulated discussions or effectively intervened in the controversies of bourgeois science. It did nothing but protect its revolutionary loyalty. This raises a question of principle. A revolutionary should not think that he has discharged his task on the scientific front by accusing his opponents of overlooking the theory of the class struggle, or by declaring his loyalty to the revolution in every third sentence. This is in no way a substitute for objective argument.

First of all, we need to take a close look at the situation and structure of bourgeois science in general. It is broken up into a hundred thousand individualistic fragments, serving either the careerism of the lower stratum of scientists or the private obsessions of the higher stratum. Within the same technical field, one scientist cannot understand another. Bourgeois science is academic not only in its language but also in its choice of subjects (compare the number of detailed papers on the structure of brain tissue in chronic alcoholics with that of papers on the social conditions which cause alcoholism). And the closer the subject studied is to real life, the more remote from life is bourgeois science, the more grotesque the theories it produces, the more abstract the discussions around these theories. For this reason a science like, say, mathematics is the most free from the influences of bourgeois thinking, while, say, research into tuberculosis has not yet got to the point of thoroughly studying the effect of poor food and housing on the human lungs. Of psychiatry, the home of the wildest idiocies of all, let it be said only that this science, whose purpose should be to define the fundamental principles of psychical hygiene, operates as a specially designed tool to render this impossible. These examples may suffice to show why Marxist science needs to compete on the terrain of purely technical knowledge so as to become objectively superior to bourgeois science and also to attract the young intellectuals and scientists, whom we shall urgently need after the revolution.

Marxist science cannot be developed simply by sticking the slogan of class struggle onto science like a label: it can only be developed from the questions, problems and findings of individual branches of science itself. It must be objectively demonstrated *where* bourgeois science has failed, *why* it has failed, *where* and *how* the bourgeois world view is an impediment to knowledge, etc. Then, after this has been done, really, objectively done, one has a right to call oneself a Marxist scientist and, as such, to investigate the relationship between individual sciences and the economic class struggle.

The above views are not empty assertions -- they are firmly based on the experience of the development of sex economy. We shall use this special example, therefore, to elucidate a further question of the scientific controversy between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie which, in accordance with the principles of revolutionary politics, leads to a more general problem.

Anyone familiar with the dissensions inside the world of bourgeois science realizes the hopelessness of any attempt to defeat by argument an opponent's false views. Freud discovered that psychological disturbances are consequences of sexual repression. The lunatic asylums, psychiatric clinics and welfare hostels of the capitalist countries are bursting with the products of bourgeois sexual economy. A humorist worked out a little while ago that judging by the increase in the number of the mentally sick in the United States, two hundred and fifty years from now there will only be mentally sick people left. That is not at all as improbable as it sounds. Until a few years ago one could still hope that Freud's revolutionary discoveries might conquer the psychiatric profession and the question of the prophylaxis of neuroses come under urgent consideration. That would have been the first step toward a dialogue between the Marxist and bourgeois views in this field, without the word "Marxism" having to be expressly mentioned from the start. But what actually happened was that psychiatry remained quite untouched, persisted in the nonsensical view of "degenerative predisposition" as the cause of psychological disease, and even in some places won over a part of the psychoanalytical movement. A leading psychoanalyst declared a short while ago that there was no need to bother with prophylaxis of neuroses; it was quite enough to practice individual therapy. The reason is obvious: the question of prophylaxis of neuroses leads to the wider question of the bourgeois sexual order and challenges the very existence of religion and morality. To launch a "Marxist" attack on Freud's errors by "unmasking" him as a "reactionary" would be idiotic. But by objectively demonstrating the areas where Freud is a scientist of genius and where he is an old-hat bourgeois philosopher, one could perform useful Marxist revolutionary work.

