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THE EXPROPRIATION OF THE EXPROPRIATORS

KARL KAUTSKY, IN THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE DAY AFTER THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

must first of all clear away a suspicion which will be aroused in many people by the title of this work. "On the Day after the Revolution" does not mean that we "overthrow" the bourgeoisie once and for all. The Marxists are only disingenuous when they expect by a coup d'etat to make themselves dictators, and is not it a return to Utopianism when I attempt to describe a movement of which we can know nothing as to the circumstances under which it will take place?

I hasten then to remark that I consider the revolution an historical process that may easily draw itself out into a decade of hard battles. On the other side I am thoroughly convinced that it is not our task to invent recipes for the kitchens of the future, and when more than ten years ago the German Social Democracy proposed to include in its program demands for such measures as would accelerate the transformation from a capitalist to a socialist manner of production, I opposed this because I maintained that the party could not lay out a definite road for conditions of which we can have only a dim presentiment, and which may easily surprise us with much that is wholly unexpected.

But I maintain that it is a help to political clearness to examine the problems that will grow out of the conquest of political power by us. This is also valuable for propaganda since our opponents frequently assert that our victory will give us unsolvable problems, and we have in our own ranks also people who are unable to paint the results of our victory black enough. According to these people the day of our victory is also the day of our downfall. Therefore it is important to investigate and know how far this is the case.

But if one wishes to attain definite results in this direction and not get lost in endless windings, then we must investigate these problems in a simple form such as never exists in reality and abstracted from all complications. This is a customary process in science whereby one remains entirely conscious that in reality things are never so simple, or develop so smoothly as is the case in the abstraction. I have already said that the social revolution is a process of many years. But to reduce things to their simplest forms we must proceed from the idea that on some fine day the proletariat captures entire political power without restrictions at one stroke and is enabled to exercise it in strict accord with its class interests. The first, certainly could not occur and the latter can never be completely the case. The proletariat itself is not sufficiently united nor enough of a uniform mass to permit such a condition. The proletariat divides into perceptibly different grades, different in their rate of development, different also in their intellectual and economic stage of evolution. It is also very probable that simultaneous with the rise of the proletariat other social grades close to them will be raised, such for example as a portion of the small bourgeoisie, or the small farmers, whose intellectual attitude is not yet fully proletarian. Friction and mistakes of manifold forms will arise from this, so that we shall never come to just what we wish, and shall never have exactly that which we should have. We must however at this time leave these disturbing factors out of consideration.

On the other hand we must proceed through-out this investigation from certain assumptions. We cannot accept as our foundation a picture of the conditions as they may develop in the future for this would lead us into fantasies. And yet it is certain that we shall not gain our victory under present conditions. Revolution itself presupposes a long and profound struggle that will in itself greatly change our present social and political structure. After the conquest of political power by the proletariat, problems will arise of which we know nothing and many with which we are occupied to-day will by that time be solved. New means to the solution of these different problems will also arise of which we to-day have no suspicion.

Just as in natural philosophy the law of falling bodies are investigated in a vacuum, and not in moving air so here we investigate the situation of the conquering proletariat under presumptions which cannot occur in their complete purity; that is under the postulate that some morning we shall at a single blow come into complete domination while the means which will be at hand for the solution of our task will be those that exist today. We can by this means attain results that will be differentiated from the actual course of coming events in exactly the same way as the laws of falling bodies from the actual fall of various substances. But in spite of these variations the laws of falling bodies actually exist and govern the fall of every single substance and the rate of fall of these can only be determined when we have first understood these laws.

So it is that the outlooks and obstacles for the conquering proletariat actually will be distorted in the road we shall take (taking as a point of departure the method of investigation) and they will undoubtedly play an important role in the social revolution and its results, even if the actuality is something wholly different from that we here consider it. And it is only in this way that one can come to scientifically definite judgments concerning the outcome of the revolution. Those to whom this road appears too uncertain to form a basis for prognostication must remain silent whenever this subject is under discussion and simply declare: "Whoever lives will know how it will come out and what is undeniably the proper road."

Only such problems of the social revolution are capable of discussion as can be determined in this manner. Concerning all others no judgment can be made either in this or in any other direction.

THE EXPROPRIATION OF THE EXPROPRIATORS.

