Viktor Chernov

Marxism and the Agrarian Question

A Historical-Critical Essay

Part One

Working English Translation

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Compilation and Translator's Note

This PDF assembles the working English translations of Viktor Chernov's *Marxism and the Agrarian Question: A Historical-Critical Essay*, Part One. It combines the pilot translation containing the preface and Chapter I with Chapters II-XI.

The source is a scanned 1906 Russian edition in pre-reform orthography. The translation is machine-assisted and intended as a readable study draft, not a scholarly critical edition. OCR defects, old spelling, hyphenation, and obvious name/title errors were normalized where possible during the chapter translation process.

To make the compiled edition more cohesive, duplicated per-chapter cover pages and per-chapter translator notes have been omitted. The original chapter translations are otherwise preserved in order. Chapter XI was included from the previously generated Chapter XI translation file, since it was not included among the latest uploaded chapter PDFs but completes Part One.

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Preface

The present little book is composed of articles previously printed by the author, chiefly in the pages of Russkoe Bogatstvo. Most of these articles formed a series under the general title "Types of Industrial and Agrarian Evolution." Others, such as "On the Question of Capitalist and Agrarian Evolution," "On the Positive and Negative Sides of Capitalism," and "The Peasant and the Worker," appeared only as natural logical supplements to that series.

The still further growth of public interest in the agrarian question leads me to think that publishing these old articles as a separate little book will not be superfluous. True, at the present moment current work deprives me of the possibility of radically reworking these articles, turning them into a more new and independent work, and taking into account everything that has appeared on this question since the first publication of my articles in print. Current life, with its great events now ripening, too strongly draws into its whirlpool everyone capable of living and working. That is why, up to now, I have lacked the possibility of working over the theme of the present work as I would have liked.

For the present edition I have reviewed my old articles, brought them together into one whole, tried to remove the repetitions inevitable in hurried journal work, filled the most glaring gaps, and made use of some of the most recent literary material. I myself understand better than anyone how unsatisfactory such a method of preparation is, and how far it is from the method of which I had formerly dreamed. And if, nevertheless, I decide to limit myself to it for the publication of the present book, I am guided mainly by practical considerations: the timeliness, in the public sense, of bringing together certain basic arguments which, in the agrarian question, can serve in defense of the theoretical positions of the tendency to which the author adheres, and in whose growth he sees a guarantee of the proper direction of social evolution - of course, insofar as the latter can depend on the conscious collective efforts of the living agents of history: human beings.

Viktor Chernov

Chapter I. Instead of an Introduction: The Crisis of the Agrarian Dogma of Marxism

The literature on the agrarian question has recently become very lively in all Western European countries, and especially in Germany. Of the former indifference toward it among the most advanced groups of thinkers and activists, no trace remains. It has at once become perhaps the most popular and burning question; it has everywhere aroused lively polemic and sown seeds of doubt in many truths that once seemed immovably established. The fermentation of thought thus provoked soon stepped beyond the narrow framework of a single separate question and spread into the far broader domain of the entire sociological worldview. And this is not surprising. The agrarian question proved to be such an important component of that worldview, and bound to its remaining parts by so close and inseparable a connection, that once it was touched the other parts could not be left in peace.

The agrarian question was the point at which the first breach was made in the general, harmonious, and integral system that is now usually given the epithet dogmatic or orthodox Marxism. As early as 1895, at the famous Breslau congress, where the split over the agrarian question revealed itself so forcefully among representatives of the social current that bases its practical life-program on the socio-philosophical principles of the author of Capital, one participant in the congress cried out: "This split into two camps is a symptom of a transformation of concepts within the party, and only those who deliberately shut their eyes and wish to see nothing can think that everything will proceed as before. You will yet understand that we must reckon most seriously with the agrarian question, with new concepts, with new aims. Agrarian life cannot be dealt with according to a ready-made pattern that has too often stood in place of investigation and knowledge. A review, a revision of party conceptions, is now taking place; the fanatical zeal of party dogmatists is already beginning to die down. We shall come again - you have already once tasted from the tree of knowledge, and it will not pass without consequence for you!" What is most characteristic is that this was said not by a "revisionist" in Bernstein's sense, not by a "moderate," not by an opportunist, but by one of the "radicals," Schönlank.

These words proved prophetic to a far greater degree than their author himself expected. Within some three or four years the revision of the Marxist worldview was already proceeding along the whole line. The most resolute defenders of the dogma could no longer deny the necessity of this revision or adopt toward every attempt in that direction a merely passive-oppositional tactic. Karl Kautsky, generally acknowledged in Germany as the most serious scientific and literary force of the orthodox tendency, and Franz Mehring, another chief pillar of orthodoxy, judged it more tactful frankly to acknowledge that the modern economic development of Europe had revealed a whole series of phenomena that Marx and his collaborator Engels had not foreseen and could not have foreseen during their lives. Thus many facts of contemporary life seem not to fit, without further reasoning, into the formulas and theses of old Marxism, and even appear to stand in a certain contradiction with them. This is the case above all with the phenomena and forms of agrarian evolution.

"A historical work that depicts a definite period in the process of human development," wrote Mehring, "cannot serve as an infallible well of wisdom for all eternity, and no one was farther from such a claim than Marx. In thirty years the capitalist mode of production has brought to maturity certain phenomena that Marx did not know and did not foresee."

"I acknowledge," said Kautsky at the Hanover party congress, "that agrarian relations do not develop according to the same pattern as industrial relations. I also acknowledge that, at the time when the Erfurt Programme was being drafted, in many respects we held different opinions on questions of agrarian evolution than we do today. Since then a mass of statistical data has appeared, and the conditions themselves have changed so much that in many respects we must think differently than before. I say quite openly: if we now had once again to edit our Erfurt Programme, I would probably propose a different formulation with regard to the agrarian question."

These words have great significance precisely from Kautsky's mouth, as the spiritual father of the Erfurt Programme. No less characteristic as a "sign of the times" is the following admission by Die Neue Zeit, the chief theoretical organ of German Marxism, edited by him: "Of the conclusions to which Marx and Engels came on the basis of their scientific method, some have collapsed; and with regard to an even greater number of these conclusions, their backwardness would already have been proved, had not the hopeless assault on the scientific method of Marxism itself unfortunately led to a situation in which, because of the need to repel these fruitless attacks, the truly beneficial and progressive criticism of the spiritual inheritance of Marx and Engels found itself in an unfavorable position."

Indeed, the revision of the intellectual inheritance left to us by Marx and Engels was greatly harmed, and continues to be harmed, by the fact that the work of revision was for a time practically monopolized by opportunist elements. All criticism is fruitful only insofar as it is pregnant with something positive. Yet what was historically valuable and progressive in this sense could in no case be supplied by revisionism from the right, but only, on the contrary, by revisionism from the left - which in Western Europe is still scarcely beginning.

Be that as it may, for every revisionism the matter could and had to begin with the agrarian question. It is more than understandable that this most vulnerable spot, this Achilles' heel, should have especially attracted the attention of criticism.

For a long time the agrarian question stood, one may say, completely outside the field of vision of old Marxism. To be convinced of this, it is enough to cast a quick glance over the corresponding literature: its poverty is striking. "Up to now," the well-known Georg von Vollmar frankly admitted in 1894, "our tendency has, in general, concerned itself very little with the question of agricultural production. We were too absorbed in the political issues of the day, too deeply immersed in the urgent tasks of the time. When this question was approached, it was in most cases in a purely doctrinaire manner. Two or three resolutions of the old International Association, the resolution of the Stuttgart Congress, and a few writings headed by Liebknecht's Grund- und Bodenfrage - an excellent work, though unfortunately followed as little as it is much read - that, for a long time, was all. For the rest, the agrarian question was touched on only lightly and in passing, and the general conviction prevailed that the laws observed in industry, without further reasoning, applied wholly and analogously to the evolution of agriculture; consequently the agrarian question had already been finished and settled for our tendency."

If we turn to the chief theoretical and scientific organ of German Marxism, the journal Neue Zeit, we encounter a striking fact: almost all the most interesting articles devoted to the agrarian question in it before the Frankfurt and Breslau party congresses were written not by Marxists, but by chance guests in a Marxist organ, such as the conservative democrat Rudolf Meyer and the peculiar follower of Henry George, the land-tenure reformer Flürscheim. German Marxism owed to them, and to their preaching of their ideas, the appearance of several articles and pamphlets on this question written from a purely Marxist standpoint; perhaps the most interesting of these was Conrad Schmidt's Soziale Frage und Bodenverstaatlichung, a little pamphlet of thirty pages. If one crosses out Liebknecht's Grund- und Bodenfrage, then the only at all substantial work on the agrarian question published by German Marxists was a shortened translation of Kablukov's Russian book The Question of Workers in English Agriculture. Up to the most recent years, something new in the development of the agrarian problem from an indeterminately collectivist point of view was contributed only by the works of the anti-Marxist Oppenheimer, a rather eccentric and self-confident "social liberal." In short, for a long time the Marxist literature on the agrarian question consisted almost entirely of pamphlets rather thin both in size and in content, and in fact it could have been placed with great ease and convenience in one average-sized pocket.

And this was no accident. The point is that for old Marxism there existed no agrarian question as a special, independent question. The sphere of agrarian relations appeared to it no more than one special branch of production alongside a whole series of other branches. Each branch, of course, is characterized by

certain specific features peculiar to it, but by features from which the political economist may freely abstract, since they change nothing in the general laws of economic development and therefore, in the general social sense, may be considered inessential and indifferent - a quantité négligeable. These features may interest, for example, the specialist farmer or agronomist, for whom the technical side of the matter is important; but not the sociologist, who is interested exclusively in its socio-historical side.

Starting from this point of view, the outstanding representatives of Western European Marxism mostly placed the agrarian question entirely in the same bracket as the industrial-labor question, treating them as one continuous homogeneous whole that did not require division, did not require the question to be posed separately, and did not require separate solutions. Practically, this led to the result that all the distinctive features of agrarian evolution were more or less ignored: it was judged simply by analogy with the development of industry; an a priori formula was constructed, and facts were approached with a ready-made pattern already in hand. Naturally, it always turned out that reality, if it did not already justify the theory, was at any rate "getting ready to justify" it. In other words: "It has not given birth, but by my calculation it ought to give birth!" These words of Famusov became the formula beneath whose shadow doctrinairism hid from every contradiction with the facts of surrounding reality.

Capitalization and proletarianization! The capitalization of agricultural production, the proletarianization of the direct producers, the concentration of property, and, as the conceivable highest point of development, the transformation of landed property and the management of agricultural production into a private monopoly, after which there remains only to transform this private monopoly into a state monopoly in order at once to realize the highest type of economic order. Such was the process that, according to the "calculation" of old Marxism, reality had to develop out of itself in order to give life to a new economic order; in this way Marxism set before its adherents the practical task of "shortening and easing the birth pangs." "The old theory," Hertz therefore ironizes, "simply declares that in agriculture, as in industry, large-scale production is economically superior to small-scale production and beats it in competition - thesis, antithesis, synthesis; expropriation and association; and the matter is finished!"

The genesis of this view can be traced from very early times. It has already been said that certain resolutions of the old International Association - prepared at the London World's Exhibition of 1862 and finally founded on 24 September 1864, with its once important General Council at the head - were devoted to the land question. As is known, all public statements and all manifestoes of this General Council came from the pen of Karl Marx, who for a long time was in general the soul of the Council. Thus, in the very first year of this organization's existence, in the inaugural address of the General Council, one can find a significant passage relating to the land question. "If the diminution in the number of landowners in England," wrote Marx, "and the union of the land in the hands of a few, continues to proceed in the same way, then in any case the land, the agrarian question, is thereby simplified." Marx further explained that in such a case circumstances would take approximately the form they had in ancient Rome, where finally half of the whole province of Africa found itself in the hands of only six proprietors.

Taken by themselves, these phrases of Marx express his thought in so cautious and purely conditional a form that one cannot yet see in them any general view or ready-made theory, especially since the matter concerns England alone. But these words were subjected to the broadest interpretation, and in this form laid the foundation of the "Marxist dogma" in the agrarian question.

Later - and also earlier - Marx himself more than once sanctioned this expanded interpretation by various statements. But among his "disciples" there has recently appeared an opposite tendency. Since the dogma entered into crisis, since reality began to contradict it too plainly, there have appeared among the most orthodox Marxists people who would like to draw the veil of oblivion over the very existence, even in the past, of the dogma.

The brightest example of such conduct is to be found in the recent edition of the Odessa publishing house Burevestnik: Engels's The Peasant Question in France and Germany, translated under the editorship and with a preface by G. Plekhanov.

Plekhanov has long acquired the bad habit of spoiling various good little books with polemical prefaces written in a flippant feuilleton spirit. Formerly, at least, he did not abuse this habit too greatly. He would take some work of Marx or Engels, accompany it with a few pages of preface, in which, as custom requires, he would mince several literary opponents into pieces, mix them all together, pour over them the spices of his polemic - and the literary okroshka was ready, intended to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the Russian reader and guide him in reading the book. When this was done in two or three pages, it even looked not bad: spices in a moderate dose only stimulate the appetite of an undemanding reader. But the more Plekhanov turned into the "venerable leader" of orthodox Marxism, the more his sense of measure deserted him. Thus, not long ago he published his extensive preface with the well-known Manifesto of Karl Marx and Engels attached; now he publishes just such a preface with Engels's article on "The Peasant Question in France and Germany" attached. Both prefaces abound so greatly in Plekhanov's usual acrobatics, in "scientific" experiments in turning black into white and back again, that one involuntarily recalls the advertisement, cited in a story by Uspensky, of that "pyro- and hydro-technician Kapiton Ivanov," who with dignity recommended himself to the most honorable public as "possessing skill in Egyptian, Arabian, Ethiopian, Indian, Chaldean, and other magics, consisting of new fantastic experiments and signs of secret and natural entertaining magic, with apparatus and without apparatus, a potpourri from the world of wonders, cabbalism and ventriloquism at very moderate prices; also Indian sleight of hand, impossibility in action, a garland of roses," and so forth in the same spirit.

Anyone familiar with the earlier, more modest attempts of Mr. Georgii Plekhanov to portray this Kapiton Ivanov in the field of literary polemic will, of course, not be surprised after reading his preface to Engels's article. But even those who up to now have believed in the "scientific" character of the dialectical methods of the theoretical leader of Russian orthodox Marxism - even they, we are firmly convinced, will think again and will find themselves at a loss when they examine this preface more closely. And this is not surprising, for there are limits beyond which speculation on the frivolity and ignorance of one's readers becomes too risky.

Plekhanov opens his preface with a brilliant but extremely peculiar - and in its peculiarity unexpected - defense of the dogma against "people who at any cost wish to declare Marx's teaching shaken."

"These people," exclaims Plekhanov, "ascribe to the author of Capital the thought that in capitalist society the concentration of landed property is inevitable by the very nature of the process of capitalist development. But Marx nowhere expressed such a thought." That Marx did not in all respects turn out to be a "Marxist" is something that the "critics" of Marxism, so unloved by Plekhanov, have told the world many times. It is very good, of course, that he is now so imbued with this idea that he defends Marx against the charge of dogmatism and ascribes to him so broad and elastic a view, excluding any "orthodox" definiteness, namely that "in social economy, as everywhere, everything (!) depends on the circumstances of time and place." With such a dogma, life is simpler: either rain or snow, either it will happen or it will not; just as the "circumstances of time and place" say. The awkward thing is only that here, as elsewhere, Plekhanov beats the critics over the head with their own property.

Indeed, above I myself emphasized, and presented to Marxists as an example, the "caution and conditionality" of Marx's expressions in the historical document of 1864. I did this already in the articles "Types of Capitalist and Agrarian Evolution," printed several years ago in Russkoe Bogatstvo and forming the basis of the present book. What does Plekhanov do? He cites the very same passage from Marx and - to shame me and defend Marx's doctrine against me - triumphantly exclaims: "As we see, he expresses himself cautiously and does not give immutable schemes." I even fear that in my old articles I leaned too strongly on this side and thereby led Plekhanov into involuntary error. But, on the other hand, could I have expected the honor that Marxists would form their idea of Marx's agrarian views from my articles? Had I known this, I

would of course then have pointed out, alongside Marx's "right hand," his left hand as well. Then perhaps Plekhanov would not have asserted that Marx nowhere expressed the thought of the inevitability of the concentration of landed property. Nowhere! And yet, as we shall see below, he expresses it in Capital, in The Eighteenth Brumaire, and in the Manifesto. He expresses, for example, that "the lower strata of the middle class, the small manufacturers, shopkeepers and rentiers, artisans and peasants - all these classes sink more and more into the proletariat, partly because their small capital is insufficient for large-scale production and does not withstand the competition of large capitals, and partly because their technical methods lose their significance with the new methods of production." If this is not a process of proletarianization and concentration arising from the very nature of capitalism, then what other meaning can be put into these words?

And is it not in that very Manifesto that Marx and Engels say that "all other classes" except the proletariat decline and perish with the development of large-scale industry? And is it not in that same Manifesto that it is said of "peasant property, which preceded bourgeois property," that "the development of large-scale industry has already destroyed it, or is daily destroying it"? I cite the Manifesto in the translation of Plekhanov himself, who now ventures to assert that "Marx nowhere expressed this thought." For whom, one must ask, does Plekhanov take his readers?

But even this is not the important point. Even if Marx himself had nowhere expressed the thought that in agriculture as in industry concentration and proletarianization flow from the very essence of the capitalist process of production, this view would nevertheless remain the substance of the dogma of the orthodox Marxists, and this would only mean that the latter are plus royalistes que le roi même - more royalist than the king himself. In general this is true, for in most cases Marx certainly expressed himself on the agrarian question far more evasively and cautiously than his "disciples."

But perhaps Plekhanov will assert that the Marxists too - at least the most prominent of them - were just as cautious and just as little fond of "ready-made schemes" as Marx was in 1864. The whole historical-critical essay on the relation of Marxism to the agrarian question that is offered to the reader answers this question in the most unequivocal way. Anticipating the further exposition a little, let us take a few quotations.

One of the most prominent Marxists of the 1860s was Eccarius, whom Plekhanov once triumphantly contrasted, as a scientific Marxist, with his contemporary, the "utopian" Chernyshevsky. And Eccarius asserted that "small peasant production stands in the same relation to modern large-scale agriculture as hand spinning and weaving to machine production," and therefore it is already economically condemned. One of the most interesting party documents of the same epoch, the "Manifesto to the Agricultural Population" of the German section of the International Workingmen's Association, declared that "small peasant farming is irrevocably and mercilessly, by the very course of things, condemned to gradual death at the hands of all-powerful capital under the influence of the development of science." Accordingly, at both the Lausanne and Basel congresses of the International, during the debates on the land question, the English and German delegates under Marx's influence "insisted especially on the historical law that everywhere leads to the formation of large property," affirmed that "economic development itself tends toward large-scale cultivation," and that "the ownership of land is concentrating more and more in the hands of a small number of persons."

Let us pass to the 1870s. In Zur Grund- und Bodenfrage, Liebknecht declares that "small agricultural production cannot withstand competition with large-scale agricultural production and is compelled to make way for it in precisely the same way as small industrial production makes way for large industry." To expect the revival of the small peasantry, he says, is as absurd as expecting "large capitals to be broken up into small ones and large factories to fall apart into small craft workshops. The course of economic development moves in the opposite direction: not from large property to small, but, on the contrary, from small to large. The path to socialized production lies through private large landownership and production." Bebel likewise asserted at

the Stuttgart party congress in 1870 that even the number of landlords must progressively diminish, and that the cause of this is "the tendency toward concentration inherent in the modern mode of production." Kautsky said the same thing: "Small-peasant economy, I say, is already economically outlived. The inevitable destruction of small production - such is the idea that runs like a red thread through my work, The Erfurt Programme."

Need one cite Engels? Even so free-and-easy a writer as Plekhanov is forced to make a reservation of this sort: "Recent investigations have, in general, fully confirmed Engels's view of the position of the small peasant under the rule of capitalism. True, the probable consequences of this position appeared, evidently, to our teacher not quite as they appear to us now. He spoke confidently of the fact that small peasant property is doomed to extinction. But the facts..." and so forth. Thus Plekhanov is now forced to correct even Engels. But only Engels? Does he not also have to correct himself and his own supporters?

We remember quite well the words of an author who, on the occasion of Mr. Tikhomirov's metamorphosis, wrote about the "little peasant man bequeathed to us by the good old time," saying that this little peasant could, of course, "save Mr. Tikhomirov and his present co-thinkers," so that they are not without reason ready to exclaim, like the prosecutor in a comic poem: "Thanks be to Christ, in the muzhik is our salvation." At that time this author consoled himself and others with the thought that the hopes of those gentlemen would be justified only if Mr. Tikhomirov and his present co-thinkers, on their side, could save their savior. "But," this author solemnly exclaimed, "no power at all will save him!" Who was this author, who almost cried out in defiance of Mr. Tikhomirov: "Thanks be to Christ, there is now no salvation for the muzhik"? Is Plekhanov perhaps acquainted with him?

One could bring an endless number of quotations from German and Russian literature, all too clearly testifying to what the "Marxist dogma" consisted in. Here, for example, is the first open confession of Marxist faith, a two-volume collection of articles which, unfortunately, in its time, "for reasons beyond its control," received very little circulation. In the very first article of the very first volume we encounter the assertion that the majority of the Russian peasantry is "condemned by history to the impossibility of escaping from such a hopeless situation while remaining agriculturalists; in other words, condemned to transformation into wage workers - the only way out of independent occupation in agriculture. Whatever efforts our peasant may make to maintain his imaginary independence, to free himself from the influence of this iron law of sorts, he encounters insurmountable obstacles everywhere." New factors compel even those independent peasants who have been "accidentally favored" by history, and who do not need by-employments in order to realize their "independence," to break their connection with the land. And "the purchase of land by peasants, taken as a whole, cannot delay for a single instant (!) the historical process of separating the producer from the means of production and subsistence." If all this is not the famous "Marxist dogma" whose existence Plekhanov now so very much does not wish to admit, then what is it?

Plekhanov disowning himself! Plekhanov not remembering his kinship with himself and with the greatest representatives of German and Russian Marxism! Is this not a comic situation? But Plekhanov will prefer any situation, even the most comic, to an honest admission of error. In this respect many orthodox Marxists of the West can serve him as an example.

Here, for instance, lies before us Wilhelm Kohnstaedt's book, Die Agrarfrage in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie von Karl Marx bis zum Breslauer Parteitag. The author is an anti-Bernsteinian and in agrarian policy takes Kautsky's point of view, insisting on preserving the exclusively proletarian character of his tendency. But he does not think of wriggling out, nor does he resort to any acrobatics. He quite calmly acknowledges that "in Marx's conception, the future not only belongs to large capitalist production in agriculture, but essentially the present already belongs to it." He acknowledges just as calmly that this view proved mistaken, that in many points the analogy between industry and agriculture does not exist, and that the works of David, Hertz, and others provide much that is correct in this respect and introduce many important corrections to Kautsky's views. These corrections must be accepted, for amicus Plato, sed magis

amica veritas: Plato is a friend, but truth is a greater friend. Just as conscientiously and calmly he points out that for Marx as a theorist, peasant economy was not a living element of the contemporary historical period, but a survival of the old; and therefore all Marx's investigation limits itself to an analysis of an abstract, pure capitalist system of agriculture.

Such an abstract method would provide a practically sufficient scheme only if the forms of production designated by Marx as pre-capitalist were in a process of continuous destruction. In the middle of the nineteenth century all the signs that testified so vividly to precisely that direction of development were present, and the observer was necessarily compelled to take them into account. At present, however, the phenomena of life point us toward another kind of process of development; we have both the right and full grounds to trust our contemporary data more than the data of the past. Now no one can predict that capitalism will swallow up the German peasant. This fact deprives Marx's agrarian theory of its politico-economic significance, but in no way changes its historical significance.

Thus the old Marxist dogma can no longer be treated seriously. The orthodox Marxists can only sigh: "Alas, alas, ancient piety!" And however much noise about victory over the critics Plekhanov and others may produce in order to cover the retreat, they nevertheless have to retreat and seek a new position to replace the old one. Since this victorious retreat occurs in disorder and haste, they must often change positions again and again, like mourners who discover they are wearing the worn-out shoes in which they followed the coffin of the old dogma.

The new position for orthodox Marxism was first found by Karl Kautsky. Already in his Agrarfrage he had to declare: "There is no thought of small landownership disappearing from modern society, displaced by large agricultural economies." "Within the limits of the capitalist mode of production," he wrote elsewhere, "we can no more expect the destruction of large landownership than the destruction of small." At a certain stage of development, concentration ceases to be profitable above a certain point, and large enterprises are compelled to rely on peasant farms existing alongside them or even artificially created; they cease to be competitors of large-scale production. Thanks to this, "large and small production do not exclude one another; on the contrary, they condition one another."

In his articles of 1903, to this idea of mutual conditioning, of a certain norm in the relation between small and large farming, Kautsky added the thought that agriculture in general is extremely conservative. Although it is hard to predict the future of agriculture because of the multiplicity and complexity of the interacting factors, one can nevertheless affirm this: "within the limits of our historical horizon, we have no basis for expecting a rapid diminution in the number of small farms; but neither have we any basis for expecting the opposite, for counting on the decisive implantation of small farming and the displacement of large."

As usual, Plekhanov immediately seized on Kautsky's remarks and hastened to settle himself in the new positions indicated by him. In the fourth number of the journal to which he refers in his preface, he obediently repeats after Kautsky the new dogma and covers the retreat from the old positions with intensified polemical fire and the sounds of a victory march. So, badly or well, the thing is done; new positions have been found, and Plekhanov is already shelling his critical opponents from them. One might think this would be enough for him. "Mein Liebchen, mein Liebchen, was willst du noch mehr?" his reassured pupils have the right to ask him. But the dear one is not at peace in his soul.

First, after all, he is a dialectician. It is not easy for him if, instead of development through contradictions, someone offers him the conservatism of agriculture, a mutual equilibrium between large and small farming, almost a pre-established harmony between them. Secondly, although small farming will work for large-scale farming and will be indirectly dependent on it, by the admission of the Marxists themselves this will poorly educate future small-peasant slaves of capital psychologically, while the proprietorial position of the latter will draw them closer to their own masters. Is it not obvious that with development by way of contradiction and with class struggle, things in these social prospects will be quiet?

And so Plekhanov unexpectedly receives enlightenment of mind. Eureka! Dogma No. 2, the conservative equilibrium of mutually conditioning large and small farms, may perhaps be as quickly, under cover once again of loud phrases and a triumphal march, abandoned and handed over to the archives as Dogma No. 1, the inevitable absorption of small farms by large capital. Long live Dogma No. 3! This dogma was discovered by Plekhanov, the new Columbus, in Marx himself. It turns out that the critics have completely in vain ascribed to Marx the incorrect thought of the inevitable absorption of small agricultural farms by large ones; Marx asserted something quite different. As early as 1850 Marx discovered that "so long as bourgeois relations of production exist, agriculture must constantly pass from concentration to fragmentation and back again." And Marx was right; the revisionists who thought they had shamed the Marxists were confounded. They do not know Marx, but he, Plekhanov, knows him and puts everyone to shame by this. And so he reads an easy notation to Michel Augé-Laribé, who devoted an entire chapter to Marx in his book but says nothing about it, and also to other "even more famous historians of ideas" who "for the most part do not know" what Plekhanov has discovered.

The whole triumph of the new discovery rests on one quotation. It is therefore necessary to reproduce this quotation in full and, if possible, take it in context, supplement it with all the documentation that led Marx and Engels to discover so important a law of the economic evolution of agriculture. This notorious quotation, as far as I know, was dragged out from under a bushel by Kautsky, who used it in passing; then from the pages of his book it jumped down and went wandering through the polemical writings of the Russian "disciples." Only recently, with the appearance of the four-volume collection Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von K. Marx, F. Engels und F. Lassalle, did it become possible to verify this interesting quotation. And verification gives an extremely interesting result. In volume III of that edition, on page 440, the reader will indeed find what is desired. But at the same time he will be convinced that there is no question there of any investigation of agrarian evolution. The quoted phrase is found in a little review of a forgotten book by Émile de Girardin on taxes. In the whole review, occupying seven and a half pages, the question of agrarian evolution and its direction is allotted exactly these six little lines - admittedly a rather narrow foundation for the reconstruction of all established notions about the essence, the inner content, of the "Marxist dogma." Do you remember, reader, Dobroliubov's parody of the "orthodox" defenders of the view of the Norman origin of the Russian princes, in their dispute with restless "critics," when the bewildered orthodox man, like a drowning man, must clutch at a straw?

Heliandri and Varuforos -
These are my two pillars!
Upon them my theory
Was placed by fate...

Yes, the "six little lines" of an old review - there it is, the straw of the drowning man. But it is time to cite them fully and completely. "Finally," says Marx, "if in France a turn from parcelization to concentration has already begun, then in England large landed property is advancing with giant steps toward fragmentation, and it irrefutably testifies that as long as bourgeois relations in general continue to exist, agriculture is compelled constantly to move in this circular course of concentration and parcelization."

The first thing to note here is the undoubted fact that the substance of the view expressed here by Marx - or by Engels; this is not exactly known - does not coincide with the substance of the conclusions at which Kautsky arrived in his book on the agrarian question. Kautsky, after all, spoke of conservatism, stability, the immobility of agriculture, of the impossibility of expecting either any noticeable absorption of small farms by large ones or any such reverse absorption. Marx, meanwhile, asserts precisely that one should expect a noticeable absorption of large farming by small, and then, after it, the beginning of the opposite process. Here there is no conservatism, no mutual equilibrium between small and large farming, but a circular movement, swift, revolutionizing all relations now in one direction and now in the opposite direction, moving "with giant steps."

But the question is this: if Marx had seriously arrived at the conviction that the law of movement of agriculture in capitalist society is the dialectical passage from concentration to fragmentation, from fragmentation again to concentration, and so on without end, then how is it to be explained that he allowed it to be buried in a passing review in an old journal long out of print? That he never reproduced these six little lines in a single one of his works? That he so skillfully concealed this view from his friends? That Eccarius, whose book Marx reviewed before publication; and Liebknecht, Marx's faithful disciple; and Engels, Marx's alter ego, always presented as the essence of Marxism the law of the concentration of landed property and the proletarianization of independent agriculturalists? That finally Marx himself forgot himself and, in the first volume of Capital, once again declared that "in the sphere of agriculture large industry has the most revolutionary effect, inasmuch as it annihilates the bulwark of the old society, the peasant, and replaces him with the wage laborer; the social contradictions and the need for revolution in the countryside are equalized with the same phenomena in the city"? In a word: where did this astonishing mirage come from, this colossal historical misunderstanding, whose dispersal required that in the year of Our Lord 1904 Georgii Plekhanov should read the third volume of Mehring's edition of Marx's and Engels's old articles and, on reaching page 440, make a brilliant discovery? Truly, wonders in a sieve!

But if one looks at the matter not from a mystical-miraculous standpoint but from a real one, everything proves much simpler. If this review of 1850 testifies to anything, it testifies only that at the end of the 1840s the views of Marx and Engels had not yet crystallized into stable forms; they were still subject to quite considerable oscillations and vacillations. Among these, evidently, there once slipped through the thought of the periodic alternation of polar opposites: the concentration and fragmentation of landed property. But however "dialectical" this idea looked from the external and superficial side, it was soon abandoned. The law of the periodic alternation of these extremes could not be derived as a necessary consequence from any real factors. Besides, it had been derived with extreme haste. The author of the review saw an "irrefutable proof" of this law in two - only two - facts: first, that in France a turn toward the concentration of landed property had begun; and second, that England was moving with giant steps toward its fragmentation. But even these data, so meager for deriving so enormous a law, require correction. French agriculture was not experiencing the beginning of concentration; on the contrary, all the data indicate that in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially from the 1860s onward, the area of large-scale farming rather decreased and in any case did not increase. It was experiencing the continuation of a two-sided process: the increase of small peasant property on the one hand, and the increase of the area of large new-bourgeois farms on the other. As for England, contrary to Marx's forecast, it was precisely the 1850s that were an epoch of decrease in the number of landowners. So this is how well founded was the casually thrown out and forgotten thought at which Plekhanov now grasps, "shaking the dust of centuries from the charters," in search of a saving dogma. Still, the cap fits the man.

Did Plekhanov, however, rest content with this third dogma? Alas, not entirely. It is good, of course, to have it in reserve for a rainy day: no matter what may come - concentration or fragmentation - Marx knew both. In practice, however, the first of these dogmas is nevertheless much dearer to Plekhanov's heart. He still strives with all his might to diminish the significance of the growth of small peasant property. He admits only that "the process of the disappearance of small peasant property in places becomes very slow or ceases altogether," while, as a particular case of such a slowing and suspension of the process of disappearance, he also allows for the direct growth of small farming. But growth is in fact occurring. To his sorrow, Plekhanov cannot deny this; but he can, and does, try in every possible way to minimize its significance. Thus, turning to German statistics on the distribution of land among farms of different sizes, he notes that the total area under small-peasant farms increased relatively by only 0.03 percent, and under the smallest farms by 0.1 percent. "Do not be mistaken," Plekhanov warns, "we are speaking precisely of tenths and hundredths of a percent!" One crushed by such evident progress might be turned to dust!

But in the first place, the area under these farms increased not only relatively but also absolutely. That is one point. Secondly, Plekhanov's reader might profit by a little popular lesson in the rule of percentages. Let

us suppose that out of 100,000 hectares, 5,000 belong to small farms; let us suppose that after ten years small farms already possess 10,000 hectares. What is the increase in the area of small farms? The correct calculation is simple: an increase from 5,000 to 10,000 is an increase exactly by half again? No - exactly twofold, that is, by 100 percent. According to Plekhanov's method, however, one must proceed differently. At first, out of 100,000 hectares, the small proprietors possessed 5,000, that is 5 percent; then 10,000, that is 10 percent. Subtract 5 percent from 10 percent, and it turns out that the area of small farming has grown by only 5 percent.

After this, readers will not be surprised if, turning away from Plekhanov's one-sidedly abstract and incorrect depiction of actual relations, they find not some "zero point somethings," nor even "zero point with zero tenths," but quite round figures. Farms of 2 to 5 hectares increased their area during the period under review by almost 100,000 hectares. It is also a fact that the next size category - middle peasant farms of 5 to 20 hectares - likewise expanded their area, and by half a million hectares. But what are hundreds of thousands of hectares to Plekhanov? He does not want to look at them. "For him Napoleon is something like a wart."

That the area under parcelled French landownership increased by approximately 250,000 hectares Plekhanov also knows; but he consoles himself with the thought that the parcel peasants are almost proletarians. The area under small peasant property, meanwhile, contracted by 120,000 hectares, and the area under large farming increased by 197,000 hectares. "The data of French statistics," exclaims Plekhanov, "do little to help overthrow the Marxian dogma!" Of course they do little - especially if one uses Plekhanov's scientific method. If, however, we turn to the inquiry of 1892 itself, we find in it an explanation that the summary data conceal the true character of economic changes. To understand the true character of these changes, one must examine separately the zones north and south of the Loire. It then appears that in the first zone there is growth of middle and small farms at the expense of large ones, while in the second, mainly under the influence of the devastating action of phylloxera, there was a reduction in the number of middle farms and their consolidation in fewer hands. From the same inquiry the reader learns a strange thing: the number of proprietors proves to be far smaller than the number of farms. The joining together in one pair of hands of two or three parcels is a frequent phenomenon. Consequently, the growth in the number of the smallest parcels does not always mean the fragmentation of owners and their conversion into almost proletarians. Finally, from the same inquiry it appears that the number of agricultural wage workers in general - and specifically that group among them endowed with scraps of land - decreased in ten years by 11.43 percent. The number of those working on their own account increased by 48.5 percent. Yet it is from this inquiry that Plekhanov conceived the idea of drawing an illustration of the dogma of the proletarianization of the peasantry!

Meanwhile France is still the country most favorable to Plekhanov. The more eloquent data on the reduction of the middle-sized farms in the United States, where the greatest blow is experienced precisely by the notorious bonanza farms, the largest capitalist enterprises, Plekhanov prefers not to touch at all. Nor does he touch the still more eloquent data on England, where small and middle farms grow at the expense of large ones; instead he turns to Belgium. There, from 1866 to 1880, there was a long fragmentation of large farms; after the 1880s, apparently, there is a certain shift toward the concentration of landed property. True, this landed property is increasingly leased out under small farms; but here Plekhanov finds it beneficial to look not at changes in farms, but at changes in property, and he treats changes in rent as, apparently, the triumph of capitalism. And he exclaims: what if a similar movement should begin in other countries of the European continent? Then, indeed, even the shadow of possibility of overthrowing the "Marxian dogma" will vanish.

Here it is, the ultima ratio of modern orthodoxy: "But what if...?" To this malicious question one Russian proverb gives a simple and clear answer: if only, if only, beans grew in the mouth, then it would not be a mouth but a vegetable garden.

But what is interesting here is this. What is Plekhanov rejoicing at? Why does he drag facts by the ears under the formula of concentration? Did he not himself explain that the Marxian dogma consists in the law of the alternation of concentration with fragmentation, and the reverse? Why then does he strive so hard to prove concentration? For if it is observed anywhere, then according to his own formula nothing will come of it except a new fragmentation. And why does he, having so brilliantly proved that Marx by no means spoke of the inevitability of concentration, himself forget everything he has said and speak of the "Marxian dogma" in the sense of concentration? Where, then, has the only true dogma gone - Dogma No. 3, discovered in 1850 in the review against Girardin?

Poor dogma, forgotten by Plekhanov! "He forgot, he forgot..." With frivolous inconstancy Plekhanov flutters back again to the old dogma, Dogma No. 1. What is to be done? Evidently the French proverb is right: on revient toujours à ses premiers amours - one always returns to one's first loves. And the dogma of "concentration and proletarianization" turns out not to be dead and buried at all. No, it is only a sleeping beauty, enchanted by the wicked sorcerer - the spirit of criticism - and waiting only for the kiss of the brave knight of orthodox Marxism in order to begin freeing itself from lethargy and returning to life. And the knight is faithful to her. All his diversions - now toward equilibrium and mutual conditioning of small and large farming, now toward the enchanted circle of concentration and parcelization - are nothing more than attempts to battle the sorcery of criticism by all the means of the "natural and entertaining magic" of our old acquaintance Kapiton Ivanov. Here is "impossibility in action": proof of the proletarianization of the peasantry from data on the decrease in the number of agricultural proletarians and the increase in those working on their own account. Here is the "potpourri from the world of wonders": the tripersonal Marxist dogma, a Protean dogma which by its transformations amazes and throws the critics into confusion. Here is "Indian sleight of hand" with statistical data. Here are "cabbalism and ventriloquism" about what will happen if the mouth becomes a vegetable garden. Here, finally, is the "garland of roses" in the form of references to Augé-Laribé and Robelin, to the Statistik des Deutschen Reichs and the Royal Commission on Agriculture. In short: "there is everything, if only there is deception."

To sink to such a level in the scientific sense could only be done by that tendency which, more than any other, has abused the word "science." And this is an especially vivid symptom of how acute and deep is the crisis of the once so self-confident agrarian dogma of Marxism, and how, if it is not recognized, even the most stubborn of its defenders feel this crisis.

The following exposition will show how this crisis arose and what socio-political moral follows from it.

CHAPTER II

The Agrarian Question in the Era of the International Workingmen's Association

The first stage in Marxism's attempt to cope, theoretically and practically, with the agrarian question belongs to the epoch of the famous International Workingmen's Association. I say "the first stage" because before it one can note only the first statements of a Marxism that had not yet taken shape - to a certain extent the embryonic Marxism of 1848. In one of the following chapters, it is true, we shall have to return to that material as well, but only in order to characterize the preparation of Marxism. As a formed whole, Marxism first approached the solution of the agrarian question at the congresses of the International Association, where, confronting the small-peasant individualism of the Proudhonist school, it set against it its own theoretical conception of agricultural evolution and its own methods for resolving the vital questions raised by that evolution.

The statutes of the Association, as is well known, did not proclaim socialism as their basic aim. Socialism was still a sect. In order to open access to the Association both to the English trade-unionists and to the Proudhonists of France, the aim was characterized more indefinitely as the "economic emancipation of the working class." The variety of elements entering the Association therefore turned its congresses, to a certain degree, into a club for theoretical debates among different schools.

At the congresses of the Association the agrarian question was discussed three times. The first discussion took place at the second congress, in Lausanne, 2-8 September 1867, where the well-known Belgian scholar and activist César de Paepe raised the agrarian question, taking advantage partly of the debates on industrial associations and partly of the question of the nationalization of railways, quarries, and so on. After lively debate, it was decided to postpone the discussion of this matter until the next congress. At Brussels, and again at the fourth congress, in Basel, 5-11 September 1869, there was a third general discussion of the agrarian question. This time it was decided to devote one of the following congresses to a more detailed discussion of the ways in which, in the sphere of rural industry, a planned social organization of production was to be realized.

The point is that this practical side of the question was scarcely touched by the three congress discussions. Although, in the words of one of the most prominent representatives of practical Marxism, "the position of the rural proletariat was discussed very seriously at Basel," in reality one would search in vain, even in the official minutes of the congresses of the Association, for signs of a deep and serious discussion of the course of agrarian evolution, the position and mutual relations of the different classes of the rural population, and the points of support within it for corresponding political work. An enormous amount of the congresses' time was taken up by purely principled disputes over the abstract rights of society and of the individual with regard to landed property.

The French delegates, as ardent Proudhonists, rose resolutely in defense of the individual principle against the collectivist one. On the other side, among their opponents, who defended the principle of the nationalization of the land, two different currents also formed: one more orthodox-Marxist, the other distinct from it, extremely interesting and original. This latter current was represented chiefly by the aforementioned César de Paepe, while the first was represented by the English and German delegates. The official minutes of the Lausanne congress already state briefly - unfortunately, the minutes were not stenographic - that the German and English speakers insisted especially on the historical law which everywhere leads to the formation of large property.

In the well-known handbook by Stegmann and Hugo, which contains a brief but solid sketch of the history of the Association written with a sharply expressed Marxist tendency, one more feature is added. According to the testimony of the compilers, who were very well informed and competent in the subject, the English and especially the German delegates resolutely opposed the Proudhonists, advancing, among other things, the idea that there could be no talk of personal freedom on the basis of small landed property, since

"large capital expropriates the masses of industrial and agricultural workers and concentrates in its own hands the means of production of industry just as it does those of agriculture."

A weak echo of this belief in the existence of a "universal historical law," according to which development in industry as in agriculture must necessarily pass through the stage of capitalist concentration, can be seen in the resolution of the Brussels congress. It declared that "economic development itself tends toward large-scale cultivation," and therefore the congress held the opinion that economic development would make social cultivation of the land necessary.

At the Basel congress all three currents separated themselves still more distinctly. I leave the Proudhonists aside; with them, as before, the central place is occupied by purely dogmatic theses concerning the abstract right of the individual to the land. Among their opponents, however, a very different tendency was revealed. Here we hear more talk of the fact that the interested elements of the population "will not be able to wait" until things arrange themselves by the natural course of events. In addition to the objective "logic of things," a purely practical and subjective logic is advanced. It is indicated that the progress of ideas, intellectual progress, has so far outstripped material evolution that, in order to restore correspondence, the latter must be advanced by a shortened path.

De Paepe, it is clear, was rather skeptical toward the "universal historical law" of the concentration of landed property. "In countries of small property," he argued, "the division of property through inheritance breaks the soil into smaller and smaller parcels. But at the same time the inconvenience of this parceling will in the end lead the peasant proprietors to cultivation by associations and to the unification of these parcels, and then perhaps to the solidarization of these cooperatives themselves with one another and to the joining of the cultivated area in their hands into common possession."