Is there any hope, then, that scientific discussions will decide the struggle in the scientific field in favor of revolution? No, that can never happen. This does not mean that we should henceforth reject all discussion: on the contrary, we must promote discussions and try to acquire leading positions in all scientific organizations based on the objective value of our work. We must learn from discussion why and where the bourgeois scientists go wrong in their thinking and ignore essential facts. Only in this way can we ourselves become better trained. But the real struggle is waged elsewhere. To stay with the example of sex: no bourgeois psychiatrist of average mentality will ever accept the view that neuroses, psychoses, addictions, etc., are consequences of the appalling sexual economy of the masses. The broad masses, on the other hand, are extremely interested in these problems, if only because they are a source of serious suffering for them and because the narrow-mindedness of the psychiatrists -- those administrators of the capitalist sexual order -- and the psychological misery resulting from it affect them personally and directly. I am sure that the average working-class youth has a better understanding of the relationship between repressed sexuality and psychological depression or loss of working 'capacity than most average psychiatrists throughout the world.

We can safely say that once the masses are leading a sexually satisfied, healthy life, the question whether mental illness is an expression of a disturbed sexual economy will decide itself even in the minds of the champions of bourgeois morality in the Marxist camp -- the doctors, educators and others -- who, as a result of their bourgeois deformations, reject

psychoanalysis because they fail to understand it. The principle of always turning to the masses, always addressing the masses in an intelligible fashion, applies here too, in the sacred sphere of supposedly unassailable science. Sex-Pol owed its popularity, and the sympathy it received, to broad strata of the German and Austrian population, not to any organization, for it had none; not to any power, for it had none; it owed it solely to its basic principle of making the question of sexual health *a public issue*. That is why even the party bureaucracy is powerless against Sex-Pol, and will remain so.

What is so eminently true of Sex-Pol applies also to every branch of medical or other science -- for instance, tuberculosis research. But revolutionary scientists must not disseminate false, bourgeois ideas among the masses, thus only helping the reaction. They must first work out the principles of a dialectical, materialist approach in their particular field and, only then, put these principles before the masses. It is clearly far better to say nothing at all than to preach the bourgeois notion, while shouting "Long live the revolution", that sexual intercourse is bad for the young.

The masses have a magnificent instinct for the truth, but this instinct is frustrated when the revolutionary organization offers them nothing, and the bourgeois charlatans will offer everything from table-levitating to the miraculous spring at Lourdes.

The Fear of Revolution

The Communist revolutionary movement wants the same as the petty-bourgeois pacifist movement: the abolition of wars and the establishment of peace on earth. The revolutionaries hold the view, rightly, that this goal is attainable only through a forcible overthrow of the rule of capital, e.g., by the transformation of an imperialist war into a civil war. The pacifists reject civil war as just another example of the use of violence. They refuse to recognize that by this rejection they are upholding a system that gives rise to wars.

The broad nonpolitical masses look upon Communists as "men of violence". Moreover, the view of the broad masses is *decisive*. The masses fear violence, want peace and quiet, and for that reason will have nothing to do with Communism. At present, nonetheless, the masses are encouraging the very thing they want to abolish.

Communist propaganda to date has proposed the theory of violence and opposed that of pacifism in an absolute and mechanistic way. That is why a considerable proportion of Social Democrats failed to join the Communist movement. The theory of the seizure of power by violence cannot be abandoned, but neither can the broad masses be directly won over to it.

One of the major strengths of the National Socialist movement has been that, besides the illusion of a "German revolution", they promised the masses a *nonviolent* seizure of power. In that way, quite unconsciously, of course, it appealed to both the revolutionary and the pacifistic wishes of the masses.

In order to resolve this contradiction it is necessary to pose two questions: First, what do the masses feel about violence? Experience shows that they are pacifistic and afraid of violence. The second question is: What is the relationship between the use of violence (which we know to be necessary) and the masses' attitude toward it? The answer to both questions is, and can only be, the same. *The larger the mass base of the revolutionary movement, the less violence will be required*, and the more, also, will the masses lose their fear of revolution. The

increasing degree of influence of the revolutionary movement inside the army and the state apparatus has the same effect. For this reason the Russian revolution had only a minimum of casualties. It was the imperialist intervention that caused the blood bath. By then it was historically clear and obvious to everyone that the blame lay with the imperialists and the White Guard.