Let us imagine then that this fine day has already come, in which at one stroke all power is thrown into the lap of the proletariat. How would it begin? Not how would it begin upon the grounds of this or that theory, or opinion, but must begin driven thereto by its class interests and the compulsion of economic necessity.

In the first place it is self-evident that it would recover what the bourgeoisie has lost. It would sweep all remnants of feudalism away and realize that democratic programme for which the bourgeoisie once stood. As the lowest of all classes it is also the most democratic of all classes. It would extend universal suffrage to every individual and establish complete freedom of press and assembly. It would make the state completely independent of the church and abolish all rights of inheritance. It would establish complete autonomy in all individual communities and abolish militarism. This last could be brought about in two ways; through the introduction of universal armament and the dissolution of the army. Universal armament is a political measure and dissolution of the army is a financial one. The former can under certain conditions cost as much as a standing army. But it is essential to the security of democracy, in order to take away from the government its most powerful means of opposing the people. Dissolution against aims mainly at a diminution of the military budget.

It can, however, be carried through in such a manner as to strengthen still further the power of the government, if in place of an army built on universal compulsory military service an army of characterless slum proletarians is substituted which will lend itself to anything for money. A proletarian regime would necessarily find a way to unite both methods so as to arm the people and to simultaneously make an end of the disturbance brought about by the installation of new weapons, cannons, warships and fortresses.

Undoubtedly the victorious proletariat would also make fundamental reforms in taxation. It would endeavor to abolish all the taxes that today rest upon the laboring population—first of all the indirect ones that increase the cost of living, and would draw the sums necessary to the covering of governmental expenses from the great properties by means of a progressive income tax supplemented by a property tax. I shall return to this point later. This must suffice for the present suggestion.

A particularly important field for us is that of education. Popular schools have always occupied the attention of proletarian parties and they even played a role in the old communist sects of the Middle Ages. It must always be one of the aims of the thinking proletariat to deprive the possessing classes of the monopoly of culture. It is self-evident that the new regime would increase and improve the schools and pay their teachers better. But we would go still further. To be sure the victorious proletariat, no matter how radically minded it may be, cannot at a single stroke abolish class differences, for these have risen from many centuries of development and these causes and their results are not swept away as easily as a chalk mark is wiped from a slate with a sponge. But the school can prepare the road in this direction and contribute very essentially to the abolition of class differences in that all children will be equally well nourished and clothed, and instructed in the same manner while at the same time the possibility of a diverse development of their intellectual and bodily activities is retained.

We must not overvalue the influence of the school. Life is mightier than it and where it comes in opposition to actuality it will certainly be forced to give way. When, for example, the effort is made today to abolish class difference through the schools not much progress can be made. But the school when it works in the direction of the existing social development, powerfully assists this movement. Where these social conditions are also operating in the direction of class interests the school can co-operate and at least within a limited sphere, realize for the generation coming the domination in which grade the whole society of this generation is simultaneously growing toward.

All these means that bourgeois radicalism has already placed before itself, but a certain power, and a disregard of capital of which no bourgeois class is capable are essential to such an attainment. Such a school as is here outlined would, in Germany, for example, according to the reckoning which I have made in my Agrarfrage demand one and a half or two million marks yearly. Almost double the present military budget! Such a sum for school purposes can only be obtained by a proletarian ruled community that does not have a respectful attitude towards great incomes.

But the revolution would naturally not stop at these transformations. It would not be simply a bourgeois democratic, but a proletarian revolution. We shall not, as we have already stated, investigate what the proletariat would do upon the basis of this or that theory, for we do not know what theories may appear or under what circumstances the next revolution will be carried through. We only investigate what a victorious proletariat, if it is to advance purposefully, will be compelled to do by the pressure of economic conditions.

There is one problem above all others with which the proletarian regime must primarily occupy itself. It will in all cases be compelled to solve the question of the relief of the unemployed. Enforced idleness is the greatest curse of the laborer. For him it signifies misery, humiliation, crime. The laborer lives only from the sale of his labor power, and when he can find no purchaser for this he is delivered up to hunger. And even when the laborer has found his labor the unemployed still torture him, for he is never secure from the loss of his labor and consequent misery. A proletarian regime would in every case make an end to this condition even if the proletarians were not Socialists but simply Liberals as in England. In just what manner the problem of the unemployed would be solved we shall not here attempt to investigate. There are many different methods, and many plans to this end have been made by economists. For example it has been sought from the bourgeois point of view to insure against the necessity of unemployment by taxation, and in part this has been done. But a bourgeois society can only create the most insufficient patchwork in this field because it is itself the bough from which unemployment hangs. Only the proletarian and