Thus, while in principle favoring the collective principle and the nationalization of land, de Paepe and his comrades held that society should transfer the occupation of the land either to individual cultivators or, preferably, to agricultural associations paying rent to the state. Later, in his well-known report De l'organisation des services publics, de Paepe even expressed the idea that in many states it might - at least at first - be more practical not to nationalize the land but to transfer it into the ownership of rural communes. As the reader sees, here, in embryonic form and in outlines not yet sufficiently vivid or definite, an entirely different schema of agricultural evolution is being sketched. Its essential levers are recognized as cooperation and the commune. De Paepe's views recall, in the highest degree, those of our N. G. Chernyshevsky, though they differ from them by a considerable admixture of Proudhonism.

It is characteristic that even the dogmatic Marxists at this time did not yet risk drawing all the logical consequences from their point of view. They did not invite people to rejoice at the successes of capitalism and to wait until agriculture was organized on a social scale by those few "entrepreneurs" who were supposed to defeat all the others by competition. Not infrequently, slipping in practice back to the preceding point of view, they introduced into the proposal put forward by de Paepe only a comparatively insignificant correction. It seemed to them too great a concession to the principle of individualism for society to hand over the land for use by individual producers or by agricultural cooperatives. They recognized only its transfer to "solidarized communes." The majority of the special commission on the agrarian question spoke in favor of this latter proposal, by eight votes against six for de Paepe. But the congress as a whole again postponed the decision until one of the following congresses. As is known, however, disturbances and mutual conflicts then began within the Association, finally leading to its complete disintegration. The agrarian question never obtained its solution there.

The debates that took place at the congresses of the Association found an echo in literature as well. Here, first of all, we must mention Eccarius.

The tailor Eccarius, who lived in London and was one of Marx's closest friends and disciples, was the chief representative of the Association's General Council who appeared at the congresses, as it were, as the

porte-parole expressing the opinions of his absent teacher. Marx himself, as is known, preferred to be absent from the congresses and to entrust the defense of his views to others. Eccarius's book, therefore, may be regarded as the purest expression of the Marxism of that time. It contains a special chapter devoted to the "small peasant economy." For more than a decade, by the admission of one supporter of Kautsky's agrarian program, this book served as the basis of Marxist rural agitation in Germany.

What did this book give for agitation of that kind? Above all, it predicted to the peasantry its impending destruction and to large-scale agricultural production its coming triumph. "The small peasantry stands in the same relation to modern large agriculture as hand weaving or hand spinning stands to machine production." Therefore, "small peasant farming is the agriculture of the past." True, the peasant economy stubbornly resists its inevitable fate; but, in Eccarius's opinion, its chief means for doing so is the terrible, superhuman burdening of itself with labor and an equally terrible "subhuman" way of life - that is, voluntary privation and cutting itself down in the most necessary things. Thus Eccarius already introduced into circulation that simplified explanation of the vitality of the peasant economy - the explanation on which K. Kautsky still feeds, and which he continues to chew over to this day.

The same Eccarius also points to mortgage indebtedness as an initially hidden form of the peasant's expropriation, leading slowly but surely to the liquidation of his economy - an end which, in the interest of productive progress, can only be welcomed. But he does not stop there. He introduces yet another argument in favor of recognizing the small, laboring peasant economy as obsolete and outlived. The small, self-working peasant, he says, has chiefly in view production for his own consumption; by contrast, the large capitalist farmer produces for sale. Yet modern industrial countries have called forth entire strata of an urban population needing to purchase agricultural products. The mainly self-consuming economy of the small peasant cannot satisfy this demand; for that, it must be replaced by large, capitalist-farmer agriculture. In short, small peasant farming is incompatible with the modern industrial state.

This argument of Eccarius is now abandoned by Marxists, for the exaggerations on which it rests are obvious. Peasants, after all, everywhere sell a certain part of their product; and in countries where the peasant population predominates numerically, its supply of grain, cattle, and meat on the market even plays the role of a factor lowering market prices. Nor can the import of grain from other countries be removed from the field of vision with such serene calm as Eccarius removes it.

It goes without saying that the author does not forget to mention especially the social-political advantages of large-scale farming in agriculture. "The wage worker far outstrips his co-worker by profession, the proprietor": he is accustomed to cooperation, while the peasant "is unfit for it." The small peasantry is condemned politically as well as socio-economically. It "has nowhere proved and could not prove its viability as a reliable contemporary, keeping pace with modern industry and social progress. It is the fifth wheel in the carriage of social-political development, a leaden weight that paralyzes the workers' movement in France as in other places on the continent." In this last practical remark, as we shall see below, lies the whole matter: da ist der Hund begraben - that is where the dog is buried. It would not be very difficult to point out the weak points in this whole argument. But the game is not worth the candle. Below we shall still have to meet the same arguments, but in a far more perfected and polished form. Then we shall settle our accounts with them.

The practical conclusions of Eccarius, his outline of a desirable agrarian policy, are marked by extreme generality and indefiniteness. Polemicizing against Mill, who wished "to turn the worker back again into a peasant," he sets against this the assertion that workers are directly interested in suppressing, in embryo, every old-new attempt to introduce small peasant farming. Eccarius demands the transfer into the hands of agricultural associations of all uncultivated lands, as well as communal, church, crown, and similar lands - "not as perpetual property, but on the basis of lease contracts securing for society control over land and soil as the source of all means of subsistence."

It remains unclear what society is supposed to play so honorable a role: the future society, or the present, bourgeois one? If the present one, is it fit for this? If the future one, what should agrarian policy be now, in the meantime?

Eccarius's book appeared at the end of 1868, immediately after the fruitless debates of the Brussels congress. It therefore preceded the Basel resolution and prepared it. Immediately after that resolution there appeared an interesting pamphlet intended to popularize it among the rural masses. This was Johann Becker's Manifesto to the Agricultural Population, published in the name of the central committee of the German section of the Association in Geneva; a Russian translation also exists. This pamphlet asserts with extreme rectilinearity that, "under the existing conditions of social life, all small proprietors are inevitably destined in the future to be deprived of possession," because "the power of capital and the further development of science, as well as the interests of society as a whole, by the force of things mercilessly and irrevocably condemn small parcel farming to certain death."

It is not worth stopping over the numerical data with which Becker tries to confirm his conclusions. These data are beneath all criticism. Characteristic, incidentally, is the following. Having, with extraordinary speed, "proved" by data on the auction sale of small estates in the German part of the canton of Bern that "the decline of middle and small farms in this small blessed country proceeds not in arithmetic but in geometric progression," Becker, with an even smaller quantity of data, confirms that in France "the time is not far off when one part of the rural population will be condemned to farm-laborer status, and the other will increase the number of the factory proletariat and of urban pauperism." This is followed by a more successful excursion into England. But the Manifesto was written for the German agricultural population. It would seem that in it, first of all, there should have been room for illustrating general propositions with facts from German economic life. Instead, however, we find an extremely characteristic phrase: "If space permitted us, we could cite a mass of similar facts manifested in Germany." But since "space" permitted discussion only of the canton of Bern, a move into France, and, after crossing the English Channel, a visit to England, instead of the expected "mass of facts" from German life we encounter a classic Marxist phrase: "The economic condition of England develops so definitely and clearly that it can serve all civilized peoples as a faithful image of the fate awaiting them."

We shall meet more than once again this refrain of the thought expressed by Marx: that the industrially more developed country shows the others only the image of their own future. With this phrase of Marx, from the preface to the first volume of Capital, there is closely bound a whole system of orthodox-Marxist views on a universally obligatory schema of economic development for all branches of production and all countries. For a long time, reference to this truth replaced actual analysis among Marxists. Inductive investigation was boldly replaced by deduction from a proposition that had never been proved. Here, of course, it is worth adding that this simplified method of resolving economic questions slipped from the hands of the Marxists as soon as practical considerations forced them to turn away from England and cease recognizing it as the "classical type" of development. But for the time being they had to ride on England.

It is now interesting to ask: what practical conclusions does the pamphlet draw with regard to the peasantry? After all, it addresses itself directly to the peasantry, and in popular form at that. To write in popular form is no easy thing when one's own head is not sufficiently clear and definite. Here one cannot resort to those kinds of "words" that conceal a lack of concepts. Here one cannot mask, by the abstractness of a formula, gaps in the concrete definiteness of one's ideas.

The orthodox author of the article Die Landfrage etc., cited above, characterized the Marxist current at the congresses in the following way: "not recommending any premature intervention in the spirit of its worldview, it rejects any agreement with the prejudices of backward social classes that are hostile to contemporary development, and it prefers to adhere to an expectant mode of action rather than compromise its aims." Of course there are situations in which nothing remains but to sit by the sea and wait for the weather - that is, for the concentration of landed property and the proletarianization of the peasantry. But it is

interesting to know what can be squeezed, for agitation among peasants, from a fondness for an "expectant mode of action."

In essence, as we have already seen, Marxism had to drift toward something more than "expectation." This is perhaps nowhere expressed more clearly than in Becker's Manifesto. There, the peasants are offered an entire concretely elaborated plan. And what is important to note is that this plan has in view not the Zukunftsstaat, the state of the future, for the question concerns the position of things at the present time, "before the complete transformation of the existing order has taken place - something that will be the work of several generations and therefore belongs to the domain of history." The question concerns only means that serve to approach the goal; and therefore "advice" is offered whose immediate fulfillment is now quite possible.

Here is that advice:

1. The small proprietors of each commune unite their parcels, domestic livestock, farm buildings, agricultural implements, and labor powers for communal cultivation with the help of all the means indicated by science and technique, and thus form a productive commune.
2. All propertyless workers who are now occupied as day laborers or serve as farmhands become equal members of the commune and receive, on an equal basis with the others and according to established rules, from the common production the share necessary for their existence.
3. Until a more just distribution of the common proceeds can be introduced, the small proprietors receive an annual remuneration proportional to the capital they have contributed to communal possession and determined by a committee specially elected for that purpose by the whole commune.
4. The entire net income is turned into a social fund, to which every member of the commune has an equal right, and for the use of which special rules will be established.
5. These agricultural communes enter into relations both among themselves and with the productive and consumer societies of urban workers and with all other workers' associations, and they form a closely organized federation of unions for moral and material support on the basis of complete solidarity and for common struggle against every kind of political and economic oppression.

We omit here the other points concerning agricultural laborers, who, for their part, are to demand from proprietors participation in the profits of the enterprises in which they work and, from the other side, a portion of communal, state, or church lands in order to cultivate them jointly. For us it is more essential to note another side of the matter.

Marxism, so contemptuous of all "utopias" and of all "premature interventions" for fear of "compromising its aims," here itself proves to be utopian precisely in what it accused others of being. Becker's plan vividly recalls the old projects of the "utopians." As with them, Becker's "solidarized productive commune" springs forth in finished form, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. As with them, its emergence is connected with nothing in the preceding course of life. It descends to earth, arising in the form of theoretical "advice," and then, by its own inner harmony, exerts an irresistible influence: the "advice," thanks to its reasonableness, is followed, and behold - a collectivist oasis is created within bourgeois society.

As with the utopians, Becker lacks the understanding that the passages from individualism to collectivism cannot be simple and sudden, and therefore that it will not do to propose to people, as a general slogan, "expropriate yourselves in view of the common benefit." Becker still stood on the old standpoint according to which a new economic order could almost be decreed by a dictatorship of the proletariat in a matter of days. The modern theories of the organic development of the new order - for example, Kautsky's book on a fundamental social transformation, according to which the creation of this order must be regarded as a complex and lengthy process, perhaps requiring about half a century - did not yet exist for him. And, together with the majority of his contemporaries, he would probably have met them with extreme hostility as an undoubtedly bourgeois heresy. Therefore the transition to association in agriculture appeared to him just as

rectilinear, in the form of just such a "leap," as the future "leap" of the whole of society from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.

The matter, of course, is not that Becker's plan wrongly indicated the direction in which one can and must work among peasant cultivators. The trouble is that this plan appeared as something torn away from life; that Becker and his comrades failed to find within the life of the peasantry itself such points from which a bridge could be thrown to the ideal. The "solidarized commune" of their projects did not work itself out organically from tendencies naturally arising within the laboring agricultural economy. It was some sort of external, self-contained phenomenon, no better than Fourier's phalanstery.

Every transition from individualism to collectivism requires a certain breaking of individual habits, a certain self-limitation, an ability to adapt oneself to comrades, to coordinate one's actions and methods with their actions and methods. It requires a certain rather broad "yieldingness," an ability to live together, an ability to defend one's interests without too sensitively touching the self-love of others, taking account of others' weaknesses and, as far as possible, tolerantly regarding even the fact that one's fellow worker does not always succeed in suppressing them in time. All such "social virtues" do not grow especially luxuriantly in the atmosphere of the present order, where sharp individualism and sharp authoritarianism mutually supplement one another.

It is therefore absurd to calculate that some clever "advice" - and moreover the advice of a person entirely unacquainted with the conditions of agricultural production - can instill in the peasant such colossal faith in the saving power of cooperative labor that he will agree simply to "expropriate himself in favor of society," to pass at once to the fusion of properties and the renunciation of the right of independent disposal over his own farm, on which his whole existence rests.

And nevertheless, the cause of cooperative labor, of collective cultivation in the village, is not only not hopeless but, as we now see, is developing with extreme rapidity. It is only developing, of course, not by the path dreamed of by the simplistic Becker. It grows precisely out of the real needs of peasant life and expands through a successive increase in the number of economic operations undertaken jointly. It follows the line of least resistance and greatest result, beginning with the "socialization" of those kinds of economic functions whose advantages stand beyond dispute.

The harmfulness of "premature intervention" consists not in the fact that life solves everything by itself and that one must only wait, but simply in the fact that the person who intervenes may himself be completely unprepared for the task he undertakes and may act as a clumsy intruder, producing deformities. The natural response to such interference is the response excellently expressed by Gleb Uspensky in the short formula: "Do not meddle!"

We have already seen that Becker could not even conceive the thought that within peasant life there might be elements whose tendencies, at least in part, could coincide with the tendencies of agrarian socialism. For him all the tendencies of the peasant economy led to one thing: its destruction. Therefore on his side there was both an enormous utopianism and a still more fatal weakness. He inevitably sought to replace real practice with agitation, and to offer the peasantry, as a universal remedy, a ready-made plan for its own salvation.

For a time, even the sympathetic organs of the German labor movement recognized in this kind of agitation a certain slant to the left, toward desired relations rather than toward actual relations. This, of course, did not prevent them - just as it does not prevent our contemporary Marxists - from being firmly convinced that they, and only they, stood on the solid ground of scientific analysis of life and impeccably correct prediction of the future.

The few isolated persons who tried to doubt the dogma of concentration and who expressed other opinions, in some respects more correct ones, did not at that time have sufficient influence. At the congresses themselves we have already seen a vivid example of this sort in the Belgian César de Paepe, to whom we

shall still have to return. In Germany, during the debates over the resolutions of the Basel congress, a voice of skepticism with regard to the dogma was also heard only once. In 1869, in the party Marxist organ Volksstaat of 6 October, there appeared an article by the well-known leader of the Swiss workers in Zurich, Hermann Greulich, entitled Zur Heulmeierei gegen den Baseler Kongress.

In this article the author advances, among other things, the idea that the extreme concentration of landownership in England calls forth the necessity of the expropriation and nationalization of landed property. However, on the continent, and especially in southern Germany and Switzerland, the state of affairs is essentially different. "It is not so easy to say how things will proceed further. However, one cannot assert that here, as in England over the course of the last century, landed property will concentrate in the hands of a few. It is possible - and at the same time desirable - that the peasants, with the help of state credit, communal funds, and associations, will emancipate themselves more from the capitalists and will pass more to cooperative work, applying machines jointly, making common purchases, constructing more durable artel economic installations, using improved agricultural schools, and so on. Thus the same result will be achieved here as will be achieved in England, but by a different path. To define this, however, is not our task; we are not suppliers of systems, nor peddlers of them; and the views of the delegates of the Basel congress on this question diverged considerably."

As you see, Greulich himself feels the lack of material needed to construct a fully definite system, still less to substantiate it. He gets off with the clever phrase, "We are not suppliers of systems." It is also characteristic to note that the obvious shakiness of Greulich's faith in the directly collective creativity of the peasantry itself forces him to put greater emphasis on state support, which gives his views a certain flavor of "state socialism." In this respect he stands on the right wing of the current under consideration, while de Paepe stands on the left. Be that as it may, his views, like de Paepe's, show that already within the International Workingmen's Association, alongside the Marxist-dogmatic view, there existed another view of the agrarian question, completely distinct from it. Only because this question was then still too theoretical - for the practical activity of the people of that time was confined to the city - did these two views not clash more sharply. They were not even properly demarcated, and in what follows we shall see not a little eclectic mixing of elements of both views even among very major representatives of Marxism. Their clash was still entirely in the future.

CHAPTER III

The Lassalleans and the Eisenachers

In Germany, the discussion of the agrarian question among the "Lassalleans" and the "Eisenachers" belongs directly to the period following the International Workingmen's Association. The obscure period of factional struggle between the adherents of Lassalle, headed by von Schweitzer, and the "Marxists," who under the leadership of Bebel and Liebknecht founded a new party at the Eisenach congress, is little known to the general public. It is usually thought that the Lassalleans were not "real" socialists, but rather rather doubtful social reformers with a whiff of Prussian nationalism. Lassalle's famous project of "associations with state aid," his maneuvers in negotiations with Bismarck, and Schweitzer's later metamorphoses - all this has served to reinforce that popular view. On the other hand, the name "Marxists," usually applied to the Eisenachers, the names of Bebel and Liebknecht, their close relations with Marx, their stronger attraction to the principle of "internationality," and their hostility to the Lassalleans all reinforced the same opinion still more.

Yet the injustice of this view is now too obvious. In the history of the German workers' movement written by the orthodox Mehring, a whole series of erroneous and unjust judgments about the Lassalleans has already been corrected. Bernstein also did not a little in this respect when he published Lassalle's writings with his not uninteresting historical-critical preface. On the other side, the "Eisenachers" proved to be far from such "pure" Marxists. It turned out that they had passed through a certain evolution, which had not at once torn them away from the radical democrats with particularist tendencies. Konstadt is even compelled to state that, upon examination, "without any doubt, the so-called Eisenachers stood far behind the adherents of Lassalle in Marxism." Marx's unjustly harsh judgments about them are explained, in addition to his extreme dislike of their Prussian sympathies, by the fact that Marx had not even read the Lassallean organ Der Neue Sozialdemokrat, and judged it only by the polemical articles written against it by Liebknecht and others.

As everyone knows, Lassalle occupied himself little with the agrarian question theoretically, and even less practically. But insofar as he did occupy himself with it, we find in him the same agrarian-political standpoint as in Marxism.

In his Frankfurt speech, for example, Lassalle spoke in the most decisive way in favor of large-scale farming as a "source of national wealth and of an increase in the gross yield from the fields," and against the subdivision of land for allotting agricultural workers, since parcelling was, in his view, "a source of national impoverishment and of a decline in the grain harvest." True, he did not deny the need for work among the agricultural population; he recognized that "the interests of all who do not possess capital are solidary." But he immediately added that "the agricultural worker, even when he owns a scrap of land barely sufficient to feed a cow, even when he is forced to work that scrap of land with nothing but a spade and a shovel - still imagines himself to be an owner." He is not yet disposed toward association, and one cannot impose this disposition, this readiness, upon him.

Finally, Lassalle also dealt with agrarian questions in his letters to Rodbertus, but there he was occupied mainly with the theory of rent and its general significance for the final conclusions of collectivism. Only in passing did he speak of his well-known plan of associations based on state credit as applied to agriculture. He held that only by establishing such associations, receiving land from the state, would it be possible to introduce a land tax from which the lowest category of plots would be exempt - those yielding no rent - and which would seize the whole differential rent of the remaining plots.

In this way, on the one hand, equality would be achieved in the position of different groups of cultivators; and on the other hand, the rent confiscated for the benefit of the state would become a rich source of funds for carrying out the cultural and educational tasks of the state. Lassalle even declared, in view of this, that "association, transferred into the milieu of agricultural workers, acquires the significance of a turning point

that opens new paths and must gradually lead to the final solution of the social question, to the social condition which we foresee at the end of the present anarchy of production."

A question arises, however: what precise "state" is supposed to accomplish all these excellent things? The state of the future, in which labor has entered into its rights and, having overcome all resistance, can freely place its stamp on all relations of life? Or the present state, upon which, always more or less openly, always more or less disguised, there weighs the class stamp of the rule of the "golden calf" that reigns over the whole universe? The absence of a clear answer to this question always gave Lassalleanism a flavor of "state socialism."

Lassalle understood perfectly well - and wrote in these same letters to Rodbertus - that his "theoretical conscience" did not permit him to regard "associations based on state credit" as "the solution of the social question." It was only a "practical transitional measure," not the final goal. But who was to carry out this transitional measure? The present state, in the way it carries out measures of factory legislation? But would not the mass of the poorest and most benighted population then be placed in too great a dependence on the bureaucracy? Would not this economic dependence upon the state, added to political dependence, become a new instrument of their comprehensive spiritual and material enslavement? Would this not, in short, be to present the modern state in the role of guardian and benefactor, thereby confusing minds and diverting them from a consistently oppositional attitude toward it?

Such were the doubts that forced Lassalle's adherents to reject, more and more sharply, the possibility of this interpretation. The "associations," and agricultural associations in particular, together with state credit as the basis of their existence, came to be regarded as one of the measures that would constitute an approach to the construction of the "state of the future" - and therefore only after the corresponding general-political cataclysm. But by the same token the question was completely eliminated: are associations needed now, before the "second coming" of this cataclysm?

Lassalle seized upon this slogan as something tangible, and at the same time sufficiently large, sufficiently disruptive of the principles of the present economy, to evoke on its basis a definite, active, militant, and at the same time broad movement. As a conception, therefore, his idea was very interesting; only its execution, as we have seen, provoked a whole series of legitimate doubts and did not harmonize with the goal. Later, the immediate slogans, the nearest demands, became among the adherents of Marx and Lassalle much more "moderate and orderly." A whole theory was even created that said: the present economic order is digging its own grave; let us not interfere with it in this; when the grave is sufficiently deep, it will fall into it by itself. Then our maximum program will be fulfilled. For the time being, let us not hinder it; we are its heirs, so let it gather and accumulate and increase our inheritance for us. We need only think of making the heir worthy of the inheritance. Thus our nearest tactic is reduced to the "defense of the spiritual and physical health" of the workers within the framework of bourgeois society. For now, do not touch that framework; treat its evolution carefully. Some even said: assist it.

Lassalle's boiling temperament did not allow him to arrive at this way of posing the question. He wanted to find, even for the present time, an offensive tactic - one that would directly intervene in present economic relations and would not spare their "sacred" foundations. His search was unsuccessful; in it he lost his way, just as he did in his political maneuvers with Bismarck. But one cannot fail to see, at the basis of this search, a healthy impulse that was later lost by his spiritual children.

Be that as it may, the Lassalleans dealt, after a fashion, with their teacher's legacy. The method by which they dealt with it made easier their union with their "friend-enemies," the Eisenach party, close to them in aims but hostile because of old factional accounts. Yet already in the period of the bitterest fratricidal struggle between them, the Lassalleans could often outdo their rivals in "Marxism." In the agrarian question in particular, the Lassalleans showed strict loyalty to the Marxist dogma. It is enough to become acquainted with the series of articles "Der Grundbesitz und die soziale Frage" in their party organ to be convinced of this.

Landed property, those articles said, has already partly gathered, and is partly gathering, "in the hands of large capitalists." Landowners, whether by means of credit or by turning their estates into joint-stock enterprises - the latter especially being predicted a brilliant future in agriculture - open the way for capital into agriculture. From there everything proceeds as if written in advance: "large-scale agricultural production" is organized, able to stand beside modern large-scale industry and at the same time, by its competition, to drive all small peasants out of their yards and from under their roofs. A whole industrial revolution takes place, "which compels all landowners to pass entirely into the ranks of the bourgeoisie, and all peasants to become proletarians."

Thus, in the end, landowners who have no capital must, exactly like artisans in the towns, lose their property in a fruitless struggle with capital. In the final result, landed property falls entirely into the hands of bourgeois who have sufficient capital for large-scale agricultural production armed with machinery. "The small peasantry is destroyed by the existing mode of production." "The moment is approaching when the entire small peasantry must perish." On the other side, the proletarians who take the place of the peasants are themselves subjected, in turn, to the same fate: machines replace them. It is expected that machines will displace no more and no less than five-sixths of the agricultural workers, and meanwhile, within five years, machine production is capable of conquering the whole country, which will naturally call forth unbelievable unemployment, crisis, and the final cataclysm.

"Well done, good and faithful servant!" the agrarian capitalism of these articles could have said to their author, naively taking the fantastic picture drawn by them for reality.

Such, then, was the result of Lassalle's searching. His passionate thirst, even now, for a larger and bolder social struggle directed against the very foundations of the existing bourgeois regime found satisfaction among Lassalle's successors in the soothing theoretical prediction of the rapid arrival of the complete liquidation of the existing economic order, according to the tendencies of its own development. But one must ask: what is to be done in the meantime? What immediate, everyday demands are to be put forward in agriculture, in the village, for the current struggle? The Lassallean organ posed this question and outlined the tasks of the day which rural workers must set themselves "directly within the limits of the present conditions of production." For wage workers this meant struggle by strikes for better conditions of labor and pressure on legislation for the regulation of the working day, rest periods, and so on.

As for the small peasants, they would seriously damage their own cause if they did not support this struggle of the rural wage workers against the large estates; for it is precisely the competition of these estates, owing to the starvation wages paid there, that prevents peasants from selling their harvest at a good price. The peasants, further, must necessarily unite on their side into leagues, so that, hand in hand with the agricultural laborers, they may undertake the struggle against the large landowners and even try to organize the planned sale of their grain in opposition to the speculating grain merchants. Further, before the peasants stands above all the task of struggling against indirect taxes, and especially against the land tax, from which their estate suffers most of all.

Advising them in this way to stand on the firm ground of the real needs of the peasantry, the author proposes to make use, for the preaching of the socialization of peasant property and labor, of certain historical survivals among the peasants - for example, of the fact that they "can very well remember that the division of communal property did not improve, but worsened their situation."

Thus a certain program of current struggle was put together. Of course, the tendency gained greatly from this. It no longer remained only an impulse toward the "final goal" without knowledge of the transitional stages. It set itself on real ground and began to seek ways of making practical use of existing forces in the current struggle, of obtaining one or another conquest even before the moment when "labor" would be strong enough, after removing all obstacles, to create a new world "in its own image and likeness." In short, the question of a "minimum program" was put on the agenda: a tactic of partial gains achieved along the way, in the process of striving for the final goal, and utilized for the speedier realization of that goal.

But if the Lassalleans acted correctly from the methodological point of view in working out such a practical program, they hardly determined the concrete content of that program correctly from their own standpoint. To the peasants they proposed uniting into economic leagues, resisting rural usury, organizing the sale of their products in a planned way, struggling against large landownership, and so on. All this was practical enough, as was the appeal to memories of the advantages of communal property. But here was the trouble: the agrarian theory of the Lassalleans undermined the very practice they had outlined. Having taken up the strictly Marxist standpoint in the agrarian question, they themselves sawed off the branch on which they intended to sit.

Indeed, what is the point of all these counsels to the peasantry, once theory has proved their complete impracticability? After all, the peasants are condemned by inexorable fate to turn into proletarians. After all, all attempts to "delay" or "stop" the process of their displacement by large bourgeois agriculture were announced in advance to be "vain." Of course, current everyday struggle is a good school for the future, but only when at least partial success is possible in that struggle. A hopeless struggle, consisting of nothing but defeats, educates and can educate the masses in nothing except moral depression and despondency. From the standpoint of the agrarian theory accepted by the Lassalleans, the whole struggle against grain speculators, large landowners, and the like could not become a lever by which a new path would be cleared for the evolution of the peasantry; it could only be a breaking against the old, well-worn road. The whole struggle had to prove "vain" and hopeless - and yet the theory's adherents advised it. This was an inconsistency.

In other respects, the agrarian question presented no difficulty for the Lassalleans. Since their party did not avoid openly preaching its final aims, when the Lassalleans were accused of wanting to "take the land away from them," they came forward boldly and with visor raised. In a special article on the burning question of their plans in agriculture, they wrote: "Land will not be taken from anyone. Large landowners will remain, just as agricultural laborers will remain, but they will both constitute productive associations. The state will supply them with cattle, improved implements, chemical fertilizers, and so on. Individual villages will likewise constitute productive associations on the land they possess. These associations will connect with one another and in some way constitute one whole, so that individual rural communes are not deprived in comparison with others, whether because of poor soil or bad harvests, and so that the income obtained by them is distributed among them evenly. Finally, a directing popular representation must determine the relation between the annually produced quantity of agricultural and industrial products and the quantity of labor expended on them, in order to establish justly the share of the different branches of productive labor in the annual income."

Having thus proclaimed their final desiderata in the agrarian sphere with complete decisiveness, the Lassalleans, in the person of Schweitzer, greeted without hesitation the resolution of the Basel congress, which proclaimed as a principle the conversion of all land into public property.

The situation was not so simple for the "Eisenachers." When the progressive-democratic camp raised a storm over the Basel congress resolution, it evidently caused no little embarrassment in the ranks of the Eisenachers. Liebknecht considered it most convenient to sidestep this painful question somehow - a question on which, obviously, not everyone felt firm even within his own party. He therefore even resorted to the following statement, printed in the party organ of the time, Demokratisches Wochenblatt: "We are asked: what position does the Social-Democratic Workers' Party take toward the Basel resolution on landed property? Answer: none. Each individual member of the party may and must determine his position toward it; but the party as such has no need to do so. At the same time, it is in no way bound by this resolution, just as the International Workingmen's Association itself is little bound by it. In general, this resolution, like all resolutions of a theoretical character, has binding significance only for those who voted for it."

This maneuver is connected with the evasive behavior of the leaders of the "Marxists" in other questions related to the resolution. In the preceding chapter we became acquainted with Becker's interesting manifesto to the peasants. Becker undertook the composition of this manifesto as a result of a decision of the Eisenach

congress of the "Marxists"; Liebknecht in Leipzig and Oberwinder in Vienna were to take up the same work. Only Becker carried out the task. But when Liebknecht became acquainted with his manifesto, he found it "unsuitable for German conditions," and his party did not publish it. Becker had to publish it in the name of the Geneva Central Committee of the section of the International Workingmen's Association. In the Volksstaat the manifesto was reprinted only much later, simply as a document - and even that happened only after long resistance by Liebknecht. The manifesto was nonetheless distributed in certain peasant districts. This gives a sufficient foundation for von Schweitzer's scornful talk of the "Eisenach semi-socialists."

It would be a mistake, however, to think that after the Basel resolution the leaders of the Eisenachers wanted simply to wash their hands of everything. If in fact they retreated somewhat, it was not to the right, in the direction of their ideological allies, the progressive democrats, whose rupture with them created a critical situation for the party. Both Bebel and Liebknecht understood this, and in a whole series of reports they prepared their adherents and strengthened them ideologically on new positions. From these reports arose the most interesting programmatic brochures of the tendency: Bebel's Unsere Ziele and Liebknecht's Zur Grund- und Bodenfrage.

When the ground had been sufficiently prepared, the first attempt appeared to give a clear and definite theoretical formulation to the resolution of the agrarian question from the Marxist point of view. This attempt was made at the party congress in Stuttgart, with Bebel himself as the chief rapporteur. Bebel developed the arguments of his report in much more detail in Unsere Ziele, a special polemical brochure against the fierce opponents of the Basel resolution - the democrats, who had begun to persecute Bebel at every step and in every way.

From Unsere Ziele we learn that small peasants are "more and more oppressed and displaced by large landownership, just as small artisans are displaced by large factory owners." The peasants are destroyed by "the very same causes that bring about the ruin of the small urban bourgeoisie." Rationalization of farming requires larger capital and a larger land area; "hence the tendency toward concentration of landed property observed in modern agriculture." It is characteristic that the author even constructs the cheapening of agricultural products by analogy with industry - from rationalization of production and its conduct on a large scale. "The development of peasant relations has shown that parcel property in the age of the steam engine is ein überwundener Standpunkt," an outlived standpoint. More than that, "the tendency toward concentration inherent in the modern mode of production more and more diminishes even the number of landlords." Here, of course, the example of England also appears, where the far-advanced concentration of landed property has supposedly already made it possible, mit einem Federzug - with a single stroke of the pen - to take the decisive step toward a new economic organization.

Thus all considerations of an economic character speak in favor of agricultural capitalism. As for the peasantry, it would seem that this same economic evolution has said its last word. "There can be no doubt that the necessary consequence of the development of our economic relations must be an increase in the lamentable condition of the lowest stratum of the peasant population and the gradual destruction of the middle stratum of the peasantry." The author, however, stops at this point and makes an unexpected turn. He not only does not invite people to "act in the spirit of the necessary economic tendency," that is, to adapt themselves to it; he even considers it impossible to recommend to his comrades a policy of neutrality, of "nonresistance" to the necessary evil. He appeals to arguments of a purely ethical kind. Are we to remain passive spectators of the suffering and ruin of the peasantry? he asks. The peasant is the same human being as all the others; he has the same right to existence as the richest and strongest; and he has the same right as we - that is, as industrial workers - to demand of society the removal of those institutions which were not created by his hands, for the existence of which he is not responsible, but upon which his existence is broken.

These general ethical propositions serve as the logical starting point for our author in putting forward a whole series of demands in favor of the peasantry: the abolition of feudal, church, and monastic property relations; the reorganization of state domains; the spread of agricultural education among the rural

population; the nationalization of land and its transfer to agricultural associations by contracts that would ensure the rational cultivation of the land and a correct distribution of the product of collective labor. For us it is especially significant that, in accordance with the rapporteur's proposal, the Stuttgart party congress declared itself "against any transformation of state and communal lands into private property."

The resolution adopted at the Stuttgart congress includes almost word for word the entire resolution of the Brussels International congress. However, it also contains additions, and these are extremely characteristic. First, everything that contains practical demands in favor of the peasantry is inserted, including the protest against the conversion of communal lands into private property. Second, two insertions are made in the general motivation, aimed at emphasizing the analogy between agricultural and industrial evolution.

The same standpoint of "analogism," the simple transference to agriculture of truths valid in application to industry, appears still more vividly in another party comrade of Bebel's - in Liebknecht's Zur Grund- und Bodenfrage. The theoretical agrarian dogma of Marxism appears in this little book more clearly than anywhere else. Since the book has long been out of print and has now become a relative bibliographical rarity, we shall allow ourselves to dwell on its content in somewhat greater detail and quote from it a whole series of the most characteristic passages.

In the author's opinion, first of all, both agriculture and industry are governed by "the same economic laws" - die gleichen ökonomischen Gesetze gelten. But once the matter is put in this way - and the identity of the economic laws governing the development of industry and agriculture then seemed a self-evident truth requiring no proof - all questions became extremely simplified. Just as, for the organicist sociologists, it was necessary to turn to the factual, concrete study of social phenomena only for illustrations of laws and propositions already known in advance, so for the Marxists of that time the sphere of agriculture was only material for the illustration of fully prepared propositions found and proven in another sphere - the industrial one. The result of the investigation was predetermined by the "point of view," and no room remained for free, scientific-inductive investigation of new truths.

And so we have a whole series of propositions. "Small-scale agricultural production cannot withstand competition with large-scale agricultural production, and in exactly the same way - gerade so - must give way to it as small-scale industrial production gives way to large-scale industry." Indeed, in general, "the small peasantry stands in the same relation to modern large-scale agriculture as hand-spinning and weaving stand to factory, machine production."

Once the point of departure is given, the results follow with irresistible logical force. The displacement of the small parcel peasantry by large landownership of the English type "is only a question of time." "In agriculture, no less than in industry, large-scale production reigns today (!), and various palliatives can save the small peasantry no more than Schulze-Delitzsch pills can save the small urban bourgeoisie. The steam plow will produce the same revolution in agriculture as the steam loom and spinning machine have produced in industry; it destroys small-scale production."

Alongside the bold prophecies about the significance of the steam plow - alas, not even half fulfilled! - what is most characteristic in this last passage is that unshakable dogmatic faith which enables our author to speak of a problematic future as if of something that already exists and can be seen and touched before one's eyes. Liebknecht states that large-scale production already "reigns today" in agriculture; the steam plow already "destroys" small production. Such, however, are the traits of every dogmatic faith, which, according to the classical definition, is certainty in the invisible as if in the visible, and in what is hoped for and expected as if it were present.

According to the author's assurance, furthermore, "many peasants, taught by bitter experience, already see for themselves that they cannot compete with large estates, and even that the small peasant economy is unconditionally moving toward ruin." In our time one can think of the emergence of a free small peasantry as little as of "large capitals breaking up into small ones, or large factories splitting into small artisan

workshops. The course of economic development proceeds in the opposite direction: not from large property to small, but, on the contrary, from small to large. The path to socially organized large-scale production lies through private large landownership and private large-scale production."

Nor is this all. "The final result of private landownership and private-capitalist production lies in the concentration of property, wealth, and power in one pair of hands. One landlord, owning all the land and soil, all the factories, monopolizing all agriculture and industry, having all citizens in his wage service and, according to his own good pleasure, regulating the prices of all means of subsistence and other commodities - this is the summit, the final goal, the complete ideal of modern capitalist culture! But fortunately the proposition summum jus - summa injuria can be turned upside down, and summa injuria is transformed into summum jus. Injustice brought to its most extreme manifestations is the mother of avenging Nemesis and of all-redeeming justice."

Here we have before us all the accessories of dogmatic Marxism, down to the Hegelian development through contradictions. It is characteristic, however, that the discussion of "one landlord" plays a larger role in the book than a mere intellectual reductio ad absurdum of the capitalist regime. As an illustration, the author gives, in a very long footnote, information about a certain English Earl Fitzwilliam, industriously working in this direction. Where is he now, this earl? Why is nothing heard of him, this hope of Marxism? For skeptics the author indicates another path for the concentration of agriculture tending toward direct monopoly: the possibility of an economic coalition, a syndicate, a trust of Fitzwilliams.

In general, English agricultural evolution stands all the time before the author's eyes. Marx's conditional and cautious phrase, quoted above, concerning the possible simplification of the agrarian question in England thanks to the growing concentration of landed property, grows in the hands of his blinded adherent into an entire world-historical theory of the general course of agrarian evolution. "The number of landowners in England decreases from year to year... This growing concentration of land in the hands of the few is usually attributed exclusively to primogeniture and other laws prohibiting or greatly hindering the division of large noble estates. It would be foolish to deny that the mentioned laws had a great influence on the formation of all property relations and substantially contributed to calling into life the modern English landed aristocracy; but, on the other hand, it is undoubted that if these laws were abolished, even if England were completely freed from feudal fetters, the concentration of landed property would proceed further."

The French parcelling of land into small fragments is not, according to Liebknecht, a refutation of this law. He sees in that parcelling nothing but another form of the pauperization and destruction of the peasantry - not through the indebtedness of the peasant, but through the iron force of modern social evolution. The difference between French and English conditions is only a question of time. Germany is moving along the same path, and "all civilized countries will go in the direction of English conditions." "English conditions show us, several stations ahead, the road along which our development is moving. What already exists in England will exist in Germany. What in our country is still green, in England is already overripe. If the social tree in our country is still green, but its core is already being eaten away by rot, then there the fruit is already ripe, fully developed, with a golden-yellow skin, but inwardly worm-eaten and rotten to the core. Everywhere the same phenomena; only in one place they are in an earlier stage, in a less developed form, in less sharp and clear outlines, while in another they are in a more mature stage and with more definite features. But everywhere the same inexorable laws make themselves felt. Small property is swallowed by large; the small owner is pushed down onto the step of the proletariat. Whether the process moves more quickly or more slowly, the final result is one and the same."

Following this dogmatic current logically, the current that runs through the entire work under discussion, we naturally arrive at precisely that exaggeratedly negative attitude toward the peasantry of which contemporary dogmatic Marxism was always so guilty. Indeed, "for modern large-scale production, whether dominant or striving for dominance, the wage worker is a necessity, while the small producer, in agriculture as in industry, is an obstacle that must be removed from the road." "Where there still exists a peasantry in a

relatively favorable position, by virtue of the inescapable laws of the modern mode of production - by virtue of laws whose destructive action can cease only with the abolition of their cause, that is, of the modern mode of production - this peasantry is doomed to ruin. Its death sentence has been pronounced, and with the help of palliative measures one can at the very most only prolong the term of its painful agony... There is no real remedy, no remedy against this ruin. There is no medicine against death, against economic death as against physical death. Whoever believes in the elixir of life is an ignoramus, and whoever says he possesses it is a charlatan."

What indications for practical policy in the sphere of agrarian relations can follow from this? It would seem, above all, that one should wait until the Fitzwilliams have accomplished their historical mission and prepared the historical inheritance - monopolized and systematically organized agricultural production, requiring only a simple change of form, since the content would already be ready. But however firmly the Marxism of that time believed in the steady and rapid course of this preparatory spontaneous process, it could not stop at such a conclusion. The snail travels, but who knows when it will arrive; and Marxism was too practical to be satisfied with cabinet calculations, with doubtful reckonings on the distant future, and to sacrifice the present to them. Besides, the Marxism of that time believed too much in itself and thought that the realization of its boldest plans and dreams was not far off, so that perhaps there was no time to wait for the slow but sure action of "natural laws."

That is why, passing from theory to practice, we encounter in the author of Grund- und Bodenfrage the greatest "inconsistency" - which, in our view, is at the same time the book's greatest merit. Had it been more consistent on this point, it would of course have been worse.

Not wishing to wait for the arrival of Ulita - that is, of capitalist concentration and even the final monopolization of agricultural production - and looking in real life for an element on which one could, if necessary, rely instead of the Fitzwilliam inheritance, the author stumbles upon... the rural commune. This discovery produces a turn in the current of his thought in an entirely different direction. "Die Gemeinde, das Dorf ist ja eine natürliche Association!" he finds: the commune, the village, is indeed a natural association. In this proposition, for him, lies already the entire solution of the question. For him it is clear that the realization of new forms is, thanks to this, "for agriculture still much easier than for urban industry." "The village is in general already a natural association - a commune; the peasant commune. This is expressed in the very word: commune. The commune means commonness, the common; and here it is only a matter of giving this commonness sufficient expansion and development, of transferring it also to the economic sphere, from which it has been pushed back by the cult and cultivation of private property."

It is undoubted, says Liebknecht, that with time the opposition between town and countryside, and also the separation between industry and agriculture, will disappear. But for the time being, one must begin with the existing towns and villages, in order to embody new economic formations within their framework. In the village this is much easier than in the town. Without significant difficulty - apart, of course, from certain prejudices - and with complete preservation of existing property relations, it is possible to transform present rural communes into associations for the clear and obvious benefit of all their members.

The very motives that among all peoples, and among the most outstanding thinkers, have compelled people to assign the land a completely special character, lifting it high above other things that are objects of private property - the absolute impossibility for all people of doing without it, its unity and homogeneity despite qualitative differences in kinds of soil - favor association and make it relatively easy even under present conditions. Since the products of the land are directly necessary for the maintenance of life itself, they are assured a firm and constant market, while the products of industry are partly subject to the fluctuating influence of fashion and partly to the devastating influence of commercial and industrial crises. The joining of separate plots of land belonging to separate owners into one economic whole presents far fewer difficulties by the very nature of agriculture than the associative organization of different branches of urban industry. In various places experiments in this direction have already been undertaken, and very

successfully. Even now peasants acquire and use agricultural machines at public expense and establish associations for agricultural, dairy, and livestock farming.

Of course, Liebknecht adds, in these associations we do not find the full embodiment of the new economic and social principle; individual associations may even have purely conservative aims. Nevertheless, they "form the natural transition to the pure type of collectivist organizations" - den natürlichen Uebergang zu echten sozialistischen Organisationen.

To promote progressive development moving in the indicated direction by the indicated path - such, in the opinion of our author, is the natural basis of a rational agrarian policy for Marxism. He also indicates the measures that the state could take for this purpose: free elementary agricultural education; the transfer of mortgage debts into state ownership; cooperative credit that would place private farms under the direct control of the people's state; the establishment of model agricultural colonies on lands constituting state property; and the enlargement of public property.