However, the size of the mass base will depend on the extent to which the revolutionary party can grasp the language of all the working strata of the population and is able to articulate their desires and revolutionary ideas. This is where one needs a conscious mass-psychological praxis.

Possibly, at this point, "a principled opponent" will object that the Russian revolution succeeded -- as one so often hears without the aid of sexual politics and mass psychology. Our immediate answer would be that the Russian peasants were not bourgeoisified as Americans are; that the Russian proletariat are not identical with the British working class, and that, moreover, the Russian revolution was led by Lenin, who was the greatest mass psychologist of all time.

To return to the question of the mass base of the revolution, let us consider a second, still more concrete example.

The Cop as Stand-in for the State and as an Individual

The ordinary German cop has always been full of curious contradictions. In a logical development of its "social fascism" theory, the Communist press has incessantly complained of "police violence", "police mobs", etc. The party's anger at the police is perfectly understandable, for the police attacked and broke up every demonstration. But however justifiable its action may be, a revolutionary leadership has no right to give in to anger or other feelings of affect. It should not ignore the fact that without the sympathy and active help of a large part (indeed the majority) of the police, an insurrection cannot succeed except with an immense loss of life. The same is true of the army.

The Communist leadership should not for a moment forget that the policeman and the soldier are sons of proletarians, peasants, employees, etc. Instead of raging against them, it should ask itself what goes on in the mind of the average policeman or soldier to make him turn his back so dramatically on his own class.

I don't know if the sketch that follows comes near the truth. It may not. But think of a mounted police captain armed and helmeted, riding high above the crowd on the street; and then imagine him at home, in the midst of his proletarian family circle, as brother, husband or father; imagine him in bed, or in his underpants! In the street, he is the "representative of the state". Little working-class girls involuntarily act ingratiatingly toward him; for haven't their mothers told them they will go get the policeman if they are "naughty", that is, if they disobey, or perhaps play with their genitals? So, of course, the policeman sees himself as the custodian of order and it makes him feel very grand. That is the reactionary element in him. At home and in the barracks, he is the underpaid, depersonalized, eternally subservient stooge of capitalism: a contradiction which, with many other similar ones, is decisive for the revolutionary struggle.

The majority of the Prussian cops were until recently Social Democrats. During the weeks in which Hitler came to power, many of them helped Communists and Socialists to escape the persecution of the S.S. A consistent, reasonable, understanding use of reactionary propaganda could have fairly easily resolved the policeman's psychical contradiction. But let me say it again: we offer no recipes, only a method of viewing various problems.

Here is an example of how *not* to do things. When the von Papen government was formed in July 1932, one of its first actions was to stop women from visiting the police barracks, which had previously been allowed. The resulting attitude was somewhat rebellious. Those of us who worked in the "lower" organizations heard from many sides that the mood of the younger cops was more or less as follows: "We've put up with a great deal without protest -- reduced wages, longer working hours, and so on. But we're damned if we'll let them take the "girls away too". Sex-Pol immediately informed the Central Committee and advised it to take account of this mood, and to come out publicly in support of this particular interest of the police. The C.C. wouldn't hear of it. They said it had "nothing to do with the class struggle". We also found that in cases where cops had attended the Sex-Pol medical-advice centers their hostility toward the working-class movement was considerably reduced. But no one paid attention to such facts. Admittedly they do not belong to "high-level" politics. Yet they show quite unequivocally that a direct approach to various strata of the population must be based not on abstract political issues, but on the actual needs and preoccupations of the masses.

If we remain deaf to the small, seemingly incidental and secondary phenomena of the life of the masses, the masses will never believe that we will understand them after we have seized power.