the victorious proletariat can and will enact the measures which are capable of completely abolishing the necessity of the unemployed whether this be through sickness or otherwise. An actually effective maintenance of all the unemployed must completely alter the relative strength of the proletariat and capitalist. It will make the proletariat master in the factory. That the laborer of today is compelled to sell himself to the employer and that the latter can exploit and enslave him is because of the ghost of the unemployed and the hunger whip that swings above his head. If the laborer can once be secure of existence even when he is not working, nothing would be easier than for him to overthrow capital. He no longer needs capitalists, while the latter cannot continue his business without him. Once things have gone thus far the employer would be beaten in every conflict with his employees and be quickly compelled to give in to them. The capitalists could then perhaps continue to be the directors of the factories, but they would cease to be their masters and exploiters. Once the capitalists recognized, however, that they had the right to bear only the risk and burdens of capitalist burdens, these men would be the very first ones to renounce the further extension of capitalist production and to demand that their undertakings be purchased because they could no longer carry them on with any advantage. We have already had similar results. This was the case, for example, in Ireland at the time the anti-rent movement reached its highest point and the land owners were not in a position to forcibly collect their rents. Accordingly it was the landlords themselves who demanded to purchase all their lands and to lease the land to the tenants. We could expect the same from the capitalist undertakers under a proletarian regime, even if this regime was not dominated by Socialist theories and did not proceed directly from the point of view of bringing the capitalist means of production into social possession. Capitalists would themselves demand that their means of production be purchased. The political domination of the proletariat and the continuation of the capitalist system of production are irreconcilable. Whoever concedes the possibility of the first must also grant the possibility of the disappearance of the latter.

The question then arises as to what purchasers are at the command of capitalists when they wish to sell their undertakings. A portion of the factories, mines, etc., could be sold directly to the laborers who are working them, and could be henceforth operated co-operatively; another portion could be sold to co-operative industries, and still another to the communities or to the states. It is clear, however, that capital would find its most extensive and generous purchaser in the States or municipalities, and for this very reason the majority of the industries would pass into the possession of the State or the municipalities. The Social Democrats when they came into control would strive consciously for this solution is well recognized. On the other side, even a proletarian which was not governed by Socialist ideas would proceed from the point of view of transforming the State or municipal property those industries which for natural reasons—for example, mines—or through the form of their organization—as, for example, trusts—have become monopolies.

These private monopolies have become unbearable, not simply for the wage-workers, but for all classes of society who do not share in their ownership. It is only the weakness of the bourgeois world, as opposed to capital, which hinders it from taking effective action against these monopolies. A proletarian revolution must from its very necessity lead to the abolition of private property in these monopolies. They are today the extreme and dominant form in which the whole economic life and develop with great rapidity. Their nationalization and communalization signifies simply the domination of the whole productive process by society and its organs—the State and municipalities.

The industries which are most prepared for nationalization are the national means of transportation, railroads and steamships, together with those which produce raw materials and partially produced goods: for example, mines, forests, iron foundries, machine manufactures, etc. These are also the very industries in which the highest degree of trustification are highest developed. The manufacture of raw material and partially produced articles for personal consumption as well as small trading have many local characteristics, and are still largely decentralized. In these spheres the municipality and co-operative governmental production interests, and trustification are highest developed. On the other side this field is extended by the development of commerce and of the great industries, which bursts the local bonds of the market for each branch of production one after another, and transforms one after another from a local into a national industry. For example, gas lighting is clearly a municipal business. The development of electric lighting and the transformation of power in mountainous regions makes the nationalization of water power necessary. This operates also to transform illumination from a municipal to a national business. Again, the business of the shoemaker was formerly confined to the local market. The shoe factory does not supply simply the community, but the whole nation, with its production, and is ripe not for communalization, but for nationalization. The same is true of sugar factories, breweries, etc.

The trend of evolution under a proletarian regime would be towards making the national form of industry predominant.