For such measures, in the opinion of our author, the workers' party must stand, for it represents not exclusively the interests of urban wage workers, but the interests of all who live not from surplus property but from their own labor - and therefore also the peasants. As he said in the passage quoted above, what is possible first of all is an expansion of the communal principle into the sphere of agricultural production.

There can be no doubt that the views expressed in Grund- und Bodenfrage were not the exclusive property of the author of that book. To a certain extent - as we shall see further on - they were a direct reflection of the views of Marx and Engels, with whom he stood in close friendship. In general, Grund- und Bodenfrage is an extremely typical phenomenon in the Marxist literature of the first period. It most fully and vividly reflects the point of view of old, original Marxism on the agrarian question; and in it is also most vividly reflected the duality that in the end ate away at the agrarian-political views of Marxism.

Indeed, Grund- und Bodenfrage consists of two sharply distinct and almost antithetical parts, penetrated by directly opposite spirits and leading to sharply different practical conclusions. Whoever reads the first half of the book and subscribes to the views developed in it will naturally say: progressive is everything that destroys the peasant economy, that throws historical ballast overboard, ballast which only hinders economic development. Reactionary is everything that seeks to strengthen and preserve the peasant economy, and therefore to impede the natural and only possible course of development. Whoever, on the contrary, reads the second part of the book and agrees with it will say: progressive is everything that strengthens and develops the peasant economy, directing it onto the path of associative organization. Reactionary is everything that destroys the peasant economy and prevents it from moving along this path. And whoever reads the whole book will most likely say that in it the unjoinable is joined and the irreconcilable reconciled.

In fact, in the last analysis, we are dealing with two completely different types of agrarian evolution. One is the capitalist type, whose summit is private monopoly, which, by a change of form, is easily transformed into an organized public service. The other is a non-capitalist type, with the development of agricultural cooperation and the progressive evolution of the rural commune as stages on the path leading to the very same final result. Of course, it is not at all necessary that the whole development of agriculture in a given country must necessarily fit entirely within the framework of one of these paths. Both currents can move side by side, supplementing each other in the end with respect to the final result, although at the same time struggling with one another for predominance.

But old, original Marxism in theory, as we have seen, recognized historical necessity and universal significance for the first of these paths. True, in practice at the same time Marxism made a sharp turn toward the second. But by doing so it introduced a split into its worldview, and the theoretical conviction in the progressive historical mission of the landlords could not fail to undermine faith in the practical program of defending current peasant interests, supporting agricultural associations and the commune, striving for the socialization of land, and so on.

Indeed, if in agriculture no less than in industry the displacement of small production by large-scale, capitalist production is fatal; if the path to a better future necessarily lies through large private landownership and farming; if the ruin of the peasantry is inevitable - then what future can one predict for agricultural associations or the commune? Will not all these experiments be only miserable attempts to "galvanize a corpse"? Will they not merely "prolong the painful agony" of the peasantry, support its illusions, and divert its mind from the bitter but sober consciousness of the inevitability of proletarianization? Will they not prevent it from being imbued in advance with its future class spirit and from transferring to the rural soil that same social-revolutionary passion with which the urban worker is filled? In short, will they not be only a brake on the path of the victorious chariot of capitalism, to which one need only say: what you are doing, do it more quickly? And should one not, on the contrary, assist as far as possible in the speediest "removal from the road" of this brake?

Here is a series of questions to which a consistent Marxist dogmatist could answer only yes. And this is why the whole further development of the agrarian-political views of Marxism comes down, in general, to the following: the internal logical contradiction we have noted gradually developed into an external, real opposition between two currents within Marxism itself. One of them accepted - with small corrections in the spirit of the times - the theoretical part of the agrarian views of Liebknecht's Grund- und Bodenfrage and rejected the whole second, practical part as completely inconsistent with it. The other current, on the contrary, accepted the second and rejected the first. Demanding rapprochement with the peasantry, or with its laboring part, and the defense of its interests, it tries to ground its practical program on a new, independently worked-out theory of agricultural evolution.

We shall trace in the most general outlines the course of this ideological process in Germany, the homeland of Marxism, only occasionally, where necessary, supplementing our account with excursions into other countries.

CHAPTER IV

The Transitional Period

Under the general heading "the transitional period" I designate the period from the middle of the 1870s to the Frankfurt and Breslau congresses, at which the sharp difference between the two basic currents on the agrarian question became manifest. In the interval between these dates there prevailed, in all essentials, a complete stagnation of Marxist agrarian-political thought. During this time the "analogical method" of judging agrarian evolution had managed to acquire universal circulation and popularity. The Marxist dogma - the very dogma whose existence Mr. Plekhanov is now trying, with the heroism of despair, to deny - had by then crystallized and hardened. This was the time of its complete triumph. It even gradually began to acquire greater roundness and consistency, freeing itself from contradictory elements, or softening them and adapting them to the general tone of dogmatic faith in the all-saving, organizing role of large capital "in all its ways."

True, during this period, which covers two decades, much water flowed under the bridge. New economic phenomena appeared now and then which fitted badly with the old views. This was a whole series of tests of the elasticity of the dogma. But by that time the latter had grown so strong and had been worked out into such a coherent and tenacious organism that it could absorb a multitude of heterogeneous elements from the surrounding world, assimilating them completely, organically reworking them, and throwing off the residue that would not submit to assimilation. In this way, while apparently defeating external influences, it imperceptibly evolved under their influence. Yet this evolution consisted in complex additions to the old conception, additions which made its structure more and more entangled and artificial, while nevertheless adapting themselves to the stubbornly preserved old plan.

The difficulties involved in this work of internally harmonizing the dogma may be shown by the following example.

We have already seen that when Marxists turned directly to the peasantry and tried to work practically in the village, they naturally came upon communal landholding and agricultural associations as means of "object lessons," as points in village life from which it was possible to proceed psychologically in bringing new ideas into peasant minds. Hence the positive attitude toward agricultural cooperatives and the remnants of communal property. Hence also every kind of plan - sometimes more or less realistic, more often quite utopian - for "solidarized communes." Hence, too, programs of agrarian demands which came down to protecting and developing these principles of popular life. But such agrarian-political "practice" stood in complete contradiction to the logical conclusions that suggested themselves from its theory.

Theory grew and strengthened, while practice remained in its previous embryonic form. Work in the cities absorbed all forces; it lay close at hand. Born in the city, Marxism could from the very beginning develop there; it did not spread into all the deaf corners, villages, and hamlets of the country until a suitable urban atmosphere had sufficiently saturated them. It is natural, therefore, that the basic motives of future village work remained barely outlined and undeveloped. They were only dim silhouettes of a practical village policy, sketched in faint contours. In contrast, the complete definiteness of the urban, industrial pattern of work, firmly harmonized with the whole theoretical worldview of Marxism, could not fail to give the dogma predominance in practice as well.

But how, then, was one to regard agricultural associations, communal property, and the like? Two ways of resolving the question arose.

The first was very simple. While preserving a sympathetic, positive attitude toward them, one could declare that the process of the bourgeois "treatment" of the village had already gone so far that only an "ideological" use of these elements was possible. The new tendencies of evolution were so strong, and the peasantry itself, drawn into the sphere of their influence, had become so bourgeois, that there was no point in thinking of fanning within it the fading spark of former village collectivism. All this was only pia desideria,

good intentions of the kind with which the whole of hell is paved. One might and perhaps should regret that the matter stood so, but facts had to be reckoned with. Where the destruction of the old "foundations" had not yet become an accomplished fact, a more direct transition of the peasants to higher forms corresponding to the general principles of the "state of the future" might perhaps be possible; but elsewhere the only path left was "capitalization and proletarianization."

Such, for example, is the train of thought in the well-known article by Paul Lafargue on "Small Landed Property in France" in Neue Zeit for 1883. Examining the influence of the great French Revolution on the peasantry, Lafargue emphasizes especially that, "liberating property from feudal obligations and breaking all the bonds that fettered the free circulation of agricultural products," that revolution "did not at all give the peasants the land as a gift, as the liberal-bourgeois legends endlessly repeat, but only gave the peasant the right of free disposal over it. The peasant could acquire land and, in proportion to the size of his purse, gratify his boundless greed for land, which very often hands him, bound hand and foot, over to usury. But the same revolution that proclaimed the inviolability of the peasant's property tore him and his family away from the land by means of the system of production and exchange which flowed from its social-political reforms; it tore him from the land and cast him below the level of the urban proletariat." "At the very time when the peasant received absolute property rights over his land, he received upon his neck the usury of the banker, the taxes of the state, and the speculations of commerce. He also parted with the use of communal property, whose destruction the physiocrats and similar 'friends of humanity' had so ardently demanded in the previous century... These communal properties were one of the chief supports of the small cultivator. With their destruction, the small peasants were deprived even of the possibility of keeping their cattle well, and thereby of providing themselves with manure... The only survivals of the communal pastures are the strips along the roads, where one may sometimes see a ragged child leading on a rope a miserable little cow. Where remnants of communal property still exist, they are leased for the benefit of the communal treasury, from which the rich peasants derive far greater benefit than the poor."

Thus, in Lafargue's depiction, an enviable picture was obtained. Let us note in passing that it portrays the condition which Russian Marxists, in the nearest future and in the social-political sense, desire: their agrarian program rests on three whales - first, the destruction of the remnants of the serf order; second, the full right of each individual peasant freely to dispose of his land; and third, the introduction of the village into conditions of life proper to the bourgeois regime.

The psychological results of this condition were also obtained. "The miserly habits, together with the individualistic instincts which small private property and the constant struggle with the usurer and the trader cultivated in the French peasant, made him unfit for any forms of cooperation whatever, even for the most elementary, such as associations for the joint purchase of seeds, fertilizers, and implements. Some rare friends of peasant humanity preached to the peasants the union of their parcels for joint cultivation, as a means of resistance to the invasion of large landed property. But it would be easier to teach a Poitou donkey to speak in verse than to incline French peasants toward such innovations."

The general conclusion of the article is, of course, the inevitable destruction of the peasantry, its transformation into a proletariat, and the development, in its place, of large capitalist agriculture. It goes without saying that such a result of "factual investigation" - even for the classical land of small landownership and small farming, France - represented a great triumph of the dogma. All the more characteristic, therefore, is the turn of 180 degrees which Lafargue and his party subsequently made on the peasant question. As is known, they themselves abruptly passed over into the ranks of those whom, in the article quoted, he ironically calls "rare friends of peasant humanity." The actual history of agricultural evolution did not justify Lafargue's predictions, and his harsh verdict on the complete incapacity of peasants for cooperation proved premature and extremely exaggerated, despite the genuinely strong penetration of individualistic principles into the village.

But all this became clear only later. For their own time, Lafargue's conclusions seemed indisputable. Yet even then, if not in France, then in other countries, there were facts with which theoretical accounts could not be settled by Lafargue's method. Thus, for example, the author of the article "Die Lage des bäuerlichen Grundbesitzes" in Neue Zeit, no. 6 for 1883, had to state that in Switzerland, for instance, agricultural associations, in part already successfully realized, were achieving a whole series of serious results: first, by jointly purchasing the necessary raw materials, implements, and so on, they took away from the intermediary trader part of his profit in favor of the collectivity; second, by organizing cheap credit, they preserved for the peasants part of what formerly went to the usurer; third, by reducing the cost of production through the natural economies of combined management, they saved peasants from the necessity of selling products below their individual value, which occurred because of competition from countries or farms with more productive labor. "Cooperative production," the author declares, "is, in my opinion, the sole, but decisive means of improving the position of our small-peasant population."

How, one asks, is this to be reconciled with the dogma of capitalization and proletarianization? As if that were difficult! "Seek and ye shall find." Our author finds the following solution. First, the spread of associations and the development of their functions would reduce to a minimum the former full independence of each separate farmer. "The share of entrepreneurial profit that falls to him, his modest share in the net income of the association, is of course insufficient to turn him into a rentier; he becomes a wage worker..." But why a wage worker? And whose? Of the whole association - that is, of the whole aggregate of similar wage workers? These questions do not detain our author. Once a member of an association is not a rentier and is no longer a self-sufficient individual entrepreneur, where else is he to be entered if not among the wage workers? To reinforce his position with at least something, the author further argues that in case of illness a member of the association may sell his share, or, if it is divided by inheritance among many children, reduce it to the extreme minimum. Well then - how is he not a wage worker?

Even this astonishing proof is not enough for the author. In his view, cooperation becomes a link on the path toward proletarianization not only in this way. "The benefit supplied by an association consists chiefly in the fact that it economizes labor in production. Thus labor power is saved and becomes superfluous. Having become superfluous, it is carried onto the industrial labor market, and there it must lower wages. The profit of the entrepreneurs increases - the proletariat grows!"

This method of proof is truly without precedent. The dogma triumphs! There is only one misfortune: for this triumph the author violated the most elementary rules of logic and the most elementary truths of agricultural economy. Of course cooperation "saves labor"; but what does that mean? It means that one unit of product costs a smaller expenditure of labor. But it does not at all mean that a smaller quantity of labor is expended on the cultivation of one and the same scrap of land. On the contrary, it is a commonly known truth that cooperation helps peasants pass to more intensive systems; and greater intensity means a greater expenditure of labor and capital per unit of area. Therefore the increase in the intensity of peasant farming, resting on the development of agricultural cooperatives, means an increase in the capacity of the territory in relation to population. Extensive systems correspond to a sparse rural population; intensive ones to a dense population. It is precisely the primitive backwardness and poverty of the peasant population that turns the village into a huge reservoir of a surplus labor army, periodically driving into the cities masses of the poor with a low level of needs, ready to work for a pittance and to swell the ranks of strikebreakers. And, on the other hand, precisely insofar as cooperation raises the level of well-being of the village, it removes this huge - under other conditions even capitalist-advantageous - reserve labor army.

But our author, as we have seen, strides bravely across all obstacles, logical and factual alike, in order to obtain as the result of his scientific-literary exploits the desired triumph of the dogma. And he boldly ends his article with the words: "Thus I see in the agricultural association a suitable means for improving the material position of present-day small proprietors, or, if one wishes, for prolonging their struggle with death; but it unconditionally leads to the destruction of small property and then to the numerical growth of the proletariat... Evolution under conditions of small rural property therefore leads - in exactly the same way as

occurred before our eyes in the dying out of the small craft - on the one hand to the concentration of the power of capital, and on the other to the growth in the number of the proletariat."

It is understandable that with a method such as the one characterized above by a few examples, one can prove anything one wishes. The point of view of analogism triumphed, though it reached its triumph by more and more winding dialectical paths. Its complete official victory in party theory and practice was secured by the Erfurt Congress, at which the revision of the old party program was completed and a new one, still in force, was drawn up.

That program begins with the words: "The economic development of bourgeois society leads with natural necessity to the ruin of small production." Further, "the means of production become the monopoly of a relatively small number of capitalists and large landowners." "Hand in hand with this monopolization of the means of production goes the displacement of fragmented small enterprises by gigantic large enterprises." As you see, the whole development of economic relations is here embraced in one general formula, which is supposed to be the same for the evolution of the village as for that of the city, for agrarian relations as for industrial ones. The completeness of the analogy is intensified by the further provisions of the program: namely, it declares that, alongside the process sketched above, "private property in the means of production, which once was the means of securing to the producer the product of his labor, has now become the means of expropriating peasants, artisans, and small traders," those representatives of "the declining middle strata of society" - versinkenden Mittelschichten. In a word, in the whole program you will not find even a hint of any distinctive character of agrarian evolution. On the contrary, it strictly carries through the idea of the unity of economic evolution, the sameness of its direction in all branches of production, and the identity of the laws of economic dynamics that govern them.

No less important to note is that, by enrolling the peasants together with small traders in the ranks of the middle strata, the program formulates with particular clarity the so-called "purely proletarian" point of view; and in the mouths of orthodox Marxists this means nothing other than industrial-proletarian exclusiveness. Needless to say, the program of the party's immediate or minimum demands did not include a single one of those agrarian demands that had still been discussed by the Eisenachers and Lassalleans. In general, no one at that time thought or even stammered about an agrarian program. For almost the whole preceding period, while the exceptional law was in force, work in the village was nearly impossible. At the same time, successes in the city forced attention to be concentrated exclusively on questions of industrial-proletarian life. Articles - to say nothing of books - on the agrarian question did not appear, except for a very few that were as stereotyped and empty as could be. Everywhere there was the same "analogical" point of view, everywhere the same dogma of capitalization and proletarianization, without any new arguments and in general almost without any arguments at all. Such were the pamphlets Die soziale Frage auf dem Lande, Die Lage der ländlichen Lohnarbeiter in Preussen, where it is naïvely explained how large capital beats down the small peasantry by low prices, especially the second part, Ruin des ländlichen Kleinbetriebs durch die Landwirtschaftliche Grossproduction, Max Schippel's Die deutsche Zuckerindustrie, and the preface to the abridged translation of Kablukov's book The Question of Laborers in English Agriculture. If, after everything set forth above, we considered it still necessary to bring new proofs of the existence of that "Marxist dogma" which Mr. Plekhanov now tries to deny, we could increase the number of quotations endlessly.

Generally speaking, the time we are characterizing - the dullest, transitional, stagnant period for Marxist agrarian-political thought - would have been the least favorable for working out an agrarian program. At that time even those leaders of Marxism who were more attentive to peasant needs and sufferings, such as Bebel, expressed themselves about the peasantry in the most contemptuous way. Thus, in his book Woman in the Past, Present, and Future, we read that the peasant is a brake on culture - ein kulturhemmendes Element: "whoever loves backward movement (Rückwärtserei), because he finds his advantage in it, may feel satisfaction at the continued existence of this social stratum; the progress of humanity, however, makes its disappearance a condition."

It is not surprising that the opposition which arose within the party at that time, the so-called "young" (Jungen), ultra-radicals and ultra-Marxists - Engels characterized their Marxism as "Marxism in convulsive distortions," krampfhaft verzerrter Marxismus, which is even worse than Beltov's "Marxism in a squatting dance" - and which accused the party leaders of inconsistency, eclecticism, and so on, tried here too to carry the most incorrect premises of the dogma to their logical extremes. In their declaration, after falling away from the party - when they adopted the name "Independents," Unabhängige - they wrote, among other things: "The elimination of small industry and small peasant farming we consider one of the preliminary conditions for the realization of the future order. Economic development is already coping with this, and we shall strive only to accelerate the ruin of these elements. In this lies one of the most important distinctive marks separating us from official Social Democracy." That there was a peculiar logic in this point of the Independents' program is shown already by the fact that Russian orthodox Marxists repeatedly slip into the same point of view, in their slogans of "going together with the bourgeoisie where it is a matter of removing old pre-capitalist relations." What Russian orthodox Marxists lack in this question, however, is the directness and frankness of the Independents.

Life, however, kept undermining now one, now another constituent element of the dogma. Hence the constant need for small corrections. It seemed that one could get by with these alone. As an example, let us point to two large points; to dwell on all the little things would be too long and tedious.

The most orthodox of contemporary Marxists, Parvus, had to establish firmly the complete falsity of the "analogical" point of view on one of the most essential and fundamental points. Until then it had been assumed that in agriculture, as in industry, large-scale production beats small production by the greater cheapness of mass production and lower prices of products. But the striking daily and hourly testimony of life forced Parvus to acknowledge that it is precisely at reduced prices that the competition of the small peasants is most sensitive for large proprietors. It had to be openly admitted that a fall in prices strikes large-scale production more strongly than small. Parvus sees the reasons for this in the fact that the small cultivator more easily limits his personal consumption than his "noble" neighbor. In this simplified explanation there appears, once again, insufficient penetration into the essence and distinctiveness of agrarian relations. As we shall see below, the real reasons lie much deeper. But the inadequacy of Parvus's explanation is already visible a priori. After all, the peasant's competitor is not only the "noble" landlord, but also the "common" modern bourgeois. True, it is rather difficult for him too to limit his consumption. But even in industry the large entrepreneur is less able to limit his consumption than the small artisan. Yet the latter's ability to go hungry did not "carry him through" in the struggle against capital. It is clear, therefore, that this is not the only issue.

Since the time of Eccarius, however, Marxists have preferred, over all other ways of explaining the vitality of peasant farming, this harmless-for-the-dogma reference to the peasant's ability to squeeze all his juices out of himself at work and to reduce his consumption budget to the last extreme. The inertia of thought they display when encountering new facts of life is truly astonishing. Even when they sometimes wandered onto the right road, in the end they invariably turned aside from the middle of it onto the old, beaten paths.

For the old Marxist, industry not only stood at the center of the world but also colored everything; by it one could judge other branches of production, and its laws could simply be transferred into other fields. Parvus already modifies this position somewhat. Refusing judgments by analogy with industry, he only preserves its neutral, determining role. "One cannot derive the development of cities from the development of agriculture; but the development of agriculture, of course, cannot be understood if one does not keep in view the development of cities." The assertion is unquestionably true. But it will be no less true if we say: "One cannot derive the development of agriculture from the development of cities; but the development of cities, of course, cannot be understood if one does not keep in view the development of agriculture." The dialectician Parvus overlooked that such an "antithesis" may always be set against his "thesis." Both will be covered by the synthesis: "One can logically spin neither the development of agriculture out of the development of cities nor the reverse; for neither can be understood separately, outside connection with the

other." Or, in other words: "the national economy is something integral; its parts are bound together by an inseparable connection which cannot be lost sight of, no matter which element of that economy we set out to examine." Parvus took only one part of this truism and, forgetting its inevitable supplement, imagined that he had made some discovery about the greater "fundamentality" or "primacy" of industry. This amusing aberration, however, proved tenacious. Subsequently Kautsky made it the basis of an entire theory, which signified the complete and final transition of the Marxist agrarian dogma into a new phase: from misadventures by analogy with industry to the retention for industry only of a more primary, central, determining role; from "industrio-morphism" to "industrio-centrism."

Another characteristic correction we find in Bebel. In the first editions of his Woman he warmly polemicized against the view that at the present time - 1883 - small agricultural production was increasing. With complete categoricalness he denied the possibility of this fact, ridiculing the defenders of the given view. In his opinion, it was precisely the excessive parcelling of small peasant holdings, which was bringing them to ruin, that created the false appearance of numerical "growth." Thus the dogma tried to cope with the facts. But alas! Insubordinate reality outstubborned the dogma. The census of 1895 showed that the increase applied precisely to all categories of farms from five hectares upward; and precisely the tiniest parcel holdings proved to have decreased in number. It was necessary to abandon the only possible harmonization with the dogma and, in later editions, to delete the whole passage.

Here it is appropriate to recall the following circumstance. The official program adopted at Erfurt was based on a draft submitted by the editors of Neue Zeit, that is, essentially on Karl Kautsky's draft. In it - and also in his interesting book Das Erfurterprogramm, which then appeared as a commentary on it - in this quintessence of Marxist "science," in Kautsky's own words, "the idea of the complete destruction of small farming runs like a red thread." It is curious, however, that among the other drafts presented to the Erfurt party congress there was one entirely alien to the straight-line view of agrarian evolution as a process analogous to industrial evolution, a process in which small peasant production is displaced by "gigantic large enterprises" and the small producers inevitably proletarianized. This draft - that of Kampfmeyer and his comrades - expresses itself more cautiously, in the sense that capital makes all strata of small peasants and townspeople zins- und tributpflichtig, liable to pay interest and tribute. "These strata of the population, crushed under the weight of mortgages, loan obligations, and debts, lose their independence more and more, sink to the level of merely nominal owners of their means of production, and in reality are slaves of capital. Thus there arises an ever-growing army of economically dependent wage workers and small producers..."

There is no doubt that such a view contradicts the facts of agrarian evolution far less than the previous one. But, not to mention that even in Kampfmeyer it received no further logical development, the party congress completely set aside this draft, which, incidentally, contained in other points as well certain "unorthodox" formulations characteristic of the future unorthodox Bernsteinian - then an unorthodox radical.

Only in 1894 was the idea timidly and vaguely formulated by Kampfmeyer expressed quite definitely and decisively. This was done at the Frankfurt party congress by the well-known Georg von Vollmar, who summed up the preceding minor corrections and, bringing them together, attempted to sketch a somewhat new conception.

"In any case, the decomposition of medium and small farming in agriculture occurs, in general, not so much through the competition of large farms with small ones inside agricultural production - as is observed in industry - but chiefly through an influence from outside, coming from money capital." Such was one of the basic propositions advanced by Vollmar. He drew the general condition of agriculture in the following features. There is no doubt that a severe crisis reigns in it. The competition of transatlantic countries, India, Russia, and so on, beats down European producers with low prices. Their indebtedness grows; interest on loans often swallows the whole net profit of the farm. In this indirect way, "the income of agricultural production passes more and more into the hands of exploiters, while the person who cultivates the land sinks, in essence, to the level of a mere manager, a clerk who hands over the profit to his master, the capitalist, and

in addition bears entirely on himself the whole risk connected with the enterprise." The formerly dominant theory was confirmed by the facts of reality only insofar as it foresaw the worsening of the people's position under the growing exploitation by capital. "But in other respects development did not proceed as was predicted by people of our tendency, who took as a necessary fact the rapid absorption of small economic units by large ones, whose rational economy, in their opinion, was to acquire dominant significance." If at present, in certain regions of Germany, a growth of large landed property is observed, that applies to noble estates tied up in fideicommissa, so that the causes of such a phenomenon have nothing in common with the internal power of superiority of capitalist agriculture. Indebtedness is not limited to small peasant farming, but weighs still more heavily upon landlord farming. Once great hopes were placed on the revolution in agriculture which the steam plough was supposed to produce - Vollmar obviously has in mind the bold prophecies of Grund- und Bodenfrage quoted by us in the preceding chapter - but these too were not justified. Sometimes we are pointed to the colossal bonanza farms of North America; but one must not hastily generalize isolated phenomena whose very results are still highly doubtful.

In cattle raising, fruit growing, market gardening, and the production of commercial crops, small production presents distinctive advantages. The intensification of farming represents a tendency which, to a certain degree, runs counter to the tendency toward enlargement of landed area. The comparative vitality shown by peasant farming is further explained by a whole series of other distinctive conditions: the cultivator produces not only commodities, but above all products necessary for his own consumption; in agriculture living human labor, not mechanical force, has a relatively predominant role; the labor of one's own family, with the cheaper rural way of life, is also a strong support for small farming; and so on. The very question of the greater or lesser advantages of large and small production in agriculture is still a disputed question. In any case, the following is clear: "all patterns borrowed from other fields, all straight-line analogies, all purely mechanical transfer of conclusions drawn from the facts of industry to agriculture are absolutely inadmissible." "The agrarian question is a question of the highest complexity; the laws of economic development manifest themselves here otherwise than in industry; the special kind of the means of production that play the chief role in agriculture gives the latter a special position, and much speaks for the view that agriculture will grow into the economic organization of the future by its own distinctive path."

This last phrase is not without interest when compared with the indications of another Marxist and, at the same time, a man of the village, Molkenbuhr, at the party congress in Halle. He stated decisively, among other things, that the peasants do not at all possess an "anti-collectivist skull." On the contrary, even now one may rather often find in the village a fair dose of practical collectivism: in irrigation works, in the use of machines that make present small production impossible, in the activity of agricultural associations, and so on. Here, perhaps, a point of support may be found for further development.

Thus, for the first time an attempt was made to shake the "Marxist dogma" as applied to the agrarian question. In fact, in Vollmar we see a fundamentally new assessment of the role of agricultural capitalism. He insists that capitalist accumulation in agriculture takes place chiefly not inside the sphere of production, but outside it. At first, superficial glance this may seem a circumstance of little importance. Indeed, is it not all the same how the rule of capital is established and how capitalist accumulation proceeds? In any case, the rule of capitalism is established, capitalist accumulation takes place, the independence of the small producers is destroyed; and if they remain owners and masters in name, political economy has no concern with empty appearances, with this "realm of shadows." It simply casts aside the deceptive exterior and says that in substance the present-day peasant is a proletarian or semi-proletarian, and present-day "small production" is a masked "realm of capital."

Is this so? Are the direct and indirect rule of capital indifferent in the higher political-economic sense? Are the direct organization of producers by capital inside the sphere of agricultural production and the indirect exploitation of immediate producers by capital from outside one and the same? Are both indifferent when taken in relation to the so-called "historical mission" of capitalism?

Capitalism, like everything in the world, may be considered first from the point of view of form, and second from the point of view of content. From the side of form, the concept of capitalism includes only the following features: objectified, accumulated labor, in the form of machines, implements, buildings, money, and so forth, separates itself from living labor; differentiates itself into a social force independent of it; and gradually acquires ever greater domination over it, sucking from it, in the form of surplus value, ever new juices. Considered from the side of content, capitalism is above all large-scale industry displacing small industry. From this point of view, capitalism is nothing other than one of the temporary forms, one of the shells of large-scale production based on socialized labor, on the many-sided development of the planned, associated work of many people who have been led out of their original individual isolation.

From the very beginning it is evident that the form and content of capitalism are contradictory. While the former is the embodiment of an anti-social, parasitic principle, the latter, on the contrary, is the equally direct embodiment of the principle of sociality, of the association of forces. The former is temporary; the latter is eternal, as eternal as the world. The former can develop up to a certain time; the latter develops and will develop, only changing forms, throwing off one shell, replacing it with another, a second with a third, and so on. "The eternal change of forms, the eternal rejection of the form generated by a definite content as a result of the higher development of that same content" - this seductive Hegelian formula is highly appropriate for a superficial external characterization of the relation between content and form in the process of capitalist development.

Both develop - the form and the content of capitalism - and the more they develop, the more they develop their internal, irreconcilable contradiction. Consequently, in both there appear two principles, to a certain degree independent, with special tendencies of development, which can peacefully coexist only at certain stages, and at later stages inevitably collide hostilely with one another. Certain conditions of time and place must be present for the content and form of capitalism to be in relative harmony with each other.

Thus there is not only no logical necessity, but it would even be entirely improbable, that capitalist form and capitalist content should develop quite evenly, or that the relation between them should remain the same at all times and in all places. This relation is a function of many variables, and the most diverse combinations are possible. Content may overcome and, in the end, tear apart and cast off form. But conversely, form may suppress and devour content. Among the transitional combinations one may also conceive an ideal middle case: under exceptionally favorable circumstances, form may for a very long time develop in a certain harmony with the developing content.

The first extreme case is self-evident. Marx deals with it, for example, when he says that "the material productive forces of society at a certain stage of development come into contradiction with the existing relations of production within which they have moved," that is, they outgrow their old social-economic form. From a "form of development of the social productive forces" this form becomes their brake; the measure of its elasticity, its capacity for adaptation, is exhausted, and under the pressure of forces developed in the process of fermentation and sharpening contradiction, it bursts and gives way to a new one.

The second, opposite case is illustrated above in the quotations from Kampfmeyer and Vollmar. It is that kind of rule of capital in which the immediate producer may even nominally preserve his independence and not formally become a proletarian. Sometimes it is enough that he merely be zins- und tributpflichtig, liable to pay interest and tribute, when, for example, "the income of agricultural production passes more and more into the hands of exploiters, while the person who cultivates the land sinks, in essence, to the level of a mere manager, a clerk who hands over the profit to his master, the capitalist, and in addition bears entirely on himself the whole risk of the enterprise."

This kind of capitalist accumulation was excellently analyzed by Karl Marx in the third volume of Capital, in the chapter on usurer's capital. It should be noted that Marx uses the term "usurer's capital" not at all in the ordinary vulgar meaning of the word, for ordinary usage knows no rational principle by which to distinguish credit from usury. Marx proposes such a principle. Why, he asks, in earlier times did interest

everywhere meet with such unconditional condemnation, and why now do enthusiastic hymns to beneficent credit sound everywhere? Because modern credit serves the entrepreneur for extracting surplus value. Credit enriches the borrower, for it gives him the possibility of setting up a capitalist enterprise and thus of enriching himself on borrowed money, merely sharing with the creditor part of the gains extracted from the labor of others. Credit in the old form, however - interest, usury - was a loan to the immediate producer or simply to a person living for his own pleasure. Borrowed money was not for either of them a means of extracting profit, surplus value, from somewhere outside. The interest paid on it was a pure loss for the borrower; it was one of the original forms of extracting surplus property from himself, from his own labor or inherited property. Therefore "interest-bearing capital retains the form of usurer's capital in relation to persons and classes, or in circumstances, where loans are made and can be made not in the sense of the capitalist mode of production; where one borrows for personal needs against pawns, in pawnshops; where consumable wealth is borrowed for extravagance; or where the producer is not a capitalist producer, but a small peasant, artisan, and so forth, so long as the immediate producer still remains the owner of the conditions of his production," and so on. The size, the rate of interest, thus does not play the determining role here.

How, then, does Marx assess the significance of this kind of accumulation of capital? In the most unambiguous way he says: "Usurer's capital possesses capital's mode of exploitation without possessing its mode of production." That is, adhering to the terminology sketched above, it possesses the general form of capitalism without possessing its content. In this type of capitalist appropriation, form developed to the detriment of essence, of content, and suppressed it. Correspondingly, the so-called negative or destructive sides of capitalism developed at the expense of the creative, positive ones. The result was that special kind of capitalism - capitalist parasitism - which Engels noted as the typically widespread form of capitalism in certain backward countries. Marx further expresses almost the same thing in nearly the same terms. Of usury he says: "It does not alter the mode of production, but attaches itself to it as a parasite and makes it miserable. It sucks it dry, robs it of vitality, and compels reproduction to proceed under ever more and more worsening conditions." And elsewhere: "Usurer's capital, in the form where it actually appropriates all the surplus labor of the immediate producer without altering the mode of production; where the ownership or possession by the producer of the conditions of labor - and corresponding to this, scattered small production - constitutes the essential condition; where, consequently, capital does not directly subordinate labor to itself and therefore does not confront it as industrial capital - such usurer's capital makes this mode of production miserable, weakens the productive forces instead of developing them, and at the same time perpetuates this pitiable condition, in which the social productive forces of labor do not develop at the expense of labor itself as they do in capitalist production." Thus once again the capitalist form develops at the expense of the content; the negative sides of capitalism at the expense of the creative, positive ones.

In the same third volume of Capital one can find another example of a similar type of capitalist relation. There may exist, namely, relations "in which ground rent, the form of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production, exists formally, without the capitalist mode of production itself existing, without the tenant himself being an industrial capitalist, or without his manner of farming being capitalist. This occurs, for example, in Ireland." On average, the tenant there represents a small peasant. What he pays the landowner in the form of rent not only often absorbs a part of his profit - that is, part of his own surplus labor, to which he has a right as owner of his own instruments of labor - but also a part of the normal wage he would receive under other conditions for the same quantity of labor. In addition, the landowner, who does exactly nothing for the improvement of the soil, expropriates his small capital, which the tenant himself invests in the land for the most part by his own labor, acting exactly as a usurer would under similar conditions, except that the usurer at least risks his own capital in his operations. Thus we again have the formal existence of capitalism without the corresponding content - without "socialized" production.

The same may be said of certain more fully developed forms of capitalism. For example, when in Russian landlord estates of whole provinces, according to the calculations of zemstvo statisticians and agronomists,

about seventy-five percent of all farm work is performed by peasant livestock and peasant inventory, the predominance of capitalist form over content is quite obvious. But this is not yet so astonishing. Much more interesting is the fact that a similar relation is sometimes observed under highly developed methods of cultivation among advanced Western European capitalist nations. Thus, according to the testimony of L. Gumplowicz, the capitalist organization of greenhouse cultivation in England is characterized by remarkable decentralization. For business to proceed successfully, it requires gardener-artists who have thoroughly studied their particular greenhouse, their corner of the land, and the delicate plant organisms grown on it in all details. Therefore gardeners are usually divided into groups of two or three persons each; to each group is assigned a completely special, separate plot of land, or a certain number of greenhouses.

Thus the separate groups of gardeners are in no way united by the very process of production; they labor just as individually as independent peasant families engaged in the same occupation. In short, the whole production is, in essence, a whole series of little economic organisms, united only mechanically by the external power of capital, a unity that manifests and embodies itself not in the process and mode of production itself, but only in the external sphere of exploitation. In this respect, the capitalist organization of such a highly intensive culture as greenhouse cultivation and such a crude method of exploiting the most primitive forms of agriculture as usury converge with one another. And there is no doubt that in the organization of greenhouse cultivation the peculiarities of agricultural capitalism as distinct from industrial capitalism appear more sharply than at lower stages of development. The embryos of different organisms are also more alike than mature individuals. In industry, too, the first seizures of capitalism are marked by the predominance of external, superficial exploitation over capital's internal reforming work in the sphere of production. That is why Western European social thought began with a complete and all-sided analogy between industry and agriculture, and only the further development of economic life forced it gradually to recognize the distinctiveness of the industrial and agricultural types of capitalism.

From this point of view it is also understandable why in Russia at present there is stronger persistence than anywhere else in identifying the types of industrial and agricultural capitalism, in affirming the "unity" of the direction and laws of capitalist evolution in all branches of production. In Russia, an economically backward country, both types are still to a considerable degree passing through embryonic phases of development, where the features of difference are not yet sufficiently sharply outlined. That is why what is impossible in Western Europe is possible in Russia. In fact, in Western Europe it is positively inconceivable that there should be such a phenomenon as a Marxist apology for "usury-kulakdom," an example of which we saw in Mr. Gvozdev's original little book. Meanwhile, for Russia this phenomenon is deeply characteristic. Mr. Gvozdev, as the saying goes, takes the bull by the horns. At the very time when a whole series of writers and researchers are proving that in Russia, generally speaking, the relation between the positive and negative sides of capitalism appears, because of various historical and natural conditions, extremely unfavorable, Mr. Gvozdev courageously takes the crudest method of capitalist exploitation and writes a dithyramb to its "social-historical mission."

On the other hand, for us this was, in a certain respect, easier to do than anywhere else. Whereas in Western Europe - of course, we mean the advanced countries - the difference between the genuinely "higher forms" of capitalism and mere parasitic growths is so sharp that the analogy between them would seem monstrous to everyone, among us even these higher forms have not gone far away, in the sense of the relation between their positive and negative sides, from the primitive ones. Therefore, for those readers who, by analogy with Western Europe, are inclined to overestimate the creative role of our national capitalism, Mr. Gvozdev's little book, with its peculiar logic, says much "to the mind and heart." We recommend that these readers think carefully over the following words of Karl Marx - and, indeed, over the whole chapter of Capital from which they are taken: "The ruin by usury of wealthy landowners, as well as the exploitation of small producers, leads to the formation and concentration of large money capitals. But how far such a process destroys the old modes of production, as occurred in modern Europe, and whether it puts in their place the capitalist mode of production - this depends entirely on the degree of historical development and on

the conditions generated by it." And further: "In Asiatic forms, usury may last long without producing anything other than economic decay and political corruption. Only then, and only where, the other conditions of capitalist production are present does usury appear as one of the means of forming a new mode of production."

Thus the center of gravity is shifted to the solution of the question: are those "other conditions" present in European agriculture - both external and internal - which are required for superficial capitalist exploitation to be replaced by the reforming influence of capitalism reaching into the depths? Vollmar, as we have seen, was a great skeptic in this respect; and what is especially important, he expressed his skepticism decisively at the very time when the third volume of Marx's Capital, which systematically discussed the land question proper, was only being printed. And the appearance of that third volume gave only new theoretical grounds for this skepticism.

CHAPTER V

K. Marx's Agrarian Theory

As is well known, the chapters on ground rent and its genesis in the third volume of Capital would have taken an entirely different form had the author himself lived to see them published. Data from North American and Russian agrarian life were to have served as the basis for this new treatment, which, however, the author carried with him to the grave. Engels reports that he did not succeed in finding among the deceased author's papers even the preliminary sketches of this plan; apart from numerous extracts from various official, zemstvo-statistical, and private publications, nothing was found. Yet "in the section on ground rent, Russia was to have played the same role that England played in the first book with regard to industrial wage-labor." [F. Engels's preface to the third volume, p. XXXVIII of the Russian edition.]

Generally speaking, we do not now possess Marx's theory of agrarian evolution in anything like the full and finished form parallel to the theory of industrial evolution developed in the first volume. Separate remarks, scattered in passing through various places in all three volumes; extracts, fragments - these are the membra disjecta of that theory, from which we shall now try to reconstruct some connected whole. As a result we shall nevertheless obtain a fairly definite - although, a priori, far from complete - picture of K. Marx's views on the distinctive features of agrarian evolution.

Among the "great achievements" of the capitalist mode of production Marx places "the rationalization of agriculture, which for the first time permits it to be carried on on a social scale." He explains his thought more fully as follows: "one of the great results of the capitalist mode of production consists in this: that, on the one hand, it transforms agriculture from a series of merely routine practices, handed down from one person to another among the least developed part of society, into the conscious scientific application of agronomy" - immediately adding, however, the characteristic qualification - "so far as this is possible within the relations given by private property." [These quotations are from p. 509 of the Russian edition of volume III of Capital.]

This qualification marks the first distinctive trait which capitalism reveals in agriculture. Among the means and instruments of production whose improvement is, generally speaking, usually counted as the "merit" of capitalism in agriculture, there figures the land itself, the soil, with its natural properties, with which one must necessarily reckon. The laws of soil fertility, the demands imposed on the producer from the standpoint of a normal crop rotation which exploits the soil evenly without exhausting it, collide with the imperious demands of the market, with the laws which the market dictates to the producer. The more deeply capitalist principles penetrate into agriculture, the stronger and more unconditional this dependence on the market becomes. The producer must supply the market with such a product, and in such quantity, as is required; to fail to satisfy these demands means to clear the field for a competitor and perhaps to lose that market forever. Moreover, in this tense struggle - competition - the capitalist, in order to triumph over his opponents, is compelled day after day to strive to obtain the greatest quantity of product at the least cost. He is forced to live for the moment, forced to think only of his immediate advantages, with little concern for what he hands down as an inheritance to posterity.

That is why "really rational agriculture everywhere encounters in private property an insuperable barrier... The dependence of the cultivation of particular agricultural products on fluctuations in market prices, and the constant change of such cultivation which accompanies the whole essence of capitalist production, whose nearest and immediate aim is monetary gain, stands in contradiction with agriculture, which has in view the totality of the permanent conditions of existence of closely linked human generations." [Capital, III, p. 509. Marx adds that "forestry gives a striking example of this; it is sometimes carried on to some extent in accordance with social interests only when it is not private property but is subordinated to state administration."] "All progress in capitalist agriculture is not only progress in the art of exploiting the worker, but at the same time progress in the art of robbing the soil; every step on the path toward increasing

its fertility for a given period of time is at the same time a step toward the destruction, for a long time, of the source of that fertility. The more a given country, for example the North American United States, proceeds from large-scale industry as the background of its development, the faster this process of destruction takes place." Such is the negative influence flowing from the very essence of capitalist relations as applied to agriculture.

There is also another influence, conditioned by an external circumstance of a more general character. Generally speaking, "in countries with developed production, the progress of agriculture has been slower than in manufacturing industry. This fact, apart from other partly decisive economic circumstances, would find its explanation in the earlier and more rapid development of the mechanical sciences, and especially of their application, compared with the later and in part quite recent development of chemistry, geology, and physiology, and again especially of their application to agriculture." [Capital, III, p. 626.]

Speaking of physiology, Marx of course had mainly in mind plant physiology. But he did not know and could not have known the true dimensions of the significance of the biological sciences for agriculture. He could not have foreseen the newest discoveries in the field of soil science, discoveries which proved that changes in soil fertility are reducible to changes in the vital activity of the mass of soil microorganisms, and constitute a function of the quantity and quality of the different species and subspecies of these microorganisms per cubic unit of space. These new discoveries have placed the progress of agriculture in still more direct connection with the progress of the biological sciences in general. But since the phenomena of life, the biological properties of bodies, are far more complex than their mechanical and physico-chemical properties, and since, generally speaking, the more complex sciences are based upon the less complex and necessarily lag behind the latter in their development, there can be no doubt that agronomy will always lag behind industrial technology, and that a lesser degree of mastery over the elemental forces of nature, a greater need to adapt oneself to them, will always remain a distinctive feature of agriculture as compared with industry. This necessary backwardness of agriculture cannot fail to intensify the other negative peculiarities of agricultural capitalism.