A friend of the Sex-Pol movement picked up two apprentices while traveling by car on a country road. The talk quickly turned to politics. The boys were real proletarian lads, not yet of voting age, with a vaguely socialist outlook, but, as they said, without any interest in politics. They left all that kind of stuff to their honored Social Democratic Premier, and would gladly surrender their right to vote, too, in exchange for the pretty girls they met on their travels. Our friend assured us that these were certainly not depraved vagabonds, but healthy, average working class boys. Anyone who has no ear, no understanding and no will to learn from such things is a hopeless case.

In Austria, soldiers from working-class and peasant families have just killed hundreds of their class comrades and razed their homes to the ground. Nowhere was the question asked: How is such a thing possible, and what can we do about it? Yet, on this question, and on the answer to it, depends nothing more nor less than the "high-level" strategical question of whether, and how, insurrections and street fighting are possible, given the present level of military equipment in the hands of the state.

Instead of hurling abuse at each other's heads and calling one another "traitors of the working class", which leads nowhere because no one is better than the next man, those who call themselves the leaders of the proletariat would do better to ask such questions, and to try to understand these soldiers; then they would learn how to influence the army and the police.

The Development of a Revolutionary State Policy from the People's Needs

When a representative of Sex-Pol met with Wilhelm Pieck, the representative of the party's Central Committee, for a discussion in 1932, Pieck said that the views expounded in The Imposition of Sexual Morality contradicted those of the party and of Marxism.

Asked to explain, he said, "Your starting point is consumption, ours is production; therefore, you are not Marxists." The Sex-Pol spokesman asked whether human needs arose out of production or whether, on the contrary, production was there to satisfy human needs. Pieck failed to understand this question. Only two years later did the distinction become clear: economistic communism developed its entire work and propaganda solely from the objective aspect of social existence, from the progress of the productive forces, from economic contradictions between states, the superiority of the Soviet planned economy over capitalist anarchy, etc., and it then "tied the politics of state into the small daily needs". But this tie-in was an utter fiasco. Sex-Pol, on the other hand, aroused maximum interest, even among the most politically confused people at every level, by developing the necessities of the social revolution out of subjective needs, and by basing all political issues on the "whether" and the "how" of satisfying the needs of the masses. Herein lies not only the fundamental difference between living revolutionary work and dogmatic, scholastic "Marxism", but also the reason why even the best party officials, once they get stuck in "high state politics", fail to understand what Sex-Pol is all about.

Some Comintern officials, of course, are aware that something is missing from their work. Yet they cannot find the concrete point at which state politics and mass needs come together. For example, Manuilsky in his speech entitled "The Revolutionary Crisis is Maturing" delivered at the Seventeenth Party Congress of the C.P.S.U. (quoted from *Rundschau*, No. 16 on page 586) said:

Let us take our Communist Youth International. The Communist Youth International has, over a period of years under the guidance of the Comintern, raised a splendid generation of young Bolsheviks who have more than once proved their boundless devotion to the cause of Communism. But it has not proved capable of penetrating deep into the masses of working youth. The Social Democrats haven't got this youth either. The youth in the capitalist countries belong to the millions-strong sports organizations created by the bourgeoisie, by its military staffs and by its priests. In Germany, a certain group of unemployed youth has gone into the fascist barracks. But the members of the Young Communist League have not quite understood this lesson. In Germany they fought the fascists courageously. In a number of countries they are doing quite good work in the army, and are getting long sentences of imprisonment for it, yet it no more occurs to them to join, say, a Catholic Sports organization, where tens of thousands of young workers meet, than it would occur to the Pope to join the League of Atheists in hopes of making propaganda for Catholicism. (*Laughter*). But members of the YCL and Communists are not bound by prestige considerations as the Vicar of Christ is. Communist and YCL organizations must be always on the move, they must be present wherever workers are present, they must be in the sports organizations, In such leisure-time organizations as the *Dopolavoro* in Italy, in the labor service camps, but above all they must be in the factories.