So much then concerning the property—in the means of production of the great industries, including those in agriculture. What then is to happen to money capital and landed property? Money capital is that portion of capital taking the form of interest-bearing loans. The money capitalist fulfills

no personal function in the social life, and can without difficulty be at once expropriated. This will be all the more readily done as it is this portion of the capitalist class, the financier, who is most superfluous, and who is continually usurping domination over the whole economic life. He is also the master of the great private monopolies, the trusts, etc., and it is therefore impossible to expropriate industrial capital without including money capital. They are too completely bound up in each other. The socialization of capital industries (as one may designate for short the transformation to national, municipal and co-operative possession) will carry with it the socialization of the greater part of the money capital. When a factory or a piece of landed property is nationalized, its debts will be also nationalized, and private debts will become public debts. In the case of a corporation the stockholders will become holders of government bonds.

In this connection comes the consideration of landed property. I refer here to property in land, and not agricultural industry. The great capitalist socially operated agricultural industries will be subject to the same evolution as the other great industries. They will lose their wage-slaves and be compelled to offer their possessions to the State or municipality for purchase, and will thereby become socialized. The little farming industries may well remain private property. But I shall return to this subject later.

But we are not here discussing agricultural industry, but the ownership of land, independent of industry, the private property in the ground that yields to its possessor ground rent, through leasing or renting or interest on a mortgage, whether the property be urban or rural.

What we said of the money capitalist holds true also of the land owner. He likewise has no longer any personal function to fulfill in the economic life, and can easily be shoved to one side. As noted above in the instance of private monopoly, so with regard to private property in land, we find much opposition even in bourgeois circles, which expresses itself in a demand for socialization, since this private land monopoly is constantly growing more oppressive and injurious, especially in the cities. Here also nothing is lacking but the necessary power to bring about socialization. The victorious proletariat will furnish this power.

The expropriation of the exploiting classes presents itself purely as a question of power. It proceeds essentially from the economic necessity of the proletariat, and will be the inevitable result of their victory.

CONFISCATION OR COMPENSATION.

The question of the possibility and necessity of the expropriation of the exploiters can be answered with much greater degree of certainty than the question which naturally arises therefrom: Will the expropriation proceed as a process of confiscation or compensation? This is a question which it is impossible to answer today. We are not the ones who will have to complete this development. It is now impossible to determine any force inherent in conditions which make either one answer or the other necessary. In spite of this, there are, however, a number of reasons which indicate that a proletarian regime will seek the road of compensation, and payment of the capitalists and landowners. I will here mention but two of the reasons which appear the most important to me. Money capital, as already stated, has become an impersonal power, and every sum of money can today be transformed into money capital without the owner actively functioning as a capitalist. We know that when a man has saved a mark today he can put it out at interest without thereby becoming a capitalist. As is well known, this phenomenon has been widely utilized by the optimistic representatives of the existing order. They conclude that this gives an easy way for the expropriation of the capitalist by the laborers depositing their total of saved pennies in the saving banks or purchasing shares in the corporations with them, and thereby becoming partners in capital. At other times these optimists say that if we were to confiscate capital today we must confiscate not alone the capital of the rich; but that of the laborers also, in which case we would be taking away the scanty savings of the poor, the widows and the orphans. In this manner we would arouse great discontent among the laborers themselves, another reason which would tend to provoke them to the overthrow of their own domination, a result which these glorifiers of the existing order await with greatest certainty.

The first assumption, I do not need to discuss further. It is too foolish. The people who expect to see capital expropriated by the increase of savings are blind to a much more rapid increase of large private capitals. On the other hand, it is not wholly unjustifiable to say that a proletarian regime pledged to universal confiscation would also confiscate the savings of small traders. That would not be a reason why the laborers should find their own rule unnecessary. (One must be hard up for plausible arguments against a social revolution when he makes use of such anticipations.) But it might become a reason for the conquering proletariat to stop in the confiscation of the means of production.

If, however, that should happen, one could ask, What justice has the laboring class received from expropriation? It works simply to make all capital become simple money capital; and all the capital being transformed into national, state and co-operative bonds, any surplus value which the capitalists have drawn directly from the laborers will flow to them from the nations, states and co-operatives. Is this in any way to change the condition of the laborer?

This question is wholly justifiable. But even if a proletarian regime should permit the same amount of profit to flow to capital that it had formerly received, the expropriation through a continuance of proletarian rule would have brought great advantages with it, in that a further increase of exploitation from then on would be impossible. Any new application of capital as well as every increase would be excluded, together with all increase in ground rent. This alone would be a significant result of proletarian

transformation. Every further increase of social wealth would from then on inhere to the good of all society.