There are also still other important peculiarities of agriculture which affect the chances of capitalism's positive historical mission. Among them belongs the relation between "production time" and the "working period," examined in the second volume of Capital. Production time is "the time during which capital is in the sphere of production." The working period, however, is the time during which this invested capital sets labor-power in motion and, consequently, absorbs surplus value. It is clear that the smaller the working period is in comparison with production time, the smaller - other things being equal - is the amount of surplus value obtained per unit of capital advanced. "The duration of the advance of fixed capital... differs considerably from the time during which it plays a really productive role..." From the standpoint of capitalism, as the author of Capital explains more than once, "productive" labor in general is labor which brings surplus value. "Where there is a difference between working time and production time, the time of consumption of the advanced fixed capital is constantly interrupted for more or less prolonged periods; for example, in agriculture, in the case of working cattle, agricultural implements, and machines. Insofar as the fixed capital consists of working cattle, it constantly requires the same or almost the same expenditure for feed and maintenance as when it is at work. As for dead inventory, non-use also leads to a certain depreciation of it." [Capital, II, p. 173.]

"The difference between production time and working time appears with particular clarity in agriculture. In our temperate climate the land produces grain once a year. The shortening or lengthening of the period of production... depends in turn on the good or bad weather of the given year; therefore it is not subject to control and cannot be determined in advance, as it can in the other branches of industry... Hence in agriculture, the more unfavorable the climate, the more, with the lengthening of the period of production, the working period is shortened; consequently, in a smaller interval of time a greater quantity of labor and capital must be expended." [Capital, II, p. 172. Marx gives Russia further on as an example of a particularly unfavorable relation of the working period to production time.]

Connected with this is another important factor - the circulation time of capital. Obviously, the more rapidly each part of capital turns over, the smaller the capital with which production can get along, and the greater, therefore, will be the surplus value sucked up in production per unit of capital advanced. And here it is important to note that "in the greater part of modern industry" - our emphasis - "the matter proceeds uniformly; working time is the same year after year... the outlays of capital which enter daily into the process of circulation are distributed evenly... the return of the advanced circulating capital, or its renewal, likewise occurs during the year at uniform intervals. But in those branches of production where working time forms only part of production time, the outlays of circulating capital during the year are extremely uneven, while its return occurs at a term fixed once and for all by natural conditions. Therefore, with the same scale of enterprise, that is, with the same magnitude of advanced circulating capital, it must be invested simultaneously in a greater quantity, and for a more prolonged time, than in enterprises with uninterrupted working periods." [Capital, II, p. 173.]

This circumstance furnishes a certain explanation for the constant lack of capital of which agriculture complains, and which most often serves as a justification against all reproaches of insufficiently rational cultivation. In connection with the variability of weather mentioned above and the variability of harvests dependent upon it, this shortage of circulating means can become extremely acute and can lead both to excessive loans on highly disadvantageous terms and to outright bankruptcies.

Can capitalists not, however, include in the price of the product, and thus shift onto the consumer, both the premium for the risk of the enterprise and for the more prolonged turnover of capital, and for the unfavorable relation of the working period to production time? We know that competition is the great equalizer of profits. In that branch of production where the natural rate of surplus value is higher, where the risk is smaller, and so on, the position of the capitalists is of course the object of envy for their brethren in other branches of production. Into such a fortunate branch there will soon flow capital from other branches placed in less favorable conditions; and this will continue until rivalry and even overproduction lower the prices of the products of the privileged branch, while a contraction in the supply of the products of the less favorably placed branches raises their prices to such an extent that the profitability of enterprises here and there is equalized. In this way the privileged branches share with the unprivileged the excess of their surplus value: the unconscious mechanism of rivalry realizes, as it were, a mutual joint responsibility among the capitalists of all branches of production. Hence, as is shown in the third volume of Capital, "so far as profit is concerned, the different capitalists play here the role of shareholders in some joint-stock company, in which profit is distributed uniformly on each hundred; and therefore the individual capitalists differ only by the magnitude of the capital advanced by each to the common enterprise, by their relative share in the common enterprise, by the number of their shares." [Capital, III, p. 115.]

On this basis one might suppose that this elemental, unconscious joint responsibility of the various branches of capitalist industry equalizes agricultural profit with the average profit; that the outflow of capital from agriculture and its inflow into more profitable branches of production raises the price of agricultural products above their value enough to compensate the extra costs, losses, and damages arising from the variability of harvests, the unfavorable relation of the working period to production time, the slow circulation of capital, and so forth. Even if this supposition were correct - and below we shall see that there are conditions which hinder its realization - then even in this best case the additional profit could compensate only the average extra costs and losses of agricultural capitalism: those arising from the average difference between the working period and production time in international agriculture as a whole, the average degree of risk from the variability of weather and harvest yields, and so on. "In every determination of value the decisive significance belongs to the given means." [Capital, II, p. 119.]

But the point is precisely that the unfavorableness of climate, the difference between working period and production time, and so forth, are not everywhere the same within one and the same branch of production - agriculture. Therefore in those countries where this difference is greater than the average, the costs and losses arising from it will not be fully covered, while in countries favorably placed they will be covered with a

certain surplus. To speak concretely: the competition of tropical and equatorial countries, where the harvest can be gathered several times a year, does not allow the European capitalist, compelled to be satisfied with one harvest, to include in the price of his product the disadvantage arising from the fact that the capital he has advanced in agriculture lies unproductively during a very long dead season. Thus even in the very best case, the agriculture of the temperate and cold zones - and consequently of almost all European countries - must nevertheless lose something from the unfavorable relation between production time and the working period.

We have assumed the best case - that the profit of agricultural capitalism is on the average equalized with industrial profit. But is it in fact equalized? That is the question. In order for profit to be equalized, there must be no obstacles to the migration of capital from one branch of production to another. In order for the prices of agricultural products sufficiently to exceed their value and compensate the extra outlays mentioned above, it is necessary that a certain part of capital really should flow out of agriculture, leaving an empty space there, and flood the more profitable branches of production, lowering their profitability in favor of agriculture. In other words, there must be a corresponding relative overproduction of other commodities and underproduction of agricultural products. If agriculture were a branch of production fully capitalized, and if the lower rate of capitalist profit, by virtue of that fact, were indeed a sufficient reason for the contraction of agricultural production, then of course the equalization of profit would encounter no obstacles.

But the whole point is that the fate of agriculture is not at the exclusive disposal of capitalists. The whole point is that alongside them we encounter non-capitalist producers, whose scale of "profitability" is entirely different. They expect from their enterprise not some rate of surplus value or profit, but simply normal payment for their own labor. And if capital, finding the rate of profit in agriculture too low, seeks for itself a more advantageous investment, the positions abandoned by it are immediately occupied by non-capitalist producers. Consequently, the usual "mission" of the outflow of capital is not attained: there is no underproduction of the product necessary for a sufficient excess of its price over its value, and therefore no additional profit raising the ordinary rate here to the height of the average social rate. That is why Marx says that "such an equalization" of the rate of profit "runs up against considerable obstacles in the case where numerous and extensive branches of production, exploited in a non-capitalist manner - for example agriculture by small peasants - are inserted among capitalist enterprises and linked with them." [Capital, III, p. 148.]

True, these producers work more for their own consumption than for the market; consequently, when one capitalist enterprise is replaced by a group of producers, the quantity of agricultural products intended for sale is nevertheless reduced. But, first, the number of persons who satisfy their need for agricultural products by their own labor is increased, and therefore the market demand for them is correspondingly reduced. Second, non-capitalist producers must often alienate a part of the products they produce in order to pay taxes; and nothing so lowers prices as forced sale, when prices are dictated to the seller by the buyer. This is also a factor counteracting the tendency toward the equalization of the rate of profit, and often even far outweighing it - that is, increasing the difference between rates of profit.

Thus the peasant can regard the land simply as a means for the application of labor, and can renounce that part of income which corresponds to rent or to profit on capital. Therefore he can lower the prices of agricultural products to a level to which the capitalist farmer cannot follow him. "Here lies one of the reasons why grain prices in countries where small farming predominates are lower than in countries of capitalist farming. A part of the surplus labor of peasants who work under the most unfavorable conditions is given to society without any compensation; it plays no role in regulating the cost of production and the formation of prices." This cannot fail to hinder capital, which in industry beat its smaller competitors by means of low prices. Here, on the contrary, it is itself beaten by them.

Finally, a new counteraction to the equalization of the rate of profit appears when new, more fertile lands are being brought under cultivation. This factor has only temporary and passing significance, but it acts long enough and with great force. Marx says that even "relatively less fertile soil, which however has only just

been taken into cultivation and has not yet been touched by culture, under climatic conditions that are not altogether unfavorable, has accumulated, at least in its upper layers, so much easily assimilable material for the nourishment of plants that for a long time it continues to yield harvests without manure, even under the most superficial cultivation. In the western prairies of the New World, there is added to this the fact that they require almost no costs of cultivation; nature itself has taken care of that." [Capital, III, p. 553.]

In a note to this passage Engels adds on his own account: "the cultivation of these steppes, prairies, pampas, llanos, and so on has only just begun; the influence of the revolution produced by it on European agriculture will therefore make itself felt in still another way than it has done up to now." Elsewhere we read: "Ocean steamers and North and South American railways have put quite special lands in a position to compete in European markets. On the one hand these were the North American prairies, the Argentine pampas, steppes destined by nature itself for plowing... Then there were the lands of the Russian and Indian communes, which were compelled to sell part of their product, and precisely an ever-increasing part, in order to obtain money for the payment of taxes. These products are sold at prices which have no relation to the cost of production, at prices offered by the merchants, because at tax-payment time the peasant absolutely needs money. And against such competition - both of virgin steppe lands and of Russian and Indian peasants under the pressure of unbearable taxes - the European tenant farmer and peasant, with the former scale of rents, proved powerless. Part of the land in European countries entirely ceased to be cultivated for grain crops; rent everywhere fell... falling prices and the falling productivity of additional outlays of capital became a common phenomenon in Europe. Hence the cries of the agrarians resounding from Scotland to Italy and from southern France to East Prussia. Not all the steppe expanses are yet under the plow; enough of them still remain to ruin all large-scale European agriculture, and small agriculture besides." [The same author, Capital, III, p. 598.] If this is perhaps put a little strongly, the general tendency of this influence toward lowering the rate of profit remains indisputable.

There are still two elements which have important significance for the formation of the natural rate of profit. These are, first, the organic composition of capital, that is, the relation of the constant part of capital to the variable part; and second, the rate of surplus value, that is, the relation of the paid portion of the working day to the unpaid. Let us see what role both these elements may play in the general question of the comparative profitability of agriculture for its large-scale capitalist organization.

Profit comes from surplus value, and surplus value is created only by living labor - such is the basic proposition of Marx's theory. Only that part of capital which is expended on labor-power increases in production and appears as a variable magnitude; that part of capital which is expended on raw material, tools, machines, buildings, and so forth merely transfers its value to the product produced, and therefore remains an unchanged, constant magnitude. It is understandable that the larger the percentage of the whole capital formed by its variable part, the greater - caeteris paribus - the profit extracted in the given enterprise per unit of capital advanced. Conversely, the larger the percentage of capital falling on the constant part, the smaller, caeteris paribus, the natural rate of profit.

For every individual branch of production the truth holds that the progress of production is connected with the successive growth of the constant part of capital at the expense of the variable. Thus for every individual branch of production the relation of constant capital to variable capital can be an excellent measure of the height of development reached in that branch of production. But for comparing different branches of production with one another this criterion is no longer sufficient. The technical peculiarities of different branches of production are too great for one to infer, for example, from an approximate equality in the organic composition of capital an equal height of technical development in two branches of production. There are labor-intensive branches of production, and there are capital-intensive ones.

"If the composition of capital in agriculture proper is lower than the composition of the average social capital, then this would prima facie express the fact that in countries with developed production the progress of agriculture has been slower than that of manufacturing industry," says Marx. But he does not decide to

reason in the reverse direction - that is, starting from the slower development of agriculture compared with industry, to infer a lower composition of agricultural capital compared with industrial capital. On the contrary, he says: "whether in some particular country with capitalist production, for example in England, the composition of agricultural capital is lower than the composition of the average social capital is a question that can be decided only by statistical means." [Both quotations from Capital, III, p. 626.] But here the fact intervenes that "statistics are almost absolutely silent about the relation of the constant part of the total social capital to its variable part." [Ibid., p. 43.]

It is impossible to decide this by eye. A priori, of course, it is clear that in agriculture the value of machines, instruments, raw materials, and auxiliary substances plays a smaller role, while living labor plays a larger one. Thus, if all other conditions were identical, variable capital in agriculture would form a relatively larger percentage of the whole capital than in industry. But the point is that these "other conditions" are not identical. In industry, fewer workers may correspond to a unit of advanced capital than in agriculture; but by working with the aid of that same capital all year round, they may deliver just as much, or even more, living labor. In agriculture, more workers may correspond to a unit of advanced capital, but they work only part of the year, while capital is advanced for the whole year; consequently the total quantity of living labor delivered per unit of capital may be less.

In industry, auxiliary substances, raw materials, even machines and tools play a greater role; but their value, as the product is made and enters the market, may be realized in money form and again advanced in production. Thus one and the same sum of value, over a certain period, for example a year, may enter production two, three, and so on times, and consequently play the same role which in agriculture could be performed only by capital twice, three times, and so on as large - since in agriculture the conditions of the harvest set narrow limits to the realization of the initial outlays and their renewed use in the same production. Finally, in agriculture one must add to the outlays of constant capital still another element which does not play such an important role in industry: the payment of ground rent, that peculiar tax levied on capitalists by the landowner by virtue of his monopoly right.

For "in the capitalist mode of production the following is presupposed: the actual cultivator is a wage-laborer working for a capitalist farmer, who carries on agriculture only as a special branch of the exploitation of capital, as an investment of his capital in a particular branch of production. Such a capitalist farmer pays the landowner, the owner of the land exploited, at fixed times... a sum of money established by contract, for permission to employ his capital in this particular branch of production." [Capital, III, p. 510.] Of course, the land may instead be purchased; but this means only paying at once the same rent, capitalized according to the usual rules. Finally, the capitalist and the historical owner of the land may coincide in one person; the undoubted advantage of such a combination is obvious. But precisely this advantage also hinders changes in the personal composition of rural proprietors, retaining, for example, old feudal elements poorly adapted to the new conditions, and thereby making more difficult the bourgeois-capitalist reorganization of agriculture.

Nevertheless, one may suppose such a coincidence of favorable natural and historical conditions in some country that the natural rate of profit in agriculture would prove higher than in other branches of industry. In such a hypothetical case the equalization of profits, their reduction to the average rate, would apparently have to take place by the usual route: by an intensified inflow of capital into agriculture, and consequently by an intensified reorganization of agriculture on capitalist foundations. It is one of Marx's extremely important merits to have proved that landed property would inevitably stand across the path of this kind of tendency; making use of its monopoly right, it would seize all this surplus of profit into its own hands in the form of an addition to rent - an addition to which Marx gave the special name of absolute rent.

"The essence of absolute rent" - Marx stipulates here that it is presupposed that agricultural capital sets more labor in motion than non-agricultural capital of the same magnitude - "consists in the following: capitals of equal magnitude in different branches of production, according to the difference in their average composition, produce, with an equal rate of surplus value or an equal degree of exploitation of labor,

different quantities of surplus value. In manufacturing industry such different quantities of surplus value are equalized into average profit and are distributed uniformly among the different capitals as corresponding parts of the social capital. Landed property, as soon as production requires land, whether for agriculture or for the extraction of raw material, prevents such equalization of surplus value on capitals advanced on the land, and seizes a part of the surplus value which would otherwise have gone into the equalization of the general rate of profit. Rent in such a case forms part of the value, more exactly the surplus value, of the commodity, which, instead of falling to the class of capitalists who extracted it from the workers, passes to the landowners, who extract it from the capitalists." [Capital, III, pp. 636-637.]

But this is not all. Landed property hangs like a heavy weight on the feet of agricultural capitalism in other respects as well, limiting its creative role. Thus, for the improvement of the soil, "capital may be fixed in the land, incorporated into it, partly for a shorter term, as with improvements of a chemical character, manuring and the like, and partly for a longer term, more permanently, as with the laying of drains, irrigation, leveling, farm buildings, and so on... Such outlays... are for the most part, and in some branches of agriculture often exclusively, made by the tenants. But as soon as the term of the lease fixed by contract expires - and this is the reason why, with the development of capitalist production, the landowner tries to shorten the term of the lease as much as possible - improvements to the soil, as something inseparable from the land, fall to the landowner as his property... This is one of the secrets - quite independent of the movement of ground rent proper - of the increasing enrichment of landowners, of the constant growth of their rent and of the growing money value of their lands which accompanies the progress of social development... But this is at the same time one of the greatest obstacles to rational agriculture, since the tenant avoids making any improvements and outlays which he cannot expect fully to recover during the term of the lease." [Capital, III, pp. 510-511. Emphasis Chernov's.]

The source of this kind of rent is a direct deduction from the constant capital of the agricultural entrepreneur. "But independently of this it is possible that under the money rent there is partly, and in certain cases wholly, concealed a deduction either from average profit, or from normal wages, or from both at the same time." [Ibid., p. 516. Compare the example of Ireland in the previous chapter.] In connection with this stands the observation that "rent for large leases is usually lower than for small ones, since competition for the latter is ordinarily greater than for the former, and since small tenants, who are rarely in a position to turn to any business other than agriculture, are often ready to pay a rent which, as they themselves know, is too high - being compelled by necessity to find a suitable occupation." [Ibid., p. 519.] Obviously here we have an example of a deduction from average profit. To compensate this loss at least in part, farmers try to shift part of it onto the shoulders of their farmhands and day laborers. The result is "the lowering of the wages of agricultural laborers proper below their average level, so that part of the deducted wages forms a component part of the rent money." [Ibid., p. 517.] Finally, examples are cited in which the tenant himself is compelled to work in the same way as his laborers, because otherwise he cannot exist; in these cases the rent paid to the landowner may include "a deduction from the wages of the tenant himself." [Capital, III, p. 619.]

It should be noted that the greater profitability of small leases for the landowner provides "sufficient reason" for breaking large plots into small parcels, and this tendency can again stand across the road of the concentration and rationalization of agriculture. Thus here again we come upon a peculiarity of agricultural capitalism. "Landed property differs from other kinds of property in that, at a certain stage of development, it appears superfluous and harmful even from the standpoint of the capitalist mode of production" - but, as we have seen, it does so to the greater triumph of the capitalist mode of exploitation. [Ibid., p. 513.]

Many causes have been adduced above which act in the direction of lowering the average rate of profit of agricultural capitalism. But one more element participates in the creation of the rate of profit, and we have deliberately postponed its consideration to the end. This element is the rate of surplus value, that is, the relation of unpaid working time to paid. It is clear that the more all the other conditions press average profit downward, and the more difficult it is to achieve the equalization of the rate of profit through the movement of capital, the more strongly the tendency must act to compensate the other losses through the rate of surplus

value. Below we shall see that the peculiar conditions of the agricultural trade provide this tendency with a certain scope.

We have already seen that in agriculture the working period does not coincide with production time. In agriculture especially important significance belongs to the so-called "critical moments," that is - according to Marx's definition - "definite periods of time, determined by the very nature of the given labor process, during which a definite result must necessarily be attained. Thus, for example, if a flock of sheep has to be shorn, or a field harvested and brought in, not only the quantity but also the quality of the product depends on whether each of these operations is begun and completed in good time. The interval of time during which the work must be performed is here determined in advance by the very properties of these operations, just as the time for herring fishing is determined... The shortness of the time allotted for the work is compensated by the great quantity of labor which, at the decisive moment, is thrown onto the field of production." [Capital, I, pp. 280-281.]

Because of this, capitalist agriculture, although it creates a great demand for labor, creates only a temporary demand, and the earnings supplied by capital are extremely insecure. "The non-coincidence of the period of production and the working period - the latter forming only part of the former - constitutes the natural basis for combining agricultural with other subsidiary rural occupations. Capitalist industry, by separating manufacture from agriculture, makes the rural worker more and more dependent on purely accidental side employments, thereby worsening his position." [Capital, II, p. 173.]

It is understandable that the instability and insecurity of the position of the agricultural wage-worker, who is assured earnings only during part of the year and must exist for the whole year on those meager earnings, calls forth a mass flight of workers. "Rural workers are in any case too many for the average needs and too few for the exceptional or temporary needs of agriculture... Therefore in official documents we find contradictory complaints from one and the same localities: on the one hand, of a shortage, and on the other, of a surplus of hands. A temporary or local shortage of labor does not produce a rise in wages, but draws women and children into agriculture. As soon as the exploitation of women and children assumes large proportions, it in turn becomes a new means of making the male population 'superfluous,' and in consequence the wages of men are kept at a minimum." [Capital, I, pp. 606-608.]

Here, undoubtedly, one of the distinctive properties of agricultural capitalism is again manifested. Marx himself emphasizes this. "If the use of machines in agriculture is for the most part not accompanied by the physically injurious consequences which they bring upon factory workers," Marx remarks - perhaps correctly for his own time, when the introduction of machinery into agriculture was only taking its first steps, but completely refuted by modern statistics of injuries and accidents, including Russian statistics - "then here their influence is incomparably stronger and appears without any counteraction in rendering workers superfluous." [Capital, I, p. 440.] "As soon as capitalist production seizes agriculture, or in proportion as it seizes it, the demand for the rural laboring population falls absolutely with the accumulation of capital functioning there; but this repulsion is not supplemented, as in non-agricultural industry, by a greater attraction elsewhere. A part of the rural population is therefore constantly in a transitional state of conversion into an urban and manufacturing proletariat, and in expectation of conditions favorable to such conversion... The wage of the rural worker is therefore reduced to a minimum, while he himself always has one foot in the swamp of pauperism." [Ibid., pp. 562-563.]

From this one may judge the full depth of the wit in the following speech by one of the defenders of the "Marxist dogma" in the agrarian question: "They try to represent matters as if impoverishment, pauperization, and proletarianization were one and the same thing. But that is not true. If we say that we can draw the peasant to our side only when he becomes a proletarian, this still does not mean that he must become impoverished; it means only that he must be freed from property." [Speech by Fischer, in the Proceedings of the Breslau party congress, Berlin, 1895, p. 156: "von seinem Eigenthum losgelöst sein muss."]

Such is the first peculiarity of agricultural capitalism in the sphere of the labor question - a peculiarity which hardly contributes to what is usually meant by the "social-historical mission" of capitalism. There are others. "The scattering of rural workers over large areas," we read elsewhere in the same book, "breaks their power of resistance, whereas the concentration of urban workers increases it." [Capital, I, p. 441.] And further: "The continuous formation of a 'surplus' of rural workers, despite the diminution of their number which goes hand in hand with the increase in the quantity of the products of their labor - this is the cradle of their pauperism. Their accidental pauperism is the motive for depriving them of shelter and the chief source of the wretched condition of their dwellings; this finally undermines their capacity for resistance and gives them over into complete slavery to landlords and tenants, so that the minimum of wages becomes for them, as it were, a matter of nature." [Capital, I, pp. 606-607.]

In sum, "capitalist production... ruins the physical health of urban workers and the spiritual life of rural workers." [Ibid., p. 441.] The village becomes impoverished quantitatively and qualitatively. Its best and most intelligent forces flee to the city, and this deals a new, irreparable blow to rational agriculture. That is why, although with the invasion of capitalism into the village "routine and irrational methods of conducting the economy are replaced by scientific ones," capitalism nevertheless "disturbs the metabolism between man and the earth, that is, the return by man to the soil of the constituent parts of the soil consumed by him in the form of clothing and food; it therefore disturbs the eternal natural conditions for the permanence of soil fertility." [Ibid., p. 441.]

The general conclusion of Marx's investigation is drawn by Marx himself in the following words: "The moral of history - which we can also derive by investigating agriculture from another standpoint - is that the capitalist system is opposed to rational agriculture, or that rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system (although the latter promotes its technical development), and requires either the hands of small peasants working independently or the control of associated producers." [Capital, III, p. 83.]

Such, according to Marx, are the peculiarities of agricultural capitalism. We have gathered from the three volumes of Capital everything essential that bears on this question. The remaining few fragmentary and unfinished remarks will be illuminated later, in the analysis of the further polemic on the agrarian question, especially the polemic between Kautsky and Hertz. But even now it may be said that from Marx's analysis, incomplete and fragmentary as it is, there follows directly the very formulation which we proposed in the preceding chapter. In agriculture, the content of capitalism is suppressed by its form, and therefore there is observed an especially strong development of the destructive, negative sides of capitalism over its creative, positive ones. Consequently, the greater the importance which agricultural production has in the economic structure of a country - owing to the international division of labor - the more unfavorable, caeteris paribus, is the general relation in that country between the dark and the bright sides of capitalism, with all the consequences that flow from this and about which we shall still have to speak in more detail at the end of this book.

[On Chernov's wording: this expression, "negative side," is used by Marx himself when he says that "the development of the negative side of modern agriculture from the standpoint of natural science is one of Liebig's immortal merits" (Capital, I, p. 442, note 329). At present Liebig's argumentation, of course, requires thorough reworking.]

CHAPTER VI

The Connection of the Agrarian Views of Marx and Engels with Their Original General Worldview

We have seen that in Marx's writings all the elements are present for a highly unfavorable assessment of the role of capital in agriculture, together with a fairly definite recognition of a number of causes that make it difficult, or even impossible, for capital to gain complete mastery over this branch of production. The question now arises: how is it that in the same Marx one can find a whole series of isolated passages which, if one concentrates on them and forgets all the rest, so easily lead one wholly into the circle of concepts of the old, outworn "dogma"? Thus, apart from the role of capital in technical progress which we have already indicated, Marx counts among "the great results of the capitalist mode of production" the fact that it "on the one hand, completely (?) emancipates landed property from lordly-servile relations, and on the other hand, wholly (!!) separates the land, as a condition of production, from landed property and the landed proprietors." Elsewhere it is asserted that this capitalist mode of production "acts in agriculture in an all the more revolutionary manner, because it destroys the prop of the old society, the peasant, and replaces him with the wage-laborer." Again, speaking of the independent cultivation of the soil by the peasant farmer in the atmosphere of capitalist society, Marx remarks that "such cases occur in practice, but as exceptions. Just as capitalist exploitation of the soil presupposes the separation of functioning capital from landed property, so it also, as a rule, excludes the independent cultivation of landed property. It is at once seen that this is a pure accident." In the famous Manifesto we have already read that the "middle strata," including the peasants, are hurled down into the ranks of the proletariat; that the peasants already "hardly exist" and are "daily being destroyed." In the first volume of Capital we read that "large-scale industry with its machinery creates the permanent foundation of capitalist agriculture, radically expropriates the enormous majority of the rural population, and completes the separation of agriculture from rural domestic industry." In The Eighteenth Brumaire, already burying the French peasantry - this funeral took place in 1852 - Marx declares that "the cause from which the peasant is now perishing is his own little plot of land." If one sets this beside sallies such as the "idiocy of rural life," or descriptions of the peasantry as "a class of barbarians standing half outside society," one must ask oneself: how are such contradictions to be explained?

Part of these contradictions is unquestionably explained by the simple circumstance that a number of Marx's mutually divergent remarks belong to different periods, during which his views were evolving. This must be said especially of the Manifesto, which belongs to 1848. Further, one must reckon with the lack of final revision and completion in Marx's works. The main part of his agrarian-theoretical views is set out in the third volume of Capital, which he himself did not manage to prepare for publication. Engels, who took this task upon himself, had to base the exposition of that volume on a manuscript composed entirely between 1863 and 1867. To this were added extracts from Marx's notebook dated 1876. To what extent later corrections were made in these various old manuscripts, when precisely, and in what places, is difficult to determine. It is known also that Marx wished to rework the whole section on rent entirely, basing it on the study of Russian and American landed relations. Under such circumstances, what is surprising is not the existence of omissions and contradictions, but rather that there were not still more of them.

It therefore becomes extremely important to trace, from the sources available, the general tendency in the evolution of Marx's and Engels's views on the agrarian question. At the same time, it is interesting to trace the socio-psychological motives of this evolution. In Marx and Engels it is impossible to separate the theorists from the practical men, the scholars from the public activists. Their general worldview constantly sought to rework the material of current reality and to answer the questions ripening within that reality. Their "pure reason" therefore often followed in the wake of their "practical reason." Whoever wishes to understand Marxism must understand it from the conditions of its origin and development. And these conditions were predominantly practical-political in character.

The "burning question of the day" at the time when Marxism was being formed was the relation between the urban worker and the peasant. The democratic movement of the century ran up against the collision between the one and the other - ran up against it, and was wrecked, as on underwater rocks, upon a series of misunderstandings between town and countryside. It is understandable how all-European reaction must have triumphed over this. Divide et impera - divide and rule - is the old principle on which the dark forces of the past have established, and continue to establish, their historical strength and power in all ages and among all peoples.

Thus, in olden times, the royal power relied in its struggle with proud feudal lords upon the urban communes, upon the newly born bourgeoisie - only, a little later, after defeating the feudal aristocracy, casting it down to the steps of the throne and transforming it to a considerable extent into a court aristocracy, to turn once again, in close alliance with it, against the strengthened bourgeoisie and to give it the last decisive battle. Thus, in the age of feudalism, the same royal power did not disdain even to encourage and provoke peasant revolts against especially powerful feudal lords. Thus, in more recent times, in the persons of Napoleon III and Bismarck, the old order, in order to cope with an excessively strengthened bourgeoisie and cast it at the foot of the throne, flirted with the proletariat, offering it as bait universal suffrage or measures of "state socialism."

In modern times, when the laboring masses of the population have begun to unite more and more closely into one compact socio-historical force, the main concern of reactionary parties naturally becomes to sow quarrels and disagreements within its ranks. With what tense expectation the servants of reaction listen for every sound of disagreement and dispute among the adherents of the new socio-historical current! With what sometimes open and noisy, sometimes hidden spitefulness they greet each new split in the ranks of the parties that represent it! How many hopes the representatives of the old order attach to every such split, to every fragmentation of the broad stream of the new movement into a series of small, separate currents, to every fragmentation of a broad and many-sided idea into a number of narrow, one-sided, and therefore inevitably exclusive and intolerant sectarian doctrines!

In England the servants of the old order were long able to triumph when they observed within the ranks of the working class itself a conservative current that found expression in the practice of the aristocratic trade unions. The better-paid part of the workers, the so-called skilled workers, for a time constituted a real workers' aristocracy, separated from the rest of the gray, untrained, rough-laboring mass. The Conservatives saw in this workers' aristocracy the best bulwark against every radically innovative tendency, which everywhere took root easily and quickly in the proletariat. And they were not mistaken. To this day, despite the rise of the new, militant trade unionism, every attempt - even by the English Marxists with Hyndman at their head - to create in their homeland a strong, independent, political workers' party has been broken against the indifferent, conservative disposition of the "privileged" layers of the working class.

On the continent of Europe, historical conditions did not dig so deep a gulf between the working plebs and the workers' aristocracy. There, however, the hope of reaction everywhere lay in another opposition, another contradiction dividing the ranks of the great army of labor - the contradiction between town and countryside, between the factory proletarian and the agricultural laborer. The difference in conditions of life, and in the cultural types that grew up under the influence of those conditions, provided reaction with grateful soil on which to sow quarrels between the two - to "divide and rule." This was shown especially vividly in the history of France.

Here is what one competent witness said on this point: "For a long time the tactic of the common enemies of the peasant and worker proletariat has been to disunite them and arm them against one another... For a long time, miserable and ridiculous legends were in circulation, by means of which they tried to present the workers to the peasants as robbers and partageurs, who would come to seize the harvest produced by the peasant in the sweat of his brow. For a whole century efforts have been made to arouse mutual distrust between the one and the other, in order to obstruct and retard the realization of justice for the peasants. Yes,

even when, before the French Revolution, the question was raised of the division of the national properties - the confiscated estates of the emigres, the clergy, and the aristocracy - the idea arose of distributing to the peasants at least a significant part of those properties. What then did the specialists in speculation and jobbing say - those who wished to preserve for themselves, for easy and profitable commercial turnover, the advantages represented by those national properties? 'If the national properties are distributed to the peasants - the old possessions of the nobility, the clergy, and the emigration,' they said, 'what benefit will that bring you - you, the rest of the workers? It is you who will be robbed for the benefit of the peasants!' And thus, a hundred years ago, in order to transfer into the hands of the financial aristocracy the properties just torn from the hands of the hereditary aristocracy, they tried to arouse the worker's distrust against the peasant - while now, on the contrary, they try to arouse the peasant's distrust against the worker, in order to maintain the supremacy and power of capital over the disunited forces of workers and peasants. It is always the same eternal tactic!" [Discours de Jean Jaures, pp. 103-104.]

As always, this tactic bore fruit. Misunderstandings between the toilers of town and countryside gradually grew and accumulated. Both suffered from the common enemy, capital; both were exploited; but the forms of exploitation were different, and therefore their immediate demands were not identical. The urban workers were proletarians not only in their way of life, not only in their level of well-being, but also in the purely formal sense: they existed by selling their labor-power. The toiler of the countryside, the agricultural worker, was not formally a proletarian; nominally he was completely independent. Yet his juices were drawn out by the usurer in the form of interest on loans, by the landowner in the form of rent, by the buyer-up in the form of commercial profit, and by the government in the form of taxes. He was oppressed and exploited often no less, and sometimes even more, than the pure-blooded factory proletarian. In fact he was a proletarian of a special kind. But formally he remained the owner of his means of production, an independent entrepreneur, a proprietor. And for that reason his psychology did not coincide with the psychology of the urban proletarian.

The latter had long been accustomed to feel himself a small screw in the immense productive mechanism of the factory. The management of this productive mechanism was always something external to him. Was it not natural for him to pass directly to the idea of a collectivist state? The very idea of such a transition had to be extremely simple for him. All property, all productive enterprises, pass from the hands of private owners into the hands of the people's state; all workers pass from the control of capitalists into its control; everything is thrown into one common purse, from which each worker then has a right to an equal share.

It was different with the peasant. He was accustomed to being, in economic life, a certain self-sufficient unit; in his everyday life nothing suggested analogies with a state or social organization of agricultural production. He encountered the state everywhere only as an external, oppressive force; he endured it as an inevitable evil. It was obvious that, as long as the peasant remained a peasant, the idea of an order ruled by socialized labor could not be grafted onto him by the same route as onto the factory proletarian. Either some other, special route had to be found, or else it had to be decided that nothing good could be expected from the peasant, that he was a hopeless individualist and therefore a bourgeois.

It was this latter decision that Marx and Engels reached in their Manifesto of the Communist Party. On the eve of the revolutionary crisis of 1848 they proclaimed: "The lower middle classes, the small manufacturers, shopkeepers, artisans, and peasants - all these fight against the bourgeoisie in order to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history." They can acquire historically progressive significance only insofar as they are about to pass into the ranks of the proletariat; insofar as they defend not their present but their future interests; insofar as they abandon their own standpoint and place themselves at the standpoint of the proletariat. [Emphasis Chernov's.]

And in the same work a veritable funeral service was then sung over the peasantry. Replying to the usual tactic of reactionaries who whispered to the peasant that the notorious partageurs wished to take from him the field tilled and the harvest gathered in the sweat of his brow, Marx says that this is nonsense, that the

socialists have no need to expropriate the peasantry, if only because "it has already been destroyed, or is being destroyed daily." It was assumed that capitalism would prepare everything in agriculture, as in industry, for the new organization of production: it would destroy the small independent farms, create large ones, drive together masses of agricultural laborers under the iron rule of capital, accustom them to see themselves as members of one great productive mechanism which only had to be torn from the power of a few usurping capitalists, transferred into the common property of the whole state, and placed under general state control.

In a word, the landlessness and proletarianization of the peasantry were regarded as both inevitable and progressive. Inevitable - because the evolution of agriculture, then very insufficiently studied, had to be judged by analogy with industrial evolution. Progressive - because for Marx and Engels the creative role of capitalism and its "educational" influence upon the proletarianized masses were at that time painted in especially rosy colors, and because this historically transformative role of capitalist relations stood out in particularly sharp contrast to the clumsiness, inertia, and resistance of the peasants. Thus, in an entirely natural way, there arose in Marx and Engels the views which were later transmitted from generation to generation, hardened and crystallized into a special "Marxist dogma" on the peasant question - precisely the dogma that we have sufficiently characterized in the preceding chapters. In its original form, in the epoch of the famous Manifesto, Marxism in this respect was a remarkably whole, harmonious, and logically completed worldview.

At that time Marx and Engels were prepared to reduce all the disasters, all the delays in the social and political progress of each country, to the insufficiency of "capitalist development." England had only just lived through the Chartist movement; it stood at the head of the workers' movement. Marx and Engels were far from any premonition that so powerful a movement could enter the shallow channel of trade unionism. In their eyes, precisely the most classical, most powerful growth of capitalism in England was the best guarantee that the English proletariat, too, having undergone "capitalist schooling" in the purest form and having been "boiled in the factory cauldron," would present to the world the example of the broadest, boldest, and most decisive movement toward the new social formation that must inevitably arrive.

Marx and Engels underestimated the stubborn vitality of capitalism and overestimated its dialectical "self-negation." They did not notice that "capitalist schooling" is a stick with two ends; that the "power of money," the all-penetrating might of capital, and the spirit of bourgeois competition can infect the workers as well, bringing into their midst a spirit of disunion, dividing them into professions shut up within themselves and fighting for a privileged position, even at the expense of the rest of the working mass; that the spirit of bourgeois calculation, narrow practicality, and heartless cash payment can extend its drying action even to proletarians, developing in them mistrust toward every "crane in the sky" and faith only in the prosaic "titmouse in the hand," saturating their psychology with narrow practicalism and making them unreceptive to a broad idealist posing of questions. Yet this is precisely what was revealed in England, where Marx's disciples had, and still have, to wage an extremely difficult, heavy, and prolonged struggle against all these tendencies within the working milieu.

Marx and Engels also did not at first notice that "socialization from above," under the iron rod of capital, can turn out to be a stick with two ends in still another sense. The externally coercive, stiff-necked, barrack-like character of such socialization can, in the eyes of many and many of the "socialized," become so fused with the very principle of socialization that, by way of inevitable psychological reaction, it provokes in them an outburst of individualist feelings and aspirations; so that this passionate protest of the "unsocialized" personality introduces a new split into the proletariat, developing in part of it "apoliticism" and an extreme distrust of the very principle of organization - as we see especially in certain individualist factions of anarchism.

Marx and Engels foresaw neither this broad possibility of part of the workers falling under the moral power of narrow bourgeois practicalism, nor this possibility of part of the workers falling into the extremes

of reaction against "socialization from above" - a reaction that goes so far as the complete denial of any activity on the terrain of the free state institutions of modern bourgeois society. Nor did Marx and Engels yet give themselves an account of the fact that the creative role of capitalism in the productive sphere itself would not everywhere be the same, and that by no means in all branches of production would it yield the same positive results as in the higher branches of industry. If we examine the various branches of industry, beginning with the most elementary ones occupied with the direct extraction of raw materials from nature, rising to the highest branches of the processing of these materials, and ending with the production of machines by machines themselves, then, descending this hierarchical ladder, we shall see that capitalism's negative, destructive, disorganizing sides increase accordingly. Later economic evolution supplied on this point such indisputable data that even the most orthodox of Marx's contemporary disciples, Karl Kautsky, had to give the following characterization of the role of capital in agriculture:

"Capitalist development affects the countryside differently than it affects the towns. Here it does not unite people but disunites them. It leads not only to the relative, but at a certain stage of development also to the absolute depopulation of the countryside. It carries away precisely the most capable, most energetic, and most intelligent elements. The weaker and more defenseless are those who remain. Hand in hand with this depopulation goes the intellectual stagnation of the village..."

We repeat: all this was disclosed only by later history. For all his genius, Marx was nevertheless mortal, unable completely to break out of the limited framework of his epoch and to rise above the still insufficiently defined course of development of economic relations. He generalized the data that lay before him; he could not see the limitation which later development brought with it; and therefore his generalizations went further than they should have, and embraced fields to which they later proved inapplicable.

Now, after the publication by Mehring of the collected early articles of Marx and Engels, it is not difficult to form a clear picture of their political and social expectations at that time. "The rule of the aristocracy and of the middle classes in England," Engels asserted as early as 1844, "is advancing with giant strides toward its end." England is now living through "the evening on the eve of the social revolution," he repeated a couple of years later in his Elberfeld speech. This seemed natural to him. For "in no country in the world has the contradiction between proletariat and bourgeoisie developed, together with the mass proletariat, to such a height"; "in England there exists the most numerous, most concentrated, most classical proletariat." There, in reality, "the strongest conflicts, the most decisive revolutions, are developing." "Class contradictions in English society have developed to such a height as in no other country; here, against a bourgeoisie unequaled in wealth and in the development of productive forces, there stands a proletariat likewise unequaled in power and concentration." "Here, under the outward cover of constitutional monarchy, far more and far more radical elements of social revolution have developed than in all the countries of the world taken together."

It is not surprising that England was therefore to march at the head of the new socio-historical current in all countries. "The Chartists at the head of the English government" - only from this moment, in Engels's opinion, would the abrupt transition to the new economic order "enter from the realm of utopia into the realm of reality." Marx and Engels were deeply convinced of this. It was the logical conclusion from their theory. If the development of capitalism as such is the preparation of a new social formation, then the chances of transition to it must increase in direct proportion to the "capitalist processing" of a country; and England, as the country that had undergone the longest and fullest "capitalist schooling," had to lead all others in preparing the sharp historical break.

True, life was already beginning to say something different. But what does the testimony of a brief moment mean? It is only an accidental, passing breeze. The theory of Marx and Engels, set out in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, cannot be wrong; consequently, all the logically necessary conclusions from it are also correct - and correct, therefore, is the prediction of England's historically transformative initiative. "The country which has transformed all nations into its proletarians, which has surrounded the whole world with its colossal armies, the country that once already paid out of its own resources the costs of

European restoration; the country in whose depths class contradictions have developed in the most sharply expressed and most shameless forms - in a word, England - seems to be the rock on which the waves of revolution break." But this means nothing. Ahead lies the great historical crisis, world war, universal upheaval, and, in the epilogue, a new victorious uprising of Chartism, that organized English workers' party. Let reaction prevail for the moment; let the new movement be suppressed everywhere. This is a consequence of a period of industrial prosperity, which in due time must necessarily be replaced, according to the law of periodicity, by a new economic crisis, and with it by a political crisis.

"In that general prosperity during which the productive forces of bourgeois society develop as luxuriantly as is possible within bourgeois relations, there can be no question of a real revolution. Such a revolution is possible only when these two factors - the modern productive forces and the bourgeois forms of production - come into conflict with one another... A new revolution is possible only as the result of a new crisis. And its arrival can be regarded as just as certain as the arrival of that crisis." Let the bourgeoisie, then, celebrate its ephemeral victory. The man of science knows that the crisis will soon expose its ephemeral nature. "The fate that cancels the victory is European bankruptcy, state bankruptcy."

Let, for example, the English bourgeoisie in fact repeal the Ten Hours Bill: the worse, the better; this only "accelerates the crises and shortens the period of prosperity. And whatever accelerates crises thereby accelerates the course of English development, and therefore also its nearest goal - the overthrow of the industrial bourgeoisie by the industrial proletariat... It is perfectly obvious that the English industrial bourgeoisie... is moving with rapid strides toward the point in its development when all its resources for maintaining affairs will be exhausted; when the period of prosperity that still separates one crisis from another will disappear altogether... and when industry, trade, and all modern society must perish, on the one hand, from an excess of living force without application, and on the other, from complete exhaustion... if there were not a class that alone can take into its hands the further management of society: and that class is the proletariat. Thus proletarian revolution is unavoidable and its victory guaranteed." Only the blindness of the bourgeoisie prevents it from seeing that it is dancing on a volcano that will come into action in a few hours. "The bourgeoisie solemnly celebrates its greatest feast at the moment when the catastrophe is at hand, the collapse (der Zusammenbruch) of its whole domination - a collapse which will prove to it more convincingly than ever that the forces it has raised have outgrown its guardianship. At the time of the next world's fair, the bourgeois gentlemen will probably no longer figure as the owners of these productive forces, and at most only as cicerones showing them to visitors."