All this is perfectly correct, but the most important thing is lacking. When a member of the YCL works inside a Christian youth organization, the economico-political analyses of the CP's Central Committee are of absolutely no use. to him in attracting the interest of his young Christian colleagues. He has got to know what he should talk about and what solutions Communism has to offer, not so much to problems of political economy as to the special problems of Catholic youth. From this starting point he can go on, very gradually, to show how a planned economy would serve as a basis for solving personal problems. And so we

may say that Sex-Pol agrees with Manuilsky in principle, so far as the inner-organizational work of Communists is concerned, but it differs profoundly from him on the concrete questions of the actual interests of average young men and women, Christian or otherwise, and the crucial personal problems that should serve as the starting point for the work of the YCL propagandist. [3](#) The same applies to every formalistic notion of the Comintern leaders.

They are always saying, quite rightly, that work concerning the masses is necessary, but at the same time they reject the *concrete contents* of such necessary work, especially if these contents are personal and removed from "high politics". They see the personal and the political as opposite poles instead of recognizing the dialectical relationship between them. Not only are some personal problems (such as the question of sexual partners or of separate dwellings for young people) among the most typical social problems, but one could go so far as to say that politics is nothing more than the praxis of the needs and interests of the different strata and age groups of society.

To sum up very briefly: the difference between revolutionary and bourgeois politics is that the former sets out to serve the needs of the masses, whereas the latter is wholly founded on the structural, historically conditioned inability of the masses to formulate their needs.

Anyone who has worked in Communist cells knows how even party members feel about "high politics". The political lecture was part and parcel of the weekly meeting. The speaker would hold forth about bourgeois politics -- some would do it better, some less well -- and all the others would listen with more or less interest, but always passively. Discussion would spring up, as a rule, only in cells where intellectuals or old, well-trained party members who actually enjoyed discussing "high politics" formed the majority. In the last few months before Hitler's seizure of power it happened more and more frequently that proletarian comrades, quite unfamiliar with "high politics" but aware that something had to be done, interrupted the dull political lecture to say something like: "You've been telling us for years what the bourgeois wants and what the bourgeois does, now tell us what *we* ought to do, what *our* politics ought to be." The speakers did not know what to say. When the success of Sex-Pol speakers began to be talked about in various branches, and it was said that Sex-Pol speakers could get the most uneducated members of the masses and the party interested in politics by starting with personal issues and proceeding to political ones, the party began asking for Sex-Pol speakers because they wanted to get the "nonpoliticals" to their group evenings. The party's work with women and youth was failing everywhere because the same method of talking about the "political situation" was used everywhere and people everywhere were equally bored. But the Sex-Pol speakers were trained to inquire first of all into the personal worries of women, young people, the unemployed, etc. They would propose "nonpolitical" subjects, such as "How should I educate my child?" or "Boys and girls in our organization". Every discussion of these issues relating to everyday life aroused great interest and lively participation on the part of the audience and always led to the great political questions, which, when presented in the old form, stifled any revolutionary feeling. Instead of going in for "high politics" and talking about "how to tie in the day-to-day problems" and then virtually excluding such problems from the discussion, the Sex-Pol proceeded systematically, always beginning with personal issues and ending up with, say, the Hitler-Brüning political setup. The official party representatives attacked our method as "counter-revolutionary diversionism". Yet they kept sending for us to come to Oranienburg, Jüterbog, Dresden, Frankfurt, Steglitz, Stettin, etc., to "bring in the nonpoliticals". In large factories, where the employees were widely contaminated by National Socialism and had been out of touch with the red trade unions for years, the Sex-Pol persuaded dozens of people to come to meetings,

revived the work of the Communist cells, got women and juveniles interested, etc. The movement was too young and too weak; at first it was reluctantly tolerated and later it was banned by the party leadership; all it could do was to gather experience. Its method, which was attacked as a reactionary diversion from politics, was in reality the true method of revolutionary propaganda. This was proved by the fact that the "nonpolitical" always became interested in politics in the end.