But together with this there would come still another advantage. As soon as all the capitalist wealth had taken form of bonds of states, municipalities and co-operatives, it would be possible to raise a progressive income tax without either income or property tax height until then was impossible. It is one of our demands at the present time that such a tax shall be substituted for all others especially for an indirect tax. But even if we had today the power to carry through such a measure with the support of other parties, which is plainly impossible because no bourgeois party would go so far, we would at once find ourselves in the presence of great difficulties. It is a well known fact that the higher the tax the greater the efforts at tax dodging. But when a condition exists where any concealment of income and property is impossible even then we could not be in a position to force the income and property tax as high as we wish because the capitalists, if the tax on their income or property pressed them too closely, would simply leave the State. There have already been instances of this. The State then has the income and property tax without either income or property. Above a certain measure such taxes cannot rise today even if we had the political power. The situation however, is completely changed when all capitalist property takes the form of public debts. The property that today is so hard to find then lies in broad daylight. It would then only be necessary to declare that all bonds must be public and it would be known exactly what was the value of every property and every capitalist income. The tax could then be raised as high as desired without the possibility of tax frauds. It would then also be impossible to avoid taxation by emigration for it is then a matter of the nation itself from which all interest must flow and the tax could simply be taken from the interest before it was paid out. Under such conditions it would be possible to increase the progressive income and property tax as high as desired. If necessary it might be put so high as to be equivalent, or nearly so, to a confiscation of the great properties.

It might well be asked what advantage is offered by this roundabout way of confiscation of great property instead of taking the direct road. Is it not mere piggery simply for the purpose of avoiding the appearance of confiscation if capital is first compensated for at its full value and then confiscated through tax legislation? The difference between this mode and that of direct confiscation appears to be but formal.

But the difference is not so trifling. Direct confiscation of all capitalists would strike all the same and the great, those utterly useless to labor and those the most essential to labor in the same manner. It is difficult, often impossible, in this method to separate the large possessions from the small when these are united in the form of money capital in the same undertaking. Direct confiscation would complete this quickly, often at one stroke, while confiscation through taxation permits the disappearance of capitalist property through a long drawn out process proceeding in the exact degree in which the new order is established and its benevolent influence made perceptible. It makes it possible to extend the process of confiscation over a decade so that it will be fully operative in the new generation that will have grown up under the new conditions and is therefore not accustomed to reckon with capital and interest. Confiscation in this way loses its harshness, it becomes more acceptable and less painful. The more peacefully the conquest of the political power by the proletariat is attained and the more firmly organized and enlightened it is, the more we can expect that the primitive forms of confiscation will be softened.

Hughes' Bloodthirsty Bombast

By J. C.

Sam Hughes, Canadian Minister of Militia, Cabinet Minister, Dividend taking dependent, gives his opinion of soldiering and says to the Cobalt working men:—"If you were to honestly study the principles underlying MY Militia and Cadet ideas you would adopt the only policy that has ever produced a proper system of human government and would be greatly benefited by joining the militia."

This is Sam Hughes, either slavishly anxious to further capitalist aims or ignorant of the use he is put to.

Napoleon, who formerly had a suspicion of being an instrument in the then rising trading class, says of soldiers:—"The profession of a soldier, is the trade of barbarians." Wellington, who described his soldiers as the scum of the earth, wrote on one occasion, "War is a most detestable thing. If you had seen but one day of war, you would pray God you might never see another."

Thus far the opinions of Napoleon and Wellington, who knew something of soldiers, agree.

General Grant, asked to attend a review, declined, saying he never wished to look upon a regiment of soldiers again.

General Sherman writes as was tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. "It is only those who have never fired a shot, nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded, who cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is Hell."

Sir John Sinclair's opinion was that "the profession of a soldier is a damnable profession." Will Sam Hughes say that these men had no knowledge of the problem of human government? Will he say they were too low, too case hardened, too depraved to realize the benefits of militarism? Yet such are the words he throws at you working men of Canada.

Remember that in civil troubles due to strikes it will be the sons of the workers who will suffer. If this seems all right, then vote for Sam Hughes and his bunch. If not right, then help the Social Democratic Party of Canada to fight such conditions. Join the local. Remember this about the cadets. Napoleon once said:—"A boy can stop a bullet as well as a man."