History cruelly mocked this faith in the beneficial and swiftly approaching "self-negation" of the capitalist order. But in his time Engels believed in the correctness of his predictions as firmly and unshakably as contemporary Russian Marxists believe in all their prophecies. Engels was no less convinced than they are that "exact, strict, inexorable science" spoke through his lips. "With the same certainty with which we can develop a new truth from given mathematical propositions," he said in 1847, "with that same certainty we can infer the coming social revolution from the given economic relations and the principles of political economy."

This "mathematical" certainty in the absolute correctness of every prediction deduced from Marxist dogma Engels transmitted intact to his disciples. The degree of their confidence in the correctness of their various "scientific" predictions - usually standing in inverse proportion to their intellectual stature - recalls Marx's words about the epigones of another school, that "no school has ever abused the word 'science' so often."

Let us now see what conclusions for the peasant question could flow from these premises. Contemporary Marxists have disputed, and still continue to dispute, whether it is possible - and if so, in what form - to defend the interests of the peasantry in modern bourgeois society. How did Marx and Engels relate to this question in the period when they composed their Manifesto? For Marx and Engels the very posing of such a question seemed entirely inadmissible. To pose this question presupposes that another question has already

been answered affirmatively: the necessity for socialists to have, besides a maximum program, also a minimum program. But if the system of Marx and Engels was at that time based upon an "exact scientific prediction" of a universal economic crash, an economic catastrophe, a general European state bankruptcy, and the transfer of the management of all state affairs to the party of the proletariat in the nearest future, then for what period could a minimum program be intended?

In the modern sense of the word, a minimum program is a program of such political and economic measures whose realization - by peaceful or other means, it makes no difference - can strengthen the position and ease the condition of the working class during the whole period when public power is still in the hands of political elements alien to it, from whom, in the process of the movement's growth, only partial concessions can be extorted or partial conquests made. The Manifesto did not yet put forward such a minimum program. It does perhaps contain a minimum program, but only of an entirely special kind: a program of initial measures whose purpose is the expropriation of the main property forces of bourgeois society and the laying of the foundation of the future order. In other words, this minimum program is a practical beginning of the realization of the integral maximum program; it presupposes that in the country the new social stratum has already won a full and final victory.

Marx and Engels had first to become irrevocably convinced that their forecast was, at the very least, premature before they could pass to another standpoint. Only in the 1880s did they themselves draw up a program for the French Workers' Party, and there, besides formulating the final goal of the movement, they also formulated a minimum program - but no longer in the sense of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, no longer in the sense of first measures toward introducing a new economic system in place of the commodity-bourgeois one, but in the sense of securing the interests of the working class and raising its chances in the struggle during the period of domination by bourgeois interests. This does not, of course, mean that only in 1880 did they recognize the necessity of a minimum program. Their first attempt, for example, at an agrarian minimum program dates, as we shall see, much earlier. What is important here is to note that in the epoch of the Manifesto Marx and Engels would have regarded a minimum program in this latter sense not only as superfluous and unnecessary, but, more than that, as directly harmful.

This is evident, for example, from an extremely interesting article by Engels on the English Ten Hours Bill. In the modern workers' movement, the struggle for the shortening of the working day and for the connected measures of factory legislation presupposes a bourgeois order headed by parties hostile to the basic, final demands of the working class. The workers' demands aim to force or wrest from a class government, a more or less bourgeois government, the concessions necessary for the physical and moral health of the workers, or to win partial conquests by other means. In a word, the realization of the workers' demands presupposes the sanction - more or less compelled - of a class hostile to them. And there is no doubt that the English Ten Hours Bill was the first important step along this path. As the first step that opened an era of further progress in legislation of this kind, it was so important that Marx later called it the victory of a new principle.

But from the standpoint of the pure, strict Marxism of the end of the 1840s, the matter appeared in an entirely different light. Precisely the fact that the ten-hour working day was introduced by bourgeois-landlord legislation made it, in the eyes of Marx and Engels, a reactionary act. It is not, of course, that they failed to see the whole importance of limiting the working day for the physical and moral health of the workers. They understood this significance, but in the final analysis they recognized the usefulness of such a measure only in connection with a whole series of other measures which, taken together, would mean the complete liquidation of the existing economic order, and which would therefore be carried out not one by one, but together, simultaneously - and, naturally, at the moment when this liquidation had become ripe and when the organized force of the new social stratum created by capitalism, victorious and capable of carrying it out, stood ready. Torn out of the living organic totality of such measures, the bill for the shortening of the working day, from the standpoint of Marx and Engels, could only be a temptation for the workers, seducing them from the true path onto the path of bargains with beneficent guardians from the privileged classes, and

also delaying the development of all the contradictions of the capitalist order - a development of contradictions in which lies the pledge of its dialectical self-negation. "The worse, the better." The development of capitalism, unbound by any norms lying outside it, would lead by the shortest route, with the least loss, to the greatest results. Such was the clear and definite meaning of a worldview logically developed to its extreme conclusions. This logical fearlessness before conclusions, this harmony and absence of all ambiguity, represented both the strength and the weakness of Marxism at the end of the 1840s.

This is not difficult to confirm with quotations. In the article just mentioned, Engels first notes that in the epoch when the English working class was not yet ready to seize the state, the introduction of the ten-hour working day could only be the work of a compromise. And he emphasizes the fact that factional struggle within the bourgeoisie itself advanced factions from its midst that used the Ten Hours Bill in order to draw the workers to their side. On one side stood the industrial bourgeoisie, whose interests were violated by this bill; on the other stood bankers, merchants, stock-exchange men, and landowners, to whom the carrying of the bill cost nothing. Alongside the calculating men, these social elements advanced the sentimental and dreamy ideologists of Toryism, who took seriously what for others was only a tactical device: the defense of the workers' interests, the incitement of the workers against the factory owners and manufacturers. On the other hand, meeting this current that came from above, there arose among the workers a current from below - that initial, immature opposition to industrialism which dreamed of a return to old patriarchal relations. In this way the workers' movement was falsified and distorted by those reactionary admixtures which were the inevitable consequence of compromise.

But that is not all. When the Ten Hours Bill, after various tribulations, was carried, the alliance had to fall apart, for there was no new major demand that could unite such heterogeneous elements into one intensive movement. The first misfortune thus appeared to be only passing and temporary. But the bill had another extremely important consequence, and a consequence that, under English conditions, was absolutely reactionary. "In consequence of the industrial revolution, the decisive branch of production for England became her industry, thanks to which she conquered and enslaved the world market. England stands and falls with her industry, rises and sinks together with the curve of its fluctuations... But modern large-scale industry can exist only on the condition of constant expansion, constant conquest of new markets... And since industry, at the height of its modern development, increases its productive forces incomparably faster than it can increase its markets, there arise from this the industrial crises during which, owing to an excess of means of production and products, the circulation of commodities is suddenly paralyzed, industry and trade almost wholly come to a standstill, until the excess of products can ebb away by finding new channels. But this moment soon gives place to a new period of prosperity. Markets that have opened again require new deliveries and supplies; manufacturers cannot work fast enough. Yet precisely here the prescriptions of the Ten Hours Bill appear as intolerable fetters for industry, which at such a moment needs, more than ever, complete independence and unrestricted freedom to dispose of all the resources necessary to it..."

"If earlier we saw that the Ten Hours Bill was defended chiefly by reactionaries and was carried exclusively by reactionary classes, now we see that, in the form in which it was carried, it is a thoroughly reactionary measure. The whole social development of England is bound up with the development, the progress, of its industry. All institutions that hamper this progress, restrict it, or seek to regulate and direct it by standards lying outside it, are reactionary, cannot be maintained, and must fall. The revolutionary force that has here been able to finish off the whole patriarchal order of old England, the aristocracy, and the financial oligarchy, will not allow itself to be pressed and tucked into the moderate and tidy bed of the Ten Hours Bill."

"And yet the Ten Hours Bill is absolutely necessary for the workers. For them it is a direct physical necessity. Without the Ten Hours Bill, an entire generation of English workers is threatened with physical degeneration. But there is an enormous difference between the Ten Hours Bill which... was carried by the reactionary coalition of 1847, and the one the workers now demand..."

"They [the workers] have experienced how little benefit they get from individual petty measures carried against the industrial bourgeoisie. They have learned by experience that, so long as the industrial bourgeoisie remains the only class capable at the present moment of standing at the head of development, it would be futile to work against it in this progressive mission..."

"They feel that their time can come only when the industrial bourgeoisie has used itself up and exhausted itself; and therefore, guided by a sure instinct, they must hasten that process of development which must give it victory and thereby prepare its fall..."

"Only from the moment when even the boundaries of the world market become too narrow for the full development of all the resources of modern industry; when the latter will need a social revolution in order once again to acquire a free arena for the play of its forces - from that moment the limitation of working time will cease to be a reactionary matter, will cease to be fetters constraining industry. On the contrary, this question will come to the fore of itself. The first consequence of the proletarian revolution in England will be the centralization of large-scale industry in the hands of the state, that is, in the hands of the proletariat that has gained domination. But with the centralization of industry all the relations of competition are removed which now bring the regulation of working time into conflict with the progress of industry."

"The Ten Hours Bill in the form in which the workers now demand it... is no longer an isolated attempt weakening industrial development; it is only one link in a long chain of measures that revolutionize society in its present form and successively destroy the class contradictions that have hitherto existed. It is not a reactionary, but a revolutionary measure."

"And thus the sole solution of the question of the ten-hour working day, as of all questions connected with the relations between labor and capital, consists in the proletarian revolution." [Engels, "Die englische Zehnstundenbill," Nachlass, III, pp. 392-395.]

This article on the English Ten Hours Bill, printed in 1850, is of enormous importance for characterizing the standpoint on which Marx and Engels - at this time already working in complete agreement with one another - stood in the epoch of the Communist Manifesto and during the few years immediately following its publication. Without understanding this standpoint one cannot fully and correctly understand and evaluate all their separate socio-political views, opinions, and judgments. We have already said that in this classical, pure, orthodox form - it is not for nothing that the Manifesto of the Communist Party, in all its details, still represents the Koran of orthodoxy - Marxism was an extraordinarily harmonious and logically rounded worldview.

The soul of this harmony, this inner coherence, was the conviction that the development of capitalism, left to itself in its "natural," spontaneously developing forms, is the shortest and best road to the new social system - a road that need only be cleared of every historically accumulated old rag blocking the way, and then the matter is settled. This optimistic fatalism with regard to capitalism only later, especially in the hands of the "disciples," finally lost its consistency and acquired a thoroughly eclectic coloring. At the same time, there gradually flew away from it that many-sided and profound spirit of activism with which it had been especially strongly penetrated precisely at the end of the 1840s. It was replaced by a spirit of opportunism, sometimes open, as among the majority of the "revisionists," sometimes hidden and masked by loud phraseology, as among the majority of the "orthodox."

Since, in the eyes of Marx and Engels, the self-negation of capitalism was advancing with seven-league strides, and since they were already preparing, at the next world's fair, to admire the social wealth of the new world in the company of obliging cicerones from among the former capitalists, it was of course easy for them to celebrate their heart's holiday and, with revolutionary enthusiasm, call to the workers: do not interfere with the victorious march of capitalism; do not trouble or bind the free development of bourgeois relations by any norms; it is in your interest not to regulate this development by norms lying outside it, but only to accelerate it.

But when reality showed that the real relation between the positive, constructive sides of capitalism and the negative, disorganizing sides was by no means as favorable as it had first seemed; when it became evident in practice that capitalism possessed infinitely more stubborn vitality and infinitely less haste in self-negation - then the repetitions of the old motif of "accelerating" and "assisting" bourgeois progress at once assumed an ambiguous character. Some singers felt as though a nasty anecdote had happened to them: namely, unexpectedly for themselves and somehow against their own will and desire, they began to fall into the tone of bourgeois apologists. Noticing this, they began to lose the beat and tried to begin again somehow anew. Others noticed nothing and, like P. Struve, happily sang their way to liberal-bourgeois cantatas. They fell into the same ambiguous tragicomic position that befell an ancient sect which worshiped Judas. The tragedy of that sect's position flowed from its peculiar logic: it reasoned that without the crucifixion of Christ there would have been no redemption of the human race, and without the betrayal by Judas there would have been no crucifixion of Christ; therefore we owe everything to Judas's betrayal, and therefore the duty of a truly believing person who saw Judas with the soldiers going to hunt for his victim would consist only in quite seriously advising him: "What thou doest, do quickly." It is clear that to say such a thing with enthusiasm is rather difficult; in any case it is accessible only to exceptional talents, and it is known that talents come from God, not from human hands.

The consistency of the former view was likewise irretrievably lost. Into the program of the more orthodox Marxists - and it is well known that the farther east one goes, the more orthodox the Marxists become - there crept a fundamental duality. Whenever the matter concerned the laboring peasantry, they placed themselves wholly at the standpoint of Engels's article on the Ten Hours Bill and used the method of argumentation of that article. The defense of the labor interests of the peasantry means constraining the natural development of capitalist relations, compromising with bourgeois principles, delaying development, whereas what we need is its acceleration. The question of defending these interests can be raised only after the arrival of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"; then the corresponding measures will be progressive, whereas now they are reactionary. Now we can only fight for the "freedom of development of bourgeois relations" in the village, for bringing it "into the conditions of life characteristic of bourgeois society," while merely "pushing" that society, keeping a hand on its shoulder and saying: what thou doest, do quickly.

But, of course, on the question of the workers' minimum program the argumentation of Engels's article on the Ten Hours Bill was wholly discarded. The situation was aggravated further by the fact that the orthodox Marxists in Russia had managed to adapt the program to the greater vitality of the capitalist order, and therefore were not embarrassed by the fact that, in "introducing the village into the conditions of life characteristic of bourgeois society," they must reckon with the extremely slow course of agrarian evolution. Thus they had to become accustomed to the idea of "slow haste." Precisely now, in Western Europe, voices are beginning to be heard again and again in favor of a more active tactic against the routine and procrastination that have entered into the flesh and blood of the German movement and of others that copy it. It is self-evident that there the whole question revolves around how far it is possible, even now, to undermine the very foundations of bourgeois exploitation. And this at the very moment when our orthodox Social Democracy, on the contrary, has fully adapted itself, has entered the rut along which it is to go to meet bourgeois transformation. And this in the most agricultural country of Europe, and at the very time when agricultural capitalism has shown in the most unambiguous way that, less than anyone else, it is capable of passing for the fabulous pelican that obligingly hastens to tear open its own breast in order to secure nourishment and life for the offspring produced by it - the new collective productive mechanism of the future, ripened in its womb.

In short, the old Marxism of 1848 degenerated into a tendency that appeared among us under the slogan: let us recognize the necessity of bringing the nearest transformation within bourgeois bounds and dare to demand... the "cut-off lands"!

Was this process of degeneration at the same time the only possible logical process of Marxism's development? Did our "cut-off lands" tendency continue to its natural end the very evolution that took place

in the minds of Marx and Engels themselves? Or did the views of the latter evolve in another direction, and is it precisely in that other direction that they should be developed?

Only a real analysis of their views on the degree of the peasantry's social receptivity can answer these questions. But in order to understand the starting point of this development, one must first remember the basic standpoint from which they looked upon all events: their faith in an immediately impending fundamental socio-economic transformation under the leadership of the proletariat. This faith had to undergo a series of harsh tests. And it is natural that at first Marx and Engels should not have thought that the source of their disappointments lay above all in the erroneous historical forecast underlying their political program. They had to seek this source, this culprit of disappointments, somewhere outside. It is not surprising that their gaze could first of all come to rest upon the peasantry. As the literary sources show, this is in part what happened.

CHAPTER VII

The Socio-Psychological Sources of the Original Agrarian Views of Marx and Engels

Several years ago, among the papers left after Engels's death, there was found, and then published in Die Neue Zeit, an extremely interesting and positively precious historical document: an unfinished sketch of "travel notes" relating to his 1848 journey on foot through France, from Paris to Bern. Engels's travel notes reflect with special vividness, and in a somewhat sharpened form, the mood that constituted the psychological soil on which there arose and took root the theoretical denial of any historical future for the peasantry - a denial proclaimed by Marxism, and often proclaimed by it even down to the present.

Every phenomenon is most easily studied in its most developed and most clearly defined forms. We have seen that since the time of the Great French Revolution, reaction had, not without success, sown misunderstandings, mutual distrust, and irritation between the toilers of town and countryside. We have pointed out that certain circumstances favored these conditions and created in France a certain estrangement between the peasantry and the proletariat. This could not fail to be reflected in the theoretical constructions of the ideological representatives of the urban proletariat. Marx's Manifesto, with its bold predictions that the "reactionary peasantry" would disappear almost tomorrow, is in this respect a sign of the times. But the historical misunderstandings between the toilers of town and countryside reached their apogee a little after the publication of the Manifesto; and in Engels's notes the negative attitude of Marxism toward the peasantry reaches its apogee. In them, en toutes lettres, there is fully and frankly expressed what in other authors and other pamphlets remains unsaid, or is contained only potentially.

In order to understand the general spirit that permeates these notes, one must recall the historical situation under which they flowed from Engels's irritated pen. In France the banner of the "social republic" had only just been raised for the first time. Working-class Paris, wholly seized by an enthusiasm the country had not experienced since 1789, was ready to rise like one man in defense of its beautiful ideal of social equality, of the universal right to work and to remuneration; it was ready to measure its strength not only against all France, but against the whole world, insofar as that world was still in the power of the dark and obsolete forces of political oppression and the economic exploitation of man by man. The frightened bourgeoisie, taken by surprise, began to rave about the "red specter" and did not know into whose arms to throw itself, where and in whom to seek salvation from it. The nobility, the higher clergy, and the officials of the old regime conspired against the republic. The peasantry looked with distrust and apprehension upon the new masters of the situation, seeing in them no response to its needs and aspirations, and regarding them - not entirely without foundation - as alien to itself. From behind all these consciously reactionary or unconsciously elemental forces, Bonaparte's tenacious hands were already reaching toward the republic; while proud, freedom-loving Paris fearlessly and carelessly raised its banner, on which were inscribed words still vague and misty, yet all the more alluring: social republic, organization of labor.

It is no wonder that the attention of the whole world, and especially of the entire advanced intelligentsia of that time, was turned upon France and Paris. The best people dreamed of France, dreamed of Paris; the deepest and most far-sighted observers of political life attributed a grand historical significance to its bold initiative. Ferdinand Lassalle regarded the entry of the worker Albert into the provisional government as the herald of a new era, the rising dawn of an entirely new historical period. Engels too, in his notes, speaks of Paris in the most enthusiastic way - in contrast to his later dry and somewhat contemptuous remarks about the "immature, unclear collectivist aspirations of 1848": "Paris - why, it is the only city in the world: in it all the nerve-threads of history are united! From here, at certain intervals, electric shocks go out, making the whole world tremble. In Louis Blanc's happy phrase, it is the heart and brain of the whole world!"

But such is the general psychological law: the more excessive the expectations, the more rainbow-colored the hopes, the stronger and more painful the disappointment, the reaction. Engels must have felt this alternation of moods with special force, all the more because the tragic history of Paris in 1848 played out

before his very eyes. He saw Paris during the honeymoon of the republic, "when the workers, those hopeful fools, sacrificed to the republic 'three months of misery': by day they ate stale bread, and in the evening, to the sound of the Marseillaise, planted trees of liberty on the boulevards." He saw Paris face to face later too, in October, when between the workers and the republic created by their own hands there already lay "the June days, a sea of blood, and fifteen thousand corpses." "In the school of the state of siege, the headstrong republic learned to be brief, moderate, and obedient. But Paris was dead - it was no longer Paris. The same city, but without that spirit, life, fire, without that ferment which the worker brought into it. Yes, Paris was dead, and this beautiful corpse was the more terrible the more beautiful it was!"

When one has moved away from an event to a certain historical distance, it is of course not difficult to analyze, quite coolly, the general course of events, the inevitable logic of the facts, and to seek out the hidden springs beneath them - in short, to understand the given process as wholly natural, explainable by a whole series of spontaneous causes independent of the good or evil will of the participants. But that is precisely the point of view of an outside observer, alien to what was taking place in the historical arena. A person who took a direct part in everything that was happening, who lived through it with every nerve and fiber of his being, inevitably stands at a completely different point of view. His standpoint is necessarily the standpoint of subjective logic, of evaluation, of judgment, establishing the rightness of some and the guilt of others; in a word, the standpoint of moral judgment. For him, at the given moment, what matters is not so much all the threads in the lawful interweaving of events, not so much all the turns of the mechanism of their development, as their subjective meaning - the victory or defeat of a certain principle, the success or failure of a given person or group, the valor and heroism of one, the voluntary or involuntary sin of another. Over the beautiful corpse of Paris - the idol of all advanced people of its time - there inevitably arose, first of all, the terrible question: who is to blame? Upon whom must responsibility fall for the death of our Paris?

Yes, who is to blame? Why was the country a silent witness of this outrageous affair? Why did it apathetically allow this "heart and brain of the world" to be trampled under the dirty soldier's boot? With such questions Engels had to set out, and did set out, on foot into the depths of the country.

And he found the guilty party. In his eyes, the guilty party turned out to be the peasantry.

And is this surprising? What could Friedrich Engels have found in the French village - especially in passing, during some two-week journey - Engels, then obviously an ardent enthusiast, a participant in the seething political life of the capitals, where there is always "noise, orators thunder, the verbal war boils"? What could he see there, in the depths of the country, which had been touched only slightly, or only superficially, by the capital's movement? At best, that old "age-long silence" of which the poet speaks. And at worst - but let Friedrich Engels himself tell us about the worst.

"What could the dull-witted, narrow-minded peasant know of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of the democratic-social republic, of the 'organization of labor' - of things whose basic conditions and elements are never encountered in his village? And when, through the dirty channel of the bourgeois papers, he received a vague notion of what was happening in Paris, when the bourgeoisie threw him the resounding slogan against the socialists - 'ce sont les partageurs,' these are people who want to take your property and your land away from you - then the fury of the peasants knew no bounds.

"I spoke with hundreds of peasants in the most varied localities of France, and everywhere there prevails the same fanatical antagonism toward Paris and the Paris workers. 'I should like that damned Paris to blow up!' was the mildest wish.

"It is understandable that among the peasants the old contempt for the towns was stirred up and intensified by the events of this year. The peasants, the village, must save France. The village produces everything. The towns live on our grain, clothe themselves in our flax and our wool; we must restore the normal order of things; we peasants must take the matter into our own hands - that is the eternal refrain which sounds, more or less distinctly, more or less consciously, in all the confused conversations of the

peasants. And how do they want to save France? How do they want to take this matter into their own hands? By electing as president of the republic Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, a petty but proud madman, who has nothing but the great name he bears. Among all the peasants with whom I spoke, enthusiasm for Louis Napoleon was as great as hatred of Paris. Their entire politics was limited to these two passions and to the most senseless, most animal astonishment before the all-European upheaval.

"One must spend two weeks with peasants, with peasants from the most diverse localities of France; one must have occasion everywhere to find the same dull narrow-mindedness, the same complete ignorance of urban, industrial, and commercial relations, the same blindness in politics, the same 'poking a finger at the sky' in everything that goes beyond the village outskirts, the same application of the yardstick of peasant relations to the greatest historical relations - in short, one must know the French peasant precisely in 1848, in order to feel fully the crushing impression left by this stubborn stupidity."

Engels is not unwilling to recognize ironically in the peasant "certain patriarchal virtues," but - "the muzhik will always remain a muzhik"; he is "a barbarian in the midst of civilization," "a dull-witted, narrow-minded peasant" who, scarcely able to distinguish his left hand from his right, hurls himself at a movement he does not understand "with all the fury of blind greed."

Such is the picture Engels draws for us; and in connection with it one involuntarily recalls the proverb according to which even the devil is surely not as terrible as he is painted by overzealous and pious artists.

Thus, the muzhik - this senseless, stupid, narrow-minded, blind, stubborn, greedy barbarian, who with animal rage and frenzy hurls himself upon what is above his understanding - here is the scapegoat upon whom Engels can at last lay responsibility for the defeat of the great, self-sacrificing Paris of 1848.

It would of course have been difficult to expect any other attitude toward the peasantry, which had not supported Paris, from a man whose best hopes had just been dealt the harshest and most painful blow by the suppression of the Paris movement. Was it for him, under the fresh impression of this blow, to be an impartial judge in the still fresh dispute between Paris and all France? No: he is not a cool investigator, hovering over events at such a height that the passions, interests, and preferences touched by the struggle and not yet cooled cannot reach him. He is a living man; he himself belongs wholly to this struggle, belongs to one of the sides participating in it. All his sympathies, all his best feelings, are given beforehand and undividedly to Paris. He does not raise the extremely serious, indeed fatal, historical question: who is to blame for the fact that the French peasantry received information about what was being done in Paris only "through the dirty channel of the bourgeois papers"? Who is to blame for the fact that at the very time when the bourgeoisie, conscious of the enormous elemental force of the peasantry, was sowing in the village seeds of distrust and hostility against the urban workers, these latter, to the sound of the Marseillaise, were carelessly planting "trees of liberty" on the boulevards of Paris?

It does not occur to Engels here the thought later expressed so well by Lassalle in one of his speeches to the workers: "Gentlemen, the servants of reaction are practitioners, not chatterers; and such practical servants are what one must wish for you as well." In 1848, the workers' cause in France was badly lacking such practical servants. This was natural. The movement of that time was still too young and immature. These were, properly speaking, only the first glimmers of a movement barely being born: that "rebellious youth" of a movement which is ready, selflessly and without reserve, to load the whole vault of heaven upon its own shoulders like Atlas; which proudly strives to give the country freedom and happiness, even if not only without the country's participation, but even directly against its own will.

And is it surprising that the peasantry began to murmur? What could it expect from the new movement? And what did that movement give it during the brief epoch of its rule?

It gave it nothing more and nothing less than an increase of the land tax by 45 centimes. An increase of the tax on land - that is, for the peasant, a tax on the means of labor, an indirect tax on labor itself!

Even Engels himself, even at that time, could not fail to recognize that by this the republican government had committed "an unforgivable, never reparable mistake." But if so, then are the peasants really so guilty in their hostility toward Paris? Engels does not pose this question; on the contrary, he hastens to reduce the significance of his own admission to nothing. The republican government's mistake, he says, had no essential significance. In a different case, it might of course have attracted the peasants to itself "for some couple of months" at most, but then they would have fallen away all the same, for the behavior of the peasantry as a whole is determined not by accidents but by an irresistible material cause: the economic position of small property.

Thus Engels had come very close to an entirely different solution of the question of the causes of the failure of the Paris movement - a solution according to which those causes lay first of all in the immaturity of the movement itself. He had, one might say, almost caught the truth with his elbow - but only in order to move away from it again immediately.

And meanwhile there were many signs of the movement's immaturity. To every unprejudiced person they would have struck the eye directly. Even Engels, without wishing to do so, gives very vivid examples in passing.

In one village Engels almost attached himself to an artel of Paris workers engaged in building a dam. And this is how our author found them: "They had preserved the cheerfulness, the high spirits, of Parisians; but in general, thanks to their isolation in a little village, they were completely demoralized. There was not a sign that they were occupied with the interests of their class, with which the political questions of the day were closely connected. It seems they did not even read any newspaper. Their whole politics was limited to mocking nicknames. One big and strong ragamuffin was called Caussidiere; another, a bad worker and a drunkard, Guizot; and so on. Exhausting work, comparatively good conditions of life, and above all separation from Paris and the fact that they had fallen into a corner of France cut off from the rest of the world - all this had remarkably narrowed their horizon. They had already begun to become muzhiks... And they had been here only two months!"

Thus, it was almost the muzhiks who turned out to be guilty even for the fact that, in two months, all the ideas breathed into the heads of the Paris workers by the capital had managed completely to evaporate. They had evaporated so thoroughly that Engels did not find in them even "any sign" of thoughts about the interests of their class. Of course, any impartial investigator could draw from this only one conclusion: that the Paris movement of that time was still, to a considerable degree, elemental, herd-like, little conscious, bearing all the marks of a superficial mass contagion. It was enough to tear the workers away for some two months from the center from which the contagion issued - from Paris - and the whole socialist coating could quickly fall off them. They not only were unable to illuminate, by a ray of consciousness, the darkness in which the peasants wandered; they themselves quickly became "muzhikized."

Is it surprising that at that time voices could not be heard calling for rapprochement and alliance between the toilers of town and village, between the factory proletariat and the peasantry? Much more natural at that time were counsels to keep away from the peasantry as from the plague, as from infection - counsels of the sort later summed up in the brief and expressive Russian formula: "with you one does not merge, one gets drunk."

Engels's mood, as expressed in his travel notes, illuminates for us as well as possible the psychological subsoil of the notorious phrase in the Communist Manifesto about the "idiocy of rural life." The peasant-phobic notes that already sound occasionally in the Manifesto were inspired by the same temporary, passing historical phenomena and events as Engels's notes. The only difference is that the latter were written later, when the misunderstandings between town and countryside had reached their apogee; correspondingly, in them these peasant-phobic notes reached the maximum of force and intensity. Marxism's misfortune in relation to the agrarian question is that Marxism, as a worldview, took shape in the heads of Marx and Engels precisely in that sad and troubled epoch. Its impressions placed their stamp upon their worldview, and the

traces of this have not been wholly effaced even down to the very latest time. Not only for individual people, but for whole worldviews and theories, the impressions of childhood are the strongest; and they are the hardest to get rid of, even under the conditions of later conscious criticism.

We have already seen that Engels's bill of indictment against the French peasantry limps at many points. By his own admissions, neither the measures of the provisional government nor contact with urban workers could give the peasants any grounds for sympathizing with the new movement. Among the measures there was one that was directly anti-peasant; the workers, when brought into contact with the village, themselves proved incapable. But if not the workers, then who could enlighten the peasantry? With what representatives of the new current could they yet meet? Only with chance tourists, such as Engels himself. Not to mention that such fleeting encounters could not leave behind any deep or lasting impression even with the best attitude toward the peasantry on the part of the tourists, it must be admitted that this attitude too often left much to be desired.

Extremely characteristic in this respect is the following episode which Engels tells about himself. Having been very hospitably received in one village cottage - after all, "the peasants do have some patriarchal virtues," Engels remarks condescendingly - our traveler repays his hosts for this hospitality in the following way. "As I was leaving, I drew, as a gift for the children, several mugs and explained with the greatest seriousness: this is Louis Napoleon, this is Armand Marrast, this is Ledru-Rollin, this is Cavaignac. The peasants, with eyes wide open, stared at the horrible mugs with the greatest respect, thanked me joyfully, and immediately nailed the astonishingly similar portraits to the wall." And Engels went on his way, noting from the height of metropolitan grandeur such unmistakable signs of the hopeless stupidity of the crude villagers.

The account of this successful mystification is, however, one of the most innocent manifestations of Engels's attitude toward the peasantry. In one place he even goes so far as to preach the future necessity of an entire crusade of the "army of the proletariat" against the peasantry: "The relation of the peasants to the revolution of 1848 is not the result of mistakes or accidental misunderstandings: it is natural. It proceeds from the very position of things, from the social position of small landed property. The French proletariat, before it carries through its demands, will have to suppress a universal peasant war, a war which even the abolition of mortgage debts would postpone only for a short time."

Beyond this it was plainly impossible to go.

Audiatur et altera pars. Let the other side be heard. Engels's sentence is severe. Let us even suppose that it is just; still, the very severity of this sentence gives sufficient ground for hearing a possible speech by counsel for the peasantry in reply to our prosecutor.

"Very well, learned and highly educated thinker!" this imaginary counsel might say on behalf of the peasants. "You have vividly displayed all our darkness, our coarseness, our hardened ignorance. And we shall not dispute your characterization. How could we! We are crushed, we are annihilated by your sentence; for before you we are indeed a mere nothing. You and your friends - you are the intellectual center, the best of what the capital has so far produced, that very capital which you so proudly call 'the brain and heart of the whole world.' That means you are the heart of the heart and the brain of the brain of the whole world. But beware! The more has been given to you, the more will be demanded of you. You know very well how to enumerate the historical sins of others. But look back at yourselves too. Why did you, 'guardians of the fire on the altar, standing above like a city on a mountain, that it might be seen by all and bring light into the darkness' - why did you not share your mind and your knowledge with us, the gray, homespun village mass? Or did you really wish to remain alone the 'heart and brain of the world,' to think for this world yourselves and arrange its destiny without asking its consent? Or did you imagine that Paris was all France? In that case, with all your education, you have not gone beyond the thoroughly rotten ideals of enlightened absolutism and of benefitting us from above.

"You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world; not for nothing has Paris for centuries drawn to itself the best and most capable forces from the whole country; not for nothing has it sucked out of the country and absorbed into itself its healthiest, most vital juices. But 'when a candle is lit, they do not put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, so that it gives light to all in the house.' Why did you forget this? Why did you shut yourselves off from us? In relation to us, the people of the outlived past proved to be greater democrats in their tactics, greater democrats than you, the people of the future. They, one way or another, came to us, gave us various promises, showed us all sorts of dark and bright perspectives, tried to convey to us their political sympathies and antipathies. And you? What did we see from you? How did you earn our favor? How did you prove to us your attention to our needs, to our sufferings? The new republican government which your revolution seated in power soon showed its state wisdom by increasing the taxes that weighed upon us; but there was no need to overthrow the old government for that - it could have done the same thing just as well. In order to mock our lack of aesthetic taste and our ability to take some crudely drawn mugs for portraits of Ledru-Rollin and Cavaignac, one does not need to be Engels either; any traveling official from among the 'nobles,' and even any military clerk who had acquired a little 'civilization,' could have done this with equal success. And, finally, for the future 'suppression of a universal peasant war,' there is no need at all for new people and new banners. Peasant wars have occurred more than once in history, and the method of 'suppression' has been practiced in every age by representatives of reaction with such success that here too your competition will be a somewhat superfluous luxury. If you did not know how to make your ideas intelligible to us, then, according to you, that means we shall eternally remain deaf to everything new and living, so that only the gendarme of your 'state of the future' will be able to open for us the doors of earthly paradise and shove us through them, dragging us by the scruff of the neck! And after this you think you have earned the right to our goodwill? And after this you blame us for the failure of your cause? Blame yourselves a thousand times more, and do not hurry to shift the responsibility from yourselves onto the defenseless peasant mass - especially since history has accustomed it to be the eternal scapegoat for all sins, its own and others'!"

If not everything in Engels's heated anti-peasant philippics is exaggeration, one cannot fail to recognize a certain justice in this sample speech for the defense. We do not, however, wish in the least to cast a shadow upon Engels or upon the advanced intelligentsia of that time in general. Its historical merits are sacred for us. Of course, its activity too was not without errors; but only he who does nothing makes no mistakes. The historical conditions of every time present natural boundaries, a limit which no one living within those conditions can cross, even if he has seven spans in his forehead. To blame a person of a given time for not knowing much that has become clear only to us, his distant descendants, would be more than strange. And so we have spoken not as reproach and not as condemnation of the glorious shades of the past. We wished only to show to what extent the method by which Engels arrived at his negative attitude toward the peasantry is a "stick with two ends." Anticipating what follows, we hasten to say, in the interest of Engels's by no means inglorious name, that his attitude toward the peasantry changed very substantially over time. Perhaps this circumstance even contains one of the reasons why the Travel Notes were never finished by the author himself and saw the light only after his death. And we would willingly have refrained from raising and digging up this old matter if - if something of the contemptuous treatment of the peasantry after the model of earlier times had not persisted in Marxism even down to the present as a historical survival; if there did not still remain people who, with special pleasure and emphasis, repeat phrases about the "petty-bourgeois reactionary nature of the peasantry," about the peasantry as "a class of barbarians standing half outside society," about the "solid anti-collectivist peasant skull," the "idiocy of the village," and so on and so on.

Only the necessity of struggling against this "survival" compelled us to turn to the clarification of the genesis of the original attitude toward the peasantry held by the spiritual fathers of Marxism; and for this there is no better historical document than Engels's travel notes "from Paris to Bern."

CHAPTER VIII

"Corrections" and "Reservations"

Up to this point we have conditionally assumed that Engels, at least in the objective part of his "notes," was entirely right: that the French peasantry during the revolutionary period at the end of the 1840s was indeed imbued with a hopelessly reactionary spirit, hostile to advanced ideas; that the whole "policy of the peasants" was in fact exhausted by three passions: a fanatical attachment to their landed property, an equally fanatical reverence for the name of Napoleon, and, finally, an equally fanatical hatred of freedom-loving proletarian Paris.

We have tried to show that even if all this were true, Engels still would not have had the right to such sweeping verdicts and risky prophecies as those found in his "notes." But now it is time to put a new question on the agenda: were Engels's impressions true even in their objective part? Some readers may perhaps regard the very posing of such a question by us as insolence. Engels's authority is too strong in the eyes of many for words of ours, unsupported by citations from authorities equal to or greater than he, to shake most readers' faith in such resolute and categorical testimony. To tell the truth, I personally do not especially like this method of appeal to the "fathers of the Church"; it too much resembles the letter-worship of old orthodox theology. But I should like to convince many readers who feel a weakness for "texts" from the "scriptures," and for their sake it is sometimes worth sacrificing one's personal tastes. We have the possibility of relying on an authority whom, I hope, even the most suspicious peasant-phobes of Marxism will not suspect of partiality toward the peasantry - even those who cannot speak of the peasant without bestowing on him the ironic title of "little muzhik" and putting the word in quotation marks for greater pungency. This authority is none other than the "teacher" himself, Karl Marx.

Here, among other things, is what we read in his Die Klassenkampfe in Frankreich concerning the period from June 13, 1849, to March 10, 1850: "In the most varied symptoms there appeared a gradual revolution in the mood of the peasantry. It appeared already in the elections to the Legislative Assembly; it appeared in the declaration of a state of siege in the five departments adjoining Lyons; it appeared, some months after June 13, in the election of one of the Montagnards in the department of the Gironde to the seat of the former president of the ultra-reactionary chambre introuvable; it appeared in the election on December 20, 1849, of a 'Red' as deputy for the department of Gard - that promised land of Legitimism - to the vacant seat of a deceased Legitimist deputy. This revolutionizing of even the most immovable minds manifested itself especially after the restoration of the abolished wine tax. The governmental measures and laws of January and February 1850 were directed almost exclusively against the peasant departments. This is the weightiest proof of their progress.

"The Hautpoul circular, which turned the gendarme into a kind of inquisitor of prefects, sub-prefects, and especially mayors; which spread a spy network down to the most hidden corners of the most remote village communes; the law against schoolteachers, by which they - the instructors, interpreters, spokesmen, and spiritual leaders of the peasant class - were subjected to the arbitrary power of the prefects; the law by which schoolteachers, these proletarians of the educated class, were chased like wild animals from one rural commune to another; then the bill against mayors, by which the sword of Damocles of dismissal hung forever over their heads, and by which they, the presidents of the peasant communes, were at every moment set face to face with the president of the republic and the 'Party of Order'; the ordinance by which the seventeen military divisions of France were turned into four genuine Turkish pashaliks, and barracks and bivouacs were bestowed from above upon all faithful Frenchmen as a national salon; the law on public education, by which the Party of Order declared unconsciousness and the forcible stupefaction of the French population to be the necessary condition of its existence under the regime of universal suffrage - what were all these laws and measures? Nothing but a desperate attempt by the Party of Order to reconquer and subordinate to itself the departments with their peasant population. Considered as repressions, all this was a

set of miserable measures which usually dig the grave of the very end they pursue. They grafted revolution onto every village; they localized and peasantized the revolution."

Already from this it is clear what an important correction must be made to Engels's conclusions and generalizations. In general, the original strict and extreme Marxism - the Marxism of the Communist Manifesto - gradually, often almost imperceptibly, but in the end very strongly, evolved. Life forced correction after correction into the original simple and harmonious scheme, developing and complicating it accordingly. Speaking of Marxism, one must distinguish several stages in its development; otherwise one risks becoming entangled in obvious and irreconcilable contradictions. As regards the peasant question in particular, the first, embryonic phase of Marxism was one of absolutely negative attitudes toward the peasantry. The peasantry was a petty-bourgeois element, absolutely reactionary and hostile to the working class. Of course, it should not be irritated; one had to reckon with it as a force, to maneuver politically. But it should not be forgotten that all this was only a temporary means for postponing the decisive battle of the proletariat with the peasantry, not a radical means for eliminating the necessity of that battle. The proletariat's best ally in this future struggle was time. Time was rapidly cutting down and undermining the economic roots of the peasantry's existence. Capitalism - that enemy-friend and friend-enemy of the proletariat - was extending its influence to agriculture too, and the days of small-scale production were numbered. The peasantry was rapidly diminishing in numbers, being proletarianized; and this process of proletarianization, from the Marxist point of view, was of course a progressive process, one favorable to movement toward the "final goal." Every conquest made by capitalism at the expense of small agriculture meant that the proletariat had fewer enemies. We have already said that the events of French social and political life up to 1848-49 created precisely the mood, the spiritual atmosphere, in which the birth of such views was more than natural.

The second phase of Marxism's development - which it would be well to call the transitional phase - begins with Marx's Klassenkampfe. Life quickly showed that a social-revolutionary movement could very much be "peasantized." From that time onward, instead of explaining misunderstandings between the workers of town and country as a natural necessity conditioned by the very essence of the social position of small property on one side and the proletariat on the other, it became necessary to seek the explanation more in certain transitory conditions of the given and exceptional moment. What had formerly seemed inevitable enmity, resting on a rational opposition of interests, now had to be represented as an accidental and lamentable misunderstanding.

And that is exactly what Marx did. At times he speaks with excessive severity of the French "social democracy" of that period. Against the leaders of the proletariat of that time there often escape from him contemptuous epithets such as "high priests of the socialist synagogue." He even makes the following proposition the guiding idea of his pamphlet: the visible defeat of the French revolution of 1848 was, properly speaking, not the defeat of the revolution at all, but only the defeat of those pre-revolutionary prejudices, illusions, and traditions from which only the bitter experience of defeat could free the working masses. "The French working class," he says further, "was not yet capable of carrying through its own purely proletarian revolution. If in moments of revolutionary crisis the French proletariat possessed such factual strength and influence as to incite it to leaps exceeding its powers, then in the rest of France it was compressed into a few scattered industrial centers, drowning in the overwhelming mass of peasants and petty burghers. The struggle against capital in its modern, developed form, at its highest stage - the struggle of the industrial wage-worker against the industrial bourgeois-capitalist - was in France only a partial fact. It could not give the revolution, after the July days, a national content. The French workers could not take a single step forward before the course of the revolution had called forth an uprising against the existing order of things, against the rule of capital, among the mass of the nation standing between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie - among the peasants and petty bourgeois; before the course of events had compelled these social strata to join the proletariat as their revolutionary vanguard."

The economic structure of France at that time resembled the structure of present-day Russia. Marx sketches it in a few sharp strokes by drawing a parallel between England and France: "In England industry

predominates; in France, agriculture. In England industry feels the need for free trade; in France, for protective tariffs, for a special national monopoly in addition to other monopolies. French industry does not dominate French national production, and that is why French manufacturers and factory owners do not stand at the head of the French bourgeois classes. The industrial bourgeoisie can rule only where modern industry has transformed all property relations in accordance with its needs; and industry can acquire this power only where it has conquered the world market, for national boundaries are insufficient for it. French industry, for the most part, maintains itself even in its own internal market only thanks to a more or less modified protective system. By necessity, the French manufacturer becomes a fanatical adherent of the Party of Order." In the passage just cited there is, incidentally, a sufficient indirect explanation of why in Russia the bourgeoisie has so far passively coexisted under the "old superstructures," although many dogmatic Marxists have confidently predicted that here too it must become an active historical-revolutionary force not only in the economy, but also in the "superstructures": so it was in the West; is it not clear that it must be the same in Russia? Let sworn economists prove how much chance Russia has of conquering a foreign market sufficient to give modern industry, and with it the bourgeoisie, that strength, power, and creative cultural influence of which Marx speaks. For now, let us remain on the factual ground.