No revolutionary organization will ever be victorious without the revolutionary politicization of the masses, who are simply not interested in high politics in the old form. The so-called revolutionary campaigns to which the masses responded with a greater or lesser degree of indifference were attempts to "mobilize" the masses by the force of example. In the majority of cases these attempts failed completely.

The experience of Sex-Pol work in Germany can be applied to all fields of revolutionary politics. The sluggish masses cannot be politicized by example alone, still less by psychologically false appeals on the lines of "To the Toilers of the World", etc. If the masses are to become politically active, they must begin by asking themselves the fundamental question of revolutionary politics: "What is it we want? How do we get it?" If it is true as we don't doubt that it is -- that the social revolution will make a reality of the idea of social democracy, so that the entire population will participate in politics (not in the bourgeois game of diplomacy but in revolutionary politics), and that it will not only "draw" the masses into the work of organizing social life but actually place the main part of that work in the hands of the masses -- if all this is true, the fundamental principles of work with the masses which we have only cursorily sketched here with the help of a few examples become an inescapable necessity. These examples make no claim to being universally applicable; they only suggest ways of dealing with the question of whether and how the latent energy of the masses can be roused to active life.

Taking Control of What is Rightfully One's Own

It is clear that there can never be a leadership capable of surveying and directing *all* the problems and tasks thrown up by social life. Only a bourgeois dictatorship can do this because it takes no account of the needs of the masses, and because it actually depends on the apparent lack of demands and the political apathy of the masses. Under capitalism today labor has been socialized for a long time; only the appropriation of the products of labor is private.

One of the social revolution's promises is that it will socialize large factories, i.e., place them under the self-management of the workers. We know the difficulties that the Soviet Union had with such self-management at the beginning and is still having today. Revolutionary work in factories can be successful only if it arouses the workers' *objective* interest in production and proceeds from there. But workers today have no interest in production as such, certainly not in its present form. In order to acquire a revolutionary interest in production they must think of it as their own property *now*, under capitalism. Workers in factories must be made aware that their labor makes these factories theirs by right, and only theirs; that this right, which the capitalists at the moment still claim for themselves, leads to many duties; that, in order to be one's own master, one has to know something about industrial management, organization, etc. Our propaganda must make it clear that it is the workers, not the present owners of capital and the means of production, who are the real masters of the factory. In terms of mass psychology it makes an enormous difference whether one says, "We are going to expropriate the large capitalists", or "We are taking our property into our rightful control". In the first case, the

average nonpolitical or politically deformed industrial worker will react with a sense of guilt and a certain inhibition, as though he were seizing someone else's property. In the second case, he becomes conscious of his legitimate ownership, which is based on his labor, and the bourgeois view of the "sacred" nature of private property will lose its power over him. The problem is not that the ruling class disseminates and defends its ideology; the problem is why the masses accept it.

Is it beyond the powers of a revolutionary organization to explain to the workers that they are the rightful owners of the factories they work in, and that they should start thinking about their responsibilities *as of now*? Just as the petty-bourgeois and proletarian women in the Sex-Pol groups were anxious to learn now what the best way was of bringing up children, organizing housework, etc., whether it was a good idea to set up collective kitchens on every floor of a tenement building, etc., so, in the same way, workers in factories must start *now* to prepare for the take-over of these factories. They must learn to think for themselves, they must train themselves to look out for everything that will be needed and to think of how it should be organized. The Soviet experience can help them in this process. But it cannot save them the work they must do themselves, for our conditions and possibilities are completely different. Without any doubt, this is the only way in which workers can be given an interest in the social revolution -- not by learned lectures on the political situation and the Five-Year Plan. The actual take-over of power in factories must be preceded by concrete preparation for this take-over *in the mind*. The same applies to every youth organization, every sports organization, every military group. This, and only this, deserves to be called "arousing class consciousness".