Thus the struggle of the industrial proletarian against the industrial bourgeois at the end of the 1840s in France could not give the revolution a national content. The formula of this struggle had to be expanded so as to embrace the overwhelming majority of the laboring population - the peasantry. "The rural population of France," wrote Marx, "making up more than two thirds of the whole nation, consists for the most part of so-called free landed proprietors. But under the regime of parceling, the land represents for its owner no more than an instrument, a means of labor. In the form of interest on the mortgage debt lying upon the land, and in the form of interest on debts not transformed into mortgages to usurers, the French peasant gives to the capitalists not only ground rent, not only entrepreneurial profit - in short, not only his whole net income - but even a portion of wages. Thus the exploitation of the peasants differs from the exploitation of the workers only in its form. The exploiter of both is one and the same - capital. Individual capitalists exploit the peasantry through mortgage and usury [one should add the rental system and speculation in peasant grain], while the capitalist class as a whole exploits the peasantry in the form of state taxes. The title of owner belonging to the peasant serves capital as a talisman by which it has until now been able to enchant and bewitch the peasantry - an occasion to incite the peasantry against the industrial proletariat, nothing more. Only the fall of capital can lead to the rise of the peasantry; only an anti-capitalist, proletarian government can break the yoke of its economic want and social degradation. The social-democratic, red republic is the dictatorship of the natural ally of the peasants."

On the basis of these words it is not difficult to dispute the very correctness of including the laboring peasantry, for whom land is only ein reines Produktionsinstrument, under the general heading of the "middle strata" (Mittelstande), together with shopkeepers, artisans - in a word, with the "petty bourgeoisie" (Kleinburgertum). The peasantry - considered, of course, not as an estate, but only as a class of small independent producers living by their own labor and, though exploited, not separated from the means of production - is undoubtedly only a part of that enormous army of labor, a part of that same working people of which the industrial proletariat is another part. The middle, intermediate strata between the working people and the bourgeoisie are only those elements in the peasantry, as also in the artisan or handicraft milieu, which unite in themselves the traits of both the bourgeois exploiter and the worker: elements which still live partly by their own personal labor, but at the same time have already partly "communed" with the general fund of unpaid labor of others, with national surplus value. These hybrid social elements, which have already fallen away from the workers who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, but have not yet finally attached themselves to the bourgeois who live wholly by the labor sweat of others, really do belong to the "middle strata." But to enroll in the ranks of the "petty bourgeoisie" the peasant whose exploitation, in Marx's words, differs from the worker's only in form - what violence against common sense! What ignoring of the essence of the economic position!

"Petty bourgeoisie!" The very combination of words already shows that the petty bourgeoisie differs from the rest of the bourgeoisie - large and middle - only in the size of its economic operations, not in their essence. What is the economic essence of the big bourgeoisie? Of course, that its property serves as capital for it, gives it the possibility of extracting surplus value directly or indirectly from the labor of others. But one must not forget that in the hands of the small peasant, land is an instrument of production; or, in other words, "small means of production, serving the producer himself as means of production and not increasing in value through the addition of others' labor, do not constitute capital." Consequently, these small producers themselves are by no means small capitalists and not petty bourgeois. The petty bourgeoisie can differ from the big bourgeoisie only quantitatively, not qualitatively. But between the laboring peasantry and the capitalist class there exists not only a qualitative difference, but a direct opposition: the opposition of exploited and exploiters. Conversely, between the proletariat and the laboring peasant there is only a difference in the forms of their exploitation by capital. Therefore, we repeat, artificially tearing the laboring peasantry out of the general working mass and assigning it to the petty bourgeoisie is neither just nor logical. This is one of the most essential points of "our disagreements" with contemporary "Russian" Social Democrats.

There was a time when Marx most decisively assigned the peasantry to the "reactionary middle strata." That was the time of the Communist Manifesto. Then Marx directly asserted that the peasantry could be revolutionary only insofar as it forgot its present peasant interests and thought of its future interests, that is, adopted the standpoint of the proletariat. Needless to say, those words already contain the most merciless judgment upon the peasantry. Individual persons from this or that class may, of course, forget their temporary and narrow interests, adopt the standpoint of the proletariat, live not by the present but by the future, by ideal interests. But for an entire class, and moreover a class of low cultural development, to forget its "present" interests for the sake of "future" interests is unthinkable and impossible. One of two things must be true. Either the interests of the peasants as such draw them toward reaction, tear them away from the proletariat, and bring them close to hybrid petty-bourgeois elements - and then Engels of the Travel Notes is right in putting a cross over the peasantry. Or the interests of the peasants as such really bring them closer to the proletariat, placing them, in Marx's words, in the position of Verbundeten, natural allies. Then the narrow formula of "the interests of the proletariat" must be included as a natural component in the broader formula of "the interests of labor."

In the Klassenkampfe Marx does not yet do either the one or the other. He still repeatedly brackets the peasants together with the burghers, the petty bourgeois, the middle strata, although alongside this he explains that the economic position of the peasantry differs only in appearance, only in form, from the proletarian one. Like Engels, he speaks of the "fanaticism of property" among the peasants, but he no longer prophesies a future civil war of the proletariat against the peasantry; he merely says: "the history of the last three years has sufficiently shown that this class of the population [the peasantry] is incapable of any revolutionary initiative."

Can the history of a mere three years sufficiently prove such a broad general proposition? This is a question Marx did not yet ask himself when he wrote his pamphlet. And no wonder. In any case, rural France during the revolutionary crisis of 1848 made too unfavorable an impression on a revolutionary socialist such as Marx; and this unfavorable impression must have imperceptibly pushed him toward a generalization too hasty and unsupported by a sufficient number of facts. The peasant revolution of 1895 in Sicily and the contemporary socialist peasant movement in Hungary certainly did not justify Marx's pessimistic estimate; yet, however excessively pessimistic it may have been in itself, in comparison with the Communist Manifesto and Engels's Travel Notes one cannot fail to note in it a significant step forward.

Marx no longer explains the behavior of the French peasantry, as Engels did, by natural peasant "dull-wittedness" and "stubborn stupidity." He is far more just and far-sighted. He does not hurry past the mistakes of the provisional republican government, but notes in full their influence on peasant feeling. The situation was, in general, as follows: the provisional government needed money to cover the deficit, and therefore

needed new taxes. It was afraid to make commerce and industry the object of these taxes: the political crisis was already accompanied by a disturbance of bourgeois credit and a stoppage in business; new taxes might have finally set the whole bourgeoisie against the new form of government. Yet someone had to pay. Who, then, should be made the scapegoat? "Why, of course," says Marx, "Jacques le bonhomme - the peasant." You remember, reader:

No matter if the muzhik suffers;
So Providence, which guides us,
Has decreed... and besides, he is used to it.

And so the provisional government stepped onto the well-trodden path, decreeing an addition of forty-five centimes to each franc of the four direct taxes. "The government press misled the Paris proletariat with its assurances that this tax would fall with its weight upon the large landowners. In reality it fell first of all upon the peasant class, that is, upon the enormous majority of the French people. It had to pay the costs and expenses of the February Revolution, and from this the counter-revolutionary movement later drew its nourishment. The forty-five-centime tax was for the peasantry a question of life, and it turned into a question of life for the republic itself. From that time on, for the French peasant, the republic meant increased taxes, while the Paris proletariat came to appear to him as a kind of spendthrift living for its own pleasure at the people's expense."

It is understandable that the very same French peasant who in 1789 spread over the whole country, "socialized," as it were, the revolution begun in the center, in 1848 on the contrary turned away from the revolution. The revolution failed to put forward any peasant, agrarian program; it proved alien to the countryside, and the countryside proved alien to it. Whereas the Revolution of 1789 began by liberating the peasants from the yoke of feudal obligations, the Revolution of 1848 debuted with a new tax upon the rural population. Hence the peasantry's attraction to Napoleon. "Napoleon was not a person for the peasants, but an entire program. With banners and music they went to the polling booths with the battle cry: 'No more taxes, down with the rich, down with the republic, long live the emperor!' In the name of the emperor was concealed a peasant war; the republic which the peasantry voted down was 'the republic of the rich.'" Thus, according to Marx, the election of Louis-Napoleon as president of the republic was only an irrational formulation of the revolutionary mood of the peasantry. "December 10, 1848, was the day of peasant insurrection. From that day begins the February Revolution for the peasants too. The act which symbolized their entry into the revolutionary movement - clumsy and sly, roguishly naive, crudely sublime, this manifestation of calculating superstition, a pathetic farce, a brilliantly absurd anachronism, a joke of world history, some indecipherable hieroglyph for the understanding of civilized man - bore the unmistakable stamp of this class, which represents barbarism within modern civilization."

In this whole passage perhaps the truest thing is that the mood of the peasants before and during the Revolution of 1848 really was an "indecipherable hieroglyph" for the intelligentsia of the time. History placed the French peasantry before the proletarian revolution of 1848 as a riddle of the Sphinx, with the words: solve this riddle or I will devour you. The revolution did not solve the riddle, and history swallowed it without a trace, leaving learned wise men afterward to display their wisdom by pointing to the movement's errors. And the severe critics, like Marx, unfortunately foresaw nothing themselves before the Revolution of 1848; they could not and did not know how to prevent the errors which, post factum, are not so difficult to expose. They defended, as in the Communist Manifesto for example, the exclusively proletarian character of the movement; they predicted the rapid, almost already completed destruction of the peasantry. Of small peasant property we read in the Manifesto that "the development of large-scale industry has already destroyed it, or is destroying it daily." The French Revolution did not sufficiently reckon with the peasantry. But what is surprising in that, if even its severe critic, Marx, at that time treated the peasantry as a quantite negligeable?

Marx regards the election of Louis-Napoleon as president, a matter to a significant degree of peasants dissatisfied with the republic, as evidence that the peasants were a class representing "barbarism within modern civilization." Let us not forget, however, that by Marx's own admission "the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat voted for Napoleon en bloc in order to protest against Cavaignac." Is this not also a "brilliantly absurd anachronism, a joke of world history, a pathetic farce," and so on? And therefore did the behavior of the peasantry lag so very far behind the behavior of the proletariat, that chosen people of socialism and revolution according to Marxism? All this again leads us to the conclusion that the events of 1848, if one approaches them with cold analysis and examines them impartially, provide no right to put a cross over the peasantry. Only in the heat of struggle could they embitter representatives of the urban intelligentsia against the "coarse countryside" and push them toward overly hasty and unjust conclusions.

The further development of French political life twice forced Marx to return to discussion of the same problem: the social-political role of the French peasantry and the establishment of normal relations between it and the French proletariat. The first time this happened was on the occasion of the coup d'etat of Napoleon III and the establishment of the Second Empire, in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte; the second time was after the fall of the Second Empire, the establishment of the Third Republic, and its struggle against the Paris Commune, in The Civil War in France.

In The Eighteenth Brumaire Marx first gives a general characterization of the small peasants, the Parzellenbauern. These peasants, he says, form an enormous mass which, by the conditions of its economic life, drags on its existence under the same circumstances and at the same level of welfare, but nevertheless does not form a special unity. "Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of establishing mutual intercourse between them." Producing mainly for their own consumption, the peasant obtains the means of life "more through an exchange of matter with nature than through intercourse with society." A parcel, a peasant, and his family; beside it another parcel, another peasant, and another family. The purely mechanical addition of several such units makes up a village; several villages, a department - "just as a certain quantity of separate potatoes makes up a sack of potatoes."

This excellent characterization of the position of small household property joined to parcel farming is not new for us Russians. Precisely references to the sad example of the French peasantry served, in the hands of the "social-populists" of the 1870s, as the weightiest argument in favor of our communal land system. In one of our journals of that time, Ustoi, there was translated, among other things, an article by Lafargue which stated that the destruction of communal arrangements and of the habits, views, feelings, and moods connected with them had brought the French village to the point where it would be easier to teach the donkeys of Poitou to recite Victor Hugo in verse than to instill in the French peasant the idea of his solidarity with other peasants. That this contains an unconditional exaggeration is beyond doubt - later history of organizational and other work among French peasants proved as much - but at the basis of the exaggeration there is nevertheless a correct idea.

"Insofar as millions of families," Marx continues, "live amid such economic conditions of existence as separate their mode of life, their interests, and their education from the mode of life, interests, and education of other classes, and set them against the latter in a hostile way, insofar do these millions of families form one class. But insofar as between these small peasants there exists only a local, spatial connection, and insofar as the identity of their interests does not create community, national union, and political organization, insofar they do not form a class."

This proposition, in our view, requires certain explanations and additions, without which it may lead to substantial misunderstandings. One might think, namely, that between the class of independent peasant-producers and other classes there exists a purely qualitative, fundamental difference: that the latter are classes in the true and complete sense of the word, whereas the Parzellenbauern are both a class and not a class. Such a conclusion would be mistaken. The concept of class in general is a relative concept. The bourgeoisie as a whole represents a distinct, unified class insofar as it is opposed to the class of workers. Outside this

opposition, the "bourgeoisie" itself is a heterogeneous and complex agglomerate. First of all, within it one must note the essential opposition between the bourgeoisie living by rent and the bourgeoisie living by capital. The struggle of capital and rent fills many extremely important and dramatic pages of world history. Again, the bourgeoisie proper, the class of capitalists, represents a single whole only within the limits of its opposition to the owners of ground rent. The bourgeoisie living by industrial profit, the bourgeoisie living by interest on money and commercial capital, and the stock-exchange and financial plutocracy are in many respects opposed elements. Marx explains, in Klassenkampfe and The Eighteenth Brumaire, many facts otherwise completely incomprehensible by means of precisely this opposition. After this comes the difference - and with it often rivalry - between large, middle, and small bourgeoisie. Further, between various separate branches of capitalist industry itself there is very often a major dissimilarity and contradiction of interests. Finally, abstracting from all these partial oppositions which on one side unite and on the other separate individual social agglomerates, within even the smallest agglomerate we find the final economic opposition: that between separate economic units. Every entrepreneur is the competitor of another; each strives to trip up the other in the struggle; moreover, the sharpness and intensity of this striving is directly proportional to the closeness and similarity of their occupations.

The same is true of the proletariat. It too represents a distinct and unified class insofar as we oppose the whole mass of exploited proletarians to the mass of exploiting bourgeois. But within the proletariat itself one can observe a complex differentiation. The worker aristocracy, the worker plebs, and the worker lumpenproletariat do not always travel the same historical paths. The opposition of socialism and anarchism, as well as the opposition of different currents within socialism and within anarchism, can be understood only in connection with these partial contradictions within the bowels of the proletariat itself. Finally, the proletariat is continuously corroded by another opposition: the competition of individual persons seeking work, taking jobs away from one another, and often driving down one another's wages. Only the existence of these corrosive principles explains the ease with which national, racial, and confessional differences among workers lead to clashes in their midst. French workers beat Italian competitors. Russian workers, on one side, beat Tatar workers because the latter have a lower standard of life, agree to lower wages and coarser treatment; on the other side, the same Russian workers beat visiting Belgian workers because the latter, by contrast with the Russians, live like "gentlemen" and enjoy better treatment and pay.

In short, a "class" is not something absolute, given once and for all and immovable. Society is an extremely complex whole, stratifying in every direction, lengthwise and crosswise. I am not even speaking of estate-legal, political, national, racial, or confessional divisions, each of which also contributes its share to the variegation and complexity of social groupings. I take only the category of the economic order, and I find that under the antagonistic structure of modern society every identity of interests is only relative. There exist different degrees of similarity, of likeness of interests; this makes it possible to understand their commonality and solidarity now more broadly, now more narrowly, depending on the degree of intellectual development and on the degree of historical necessity to seek allies in the struggle. In other words, when interests are similar and homogeneous, their commonality is not something given from the beginning by nature, ready-made and fallen from heaven. This commonality must still be established, and the process of establishing it is to a considerable degree an artificial process. The necessity of struggle with one social class compels another class, for the sake of greater success in that struggle, to strive to establish within itself the greatest possible maximum of cohesion, to suppress or at least smooth over oppositions, to reconcile, coordinate, and bring together heterogeneous strivings.

Within every social stratum, in the establishment of such class unity, centripetal forces struggle with centrifugal ones. Thus not only the Parzellenbauern, but every other social stratum too is, in this sense, both a class and not a class. It is a class within the limits of opposition to other social forces, and not a class when one abstracts from these oppositions and compares its component elements one-sidedly among themselves, whether individual persons or groups. The more intense a social movement becomes - and social movement is always connected with struggle - and the more conscious the struggle itself becomes, the wider becomes

the field of action of the centripetal forces and the weaker becomes the action of the centrifugal forces. Narrow personal, family, group, and professional interests retreat into the background before class interests in the broader sense of the word. Society strives to turn into an arena of struggle between two mighty forces: the unified and cohesive army of labor against the unified and cohesive army of the exploiters of labor. At the same time, on the banner of one of these armies is inscribed the abolition of all classes and with them of class struggle, the triumph of the universally human ideal over all narrow national, estate, class, and other ideals. The universally human character of its ideal and its program increases its centripetal force and carries the action of this force beyond class limits: all that is best, all that is honest, all that is idealistically minded in other classes gradually leaves their ranks to adhere to the one cause capable of satisfying their moral feeling. The growing army of labor little by little becomes not only the greatest material force, but even earlier the greatest intellectual force in modern society. And this is because its cause is the cause of all humanity, because its kingdom is not the kingdom of a new privilege, but the kingdom of labor, which itself represents the universally human element.

The fundamental practical task under these conditions is one: to find means to suppress and smooth over all the centrifugal forces acting among those groups and strata of the population which in modern society are the expression and living bearers of the labor principle; to find means, under the antagonistic conditions of modern society, to create among these elements, for each historical moment, the greatest possible maximum of economic and political unity. For this purpose there exist different types of economic and political organizations: syndicates, unions, cooperative societies, open political clubs, conspiratorial groups, and so on. Only insofar as organizations of this sort spread do disunity and individualism soften and recede into the background; only insofar does the homogeneity of interests become their commonality.

Thus, if on the basis of the words of Marx just cited someone were to try to find between the Parzellenbauern and other social strata not merely a quantitative but a qualitative, fundamental difference, that would be an error against truths that are quite elementary and self-evident - truths it would even be embarrassing to expound if not for current prejudices, if not for the popular habit of imagining a "class" as something absolute. For the dogmatists of the theory of class struggle there are only two real classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. To place beside these social elements, as an equal magnitude, the peasantry - this is in their eyes an abuse of the term "class," into which they put some absolute, immovable content; for them it is a true mystical substance. It is also an insult to the purity and rigor of the theory of class struggle. They see an even greater insult to the purity and rigor of the theory in the fact that one of our tendencies dares to unite, in the concept of the "working class," the industrial proletariat together with the laboring peasantry. And since that same tendency sometimes, horribile dictu!, also speaks of the "working people," here is a convenient opportunity to enroll them among the "bourgeois democrats."

Let us recall, by the way, a passage from the same Eighteenth Brumaire which Mr. Plekhanov tries especially hard to exploit in his preface to Engels's pamphlet on the peasant question. "The democrat, who is the representative of the petty burghers - that transitional class in which the interests of two different classes are mutually blunted and combined - imagines himself to stand above class contradictions. The democrats admit that a privileged class stands against them, but they, together with the entire remaining aggregate of the nation, form the people. What they defend is the people's right; what interests them is the people's interest. In the approaching struggle they therefore are not in the habit of investigating the interests and positions of the various classes. They are not in the habit of carefully weighing their own forces and means. Their business is to give the signal for the people, armed with all its immense forces, to rise against the oppressors." In the event of failure, they usually blame "pernicious sophists who divide the single indivisible people into various hostile camps."

What is one to say of these propositions of Marx? Propositions like any others. One must suppose that in somewhat exaggerated, caricatured form, but in substance, they give a true characterization "from the original" of the democrats of the 1840s. But when among Russian Marxists, as in Plekhanov's above-mentioned preface to the new Odessa edition of Engels's article on the peasant question, attempts are made to

apply this very characterization directly to us, this is an attempt with unsuitable means, and the authors of this attempt might rightly say: oleum et operam perdidi. For we not only do not believe in the absolute "unity and indivisibility" of the people; more than that, we do not believe in the absolute, spontaneously given "unity and indivisibility" even of that part of the people called the proletariat. But precisely for that reason we set ourselves the task of creating this unity by our social-pedagogical and organizational work, believing that the soil for this unity exists and is given by the homogeneity of the interests of labor, whatever kind of labor it may be, oppressed in modern society by exploitation, whatever form that exploitation may take.

Russian Marxists have more than once been tempted by the idea of drawing a parallel between Marx's words about democrats who represent the "people's interest," "people's right," and "people's will," and certain analogous categories of Russian life. After all, it is much easier to think in words than in concepts. But since we are speaking of words and names, it will be appropriate to recall here that in Switzerland Volksrecht (People's Right) is the name of the central organ of the Social-Democratic Party in Zurich; in Flanders, Belgium, the same title is borne by an organ of the Parti Ouvrier Belge; Le Peuple (The People) is the name of the central organ of Belgian social democracy; Volksfreund is the title of an existing German Social-Democratic organ intended specially for peasants; Volkswille was the title of one of the former organs of Hungarian Social Democracy; in Volksstaat, the former organ of German Social Democracy, one finds the signatures of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and so on. None other than Kautsky, in his Erfurt Program, asserts that his party strives more and more to become "the only true people's party." None other than the late Wilhelm Liebknecht declared in the name of German Social Democracy: "We call ourselves a workers' party because the working people (das arbeitende Volk) has the closest interest and, thanks to its numbers, alone has the strength to establish the order we desire." The representative of another wing of German Marxism, Vollmar, likewise declares that "Social Democracy is by no means simply the party of industrial workers; no, it is the vanguard of the entire people that labors and struggles for its political and economic emancipation."

If there once existed in the 1840s political infants for whom this concept "people" was some metaphysical, single, simple, and indivisible substance, must Kautsky, Liebknecht, and others, only because they too speak of the "people" and use the same combination of sounds, be accused of the same ideological sin? Following this road, one can go very far. In the same pamphlets of Marx, for example, one can find a whole series of the most biting, most annihilating mockeries of Social Democrats. Yes, of Social Democrats! Marx uses precisely that term. The matter is very simple: at the end of the 1840s Marx, Engels, and their adherents called themselves Communists, while one of the French parties which committed not a few political errors was called Social-Democratic. And if any one of us wished to repay our witty critics in their own coin, it would be even easier for him to do so than for them. It would be enough simply to copy out all these mockeries by Marx and solemnly proclaim: so, you too are Social Democrats? Listen, then, to what your own "teacher" says about you! Of course, we have never used such a simplified method of polemic, for we think that such "wit" can testify only to a lack of other, more serious arguments, and one may pass it by as a testimonium paupertatis, a certificate of poverty issued by our opponents to themselves.

The Eighteenth Brumaire was written by Marx almost immediately after Klassenkampfe: one was completed in the second half of 1850, the other begun at the very beginning of 1852. Approximately the same distance separates Klassenkampfe from Engels's Travel Notes. It is understandable that one should not look in these three historical-literary documents for major, radical, principled changes. In general, any change of views most often does not come ex abrupto; it takes place gradually, by the accumulation of a whole series of small "corrections" and "reservations." So it is here. By the time The Eighteenth Brumaire appeared, a whole series of new facts had accumulated that did not fit the sweeping characterization of the French peasantry as a greedy, coarse, idiotically reactionary mass. The thick colors of Engels's picture, the absolute character of his assertions, and, moreover, the somewhat crude, Suzdal-like manner of his portrayal proved plainly untenable. Let us see, then, how Karl Marx tried to reconcile his basic point of view - the point of view of the Communist Manifesto - with the new facts of life, to which Marx never closed his eyes.

Marx once more formulates the basic, orthodox-Marxist point of view on the peasantry in the following way: "The state power," he writes, "never hangs in the air. Bonaparte represents a definite class, and indeed the most numerous class of French society - the parcel peasants." "As the Bourbons are the dynasty of large landed property, or the Orleanists the dynasty of the money aristocracy, so the Bonapartes are the dynasty of the peasants, that is, of the mass of the French people. Not the Bonaparte who submitted to the bourgeois parliament, but the Bonaparte who dissolved the bourgeois parliament - he is the true peasant elect. For three years the cities had succeeded in falsifying and distorting the meaning of the vote of December 10 and in leading the peasants by the nose on the question of the restoration of the empire. Only by the coup d'etat of December 2, 1851, was the vote of December 10, 1848, carried out and embodied in life."

We shall see that about twenty years later Marx expressed an already diametrically opposite view of the role of the peasants in elevating Napoleon III to the imperial throne. But even at this time he already saw that not all facts reconciled themselves with this conception of the Bonapartes as a "peasant dynasty." Earlier, Marx had once had to note that the social-democratic party of the time, which of course should not be confused with modern Social Democracy, as the departmental elections showed, had acquired a considerable following among the rural population. But there was, of course, something more substantial than those departmental elections, although after all the mistakes made by the republicans in relation to the peasantry, even such a result of the elections must be recognized as highly significant.

"However," says Marx almost immediately after bestowing on the Bonapartes the title of "peasant dynasty," "I will be objected to: what about the revolts of peasants in almost half of France, what about the hunts after peasants with troops, what about the mass arrests and deportations of peasants? Since Louis XIV France has not experienced such persecutions of peasants 'for demagogic intrigues.'" "But this must be understood more deeply. The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary but the conservative peasant; not the peasant who rises above the social conditions of his life, above his parcel, but rather the peasant who wants to strengthen it; not the village people who, by their own energy, joining with the towns, want to overthrow the old order, but on the contrary the peasant who, closing himself dully within the conditions of this old order, expects salvation and advantages from the phantom of the empire. The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the enlightenment but the superstition of the peasants, not their reason but their prejudices, not their future but their past."

But to say this - does it not in essence mean saying nothing? Let us recall the fact stated by Marx in Klassenkampfe: "the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat voted for Napoleon en bloc in order to protest against Cavaignac." Let us recall Victor Hugo's testimony that when several hundred intellectuals, students, workers - generally speaking, conscious democratic elements - tried to carry the Paris population with them into a counter-revolutionary movement against Bonaparte's coup d'etat, they encountered either coldness and indifference among the working masses, or even hostile cries of "Down with the twenty-five-franc men!" (twenty-five francs being the daily allowance of a deputy, voted shortly before by the French parliament). Let us recall Napoleon's flirtation with socialism and the proletariat; let us recall that one of the pretexts put forward by him to justify the coup of December 2 was the chamber's abolition of universal suffrage. Let us recall, finally, the recent successes and popularity among a considerable part of the workers of various Boulangists, Derouledists, and similar plebiscitary Caesarists, and we shall see that the words of Marx quoted above can with equal right be paraphrased in application to the proletariat. This is all the easier for us because the role played in the revolution by the lowest strata of the proletariat - to which Marx here gives the contemptuous name of lumpenproletariat - appears in our author's portrayal to be reactionary in the highest degree.

Thus, as a pendant to Marx's words, we may say: "The Bonaparte dynasty, or more generally, demagogic plebiscitary Caesarism, represents not the revolutionary but the conservative proletarian; not the proletarian who rises above the immediate social conditions of his life, above the addition of a five-kopeck piece to the ruble of his wages, but the proletarian who wants only to improve and consolidate his present position; not the proletarian who wants by his own strength, in alliance with all his brothers, to overthrow the old order,

but on the contrary the one who, closing himself dully within the conditions of this old order, expects salvation and advantages from the phantom of the empire. Demagogic Caesarism represents not the enlightenment but the superstition of the proletariat, not its reason but its prejudices, not its future but its past."

> In a word, Marx's reasoning does not advance us a single step in understanding specifically peasant reactionariness. No qualitative, fundamental difference between the historical role of the peasantry and that of the proletariat can be discerned from the data brought to our attention. We are pointed to the ignorance, the complete political immaturity, disorganization, and dispersal of the peasants.
> We are told that the peasants are incapable of making their class interests count by acting in their own name, whether through parliament or through a convention; that they cannot represent themselves and must be represented; that their representative must at the same time stand above them as their ruler, as an authority, as an organized governmental force which protects them against other classes and sends them, from above, beneficent sunlight, warmth, and life-giving rain. But is it not obvious that this characterization applies equally to any class if it is insufficiently mature politically and insufficiently strong to defend its interests against the pressure of other classes in the free play of parliamentary forces? In moments of crisis, for such a class or estate there is always only one outcome: to throw itself into the arms of someone's dictatorship, naturally in the hope that this dictatorship will know how, and will wish, to defend its interests better than it could defend them itself under the normal functioning of free democratic institutions.

From this point of view, the fact that "the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat voted for Napoleon en bloc" is quite understandable. Marx's preceding exposition, on which we cannot dwell in more detail here, sufficiently shows how unsuccessful were the attempts of the proletariat to use the Revolution of 1848 in its own class interests, how dearly those attempts cost it, and to what extent "the French working class was still incapable of carrying through its own proletarian revolution." And when, beside the bourgeois republic stained with the blood of the workers whom it had "pacified," there arose a skillful and shameless adventurer, actively agitating through his emissaries, not scrupling over means, even flirting with socialism, and possessing besides a great name - the choice was not difficult. In a word, the proletariat, no less than the peasantry, proved "incapable of making its class interests count by acting in its own name." Once it could not represent itself, someone else had to represent it - all the way to the fatal outcome of "society's subordination to the executive power."

Marx himself, in another place, much more correctly evaluates the true cause of Napoleon's rise as a tertius gaudens. It lay in the fact that the bourgeoisie had already become incapable of governing the state, while the working class was not yet capable of doing so. In normal times the matter might perhaps have ended in some peaceable compromise, but France was passing through a period of economic crisis, one of those usual cyclical crises which so sharpen all the "contradictions" and "antagonistic sides" of the capitalist order. Such is the general formula explaining the fatal fiasco of the revolution. This formula of course does not exclude, but on the contrary includes, the political immaturity of the peasantry as one of the essential elements, or if you like, "factors," of that fiasco.

To avoid all possible misunderstandings, it may be useful to emphasize once more that we are not proving a complete identity. We are speaking only of a certain analogy between the behavior of the urban working class and that of the peasantry during the political crises of 1848 and 1851. This of course does not exclude a major political difference in the degree of political immaturity of one or another of these social classes. It would be contrary to everything if such a difference did not exist. Above all, the French and especially the Paris urban proletariat - since the Paris workers were the principal actors of the revolution - lived in the free air of the capital, the intellectual center, to which flowed all the best, most intelligent and socially advanced forces not only of France, but also of many neighboring countries. There, one might say, the entire atmosphere was saturated with advanced ideas; they floated in the air. Compare with this the isolated village, where the peasant, bound to his furrow, drags on his life absorbed in the struggle for daily bread, and only

from time to time listens to the muffled echo of the revolutionary storms playing out in the crowded streets of the capital.

Among the peasants there was almost no serious and systematic propaganda; no suitable literature was published for them. Only the adherents of Proudhon's school thought about the specific interests of the peasantry, but their practical impotence, at times their dubious politicking and doctrinaire projectorism, showed itself too plainly and too soon in its true light. And if, in spite of all this, a living social current continued to beat within the peasantry, that is the best proof that a reactionary mood in certain historical moments does not flow from the immanent social properties of the peasantry as such; in philosophical jargon, it belongs not to its substance, but to its accidents.

"The three-year, harsh rule of the parliamentary republic," Marx continues, "freed a part of the French peasantry from Napoleonic illusions and, though only superficially, revolutionized it. But as soon as a movement began among the peasantry, the bourgeoisie at once violently suppressed it. Under the parliamentary republic two peasant worldviews entered into struggle: the traditional and the newest, the modern. This process appeared as a continuous struggle between schoolteachers and priests. The bourgeoisie bent and suppressed the schoolteachers. For the first time the peasants tried to defend their independence against government interference. This showed itself in continual conflicts between village mayors and government prefects. The bourgeoisie removed mayors and dismissed them from office. Finally, during the period of the parliamentary republic, peasants in various localities rose up against their own offspring - the army. The bourgeoisie punished them with states of siege and military executions. And this same bourgeoisie now cries out about the stupidity of the masses, the vile multitude, which betrayed it for Bonaparte! It itself forcibly strengthened imperialism among the peasants; it created and maintained the conditions which served as the lying-in hospital for this peasant religion. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie must fear the ignorance of the masses so long as they remain conservative - and their insight as soon as they become revolutionary."

"After the coup d'etat," Marx continues, "a part of the French peasants in a series of uprisings, arms in hand, protested against their own vote of December 10, 1848. The school through which they had passed since 1848 taught them a lesson." But precisely for this reason doubts arise again: is it correct to say that "the Bonapartes are the dynasty of the peasants," that "not the Bonaparte who submitted to the bourgeois parliament, but the one who dissolved the bourgeois parliament is the true peasant elect," and that, finally, "only by the coup d'etat of December 2, 1851, was the vote of December 10, 1848, carried out and embodied in life"? Is this not an exaggeration? Do the facts not contradict it? Apparently Marx already had these doubts while writing The Eighteenth Brumaire, and twenty years later he removed them at one stroke by declaring: "True, the French peasant elected Louis Bonaparte president of the republic, but the Second Empire was created by the Party of Order." What the French peasant really needed he began to show in 1849 and 1850, when everywhere he opposed his own mayors to government prefects, his own rural schoolteachers to government priests, and himself to government gendarmes. All the laws issued by the Party of Order in January and February 1850 were plainly measures of violence directed against the peasants. The peasant was a Bonapartist because, in his eyes, the name of Napoleon was the embodiment of the Great French Revolution, with all its advantages for the peasantry. Under the Second Empire this self-deception quickly collapsed.

By the name "Party of Order," Marx meant the coalition of the monarchist parties of the time: Legitimists, Orleanists, and similar representatives of the ruling classes frightened by the "red specter." Marx's work on the Paris Commune is also extremely interesting in this connection. The Paris Commune and its fate are constantly invoked in the same spirit as the events of 1848. It is well known that, thanks to the phrase of one radical deputy, the reactionary majority of the National Assembly in Bordeaux received the contemptuous name of "the rural majority." And this majority crushed the Paris Commune. For our Social Democrats, references to the fate of the Commune are among the most common arguments proving the "idiocy" and inevitable reactionariness of the peasantry. Here too, as in many other cases, they display a decent share of ignorance of the writings of their own teacher.

If we look at how Karl Marx himself judged these events, we must first pause over the following energetic declarations of the deceased: "Of all the lying inventions hatched at Versailles and spread throughout the world by the glorious bashi-bazouks of the European press, hardly one was more monstrous than the claim that the backwoods squires of the National Assembly figured as representatives of the French peasantry. One need only imagine the love of the French peasants for people to whom they had been compelled since 1815 to pay a whole billion in indemnity! In the eyes of the French peasants, the very existence of large landed property already appears as an attempt upon the conquests and acquisitions of 1789." The events of the Commune "secured for the peasants, in the person of the urban workers, the natural representatives of their interests." The Commune "had every right to exclaim to the peasants: in our victory lies your salvation!" The squires knew - and in this lay their chief fear - that three months of free communication between the Paris Commune and the provinces would have produced a general peasant uprising (einen allgemeinen Bauernaufstand). Hence the frightened haste with which they surrounded Paris with a police blockade in order to stop the spread of the revolutionary infection. Thus, under favorable circumstances, Marx foresaw the possibility of a "general peasant uprising" of a quite different kind from the one Engels had imagined. It would not have been the proletariat's task to deal with and suppress it.

At this point we leave Marx's analysis of the events of 1848. The vulgar-Marxist view constantly returns to groundless and superficial references to these events as the clearest example and proof of the historical reactionariness of the peasantry. The events of 1848 are the greatest trump card of the peasant-phobes of Marxism. What have we found when we looked at them more closely? That, contrary to Engels, even the most reactionary tendencies manifested among the French peasantry were only an irrational form of expression of its revolutionary needs and requirements. Insofar as the peasant was attracted even to Bonapartism, he was attracted to it - according to Marx's own testimony - because in the Bonapartes he personified the Great French Revolution, the "successful Jacquerie," as one historian put it. "The name of the emperor," Marx says, "in essence concealed a peasant war." Only the complete ignoring, by the republicans and democrats of the time, of the needs and interests of the peasantry led to the grand and lamentable historical misunderstanding: the fratricidal enmity between the working people of town and countryside.

Such is the cruel irony of history. In their time, peasant wars, which swept through all Europe in a mighty wave, were suppressed; their leaders and participants were drowned in a sea of blood. The scattered and unorganized condition of the peasants, the lack of coordination in their actions, and the absence of leading urban centers where a revolutionary vanguard might have been concentrated destroyed the cause. Later, an equally mighty wave of urban revolutions swept across Europe. This time the concentrated vanguard was present, but it lacked a living connection with the masses of the village people; it lacked the support of the land. And again there were the same failures, the same rivers of blood, the same multitude of human sacrifices, the same reaction.

It seems more than clear that the single historical conclusion we can draw from these events is the following: in countries where the working population is divided into two large parts - the industrial proletariat and the peasant-farmers - only that movement can be vital, rational, and successful which will be a synthesis of the preceding unsuccessful movements, uniting the initiative of the concentrated forces of the city with the support of the rural peasant masses. And this is already beginning, little by little, to enter general consciousness. We no longer find it strange to hear from the mouth of the German Marxist Quarck the words: "Let the forces of the village strengthen our party too, as that mythical giant gained new and fresh strength each time he touched his mother earth." Hercules, as the mythic tale says, noticed this and defeated Antaeus by lifting him into the air, tearing him away from the earth. In exactly the same way, the forces of reaction in France were able to localize the revolutionary movement in a few industrial centers by sowing discord between town and countryside. That is why, in 1848, for the French Antaeus - the proletariat - the bourgeois regime remained an invincible Hercules.

CHAPTER IX

The Peasant Wars before the Judgment Seat of Marxism

> "A successful Jacquerie... a peasant war... Let that be so. But do we not know that the peasant wars were a reactionary movement, that had they succeeded they would only have turned back the wheel of history? Even if you proved that beneath the absurd shell, beneath the village's protest against the city, there lay, in embryo, the old tendencies of the peasant wars - would that say anything in favor of the peasants? The revolutionary character of their mood would be an empty appearance; in essence it would remain reactionary."

That is what the supporters of orthodox Marxism may answer us. But their answer contains a very grave misunderstanding.

The proposition that the peasant wars were a reactionary phenomenon belongs properly to Lassalle. But it has been regarded, and is still regarded by many people - not only by adherents of this view, but also by opponents of it - as a necessary logical deduction from the deepest principles of Marxism. There is, however, a slight element of truth in this view. Marxism in its embryonic phase - the Marxism of Engels's "Travel Notes," of the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels - harmonizes quite well with this proposition of Lassalle. In this respect, just as the Lassalleans were purer Marxists than the Marxist Eisenachers properly so called (see Chapter III of this book), so Lassalle was more Marxist than Marx himself.

For Lassalle, the revolutionary principle of that time was the principle of capital. It was capital that, by destroying the old, obsolete feudal and semi-feudal forms, represented in his eyes the pledge of further historical development. Above all, it was the principle of individualism, of the emancipation of the person from the bonds of the old order. The peasant movement, in Lassalle's opinion, did not aim at proclaiming a new principle. It aimed only at the consistent and strict application of the general principle of that epoch. It never entered the peasants' heads to present their demands directly in the name of the human person. The principle in whose name they acted was the principle of landed property. They demanded for peasant landed property the same rights of participation in state administration that had earlier belonged only to noble landed property. Yet the important economic significance of landed property, and its determining political role as a necessary condition of participation in public representation, was already approaching ruin; and it was precisely capital that was destroying it.

In Russian literature of the 1870s - for which "the people," as the totality of the laboring classes, agricultural and industrial, purely proletarian and economically independent alike, stood at the center of the whole practical social program - Lassalle's view met with serious and decisive criticism. In Notes of the Fatherland, N. K. Mikhailovsky had already pointed out, first of all, the factual errors in Lassalle's picture. It is not true that the peasants never thought of putting forward their demands directly in the name of man, of his interest, of his personal dignity. French peasants sang, "nous sommes hommes comme eux" - "we are men as they are" - while among German and English peasants a no less popular song mocked the "historical rights" of the nobility and asked: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" Nor is it true that, in the socio-political sphere, the peasant movement took landed property as such for its watchword. No: what it had in mind was not the interests of landed property, but the interests of peasant agricultural labor. Religious freedom of the person, too, was defended by it far more extensively and far more radically than by Luther, whom people - Lassalle among them - regard as the representative, in the intellectual sphere, of the new principle of personal, individual freedom. Without doubt, there was much in the peasant movement that was dark, crude, undeveloped, and even directly contrary to the movement's own basic principles. But no movement that is only just being born is free from such defects - especially when it is being born under the pressure of the most unfavorable circumstances.

Lassalle's error arose from the illegitimate tendency to look at history one-sidedly and teleologically, as our own embryology. Having drawn, in doctrinaire straight lines, a row of links in a causal chain from

ourselves back into history to some given event, we begin to regard as progressive everything that lay on the road thus discovered. Everything that stood aside from that highway of history, everything that tried to turn history from the track that in fact connects the past with the present - all this we begin to regard either as unworthy of attention or, worse, as a brake upon the "only true" progress. The one-sided transformation of history into our own embryology necessarily leads to fatalistic optimism, to justification of every historical reality simply because it is reality, to fetishistic bowing before the fact.

Voltaire's Pangloss comforted his friend Candide as follows: "Everything is closely connected in this best of all worlds: if you had not been kicked out of the beautiful castle because of your love for the baron's daughter; if you had not fallen into the claws of the Inquisition; if you had not had to wander on foot over all America; if you had not wounded the baron with your sword; if you had not lost your barons from beautiful El Dorado - then you would not be sitting here now eating candied fruit and pistachios." Consequently, after adopting this point of view, it is not hard to recognize as "excellent" and "historically progressive" in the life of Candide the kicks of the baron's servants, the denunciation to the Inquisition, and the exploits of the robbers who violated his beautiful Cunegonde; for "in the last analysis" the combination of all these circumstances did bring together Candide, even though badly battered by life, Cunegonde, even though violated, and Pangloss, even though now a miserable sick old man. It brought them together and seated them at a single table, on which there even happened to be candied fruit and pistachios. Conversely, Candide's resistance to the lackeys' kicks, Cunegonde's struggle for her maidenly honor, and Pangloss's unsuccessful attempt to flee the Inquisition - all these were "brakes" upon the necessary and, in the last analysis, progressive course of things; attempts to "delay" and "stop the wheel of history."

Pangloss regarded Candide's personal history as the embryology of the candied fruits and pistachios consumed by their friendly trio with a seasoning of philosophical reflections. Since "everything is closely connected in this best of all worlds," he could at will establish a causal connection between their friendly meal and any of the foulest adventures of their past life. But the very same simple hocus-pocus of Pangloss's "teleologo-cosmologo-nigiliology" - Voltaire's phrase - can be performed just as successfully upon the universal history of humanity. However rich our gray modern reality may be in suffering, injustice, and things worthy of laughter and pity, one can still arbitrarily concentrate all one's attention within that reality exclusively upon a series of "bright phenomena," and then connect them by a causal chain with any historical fact whatever - with the noblest deeds as well as with the vilest. For the rule of causality is universal and unconditional; everything is inseparably connected with everything else "in this best of all worlds."

If one adopts this point of view "fully and exclusively," one can no longer judge events by any higher principle whatever. Actual predominance, actual victory - this is the only remaining criterion of judgment. We become unprincipled "priests of the moment," worshipers of success, who remember and reverently honor the two newest commandments: "the victors are not judged" and "vae victis" - woe to the conquered.

Lassalle optimistically exclaims: "From history one may draw the optimistic conclusion that a truly revolutionary movement has never yet perished, at least not for long." Of course there is a very simple way to justify such optimism historically. One need only declare all revolutionary movements that have not succeeded to have been revolutionary only in appearance, in form, but reactionary in essence. Let those who hold that "a comforting illusion is dearer to us than a host of base truths" engage in such an operation. We prefer to look stern reality straight in the face. As though we did not know that over whole historical periods one often has to write the sorrowful conclusion: "Great Patroclus is no more; contemptible Thersites lives." As though we did not know that in this history almost every step is bought with a mass of sacrifices, and that "too early forerunners of too slow a spring are doomed to death." The Chartist movement, for example, was crushed, drowned in blood no less than the peasant wars. After the cruel repression, for a very long time the movement seemed dead. One might have thought that, in that form and with that program, it would never revive. Only recently did the workers' and radical-socialist fractions of England form a league, an association, for the realization of those demands that the Chartists had already put forward and that have still not yet been embodied in life. Here is one of many possible illustrations showing how mercilessly life can

shatter the rose-colored spectacles through which Lassalle looked at "the lessons of history." Or perhaps the Chartist movement too must be recognized as reactionary? After all, it too remained without a result, while the glorious and courageous exploit of its fighters was, in the end, only appearance, only form. It was rejected by history, and that was historically necessary. Then let us cast the Chartist movement down from its revolutionary pedestal and unmask it - fortunately, since it is dead, it cannot protest, cannot defend its dishonored historical honor; and "a dead body may even be used to prop up a fence!"

Marx and Engels, too, were not sinless in matters of fatalistic reasoning. The classic "objectivism" of the Marxist appraisal of slavery is well known: the mockery of those who, on this subject, can fall into a lyrical tone or into indignation over "such infamies"; the almost Panglossian reflection that slavery was a historically necessary and progressive phenomenon, and that without ancient slavery there would have been no modern socialism. Need one seek a clearer example of treating history as one's own embryology?

But it is not hard to be "objective" at the expense of classical antiquity. It is harder, in the name of the same all-powerful historical necessity, to offer the same sort of apology for events nearer to our own time; harder here voluntarily to renounce the right to call every infamy an infamy. Neither Marx nor Engels possessed enough moral self-renunciation, enough self-oblivion, to recognize as necessary and therefore historically progressive the dirty boot of the soldier of the Versailles army trampling the Paris Commune, stretched out in the dust and bleeding; or the clinging paws of Bonaparte, who strangled the Republic of 1848-1850 in his embrace with a Judas kiss; or Cavaignac's sword, reddened with the blood of the June insurgents. No: on such close and living questions Marx and Engels immediately turned into the most resolute "subjectivists."

Listen, for example, to the tone of this reproach addressed to Proudhon: "Proudhon tries to depict the coup d'etat as a product of previous historical development. But in his hands the historical construction of the coup d'etat slips into a historical apology for the heroes of that coup. He thereby falls into the error of our so-called objective historians." In another place, speaking of the "historical school of law," which also sinned greatly by its pretensions to objectivism, Marx writes, among other things: "There exists a school that justifies the infamies committed today by the infamies of yesterday; that declares every protest of the serf against the whip to be a rebellion, provided only that this is an old, inborn, historical whip; a school to which history, like the God of Israel to his servant Moses, shows only its a posteriori..." "This Shylock, in every pound of flesh cut from the heart of the people, swears by his bond - by his historical bond."

In short, alongside the "objectivist" current in Marx's writings there also flows a "subjectivist" current. The first brings with it mockery of the moral evaluation of events; it drapes itself in the toga of icy indifference to the sight of "pieces of flesh cut from the people's heart," even by slavery, for example; it parades its recognition of slavery as a historically progressive institution, and so on. To this order of ideas belongs the strange declaration of Marx that we encounter in The Civil War in France, that "the working class has no ideals to realize," but only has to give free scope to the natural tendencies of development of bourgeois society. It was precisely this current of ideas in Marxism that one of the first legal Russian Marxists emphasized when he declared that Marxism "contains not a single gram of ethics," and that its distinguishing features are objectivity and historicity. The citations from the preface to The Eighteenth Brumaire and from the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right show the subjectivist current of ideas in Marxism, expressed splendidly in Marx's words in the latter work: "The task of history, now that truth beyond the world has disappeared, is to establish truth in the world." From this point of view, a "historical" patent for existence, issued by elemental fate to some social movement, says just as little for its progressiveness as the defeat of another movement says for its reactionary character.

Marx and Engels adopted this second point of view in their assessment of Lassalle's risky and ambiguous thesis on the reactionary character of the peasant wars. As is well known, in Franz von Sickingen Lassalle attempted to give an artistic illustration of his historical ideas. It was over this work that an interesting dispute, touching on the question of the peasant wars, took place in private correspondence between Marx

and Engels on one side and Lassalle on the other. Since neither legal nor illegal Russian literature has made any mention of this dispute, and since because of this Lassalle's thesis is usually taken to be a logical supplement to Marx's evaluation of the peasantry, we shall cite here some data that have been published in German Social-Democratic literature concerning this correspondence, which unfortunately has not yet been published in full.

Eduard Bernstein, in his large biographical introduction to the first volume of Lassalle's works edited by him, reports, among other things: "Thanks to the kindness of Friedrich Engels, I received Lassalle's letters to Karl Marx found among the papers left after Marx's death. Among them is a letter of thirty-four quarto pages, in which, with the exception of a few lines, the matter concerns Franz von Sickingen. Immediately after this drama appeared in print, Lassalle sent a copy of it to Karl Marx and to Friedrich Engels. Both of them, who were then still living in different places, answered by communicating to him their opinions of the drama in detail. The letter just mentioned is Lassalle's reply to their reviews. He combines them in one and the same letter, 'because,' as he puts it, 'the objections sent by you both, though not completely identical, nevertheless concern the same points in the main.'"

> "You both agree," Lassalle writes in another place, "that I have assigned too secondary a significance to the peasant movement, have not sufficiently emphasized and brought it forward. You, Marx, justify this as follows: in my drama, Sickingen and Hutten had to perish because they, like the Polish aristocracy, were revolutionaries only in their imagination, while in reality they were representatives of reactionary interests. 'Aristocratic representatives of the revolution,' you say, 'behind whose fighting slogans of "unity" and "freedom" there constantly lurk dreams of the old imperial forms and of fist-right, ought by no means to absorb all attention or concentrate the whole interest of the narrative upon themselves, as happens with you, Lassalle. On the contrary, the representatives of the peasants - precisely the peasants - and of the revolutionary elements in the cities ought to have formed a much more active background to the picture. You could then have made precisely the newest, most contemporary ideas speak out to a far greater extent, only in the most naive form; whereas now, apart from religious freedom, the main idea remains that of bourgeois unity.' 'Have you yourself not fallen,' you exclaim, 'into the very same diplomatic error as your Sickingen, by placing the Lutheran-knightly opposition above the plebeian-civic one?'"

Only through these quotations in Lassalle's letter is the authentic text of Marx's letters known so far. In polemicizing against them, Lassalle declares that, in his opinion, the peasant movement was historically just as reactionary as the noble movement. "This latter view of his," Bernstein adds, "Lassalle, as is known, defended in other works as well, for example in the Workers' Program. In my opinion, it can in no way be recognized as correct. The fact that the peasants appeared with demands bearing the stamp of the past did not in the least make their movement reactionary. True, the peasants were not a new class, but neither were they a dying class like the knights. What was reactionary in their demands belongs only to their form, not to their essence. Lassalle does not see this... To Marx's remark that 'then you could have made the most contemporary ideas appear and speak out, only in the most naive form,' Lassalle places two question marks plus one exclamation point."

It is not known whether Marx wrote a reply to Lassalle's reply. Nor is the text of his first letter known. It would be highly desirable that it should at last see the light of day. For the historian of the development of Marx and Engels's social philosophy, it would be extremely precious material. But already from what Bernstein reports, in intellectual agreement with Engels, that alter ego of Marx, it is sufficiently clear how groundless is the conduct of those who regard Lassalle's thesis on the reactionary character of the peasant wars as a conclusion logically obligatory for every Marxist. On the contrary, the "naive form" of many peasant demands did not prevent Marx from discerning in them the healthy revolutionary kernel of "the most contemporary ideas."

One can also become acquainted with Engels's attitude toward the peasant wars from his essay Der deutsche Bauernkrieg, which is unfortunately a bibliographical rarity. This essay appeared in Nos. 5 and 6 of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung in 1850 and later, in 1871, was issued as a separate pamphlet.

In this pamphlet Engels treats the peasant wars as evidence that "the German people, too, has its revolutionary traditions," for at that time "the German plebeians and peasants came forward with ideas and plans from which their descendants have often enough recoiled in terror." "Three centuries have passed since then, and nevertheless the peasant wars are not so very far removed from the civil wars of the present; and the enemies to be overcome are, to a considerable extent, still the very same... And if in the movement of recent years only here and there - in Silesia, in the Black Forest, in the Odenwald - did that healthy vandalism appear which distinguished the peasant wars, this in any case cannot be counted as an advantage of the modern insurrections."

We have more than once encountered in Engels the most decisive opinions about the hopeless dispersion and isolation of the peasantry, which make it completely incapable of broad organization. All the more interesting, then, is the fact that in the peasant wars he could not fail to find facts that at least considerably limit the force and applicability of these opinions. "The persistence and patience with which the Upper German peasants conspired for thirty years from 1493 onward; with which they overcame all the obstacles arising from their dispersed rural way of life and blocking the way to the formation of a large, centralized organization; with which, despite countless routs, defeats, and executions of their leaders, they again and again took up conspiracy until, at last, an occasion for mass uprising presented itself - this persistence truly deserves admiration."

In essence, Engels leads the reader to the thought that the peasant wars might have ended in success had the peasants possessed some ally. But there was no such ally, because there did not yet exist an industrial proletariat concentrated in the cities.

> "The German peasant of that time had this in common with the modern proletarian: his share in the products of his own labor was equal to the minimum means of subsistence necessary for his maintenance and for the reproduction of the peasant race." Without such an ally, however, the peasants still could not fully overcome their dispersion, aggravated by a mass of external conditions. Engels lists "decentralization; local and provincial independence; the mutual industrial and commercial estrangement of regions; bad means of communication." On their own, the peasants were not in a position to make a revolution while opposed by the organized force of princes, nobility, and cities, unified and consolidated. Only an alliance with other estates would have given them chances of victory. But how could they unite with any other estates when all these estates were equally their exploiters? Only the plebeian poor and also the lumpenproletariat joined them; but the latter exerted a corrupting influence upon them, while the petty burghers frequently betrayed them at the most decisive moments.

From this point of view Engels traces the ideology of that time and reaches a conclusion diametrically opposed to Lassalle's. Lassalle saw in the bourgeois stratum the truly revolutionary element of the period and, in comparison with it, presented the peasant movement as a reactionary element. Engels, on the contrary, places the peasant-plebeian tendencies of the epoch far above the bourgeois ones. Examining the various currents in the time of the Reformation, he exposes the extreme flatness and superficiality of its right, bourgeois wing, headed by Luther and Melanchthon. "Sectarianism had an altogether different character insofar as it was the direct expression of peasant and plebeian needs, and almost always attached itself to the uprising. It of course shared all the demands of burgher sectarianism regarding the priesthood, the papacy, and the restoration of the ancient Christian church order, but at the same time it went infinitely further... It demanded the restoration of ancient Christian equality in relations among all members of the community and the recognition of this equality as the norm for the whole of civil society. From the 'equality before God of all his children,' it drew the conclusion of civil equality, and partly even of equality of well-being."

Engels treats the plebeian strata of the cities as forerunners of the modern proletariat, compelled to lead an existence analogous to that of the latter, insofar, of course, as this was possible under the conditions of the social order of that time. "From this position of theirs it is explained why the plebeian fraction could not even then stop at the simple struggle against feudalism and against the privileged stratum of the burghers; why, at least in fantasy, it could already rise above the contemporary bourgeois society then only barely coming into being; why this completely propertyless fraction of society had to call into question the institutions, views, and conceptions common to all social forms resting on class antagonisms."

> "The peasants and plebeians finally unite into one revolutionary party, whose demands and doctrines find their sharpest expression in Muenzer." "With Muenzer, for the first time, these communist motifs become the expression of a real social fraction; for the first time in him they receive, to a certain degree, a definite formulation; and from then on, after him, we meet them again and again in every great popular upheaval, until they gradually merge with the modern proletarian movement - just as, in the Middle Ages, the struggle of the free peasants against the feudal domination increasingly enveloping them merges with the struggle of the serfs against their lords, right up to the final collapse of the feudal principles."

This attempt to carry a continuous line from modern socialism back to the peasant-plebeian movement of the Reformation epoch is extraordinarily interesting. There are two views of socialism. From the standpoint of one of them, socialism is the special product of special economic conditions - namely, of large-scale capitalist industry. From this point of view it is absurd to seek predecessors of socialism there and then where industrial-capitalist "socialization" did not exist. Popular movements and uprisings against oppression and exploitation in the epochs of slavery, feudalism, and serfdom are, from this standpoint, phenomena of a completely different order from the modern workers' movement. They are incomparable; they are not different stages of one and the same world-historical movement that, in our time, gradually reaches more or less complete maturity. No: each of them is something entirely separate and self-contained, with its own closed cycle. As the specific offspring of a definite bourgeois-capitalist social formation, socialism did not evolve out of the communist theories and dreams of antiquity and the Middle Ages; it was born of capitalism. Such is one view.

The other view regards socialism as something far more universal. It regards the whole of history as a struggle between the principles of solidarity and competition, leading, at different stages, to different temporary combinations of these two principles in one or another social regime. Primitive communism and the currents that dissolved it; slave uprisings and their cruel pacifications; movements of serfs and the coercive support of the foundations of the feudal order - all this forms a continuous line of development of two antagonistic elements: one striving toward social equality, the other supporting or intensifying the historically formed shapes of oppression and exploitation. From this point of view, the modern workers' movement in its struggle against the bourgeoisie is only the latest, most recent link in this world-historical process of struggle. The conditions of the bourgeois-capitalist order provide only the distinctive concrete setting for this developing phenomenon; they do not at all "give birth" to it "out of themselves" by virtue of some mystical dialectical law of self-negation.

It is clear that these two essentially different views of socialism also lead to different practical conclusions. Within the limits of the capitalist regime there exist and live classes of pre-capitalist society, for example the laboring peasantry. It has its own historical movement; it has the traditions of its civil wars and uprisings. In the new setting these traditions undergo serious internal transformations, struggles, and crises. Is it possible to hope and to strive logically to develop these traditions and tendencies, to adapt them to the newly developed conditions of society, and thereby to bring about their organic fusion with the revolutionary tendencies of the proletariat? Or is this absurdity, madness, utopianism? This question must be decided one way or the other according to which of the two general understandings of socialism described above one accepts: the narrower understanding, which turns socialism into a mere side-reflex of the capitalist-industrial order, or the broader, universal, world-historical one.

For us it is characteristic that Engels, who usually develops the narrow view in a very straightforward way, slipped into the broader one in his evaluation of the peasant wars. We shall see below that in exactly the same way he slipped into the same broader view on the question of the Russian peasantry and the fate of the Russian commune.

In analyzing the peasant wars one must also confront another element - namely, the religious form in which the social claims of various social estates and classes were then clothed. In judging its significance in the history of the peasant wars, we are doing the same thing that every revolutionary politician must do in the present day when studying the role of sectarianism in popular life. Suppose that, in their essence, the given class claims were not reactionary but, on the contrary, the most advanced of all the currents of the epoch. But surely the form into which they poured themselves remains thoroughly reactionary? All those who do not believe in the revolutionary receptivity of the peasantry are very fond of dwelling on this consideration, emphasizing that the highest point to which the village can work its way is a set of vague communist fantasies densely overgrown with a mystical-religious husk.

They forget that the modern proletarian movement too, especially insofar as it was left to itself, began with the same phase. One example is Weitling's religious communism. And Engels, of course, as an intelligent man, perfectly understood what many contemporary Marxists can in no way grasp. Dwelling upon the characteristic combination, in the epoch of the peasant wars, of revolutionary tendencies with religious asceticism, Engels even arrives at a whole historical-sociological generalization. "Already here," he says of the first pioneers of the movement, "we find the asceticism that we encounter in every medieval uprising with a religious coloring, and in modern times at the beginning of every proletarian movement. This moral-ascetic severity, this demand to renounce all worldly pleasures and joys, on the one hand opposes to the ruling classes the principle of Spartan equality; on the other hand it is a necessary transitional stage without which the lower stratum of society can never enter into movement. In order to develop its revolutionary energy, to make clear to itself its hostile position in relation to the other social elements, to concentrate itself as a separate class, it must begin by renouncing everything that can still reconcile it with the existing social order. It must renounce the few pleasures that temporarily make its oppressed position more tolerable and that cannot be taken from it by the severest oppression. This plebeian and proletarian asceticism therefore differs, both in its content and in its wild-fanatical form, from the bourgeois asceticism preached by the bourgeois morality of Lutheranism and English Puritanism, as distinct from the Independents and still more radical sects, whose whole secret lies in simple petty-bourgeois miserliness."

Engels analyzes other religious elements of the movement as well. They are, of course, all "errors." But one error differs from another. Among them there may be some to which F. A. Lange's words are especially applicable: "Error often serves only as the form into which the bell of truth is cast, and which is immediately broken once the casting process is complete." Engels indicates through a whole series of examples how essentially new a wine the movement poured into old wineskins. "By the Kingdom of God," Engels says, "Muenzer understood, in essence, nothing other than a social condition in which there would no longer exist any class differences, any private property, or any independent state power alien to the members of society. All existing authorities, insofar as they refuse to submit and join the revolution, must be overthrown; all labor and all property must become common; the most complete equality must be carried through."

> "His philosophical-theological doctrine touched all the fundamental points not only of Catholicism, but of Christianity in general. In Christian forms, he in fact taught pantheism, which bore a remarkable resemblance to the modern speculative worldview and even partially approached atheism." These examples show perfectly how the religious shell eliminates itself, outlives its content, and becomes superfluous - just as, for example, religious asceticism is superfluous for the modern workers' movement, although once, in Engels's opinion, it rendered that movement no small service.

Muenzer's views, of course, were far in advance of his time, and for that reason were shared only by the most advanced revolutionary minority of the movement. This did not prevent them - on the contrary, it rather

helped them - from playing a directing role, setting the tone for the whole movement, and pushing it forward. History did not grant these aspirations and these people practical triumph precisely because they were people of the future. Engels's general law for all advanced parties was partly fulfilled in them as well: "The worst thing that can befall the leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take power in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the rule of the class he represents and for the implementation of the measures required by that class's rule."

A contradiction arises between what he ought to do and what he can do. In practice, therefore, his activity is limited to carrying out the demands not of his own class, but of the class for which the movement has matured. Engels shows how this was reflected in Muenzer's party and how its communist hopes were resolved, in practice, into rather flat and compromise measures that had not so much a revolutionary character in the social sense as a socially charitable or generally democratic character. Such, in Engels's opinion, would also be the fate of contemporary Social Democracy if it were to obtain power prematurely. Thus Engels attributes the very bankruptcy of the movement there where it temporarily achieved success not to its reactionary character, but, on the contrary, to the fact that its character was too advanced for its time.

With this we may consider settled the question whether the majority of contemporary Marxists are correct in regarding the peasant movements of the past as "revolutionary only in appearance, but reactionary in essence." If this Lassallean view was for so long and by so many taken for the pure expression of orthodox Marxism, that can be explained only by the often astonishing ignorance concerning the actual views of Marx and Engels that still prevails among the enormous majority of rank-and-file Russian Marxists - and perhaps not only among the rank and file.

Chapter X.

Marx and Engels as Agrarian Politicians.

We have already said above that, at the time of the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels did not put forward a minimum program in the modern sense. The program of demands sketched in the Manifesto for the "advanced countries" was intended for the time when the proletariat would have attained full supremacy in the state and would be able "gradually" (nach und nach) to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state. There is a rather widespread view that the denial of a minimum program is a more radical way of posing party tasks than the recognition of one. This, of course, is untrue. Those who reject a minimum program are more revolutionary only in their own imagination. They leap over questions that they must solve.

Since the maximum program is the totality of demands to be realized after the final victory of the conscious working class, it still does not answer the question: what is to guide the assessment of practical gains before that complete victory? This question retained its force for Marx as well, for before the dictatorship of the proletariat he could not have desired what he demanded after it. Before the dictatorship of the proletariat, to "gradually centralize" the means of production in the hands of the state would have meant practicing state socialism - a thing suited to Bismarcks, not to Marxes. One can, of course, adopt the view that all partial gains before complete victory are always harmful. Such a view would remove the very posing of this unresolved question. But the trouble is that no one has held, or holds, that view - at least not for long.

Let us suppose, however, that there is a party which adheres to it. "All or nothing" of course sounds very radical - if there is both the possibility and the force to take "all" at once in the immediately approaching moment. If that possibility is absent, and there is only a naive childish faith in it, then in practice the loud formula undergoes a noticeable metamorphosis. It becomes something like this: all - in an unknown future, and zero - in the present.

But what does this zero mean? There is a certain existing quantity of forces at hand. It is not sufficient for the realization of "all." But it can nevertheless be put to immediate practical use. The standpoint of "all or nothing" rejects such immediate practical use. It leads to partial self-castration. Thus, if they stood on the standpoint of Marx and Engels at the end of the forties, workers would have believed in a very "revolutionary" way that by the time of the next world exhibition the expropriated capitalists would have nothing left to do but serve as guides to visitors viewing what had formerly been "their" wealth. But by denying from that standpoint the usefulness of the struggle for a reduction of the working day, they would have entirely struck out those pages of world history which are filled by that struggle: the organization strengthened in its course, the widening of the movement, its consciousness, persistence, endurance - that is, the development of those precious capacities which are not produced by the pious wish to leap at once into the socialist Elysium by the inspiration of some revolutionary revelation fallen from heaven.

More than that: in the end the matter would come down to the same thing, in principle if not in its details or practical forms. Even if we suppose that the conscious part of the working class, taking no interest in partial gains, tried only through separate heroic attempts to leap immediately to the final goal, we would still have to recognize that, for a time, this would have only one consequence. Under the increasing pressure of the working class, the ruling elements of society - if only in order to weaken the conscious part of the workers by drawing away the unconscious part from it - would from time to time undertake reform measures. Thus the consequence of revolutionary attempts - this time not merely an incidental consequence, but an involuntary consequence as well - would for the moment be partial concessions. How would the conscious part of the working class evaluate them?

Two combinations are possible. Either it would look down from the height of its grandeur with the same negative attitude toward all reforms without distinction; or it would make certain distinctions among them: some reforms would be regarded merely as inadequate, while others would be regarded, in addition, as

harmful. In other words, it would consider the latter not as real concessions, even if insufficient ones, but as sham concessions in which traps are hidden behind a false appearance of concession. If the first combination were realized, the conscious part of the working class would by its conduct come into conflict with the very vital interests of the masses; it would call forth their alienation and thereby hinder its own activity. From its revolutionary attempts, as we have seen, only reforms would for a time result in any case - but they would result less successfully; and, secondly, there would be a higher percentage of deceptive reforms among them. For the withdrawal of the conscious part of the working class from a real analysis of the reform activity of the ruling elements of society, and the replacement of that analysis by a sweeping absolute negation, would lower the general ability of the working masses to orient themselves among the measures offered to them as concessions.

If the second combination were realized, the results would be as follows. From various partial concessions and reforms, some would be marked with a plus sign as real acquisitions, as conquests of the working class which ease the further course of its struggle for its final aims; others, conversely, would be marked with a minus sign as cleverly disguised obstacles in that revolutionary march. But what does that mean? If we consider the whole set of reforms - completed and projected - to which the party attaches the plus sign, what is this if not a minimum program in embryo? I say "in embryo," for in that case it lacks only a certain completeness, wholeness, harmonization, and clear methodical formulation in order to become such a program fully. If the party is naively convinced that it has no minimum program, it finds itself in the comic position of Gogol's Akaky Akakievich, who only at the age of fifty learned with amazement that he had been speaking prose all his life. If, however, the party is not so naive but avoids an explicit formulation of a minimum program from fear of the opportunist fall from grace supposedly inseparable from it, then that means only that it is politically insincere. Not wishing to have an official minimum program, it contents itself with an unofficial one; ashamed to have an open program, it has a backstage one.

This is usually what happens with those who deny the minimum program - all sorts of "anti-politicians." They resemble people who proudly declare that they deny philosophy; in reality this only means that they have a "home-made" philosophy - for all people philosophize - only a philosophy that is rudimentary, vague, and uncoordinated. In the same way, tendencies that loudly deny a minimum program on grounds of principle in reality have a rudimentary and bad minimum program. But if a party is placed under the necessity of practicing a minimum program without having worked one out independently, it at once enters a dangerous position. In this practical side of its activity it risks merging with other, neighboring parties in the political sense.

Marx and Engels did not avoid this danger. For all the apparent radicalism of the way they posed the question - in economics they denied all minimum demands - this very way of posing the question, by an irony of fate, brought them practically closer to bourgeois political radicalism. Conradt says of this: "Thus the entire program of the Communist Manifesto was not intended for the time when the bourgeoisie still ruled in the state; no, the realization of all its separate demands was projected only for the time of proletarian dictatorship. Up to that time the proletariat was not to conduct any economic policy at all, but only a democratic one, in the full sense. Its task was to form the left wing of bourgeois democracy, to push the bourgeoisie toward its most extreme and final political goals, and then to step over them and go further." Mehring essentially notes the same thing when he says that the character of German conditions at that time required that the working class at first enter the revolutionary arena only as the extreme wing of the democratic party, while Marx and Engels had to act as the advanced fighters of a movement "which could not yet inscribe specifically proletarian ideas on its banner once and for all." Engels explains this position by saying that they did not wish to remain a small sect, like the old utopians, or to play the role of "preachers in the wilderness," but strove for practical political influence and for the formation of a party of action. That this striving was a healthy striving admits of no doubt; nevertheless, it was not necessarily connected with becoming the left wing of burgher democracy. Marx and Engels soon saw this themselves and withdrew from the democratic organization, the "bloc," with the slogan of closer union among the workers' own

organizations. From that time begins the new tactic of their organ, which up to then - even by Mehring's admission - had "defended the interests of the bourgeois revolution against absolutism more than the interests of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie."

In one way or another, Marxism grew and developed, learning from its own errors. The standpoint of the article on the English Ten Hours Bill, with its denial of "minimum" demands, was abandoned. The need, even in immediate practical tactics, to demarcate itself from non-socialist democracy was understood. In programmatic terms the result was the working out in Paris, in addition to the demands of the Manifesto, of a special declaration, the "Demands of the Communist Party in Germany." The first demands, as we have seen, were tied to the epoch of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the second to the democratic revolution. Thus the latter stood to the former as the minimum part of modern programs stands to the maximum part.

Here we need examine only the agrarian demands of both programs; the rest of their content falls outside the theme that occupies us in this book. Let us turn to that examination, noting in passing that the "maximum" agrarian demands in particular should not be judged too severely. The authors of the Manifesto themselves later spoke of its section of "demands" as obsolete and did not correct it only because they regarded the Manifesto as a kind of historical document which must be preserved in full inviolability.

First of all, it should be noted that even after the "dictatorship of the proletariat," according to Marx, there is not an instantaneous "leap from the kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of freedom," but a process of creative work, centralizing the means of production in the hands of the state successively, gradually - nach und nach. It is necessary to begin with the land. Hence the first demand: "expropriation of landed property and use of rent for state expenditures." As for the use of the expropriated land, this is determined by other demands in the following way: "cultivation and improvement of the land according to a common plan," and further, "establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture." Finally, still further: "combination of industrial production with agriculture; action toward the gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country."

The conviction that demands of this kind would be regarded as subject to immediate practical realization by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat - and it is known that in the advanced countries Marx and Engels hoped for the near realization of that dictatorship - once again testifies to how small Marx's and Engels's understanding of the nature of agricultural production was at that time. "Cultivation of the fields according to one common plan!" One need only think of the extreme and inexhaustible diversity of agricultural cultures, with different sorts of grains, vegetables, fruit trees, fodder grasses, and also with differences of climate and soil. The further agricultural development proceeds, the more clearly it becomes evident how much in this sphere the principle of broad decentralization must triumph over the principle of all-embracing centralization which Marx pictured above all as a "single general plan" for the cultivation of fields given from above by the state.

Another side of the same centralist plan is that the cultivation of fields more and more begins to be carried out by "industrial armies" organized for that purpose. This further step on the path of conducting agriculture is, as is self-evident, connected with a whole series of new and great difficulties. From this point of view it is enough to look at modern state domains. I am not speaking, of course, of the state domains of half-European, half-Asiatic countries, where venal, predatory, and incompetent administration carries all the vices of the bureaucratic mechanism to their conceivable extremes. No - take advanced democratic countries, such as England, or countries where the administrative habit of "economic efficiency" is a historical tradition, such as Germany. Everywhere the most profitable way of using state domains has turned out to be leasing them out. The central conduct of farming "according to one plan" has encountered the fact that uniform templates are least of all applicable to agriculture, where nothing can replace free initiative joined to love for the work, interest in it, economic care, and comprehensive knowledge of the given plot.

The work is not carried on in workshops that facilitate control, but in highly varied fields, often distant from one another. Depending on the weather, it is necessary to take one measure or another rapidly, and any

centralization, any need for communication with higher instances, is least purposeful here. Improvements that are easily visible on the spot are hardest of all to discover from a distant "central administration" of the farm. With these and many other difficulties even the most exemplary organization of domain management has not yet coped, despite all sorts of auxiliary measures: bonuses for successful management, the responsibility of officials for a minimum income, their participation in profits, and so on. It is easy to imagine what would have happened if the "dictatorship of the proletariat" - and in the fifties of the last century! - had tried to introduce into agriculture, this realm of scattered small production and peasant economic individualism, its centralist plans of new economic construction. It would have been the practical bankruptcy of the new plans, and as a result not only their discrediting in the eyes of living and future generations, but also a more than probable "peasant war" against the new regime - a peasant war whose inevitability, as well as its suppression by the resources of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," Engels had prophesied in his "Travel Notes." But the trouble is that the victorious side in the end would not have been the party of the future, and the guilt for its bankruptcy would have fallen not on forces external to it but on its own internal insolvency.

As for the last demand, it can scarcely even be called a demand. The collectivist union of industry with agriculture, as opposed to their bourgeois-capitalist divorce; the collectivist abolition of differences between town and country, as opposed to their sharp differentiation in the bourgeois-capitalist order - all these are features of a new social ideal, and as such they are indicated in the Manifesto quite correctly. But their formulation is so general that their inclusion among concrete demands is entirely wrong. They indicate and partly characterize the great historical aims of the coming economic revolution, but not practical measures for embodying those aims.

Such, in broad outline, is the agrarian program-maximum of the Manifesto. It was put forward as the practically nearest program, as an immediate Actionsprogramm for the most advanced countries, für die fortgeschrittensten Länder. There remained, however, the backward countries. For them, even at that time Marx and Engels had to recognize the necessity of other, preliminary measures. Hence their first sketches of an agrarian minimum program.

The question of this program has a certain specific interest for the present. The reason is that Russian Marxists have more than once tried, on the basis of separate articles from Marx's earliest period, to reconstruct his then-current views on a practical agrarian program. This was done, of course, to spite the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, who could point to Marx's sympathetic remarks about the Russian commune. It can hardly be called a clever polemical method. It means nothing more or less than appealing to rudimentary Marxism against Marxism enriched by historical experience. It means indirectly confessing the rudimentary character of one's own views - that after the historical experience that has flowed since 1848, the "disciples," unlike their teachers, have "forgotten nothing and learned nothing."

Leaving aside the suicidal character of this method of polemics in its very essence, it must be said that Marxists do not always use it successfully: the soundness of their references often limps on both feet. Thus, to shame the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mr. Lenin's organ, Vpered, informed its readers with great pomp about Marx's old polemic from 1846 against one of his contemporaries, Hermann Kriege. Kriege, carried away in America by the preaching of "nationalization of the land," according to Vpered, "quite like the Socialist-Revolutionaries" clothed the question of agrarian revolution in lush, high-sounding phrases. Marx, according to the same Vpered, "lashes him precisely for those features of his views that we now see among our 'Socialist-Revolutionaries': the rule of phrase, petty-bourgeois utopias set up as the highest revolutionary utopianism (socialism? - V. Ch.), and failure to understand the real foundations of the modern economic order and its development."

Let us for the moment leave aside these contentless phrases about the alleged "phrases," "misunderstanding," and "utopias" of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and turn to checking the historical parallel offered by Vpered. What was Hermann Kriege, and how much did he resemble us?

The Socialist-Revolutionaries, first of all, seek in the agrarian question the socialization of the land, that is, the abolition of all private landed property; the transfer of the land into public disposal on the basis of broad decentralization of that disposal from the formal side, and on the basis of organizing equalized use of it from the real side. In this they assign an essential role to the democratically organized commune and to higher unions of communes, for example the volost, zemstvo, and regional union. These higher collectivities, in relation to the lower ones, are given the following functions. First, in one way or another, to equalize the land use of separate communes, taking into account, in the distribution of land, public obligations, contributions for common needs, and so forth, differences in soil fertility, systems of farming, density of population, and so on. Second, to dispose more directly of those natural goods whose use, by its very nature, goes beyond the narrow limits of the separate commune - large forest lands, fisheries, mineral resources. Third, to manage the reserve land fund, that is, spaces whose cultivation, at a given density of population and system of farming, is not yet advantageous, but which with a further increase of population or intensification of farming will enter the cultivated area.

As for the determination of norms of land allotment for each commune, both the maximum and the minimum norms are determined by natural data. The absorption of the entire labor power of the adult population is the natural maximum limit of land use; the satisfaction of consumption in normal hygienic dimensions is the minimum norm. Depending on the degree of intensity or extensiveness of farming, each norm will be expressed in a larger or smaller land area. Thus these norms are fluid. They therefore presuppose not some single "black repartition" valid for all eternity, but constant regulation of equalized land use on the spot. Economic self-government in the commune, district, and so on - that is, broad decentralization in regulating equality of use - is the necessary precondition of the socialization of land. Whether the land allotment coincides with the maximum norm, with the minimum norm, or passes somewhere in between will each time depend on how far equilibrium is maintained or disturbed between the growth of the agricultural population and the growth of productive forces.

The growth of productive forces presupposes improved means of production, cooperation, and collectivization of labor. The system of the Socialist-Revolutionaries opens wide space for the socialization of labor from below, through the conscious efforts of the producers themselves. In this respect it takes account of the predominance of capitalism's negative, destructive sides over its positive, organizing sides in the agrarian sphere. At the same time, for this party the socialization of the land is part of the minimum program. That is, the party regards it not as the solution of the "social question" in the countryside, but only as the creation of a firm basis for the further struggle for that solution. The socialization of the land still does not solve the question of the other means of production needed in agriculture. Supplying them - as well as seed for sowing and other raw materials and products - can and must be the function of a democratically administered agronomic organization serving neither landownership nor capital, but labor. The socialization of the land still does not eliminate the exploitation of peasants by monetary, credit-usurious, and commercial capital, by an unjust system of taxation, and so on. Consequently the struggle continues against all these forces of modern society, a struggle which will reach its final goal only with the complete destruction of these forces, that is, with the expropriation of all expropriators.

Thus the party whose agrarian program we are discussing does not in the least idealize the socialization of land. It regards land arrangements of this kind as the natural basis for further agitation among the peasantry, one of whose slogans is the development of communal farming, the spread of cooperative principles, and the consistent transition to collective cultivation of fields with division of the product. All this, besides directly improving the position of the masses, serves the aims of visible propaganda for the advantages of large-scale public economy - no longer only on a small scale but within national limits, that is, of socialist economy. The necessary condition of such a program is the organization of the laboring agricultural population, for systematic struggle against all exploitative and anti-social elements, into syndicates, cooperatives, and political organizations striving for power in communal, volost, zemstvo, and regional self-government, as well as in central popular representation, and fighting hand in hand with the other part of the working class,

the industrial proletariat, against common enemies, for the establishment of a single, planned public economy in which rural productive communes would grow as a natural component, on the basis of the conscious social organization of universal labor for universal benefit.

Let us now see what Hermann Kriege's social philosophy has in common with this social program.

First of all, so far as one can judge from Marx's article, Kriege did not even speak of converting all land into public property. Together with a section of the American National Reformers, he insisted only that 1,400 million acres of land - the North American state lands - be preserved as the inalienable common property of all humanity. True, this is an enormous territory. But, however that may be, it should be noted that Kriege's plan was entirely reconciled to the fact that some quantity of land had already been plundered and seized by speculators, and did not even hint at expropriation from the plunderers. For, as Kriege put it, "we do not wish to touch the property of any man; and what the usurer has once obtained, he may keep." That is the first point. The second, very essential point is the centralist disposal of land. On one side, according to Kriege's plan, stands state power, distributing land for possession, apparently on the basis of perpetual or hereditary lease; on the other stand scattered individual candidates for receiving it. The third characteristic feature is a purely mechanical criterion of "equality" in land use. Kriege proposed to give "each peasant 160 acres of American land for subsistence." "One hundred and sixty acres of land," Marx laughs on this occasion, "appears to him as an eternally equal norm, as if the value of such an area of land did not vary according to its quality."

There is no need to waste words over the first characteristic feature of Kriege's plan: the inviolability of property already established. It of course fits perfectly with his general tendency, which Marx defines as the "hypocritical presentation of communism as a force that has come 'not to destroy, but to fulfill' the existing bad conditions together with the illusions by which the bourgeoisie adorn them." In Kriege's plan one does not notice even a shadow of a desire to reckon with the necessity of developing the productivity of agriculture, the use of machines, melioration on a broad scale, or generally the development of cooperation, division of labor, and so on. Isolated, self-sufficient, 160-acre farms solve all questions. This gave Marx reason to observe that "it is not within the power of legislators by decrees to stop the development of the patriarchal order desired by Kriege into an industrial one, or to throw the industrial and commercial states of the eastern coast back into patriarchal barbarism." Further, in his 160-acre allotments Kriege saw not simply a temporary improvement in the position of agricultural producers, but a complete solution of the social question, and not only in the countryside but in the city as well. "Every poor man is at once transformed into a useful member of human society once he is secured the possibility of productive work. Such a possibility will be secured for him forever if society gives him a piece of land on which he can feed himself and his family. If this gigantic land area - the same 1,400 million acres - is withdrawn from commercial circulation and secured in definite quantities to labor, then poverty in America will be ended at one blow." In exactly the same way, in another article Kriege asserts that it is enough for New York to make proper use of its 52,000 acres of land in order "at once" to free New York forever from all pauperism, poverty, and crime.

In short, as you see, from this standpoint it is enough to have a large area of public land and to divide it into individual plots in order to abolish all the calamities of the existing order. No socialism and no transfer of the industrial means of production into the hands of society is needed. Commercial, industrial, and credit capital may remain untouched. Marx was therefore fully right when he ironized over Kriege: very well, let the land not fall "into the hands of robber-speculators"; but the products of the land may fall into their hands - and is that not one and the same thing? In passing, however, Marx here falls into the opposite extreme: it is, of course, far from entirely "one and the same," although speculation does not cease to be robbery and demands a corresponding struggle against itself.

In a word, the crudeness, simplification, and primitiveness of Kriege's political economy are striking. Individual farming is the center of the whole system. There is no revolutionary stream, no aspiration to move forward the socialization of property and labor in all branches of life - at least judging by Marx's exposition.

Of this there is not a trace. To criticize such a system was, of course, not difficult. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in his criticism Marx himself sins in something - not against Kriege, of course, whose system is beneath all criticism, but against reality. According to Marx, it is enough that peasants, working on inalienable land - say, on the basis of perpetual hereditary lease - exchange among themselves and with third persons the products of their labor: "once it comes to this, it will soon turn out that one peasant, even without capital, thanks to his labor and the greater fertility of his 160 acres, will bring another to the position of his hired laborer." But is this not rather too soon, and even too hasty? Marx of the article on Kriege can be referred, for the solution of this question, to Marx of Capital. There, in the last chapter of the first volume, "The Modern Theory of Colonization," it is explained that not only "without capital," but even with capital, and not a small one, in colonies where access to land is free one can often do nothing.

> "In the colonies," Marx says there, "the possession of money, means of subsistence, machines and other instruments of production does not yet make a man a capitalist." Everywhere here the capitalist mode of production encounters obstacles presented by property acquired by one's own labor, and by producers who, as private possessors of their own conditions of labor, enrich themselves by their own labor instead of enriching capitalists. Hence it happens that capitalists who begin enterprises in such colonies bring with them not only their capital, but even a sufficient supply of wage laborers; but then it turns out that they have "provided for everything, except exporting along with themselves the capitalist conditions of production." Therefore what "soon" happens is not what Marx foresaw in 1846, but something quite different: it turns out that these capitalists bring at their own expense their own future competitors. Instead of one peasant "even without capital" soon turning his neighbor into a farmhand, it turns out that "today's wage-worker becomes tomorrow an independent peasant or artisan with his own business." This constant transformation of the wage-worker into an independent producer greatly damages the condition of the market for wage labor. Not only does the degree of exploitation of the worker become indecently low, but the workers, together with dependent relations, lose the "feeling of dependence" on the "abstemious capitalist." Hence the necessity of artificial measures, crude or refined, open or masked, in order if not to eliminate, then at least to weaken such "disorders."

That Marx of 1846 can learn much from Marx of 1867 is not surprising. But that Marxists of 1905 regress from Marx of 1867 to Marx of 1846 - this is a circumstance before which one can only shrug one's shoulders. In science, however, such phenomena are known and partly studied. Scholars call them historical survivals or phenomena of regressive evolution.

Connected with the youthful error of Marx just indicated - an error removed by the deeper study of economic phenomena he undertook in his mature years - are certain other overly hasty conclusions. Such is his assertion that one of the "necessary consequences" of the division of land into individual farms will be "concentration," and that in this respect it makes no difference whether the land itself enters commodity circulation or only the products of the land. Here we have the very same "Marxist dogma" whose existence Mr. Plekhanov now disputes. In addition, it is worth noting Marx's then deep conviction that it is "not within the power of the legislator" to stop the development of the patriarchal order into an industrial one, or to throw industrial localities "back into patriarchal barbarism." This view corresponded to those enthusiasms of Marx and Engels in the direction of exaggerating the power of spontaneous economic development which F. Engels later acknowledged. Alas, today we know too well that some "legislators," by their conduct of state economy and finances, can for a long time freeze the development of a country's productive forces, stop it, or even throw it "back into patriarchal barbarism." Today we know too well how strongly "political superstructures" may sometimes influence the "economic foundation."

But our orthodox Marxists are not at all embarrassed by this. It is enough for them to dig out, even from Marx's earliest works, some polemical passage in which they can fish out a small, however superficial, purely verbal resemblance to their polemic against our program - they too often think in words rather than in concepts - and they are satisfied. What does it matter that the passage reflects the childhood of Marxism? To

fall into childhood in old age is not surprising; and Russian Marxism, evidently, is aging more and more, is outliving itself, and hence returns to its own historical childhood, to the rudimentary forms of Marxism.

Indeed, is this not thinking in words instead of concepts? Having caught in Kriege the words "withdraw from commercial circulation" the state lands and "secure them to labor," the editors of Vpered triumphantly add their own note to this passage: "Recall what Revolutionary Russia wrote beginning with No. 8 about the flow of land from capital to labor, about the significance of state lands in Russia, about equalized land use, about the bourgeois idea of drawing land into commercial circulation, and so forth. Quite like Kriege!" Indeed, Revolutionary Russia did assert that firm data of zemstvo statistics have established this fact: in places among us there is taking place a spontaneous economic process of the transfer of land from capital to labor. The trouble is only that we do not know of any similar assertions by Kriege concerning America. Indeed, we wrote about the significance of the Russian state land fund - only not about its sufficiency, but, on the contrary, about its complete insufficiency for satisfying the land hunger even of the Russian peasantry, to say nothing of peasants from whatever other countries. Indeed, we wrote about equalized land use - but we never tried to squeeze that idea into the absurd framework of dividing the state fund into fictitiously equal, spatially identical pieces of territory distributed by the bureaucracy to individual perpetual hereditary tenants. As for the protest against the bourgeois idea of putting the state land fund into commercial circulation - did Marx not protest against it, and not less but much more decisively and consistently than Kriege?