The revolutionary party leadership has and can have no other task than that of working on these preliminary stages of revolutionary social democracy, guiding the preparations, making its own superior knowledge available. Drawn into concrete work in this way, every worker will feel he is the real master of his factory and will no longer see the entrepreneur as an employer but as the exploiter of his own labor power. A revolutionary leader should know what surplus value is, and a worker should know exactly how much profit for the entrepreneur he is producing with his labor. *That is class consciousness*. Then he will strike, not just out of a sense of solidarity, not just because the shop steward tells him to, but *in his own interest*, and no trade union leader will be able to deceive him ever again. He will fight for his own interests -- more than that, he will force the strike upon his weak-kneed trade union leaders and will sack them if they let him down. Until now, revolutionary propaganda has consisted, in substance, only of negative criticism. It must learn to be constructive, anticipatory and positive as well.

Exactly the same principle of *becoming conscious* through tackling concrete problems applies to youth of every social class and stratum. Working-class youth will take part in concrete trade union work. Others will concern themselves with organizing their personal lives, dealing with their parental conflicts, solving the problems of a sexual partner and housing. In this way they will create new forms of social life (at first only in the mind), then they will argue and eventually fight for these new forms; nothing will stop them. Talks on the political situation or even about the "sexual problem of youth" are useless. That is control from above. Youth must begin *as of now* to organize its own life in every field. At first, in doing this, the young people cannot pay much attention to the authorities or the police, nor should we expect them to; they should go right ahead and do what they think right and what they believe they can accomplish. They will realize soon enough that they are rigidly fenced in on all sides, that the system makes it impossible to organize even the simplest and most obvious things in the life

of young people; thus their own practice will show them the nature of revolutionary politics and revolutionary necessity. If the capitalist authorities interfere with their efforts to obtain contraceptives, or, for instance, to organize cooperatives, if they interfere with threats, then with arrests, finally with heavy sentences, then and only then will young people feel acutely where and how they are oppressed; then they will learn to fight, not in a vacuum, not for the sake of slogans brought in from outside, but against the harsh reality of life under capitalism. That is how the young Czechs learned to fight when the police attacked their camping grounds, where they were leading the sexual life they wanted to lead. They fought for their rights in the streets -- bare fists against the power of the state. In Germany today, people camping together have to produce their marriage licenses; German youth so far has accepted the ban, reluctantly but without protest, still hoping to find ways of circumventing it. Their awareness that they have a right to run their own lives as they see fit will inevitably drive them, too, to fight for it. All they need is a little support, an organization, a party which understands them, helps them, speaks on their behalf.

Conclusions

The class consciousness of the masses is not a knowledge of the historical or economic laws that govern the existence of the human being, but it is

1. knowledge of one's own vital necessities in all spheres;
2. knowledge of ways and possibilities of satisfying them;
3. knowledge of the obstacles that a social system based on private property puts in the way of their satisfaction;
4. knowledge of one's own inhibitions and fears that prevent one from clearly realizing one's needs and the obstacles to their satisfaction ("the enemy within" is a particularly true image of the psychical inhibitions of the oppressed individual);
5. knowledge that mass unity makes an invincible force against the power of oppressors.

The class consciousness of the revolutionary leadership (the revolutionary party) is nothing more than knowledge plus the ability to articulate on behalf of the masses what they cannot express themselves. The revolutionary liberation from capitalism is the final act that will grow spontaneously from the fully developed class consciousness of the masses once the revolutionary leadership has understood the masses in every aspect of their life.

Citations

1 The question of Soviet foreign policy and its connection with mass psychological problems require detailed discussion elsewhere.

2 The killing at Hitler's orders of the storm troopers' leaders -- Röhm, Schleicher and others - - on June 30, 1934, showed that the contradictions between revolutionary and reactionary trends in fascism described in Mass Psychology of Fascism -- contradictions which, in fascist ideology, were presented as a unity -- had become irreconcilable. I say this, not -- as the "only true leaders of the revolution" do all the time -- in order to prove that my analysis was correct, but for another reason. Shortly before the event, the Comintern had rejected with vehement abuse any attempt to view the Nazi Party as anything more than a servant of finance capital. (To be precise, the attempt consisted in seeing Nazism as a siphoning of the revolutionary energy of the masses to reactionary ends.) The Comintern then interpreted the

killing, which removed the leadership of the left-wing of the Nazi Party, as a confirmation of the "revolutionary upsurge" it had predicted! It is to be hoped that the history of the revolutionary movement will never see another instance of such ineptitude and superficiality. Those of us who took part in the inner-party struggles between 1929 and 1933 know that anyone who drew attention to the inarticulate revolutionary potential of the storm troops was immediately accused of sabotage. This happened to anyone who mentioned the undeniable fact that large sections of the R.F. (Red Front) had joined the storm troops, or emphasized that the storm troops recruited their members among the working class and were only objectively, not subjectively, mere mercenaries of capital. The party did not like to hear such things; it saw only the reactionary function of fascism and not the revolutionary energies of its mass base; and as a result it lost the battle. Now, after the event, when the contradictions are obvious to everyone, it admits what it previously anathematized. Those who are "loyal to the party" will say: Well, that's better than nothing, you mustn't expect too much; after all, the Comintern is changing course in its estimation of fascism as well as on the question of a united front with the Social Democrats. Our answer to that is: *A leadership which is not ahead of the masses in understanding facts and processes, a leadership which does not foresee events, isn't a leadership but a brake on historical development.* When good Communists make such excuses for the leadership, they do it out of an unconscious fear of authority. Practical experience of party life has taught us that the average party official, unless he is defending a party decision, sees more and thinks better by himself, purely by instinct, than any official at the top. *Today there are new processes which have to be foreseen and predicted on the basis of present contradictions if one means to master the future instead of facing it completely unprepared.* For instance, there is a terrible risk that if the gigantic mass movements which are springing up in a number of countries (U.S.A., France) are not properly led and made conscious of their goal, they will peter out and will be followed by the bitterest disappointment and lethargy. It is just as possible that the growth of indignation and political insight among the masses will develop into a world-revolutionary situation. We are entitled to say that after the events of June 30, reinforced by Germany's grave economic disorganization, we might have dealt the decisive blow if only the Communist leadership in Germany had thoroughly prepared itself for such an opportunity since 1929, or at least since 1932. We should use the past not to make excuses but to learn. Today we need to understand the main lines of historical development, as well as the social factors which impede development, if we are to seize the initiative when the system breaks down. Until then, the broad masses of the world's population must come to feel, slowly but unshakably, that we Communists are the only ones who understand them. We must understand the masses, and not just the language of Barthou and Litvinov and our own daydreams. Such confidence cannot be created by sleight of hand; it must be a true, fervent confidence in us, in Communism, such that the "sole leaders" not only were unable to obtain in the space of ten years but actually undermined by their mistakes and lack of insight. The impending war will doubtless be the next enormous chance that will offer itself to the social revolution. We must not miss it as we missed the chances of July 20, 1932, of December 1933 and January 1934, and of June 30, 1934. But first the revolutionaries will have to get rid of their own blind faith in authority.

3 See [The Sexual Struggle of Youth](#). This book was banned by the German Communist Party, while young people at all levels snatched it up with the utmost eagerness.

Revision History

Release	Date	Released By	Format and Features
v1.0	1934	Wilhelm Reich	Original text published by Wilhelm Reich under the pseudonym, Ernest Parell.
v2.0	1966, 1971, 1972	Vintage Books (New York)	Published as Section 5 in <u>Reich: Sex-Pol Essays, 1929-1934</u> ; edited by Lee Baxandall; foreward by Bertell Ollman; pages 277-358.
v3.0	September 11, 2006	Lust for Life	HTML for the internet.



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