In fact, let us take the aforementioned Forderungen der kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland. They are reproduced in full in Engels's preface to the second edition of Marx's Enthüllungen über den Kommunisten-Prozess zu Köln. According to these demands, "princely and other feudal landed estates are transformed into state property. On these landed estates agriculture is conducted on a large scale, with the help of the most modern auxiliary means produced by science, in the interest of all society." Further: "mortgage debts lying on peasant holdings are declared state property; the interest on these debts is paid by the peasants to the state." Finally: "in localities where the lease system is developed, ground rent or lease payment is paid to the state in the form of a special tax." As you see, in some cases by direct expropriation of land, in others indirectly - by expropriation of land rent or mortgage debt - such major steps are taken toward the socialization of land, in an extremely centralist form, in the form of nationalization, as Hermann Kriege never dreamed of. It is worth noting that the concluding words of the manifesto with these demands say that "in the interests of the German proletariat, the petty urban and peasant estate," it is necessary to work with all energy for the realization of these measures.

In connection with this standpoint Marx and Engels also developed a definite attitude toward the various factions of English Chartism. They recognized as its revolutionary faction the one which stood on their standpoint in the agrarian question. In their opinion, precisely to that faction belonged "the mass of workers living in genuinely proletarian conditions of existence." Conversely, they attributed to the other, "purely democratic" faction, which limited itself to petty-bourgeois reforms, a corresponding social composition: the petty bourgeoisie together with the labor aristocracy. "The main point of collision between the two factions of Chartism is the land question. O'Connor and his faction wanted to use the Charter in order to transfer part of the workers onto small land parcels and, in the end, to make the parceling of land in England universal. The tendency of every bourgeois revolution to split up large landed estates could for a time create among the English workers the notion that this parceling was something revolutionary, although it is correctly complemented by the invariable tendency of small property to concentrate and perish under the pressure of large agriculture. As for the revolutionary faction of the Chartists, it opposed this demand for the parceling of landed property with the demand for the confiscation of all landed property, and demanded that it not be divided but remain the property of the whole nation."

From this same standpoint one must understand those passages in Marx's polemic against Kriege which Vpered quotes but, alas, does not understand well enough: passages in which a positive attitude is vividly expressed toward the effort, already now, before the complete socialist transformation, to remove the land from private ownership and transfer it into public ownership. These passages vividly show wherein Marx

saw Kriege's error. "If Kriege had understood the movement in the sense of 'liberating the land' as the first necessary form of the proletarian movement under definite conditions; if he had understood it as a movement which, owing to the life position of the class that produced it, must necessarily develop further into a communist one; if he had shown how in America communist tendencies had at first to appear in these agrarian forms which outwardly contradict all communism - then nothing could be said against all this. But he declares a certain, in essence subordinate, form of movement of definite real people to be 'the cause of all humanity'; he presents this form of movement, contrary to what he himself knows very well, as the final and highest aim of every movement in general, and in this way transforms the concrete aims of the movement into a pure and incredible absurdity."

Or, in another place: "We fully recognize the historical justification of the movement of the American National Reformers. We know that this movement strives toward a result which, for the given moment, would favor the industrialism of modern burgher society, but which, as the result of a proletarian movement, as an attack on property, must, both generally and especially under contemporary American conditions, lead by its own consequences to communism."

> Thus, as you see, Marx saw no error in the very basis of the effort to attack private property at once at this vulnerable point - in the sphere of land. The error begins when this partial aim of the movement is turned into its final aim, when it is made not the starting point of a further attack on private property but the last stage of the road. Only in that case does "agrarian socialism" become a one-sided, exclusive doctrine entering into contradiction with a consistent and comprehensive conception of socialism. Let us recall here in passing that later, at the beginning of the sixties, Marx wrote in his letters to Kugelmann: "Ich war aber von jeher überzeugt, dass die soziale Revolution vom Grund aus, das heisst vom Grund und Bodeneigenthum aus ernsthaft anfangen muss" - that is, "I have always been convinced that the social revolution must begin seriously from the very foundation, that is, from landed property." In the original there is an untranslatable play on words: Grund means both foundation and land.

But this is exactly what we affirm when we bring to the foreground, as a vital and urgent task of the nearest revolution, a transformation in relations of landed property, the replacement of private property by public property, that is, the socialization of the land; and when we regard this socialization of the land as the starting point of the coming historical turn and of the coming battles of labor with capital, which will be completed by the realization of integral socialism.

Another attempt to discredit our agrarian program by opposing to it the agrarian views of Marxism of the late forties and early fifties was made by Mr. Plekhanov.

The party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries not only does not relate negatively to the peasant commune, but, on the contrary, reckons with it as a living phenomenon, naturally grown and capable of development. Our demand for the socialization of the land is not some cabinet plan which must be realized, imposed from above into life by the magical force of decrees. It rests on real forces, on entirely concrete elements of the existing economic reality. The commune, freed from bureaucratic and estate bonds, will not cease to be one of the cells of the new order of land use. In its hands will be concentrated not a few functions concerning the disposal of definite kinds and quantities of land. It will be entrusted with carrying out the principle of equality in intra-communal relations, in the forms most practical and most appropriate to local conditions. The public-legal unions standing above it - for example, the future democratically organized small zemstvo unit - will carry out the same equalizing principle in relations between communes. This means, first, raising contemporary communal landholding to a higher level, and, second, transforming contemporary state property on democratic principles.

Our Social-Democrats, "of whom the first is" Mr. Plekhanov, look at the matter differently. Since the time of their zealous campaign against Russian "social-populism," the very word "commune" has been unbearable to them. It is not surprising that all their agrarian programs contain direct or indirect tendencies to replace communal property with private property. "The abolition of communal landholding," Mr. Plekhanov says on

this occasion, "would without any doubt be equivalent to a very considerable support and multiplication of private property. More than that: thanks to it, many Russian peasants would for the first time acquire land as private property. Can socialists agree to this without betraying their program? We think they can; and thinking so, we again see ourselves in very good company. In March 1850 the Central Committee of the Communist League, in its Address - apparently written by Marx's hand - to the members of that League, categorically said that the party of the proletariat should least of all (am allerwenigsten) reconcile itself to the perpetuation of communal property (Gemeinde-Eigenthum), which represents a backward form even in comparison with modern private property and which everywhere necessarily decomposes into the latter. The multiplication of private property resulting from the decomposition of communal property, as we see, did not seem to Marx at all a phenomenon capable of slowing the movement of modern society toward socialism."

Mr. Plekhanov's usual lawyerly method of argument and usual freely artistic method of quotation appear here in all their brilliance and nakedness.

By a strange chance, Mr. Plekhanov forgets to indicate the source from which he quotes. We know this source. The text of both Addresses is reproduced in full in Marx's Enthüllungen über den Kommunistenprozess zu Köln. The passage concerning the commune which Plekhanov quotes is on page 82. From it he infers that "support and multiplication of private property" is a thing to which "socialists can agree without betraying their program," especially if this support and multiplication is carried out at the expense of communal landholding. Marx turns out to be ideologically solidary with the aspiration of Messrs. Lenin, Plekhanov, and others "to introduce the countryside into conditions of life corresponding to the bourgeois mode of production" by destroying all "feudal" and "pre-capitalist" survivals, and Plekhanov solemnly declares that he is "in good company."

The trouble is only that before page 82 stands page 81, and there we read: "The first point on which the bourgeois democrats will come into conflict with the workers will be the abolition of feudalism. As in the first French Revolution, the petty bourgeois will want to give the feudal lands to the peasants on the basis of free property; that is, to preserve the agricultural proletariat and to form a petty-bourgeois peasant stratum which will go through the same cycle of indebtedness and impoverishment into which the French peasant is now drawn. In the interest of the agricultural proletariat as well as in their own interest, the workers must oppose this plan." About this passage, which completely destroys Mr. Plekhanov's strained interpretation, the latter, of course, prudently keeps silent.

But did Marx nevertheless say that one should reconcile oneself least of all, am allerwenigsten, with the perpetuation of the commune? Yes, he did. But not because he would have liked to replace communal property with private property. Rather, because he would have liked to replace both scattered communal property and scattered private property with state property. He even believed in 1850 that if communal property were not turned into all-national property, it would inevitably decompose into private property. More than that: in 1850 he really did place communal property lower than private property. But Mr. Plekhanov forgets that Marx's views on the commune evolved, just as his views on agriculture, the peasantry, and the agrarian question generally evolved. Below we shall show how his negative attitude toward the commune passed into a positive one.

For the moment let us note that Marx's old, original view of the commune stood in close connection with his original views on the state-legal order corresponding to the interests of the proletariat. At that time Marx was the most ardent centralist in both economics and politics. Anyone who read the program of demands formulated in the famous Manifesto was struck by this tendency toward extreme centralization of economic functions in the hands of the state in the narrow sense of the word, that is, of central organs of administration. The reverse side of economic centralism was political centralism. In the same Address, on the same page 81, it is said: "The democrats, further, will either work directly for the creation of a federal republic, or, if they cannot avoid a single and indivisible republic, will try to weaken the central government by means of the greatest possible autonomy and independence of regions and communes. In opposition to this plan, the

workers must work not only for a single and indivisible German republic, but also for the most decisive centralization of force within it in the hands of state power." Correspondingly, in the sphere of land relations Marx's socializing demands appeared in the form of centralist-state nationalization. Opposing the plans of petty-bourgeois democrats to free the land from feudal bonds and introduce it into the circulation of free private property, the workers "must demand that the confiscated feudal property remain state property and be used for the foundation of workers' colonies; that it be cultivated by associations of agricultural workers with all the advantages of large-scale agriculture; and that through this the principle of public property immediately acquire firm ground amid the wavering bourgeois relations of property." It is in connection with this standpoint that we must examine the quotation which Mr. Plekhanov cites - or, more correctly, part of which he cites.

In full, the quotation reads: "Least of all can one reconcile oneself to the fact that, by means of so-called free communal self-government, a form of property should be perpetuated which stands still lower than modern private property and everywhere necessarily decomposes into the latter - namely communal property, together with the quarrels between poor and rich communes that flow from it, and likewise the communal civil law existing alongside state civil law, with its oppressive petty tricks against workers. The carrying out of the strictest centralization is the task of the truly revolutionary party now in Germany, just as in France in 1793."

It is worth noting, however, that precisely this passage from the Address was accompanied in the new edition by a note which said: "It should now be borne in mind that this passage rests on a misunderstanding." The misunderstanding is explained by the fact that, owing to various liberal and Bonapartist falsifiers of history, it was considered proven that the French centralized governmental mechanism was created by the revolution as its best weapon against external and internal enemies. Study of the facts, however, convinced Marx and Engels of the erroneousness of this view. On the contrary, this centralism arose as a "pure instrument of reaction" (ein reines Reactionswerkzeug); and, conversely, "precisely provincial and local self-government, similar to the American, was the strongest lever of the revolution." On the other hand, "this self-government can just as little be considered necessarily connected with that narrow cantonal or communal egoism" of which Marx spoke and of which a model can be found in Switzerland.

The extreme political and economic centralism with which the Address is permeated did not last long. Just as short-lived was the excessively negative view of the commune expressed in the Address. The trouble with our Marxists consists in the fact that they are still chained, at this point as at many others, to the most primitive views of old, embryonic Marxism.

Thus Mr. Beltov, Plekhanov's alter ego, says of communal landholding: "This landholding is useless at the present time for the people, because there are not (and it seems there never have been) such conditions present under which it could become useful to them, and there are no forces which could create the presence of such conditions." What has Marxism in common with such categorical assertions? However much their authors may try to cover themselves with Marx and assert that they are "in good company," they do not remove the fact that Marx here, on the contrary, turns out to be "in bad company," for in essence his disciples quite often repeat old tunes common in the mouths not of socialists but of reactionary agrarians of the type of the late Chedo-Ferrotti, Lilienthal, and the like. We need not criticize them. Already in the sixties, in his letters to Kugelmann, Marx sufficiently characterized these gentlemen and their argumentation.

> "So far as Russian communal landholding is concerned," Marx wrote, for example, about Chedo-Ferrotti, "this fellow displays as much ignorance as juggling. Chedo-Ferrotti is one of those little gentlemen who present communal landholding as the cause of the miserable condition of the Russian peasantry - naturally in the interest of landlordism - exactly as once in Western Europe the abolition of serfdom was shouted out as the cause of pauperism, instead of the loss by the former serfs of their land. The poverty of the Russian peasantry is created by the same thing as the poverty of the French peasantry under Louis XIV - the tax system of the state and payments in favor of large landowners. As for communal

landholding, it not only did not create the calamities of the peasantry, but on the contrary it alone mitigated them." As you see, already in the sixties Marx was far from Beltov's opinion that communal landholding is "useless" for the people.

About ten years separate this opinion of Marx from his old opinion expressed in the Address. From the beginning of the fifties to the beginning of the sixties - this period did not pass for Marx without leaving a trace. Let us now step over another ten-year interval and pass to the beginning of the seventies.

In the Volksstaat in 1874, and then in the following year, Engels began and continued a polemic with P. N. Tkachev. Here this polemic interests us insofar as it concerned the question of the commune. In opposition to Tkachev, the extreme idealizer of the commune, Engels naturally says a great deal about the shortcomings flowing from the primitiveness of the historical commune, thus pouring a bucket of cold water over his antagonist, who in his worldview combined in a curious way elements of Jacobinism - that is, revolutionary guardianship over the people - with elements of extreme populist enthusiasm.

Engels points out that "communal landholding is an institution which we meet among all Indo-Germanic peoples at a low stage of their development"; that "in Western Europe, down to Poland and Little Russia inclusive, at a certain stage of social development this communal possession became a fetter on agricultural production, a brake, and was more and more removed." Engels connects the preservation of the commune in Great Russia with the undeveloped state of agriculture, and especially emphasizes that the isolation of communes from one another does not transform the sameness of their interests into a community of interests. Noting that the conditions of the emancipation of the peasants struck the commune "the severest blow," wrapping it in a strong net of exploitation, Engels says: "Under such conditions, under the pressure of the tax system and usury, the landed property of the commune ceases to be a blessing and turns into a burden. Peasants often flee from this property with their families or without them, seeking subsistence as wandering laborers, and abandon their land." Engels's general conclusion about the contemporary position of the commune is extremely hopeless: "as is evident, communal property in Russia has long outlived the period of its flourishing and, to all appearances, is moving toward decomposition."

Thus it is quite obvious that Engels at this time not only did not look at the commune through rose-colored glasses, but rather, on the contrary, through the blackest and deliberately smoked ones. At first glance one may even think that he is returning to the standpoint of 1850 from which Marx had departed. In reality, however, despite an exaggerated idea of the decomposition of the Russian commune, he made an extremely important recognition of principle. Immediately after enumerating all the commune's misfortunes he says: "And nevertheless it is indisputable that there is a possibility of the transition of this social form into a higher one, if it holds out until circumstances are ripe for this, and if it proves capable of development in the sense that the peasants begin to cultivate the land not separately but jointly; then it will be possible to transfer the commune to a higher form, so that the peasants will not have to pass through the intermediate stage of bourgeois small property." The victory of the social revolution in the West before the final decomposition of Russian communal property - such was, in Engels's eyes, the basic condition of this possibility which he recognized.

We see that even a somewhat one-sided and inaccurate conception of the fate of the Russian commune did not prevent Engels from taking a new step forward in evaluating its significance, compared with Marx's evaluation in the letters to Kugelmann. There the question concerned only the fact that the commune proved capable of somewhat easing the position of the peasants in the past and present. Here the question is posed generally: whether the commune can be considered a mere survival, or whether it is a living element capable of further development. Here for the first time the possibility is recognized in principle of conditions under which the commune will appear as a living element of the present and future.

Let us move forward yet another decade, to the beginning of the eighties. In 1882 Marx and Engels, in the preface to the Russian translation of the Manifesto, stated the following well-known proposition: "If the Russian revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each

other, then contemporary Russian communal landownership may serve as the starting point of a communist development."

Alongside this well-known proposition we must recall Marx's no less well-known letter to the editorial board of Otechestvennye Zapiski, written earlier but published later than the preface to the Manifesto. In its time a whole series of polemical skirmishes took place around this letter between "Marxists" and their opponents. The conditional and somewhat vague turns of the letter were interpreted in every possible way and served as starting points for the most opposite conclusions. And although in the same letter Marx says that he does not like leaving "quelque chose à deviner" - something to be guessed - nevertheless, by its brevity the letter leaves many questions unanswered while at the same time hinting to some extent at their solution, thereby giving rise to a whole polemical and commentatorial literature. We shall not enter into its details here. Let us say only that only a person very close to Marx, who knew both the circumstances under which Marx wrote his letter and the intimate mood by which it was dictated, could interpret it at all correctly in many places. Such a person was Engels alone.

That is why, in order to throw more light on the meaning of the letter, we know no better means than to turn to Engels's exposition of the "essence of its content" in the afterword to Socialiges aus Russland. Engels sees this "essence of its content," seinen wesentlichen Inhalt, among other things, in the fact that "above all Marx rejects the view attributed to him by the Notes, a view agreeing with that of the Russian liberals, according to which Russia must as quickly as possible break up the communal property of the peasants and rush into 'capitalism'." More than that: in general, "Marx then advised the Russians not to be in too great a hurry with the leap into capitalism" (Kein Wunder, dass Marx da den Russen rätht, es weniger eilig zu haben mit dem Sprung in den Kapitalismus). It is enough to compare this, we hope sufficiently competent, exposition by Engels of the meaning of the letter with the famous slogan of Russian Marxism, "let us go to school with capitalism," in order radically to eliminate a multitude of strained interpretations of the letter that have come from that latter camp.

It is further worth noting that in the same eighties Engels had occasion to speak separately about the German peasantry and its land commune, the Mark. First of all, it should be noted that Engels stated the "astonishing capacity for adaptation" which the Mark displayed both "in social life in relation to its most various needs" and "in relation to the development of agriculture in the struggle with growing large landed property." It survived a multitude of political and economic crises, "and nevertheless it remained so necessary that everywhere the nobility took possession of peasant land, the villages subject to it preserved the order of the old Mark, although greatly cut down by the landowners' claims." Finally the emancipation of the peasants took place - "but how far the present free peasant is from the free member of the Mark of former times! His plot has become much smaller, while the undivided Mark has been turned into a small neglected patch of communal forest. Yet without the common Mark the small peasant proprietor can have no cattle; without cattle, no manure; and without manure, no proper grain cultivation. But worst of all, these new free peasants appeared in Germany - where everything happens too late - precisely when agricultural science on the one hand and newly invented agricultural machines on the other transformed small landownership into an outlived, nonviable form of economy." And further, as in other places in the article, we meet the usual prophecy by Engels, as strict guardian of the purity of the agrarian dogma of Marxism, about the victories of large landed property.

Less usual, however, is the practical conclusion at which he arrives. He recalls that "all European agriculture in its present form is threatened by a mighty rival in the form of American mass production of grain. With this soil, fertile by nature, fertilized for long years and given away for a song, neither our indebted peasants nor the large proprietors, likewise entangled all around in debts, can compete. American competition is killing the entire system of European economy."

What practical conclusion follows from this? It is brief, and by virtue of its brevity all the more expressive: "Agriculture can be preserved in Europe only on the condition that it is conducted by the

commune and at the expense of the commune." "These are the prospects for the future that German peasants may have. The emergence of a class of free peasants, though needy ones, had this good side: now the peasants have found themselves in a position in which, with the assistance of their worker-comrades, they can help themselves, if only they wish to understand how to do so."

> "And how? By restoring the Mark again, not in its outlived, old form, but in another, renewed form; by transforming the land commune in such a way that it would give individual members of the commune the possibility of using all the advantages of large-scale farming and the application of agricultural machines."

Let us note in passing, to avoid any misunderstandings, that Engels of course greatly exaggerates when he speaks almost of the complete liquidation and death of all European agriculture. We return, however, to the theme that now occupies us. It may seem strange - all the more in the mouth of such a strict realist as Engels - this idea of restoring and developing the Mark, a form of communal order that had almost disappeared and, in its old historical forms, according to his own words, was "economically obsolete." Is this conceivable? Is there even a weak shadow of possibility for it? To answer that question, however little we are called upon to solve it for Germany, it is nevertheless necessary to bear in mind that communal psychology, the communal spirit, usually tends to survive the very forms of the communal order. In this respect, among other things, it is worth noting the admission of V. Conradt, who is not especially indulgent toward communal possession and stands guard over the progress of agriculture: "Even today the blood of many a peasant boils when old communal fields are mentioned. Large landed property has found no few means to appropriate the allmend lands in various places. And it goes without saying that the peasantry touched by this suffers not a little from the results of usurpations of this kind."

After another ten-year interval, Engels again returned to the same theme - the Russian peasant commune. To understand the ground on which the view he expressed this time grew, one must first know what conception Engels had at this time of the factual condition of the Russian commune. This conception was quite definite. Engels was perfectly seriously convinced that the Russian land commune no longer existed, or almost no longer existed; that the process of its decomposition, if it had not been completely finished, was at least approaching its end. From where could Engels have derived such a conviction? One passage from his 1894 postscript to Socialiges aus Russland, if it does not answer the question, at least hints at an answer: there he refers to Mr. Plekhanov's well-known Our Differences. It is self-evident that whatever Engels's attitude toward his "Russian disciples," he could hardly have thought that even purely factual information coming from this source might glaringly fail to correspond to reality.

In any case, already at the beginning of 1892, in connection with the famine in Russia, he wrote: "The primitive-communist customs and institutions of the Russian peasants have since 1861 been partly buried by economic development, partly systematically destroyed by the government. The primitive-communist commune has disintegrated or at least is in a state of disintegration."

It might seem that with such a view of the factual existence - or better, the factual nonexistence - of Russian communal possession, Engels would have had to radically revise his former view of the possibility for the Russian commune to pass into higher forms and then organically grow into the future socialist organization of society. Yet this did not happen. The destruction of the Russian commune - and for Engels, as we have seen, this destruction appeared to be a fact that raised no doubts - only made Engels take a pessimistic view of the capacity of the Russian commune "from itself" independently to develop a tendency to rise to a higher stage of development. He developed very vividly and sharply the view according to which the commune must be regarded as passive material which, by an external force, may be used in the interests of socialism, and not as an active creative force acting independently in that direction. He even tries to ground this view on a much more general proposition: "The solution by a society standing at a lower stage of development of those tasks and contradictions which arise and can arise only at a much higher stage represents a historical impossibility. Each given economic formation has to solve its own tasks flowing from

itself; to strive for the solution of tasks flowing from a formation completely alien to it would be the purest absurdity." Socialism solves the tasks and contradictions that have arisen in the womb of capitalism. In the commune there are no such tasks and contradictions, and therefore no "immanent" striving toward socialism.

Now comes the other side of the medal. "On the other hand, it is not only possible but certain that in countries barely fallen under the rule of capitalism and still preserving their clan institutions or remnants of them, these remnants of common property and the popular habits corresponding to them will, after the victory of the proletariat and the transition among the Western European peoples of the means of production into public property, prove a mighty instrument that will help these backward countries greatly shorten the process of their development into socialist societies and avoid a large part of the sufferings and struggles that have fallen to our lot in Western Europe." As is known, Engels mistakenly considered the contemporary Russian commune also a fragment of clan life. But what if it, this "weakened form" of clan communism, has decomposed or "almost finally decomposed" since its "roots were cut" by the mutual adaptation of old absolutism and the new bourgeoisie? Engels recalls here that "for Russia the social reconstruction will be greatly eased by the circumstance that a part of her own population has already assimilated the ideological results of capitalist development." And this is why Engels nevertheless does not dare to put a cross over the Russian commune, however much his entirely incorrect factual information seems to push him toward this. He expresses himself with the utmost caution and even evasiveness: "I shall not venture to say whether such remnants of the Russian commune have survived (!) as could, under appropriate conditions, become, together with a revolution in the West, the starting point of communist development, as Marx and I still hoped in 1882. But this much is certain: if remnants of the Russian commune can be saved, then only on condition of the overthrow of despotism - by a revolution in Russia. This revolution will tear the mass of the Russian people - the peasants - from the isolation of their villages, which for them constitute the whole 'world,' and will bring them out onto a broad arena from which they will see the external world, and through that will learn themselves, their own position, and the means of salvation from present need. In addition, this revolution will give a new impulse to the workers' movement of the West, will give it better conditions of struggle, and thereby speed the victory of the industrial proletariat, without which contemporary Russia cannot come to a socialist transformation either through the commune or through capitalism."

Since Engels wrote these words, about another decade has passed. The commune, that hopeless patient so many times sentenced to death by the learned priests of science, continues to test their patience. Not only is it not dying; to spite them, it even shows signs of internal revival. Repeated zemstvo-statistical investigations leave no doubt of this. Meanwhile, the propaganda of a definite extreme party and the proximity of the urban workers' movement, in the epoch we have lived through of general ferment and open civil war, have in fact already led the Russian peasantry "out of the isolation of the villages" onto the "broad arena," have made it see the external world, its position within it, and better and better understand the means of exit from that position. Already in the seventies Engels said that the isolation and disconnectedness of the peasant communes constitute the "natural basis" of a state organization of the type of Oriental despotism imposed on the country from outside and above; but at the same time, "the mass of the peasant population, especially since the abolition of serfdom, has been placed in a position which more and more urgently pushes it toward struggle with the government." Speaking further of the growth of general dissatisfaction with the present regime, Engels noted that with the growth of opposition among "educated society," there "appears the illusion of the possibility" of directing this upheaval into the peaceful channel of a constitution. "Here," Engels continued, "all the conditions of a revolution are combined - a revolution which the higher classes of the capitals, perhaps even the government itself, will begin, but which the peasants will inevitably continue and soon carry out of its first constitutional phase."

Although the general tempo of events proved not as swift as Engels thought, the general direction of their course was nevertheless correctly indicated by him. At the present time we really stand before the perspectives he indicated. And in this connection the question of the peasantry and its communal-labor instincts and views has not only not been removed from the agenda by reality; on the contrary, it has been

brought to the foreground with particular force. What place will the contemporary peasant commune occupy, what role will it play, and in what direction will it be modified in the impending land reconstruction? Of course we can no longer seek the solution of this question in any quotations from Engels or Marx. All these quotations show only how little the method of Alexander the Great - by which Russian orthodox Marxists are not averse to cutting through the tangled knot of Russian life called the land commune - has in common with the views of Marx and Engels, whose names are too often invoked by them in vain.

It goes without saying that for us the peasant commune is not some mystical social form which immanently, "out of itself," produces an inevitable movement either toward development into socialism or toward its own decomposition. For us there are in general no immanent laws of dialectical self-development. Before us stands a much more real and concrete question, to be decided not by a priori considerations but by purely inductive investigation: does the given, historically real peasantry, under given cultural and socio-political conditions, organized into land-communal cells, show the capacity to reorganize surrounding land relations and its own land relations on broader, historically progressive principles? Is the commune merely passive material which offers less resistance to influences from outside in the sense of progressive development, or do we have in the commune currents on whose active tendencies we may rely while working for this progressive development in the direction of socialism? We repeat: this question can be solved only by concrete, inductive investigation of real Russian actuality. But in order to clear the way for such an investigation, it is necessary radically to sweep away every pseudo-Marxist, fundamentally negative attitude toward the commune that puts on a Marxist mask in the curious manner of appealing to Marx of the forties against Marx of the later years - a regressive evolution toward the most primitive, undeveloped, embryonic forms of Marxism.

CHAPTER XI.

F. Engels on the Peasant Question.

Engels said his “last word” on the peasant question not long before his death, in the special article entitled “The Peasant Question in France and Germany.” The thoughts expressed in that article contain much that is new in comparison with Engels's earlier views. But he did not arrive at those thoughts and conclusions suddenly. In embryonic form they appeared already in several of his earlier writings; thus the sources of the views that stand out sharply in “The Peasant Question” can be traced back considerably earlier.

Thus, as early as 1870, Engels issued a second edition of his pamphlet on the Peasant War, written in 1850 and analyzed above. To this pamphlet he prefixed a fairly interesting introduction, in which he pointed out to the German working class two strata in the countryside that could serve as its support: the agricultural proletariat and the small peasantry.

Engels regarded the position of the agricultural proletariat - in the proper sense of the word, that is, farm laborers - as entirely analogous to the position of the industrial proletariat. Therefore, in his eyes, the measures for improving the position of both must also be analogous. He used the occasion to emphasize that “agricultural laborers can be freed from the pressure of their terrible poverty only if, first of all, the chief instrument of their labor, the land itself, is taken out of the private ownership of large peasants and still larger feudal landowners and transformed into common property, to be worked for common account by associations of agricultural workers.” But Engels says nothing here about the possibility of any demands moving in this direction already in the minimum program. In general, the content of a minimum program is hardly touched on in this preface; there is only one hint, which will be discussed below. Engels is concerned almost exclusively with the tactical tasks of the movement, and almost does not touch the programmatic demands that follow from them. Regarding hired farm laborers as “the most numerous rural class” in districts of medium and large landed property, and still standing at that time on the view that this class must progressively grow - a view which, as is known, was not confirmed - he considered “the nearest and most urgent task” of the German workers' movement to be the revival and drawing into the movement of the agricultural wage-workers: “this class, which is powerless because it is scattered and dispersed, but whose hidden strength the authorities and the nobility know so well that they deliberately neglect the schools in order to leave it in ignorance.”

The other stratum is “the small peasants - for the larger ones belong to the bourgeoisie.” Incidentally, passages of this kind in Marx and Engels ought to be thought over more carefully by our Marxists, who at any cost want to declare all independent peasantry to be bourgeois, “small, even the very smallest, but bourgeois all the same.”

It seems that the most “scientific” motive for assigning the peasantry to the bourgeoisie is that this makes it possible to declare the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, as a defender of the interests of the laboring peasantry, to be a petty-bourgeois party. But the “scientific” character of our “orthodox” people is not of any higher quality than that.

Analyzing further the various strata of the small peasantry, Engels first pauses over the peasants bound by labor services, who had preserved a series of duties inherited from serf times in favor of former lords, and then over tenants. Both, in his opinion, can easily be convinced that they may expect salvation only from the victory of the working class. “There remain,” he says, “the peasants who cultivate their own little plot of land. They are for the most part so burdened with mortgage debts that they depend on the usurer as much as the tenant depends on the landlord. Indeed, what remains to them is, in essence, only a meager wage, and even that insecure, because of the alternation of good and bad harvest years. Least of all can they expect anything from the bourgeoisie, for they are sucked dry precisely by the bourgeois - by capitalists practicing usury in every possible form. But they are for the most part very dependent on their property, although in reality it belongs less to them than to the usurer. Nevertheless it must be explained to them that only when a

government entirely dependent on the people converts all their mortgage debts into a debt of the state, with a lowering of interest, can they be freed from the usurers; and only the working class can carry this out." It is characteristic here that the moment envisaged for "state assumption of mortgages" is not the establishment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but simply the introduction of a state regime in which the government depends on the people - that is, a democratic republic or a form of government close to it.

The social-political estimate of the "small peasantry" outlined here is not an accident, not a slip, not a passing mood. Twenty years later, in the article "The Peasant Question in France and Germany," Engels repeated almost the same thing, but in an even more pronounced form. "By the small peasant," he writes, "we understand the owner or tenant - chiefly the former - of a piece of land ordinarily no larger than he can cultivate with the help of his own family, and no smaller than is necessary to support that family. Such a small peasant, like the small handicraftsman, is therefore a worker, distinguished from the modern proletarian by the fact that he still owns his means of production." But if such a peasant - whom Engels elsewhere calls the "self-working peasant," which corresponds to our usual term "laboring peasant" - is in substance a real worker, then there is nothing surprising in another statement by Engels in the same article: "we regard the small independent laboring peasant as, by inner tendency, potentially belonging to us." The aspiration to unite in the ranks of the socialist party these two elements - the proletariat and the laboring peasantry - no longer met, as you see, with any objection from Engels on this occasion. He merely held that, besides these two elements, no other rural strata as such could enter it. "I emphatically deny," he says, "that the socialist workers' party of any country has the task of taking into its ranks, besides rural proletarians and small peasants, also the middle and large peasantry," whose typical mark he sees in the exploitation of hired labor, "or even the tenants of large estates, capitalist cattle-breeders, and other capitalist exploiters of the national soil. In our party, it is true, we may accept individual persons from any social class, but never groups representing capitalist, middle-bourgeois, or middle-peasant interests." Notice that Engels proclaimed this attitude to the small peasantry even though he still regarded it as a remnant of the old mode of production, condemned to disappear before capitalist competition, and therefore saw the typical small peasant as a future proletarian. On this point the orthodox themselves no longer stand where Engels stood.

All the more reason, then, for them to recognize Engels's propositions on the union of the proletariat and the laboring peasantry, and to draw from them all the necessary logical conclusions. The more we become convinced that the peasant is not merely a survival of the past, but a living element of the present and immediate future, the greater importance those propositions acquire.

Instead of this, the orthodox gentlemen prefer to fall into sacred horror at the fact that we wish to unite the proletariat with the laboring peasantry in the general concept of the toiling, working class; in doing so, they say, we take the standpoint of old production relations. "The standpoint of these relations," writes Mr. Plekhanov in his preface to the Engels pamphlet cited above, "is precisely the standpoint of 'all the toilers' characteristic of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. That is why, and in this perfectly exact scientific sense of the word, we call them socialist-reactionaries." Yet one must admit that these orthodox gentlemen are not always so strict on this score. Even Mr. Plekhanov himself, who chastises us for such a reactionary and petty-bourgeois fall, is not above correcting his own "orthodoxy" with our "petty-bourgeoisness" when the occasion requires it. What is to be done? It turns out that, when practical and diplomatic considerations make it useful to show the goods in a good light and to emphasize more strongly that the Russian Social-Democrats are not narrow defenders of only the wage-workers of capitalist industry, Mr. Plekhanov considers it "expedient" to give, for example, definitions such as this: "What are the interests of the working class? They are the interests of all those who do not live by exploiting the labor of others. They are all our, or more precisely, all the nation's toilers, minus the exploiters."

From this it is clear that Mr. Plekhanov, who so frankly adopts the standpoint of "all the toilers," must, in the "perfectly exact scientific sense of the word," call Mr. Plekhanov a socialist-reactionary. As you see, "the slave beats herself when she does not thresh cleanly."

But let us turn from Plekhanov back to Engels.

His article “Die Bauernfrage in Frankreich und Deutschland,” as we have already said, is of particular interest because Engels wrote it shortly before his death. It is therefore the last word of the creators of “scientific socialism” on the peasant question, and as it were Engels's posthumous testament to European social democracy. And we shall see that the Russian Social-Democrats - and perhaps not only the Russian ones - have by no means remained faithful to this testament in all respects. Instead of going farther along the road on which Engels, and before him Marx, were increasingly entering, they turned back toward the rudimentary Marxism that bordered on peasant-phobia.

Engels begins his article with a polemical thrust. “The bourgeois and reactionary parties,” he says, “are extraordinarily surprised by the fact that at the present time the peasant question has suddenly everywhere been placed on the agenda by the socialists. It would be more correct for them to be surprised that this had not happened earlier. From Ireland to Sicily, from Andalusia to Russia and Bulgaria, the peasant plays the role of an essential factor in population, production, and the distribution of political power.” Of course, from the standpoint of plain common sense, it is clear that no living practical party can with impunity ignore a social stratum so numerous as the peasantry, especially if within that stratum there is ferment, passing over into sharp outbreaks of unconscious and half-conscious protest. Ireland and Sicily, Andalusia, Russia, and Bulgaria are not the first names that happened to come to Engels's tongue. They are the names of countries and localities where, before the appearance of Engels's article, especially strong or frequent peasant riots, uprisings, or even organized movements with revolutionary methods and more or less bold social demands had taken place. From this point of view it is understandable that the socialists of all countries had to concern themselves with the agrarian question more attentively than before. And it is equally understandable that, in answer to the amazement of the bourgeois and reactionary parties - why had the socialists suddenly seized upon the peasant question? - Engels could only “wonder at their wonder.”

But unfortunately the matter has another side. In justification of their surprise, the bourgeois and reactionary parties could have adduced not a few very weighty arguments. True, ferment is visible among the peasantry; movements of protest, more or less powerful, arise there. But what follows from that? Were not the peasant wars broader in extent and often more intense in their course? Yet, thanks to Lassalle, they have acquired among broad circles of socialists the reputation of movements reactionary in substance and revolutionary only in appearance. And does not the gospel of the modern Social-Democrat - the Communist Manifesto - declare that peasants, craftsmen, and small producers in general are conservative and even reactionary elements, since they defend their economic existence against the encroachments of large capital and hinder it from carrying out its “historical mission”? Has it not until now been one of the dogmas of the Social-Democratic creed that peasants strive to turn back the wheel of history, that their disappearance is inevitable and even historically progressive? And does it not logically follow that, for the “true” Social-Democrat, all present-day peasant outbreaks are no more than the convulsive spasms of a hopelessly sick man experiencing his death agony?

The Communist Manifesto asserted not only that the peasantry was decomposing, but even that it was already almost destroyed or, at least, was being destroyed daily. But more than half a century has passed since the appearance of the Manifesto. Is it not clear that, the farther history advanced, the less reason there remained to pay attention to the peasantry? Is it not clear that in the end its fate was more and more to become a quantity negligible? Is it not clear that half a century of “daily destruction” is more than enough to make complete ignoring of the peasantry perfectly timely? And yet we observe an entirely different picture: the socialists are compelled by the very course of events to devote more and more attention to the peasantry. From the beginning of the 1890s down to the present, the agrarian question has been one of the main “nails” in party debates; and for the socialist world these decades may truly be called an “epoch of agrarian programs.” Is not this unexpected, not only from the standpoint of the bourgeois and reactionary parties, which naturally rested in the happiest calm at the sight of the discord between proletarian socialism and the peasantry, but also from the standpoint of the pure, orthodox Marxist, immovably faithful to his “dogma”?

But the whole point is that, by the time Engels's article appeared, real life and the Marxist dogma had diverged so far that a new step forward, new corrections and reservations, had become necessary. To remain in the old theoretical position had become impossible. Not everyone has the courage of the Englishman faithful to his Baedeker, who, not finding in the place indicated by the guidebook a tower or bridge, calmly noted in the margin: “the locality is wrong”; or of the botanist who tore off the extra petals from flowers that had the insolence to possess a larger number of them than his theory allowed. And so Engels, first observing that until then the peasant had been characterized politically by apathy, whose source he saw in the isolation of village life, at once states decisively of this apathy that one must not see in it something insuperable and inevitable. In the past, there had been many misunderstandings between the revolutionary proletariat and the peasantry; but their cause was not only peasant mistrust. It also lay in the immaturity of the workers' movement itself. Since then, however, much had changed. Industrial progress had shaken the immobility of the village; on the other hand, in the cities powerful workers' parties had arisen, with an elaborated program and tactics, and with a persistent struggle for the future conquest of political power. “But in order to conquer political power, the workers' party must first go from the city into the countryside; it must become a power in the countryside too.” Such is Engels's first and fundamental practical conclusion.

Socialism must become a force in the countryside as well - that is easy to say; but how is it to be done? Socialism rejects private property, whereas peasants are private owners. Must socialism, therefore, carry out the expropriation of peasant property? And is not a collision with the peasantry at this point inevitable?

This is the fundamental question that, in one form or another, must be answered in the agrarian program of every socialist party. It is impossible to evade it or slip away from its solution. It must be placed squarely, and the answer to it must be clear and categorical.

Engels raises this question in the above-mentioned article while criticizing the agrarian program of the French Workers' Party, the so-called Guesdists. He finds - on the whole quite rightly - that the authors of the French program had tried to get around this question by a series of vague and indefinite phrases, which made the motivation of the most important points of the agrarian program very doubtful. But for the moment we shall not enter into the details of the critical part of Engels's article. We shall dwell only on the positive views expressed by Engels in his “Bauernfrage.” We shall dwell on them in some detail especially because, when one of our articles referred to this article of Engels in confirmation of certain of our views, Mr. Plekhanov tried - in his preface to the Russian translation of Engels's article - to accuse us of misquoting him and therefore of distorting Engels's opinions. Below we shall examine his accusations; for now let us cite several basic passages.

> “When we have taken state power,” says Engels, “we shall plainly not even be able to think of forcibly expropriating the peasants, whether with or without compensation, as we shall be compelled to do in relation to the large landowners. Our task in relation to the peasant consists, above all, in transforming his private economy and private property into social ones - not by force, but by example and by the offer of social assistance for that purpose. In any case we have enough means to show the peasant the advantages that ought already now to be clear to him.”

In what way, then, are we to “show the peasant the advantages of common property and common economy, which ought already now to be clear to him”? The example of the Danish socialist party serves Engels in clarifying this point.

> “For twenty years already,” he says in substance, “the Danish socialists, in whose country there is actually only one real city - Copenhagen - and who outside it must conduct almost exclusively peasant propaganda, have worked out a plan of this kind. The peasants of a village, or parish - since in Denmark there are many large isolated farms - are to unite their land into one large estate, cultivate it for common account, and divide the income proportionally according to the size of the land plots, the money contributions, and the personal labor of the members.

> “In Denmark small ownership plays only a secondary role; but if we think of parcel property, we shall find that when the parcels are united and their common area is cultivated on a large scale, part of the labor-power previously occupied in the separate farms becomes superfluous. It is precisely this saving of labor that constitutes one of the chief advantages of large-scale cultivation. Employment for this liberated labor-power may be found in two ways: either the peasant associations are given the use of large stretches of land from neighboring large estates, or they are given the means and possibility for auxiliary industrial occupations, as far as possible and above all with a view to personal consumption. In both cases they are placed in a more favorable economic position, and at the same time the necessary influence over common management is secured, so that the peasant associations may gradually be transferred into a higher form and the rights and duties of both the separate associations as wholes and of their individual members may be equalized with the remaining branches of the great social whole. How to do this in each special concrete case will depend on the circumstances and on the conditions under which we acquire public power. Thus, perhaps, we shall be in a position to give the associations still further advantages: conversion of all their mortgage debts into state debt with a strong lowering of interest; assistance from public funds for the introduction of large-scale production - assistance not necessarily in monetary form, but above all in kind: machines, fertilizer, and so forth - and various other benefits.”

Thus Engels allowed for the possibility that peasants could enter the socialist “state of the future” by a different, special road from that of factory workers. For factory workers the socialization of labor is accomplished from above, under the iron rule of capital. Among peasants, the same socialization of labor and property may organically grow from below - of course with the assistance of the socialist party, growing stronger and acquiring a decisive voice in legislation. This special road is all the more necessary because agrarian capitalism has not justified the rosy hopes that many theorists of Marxism formerly placed in it. In agriculture, capitalism has developed chiefly its negative and destructive sides at the expense of the creative and positive ones. It has developed less as a higher mode of production than as a higher, indeed extreme, mode of exploitation. Its “historical mission” has turned out to be purely negative: it has generated a mass of sufferings, discontent, and indignation. But it has not concentrated and reformed the productive forces in a degree analogous to industrial progress. It has gravitated not so much toward large capitalist farming as toward small tenancy under conditions most advantageous to large landed property. It has gravitated not so much toward the creation of a special permanent class of wage-workers with a typically proletarian psychology as toward the mixing, in one person, of the functions of farm laborer and small owner; toward the reduction of the stratum of pure agricultural laborers; and toward the development in the farm laborer of that psychology which has made it possible to christen him a “larva of the peasant,” or Bauern-Axolotl. Agrarian capitalism has not concentrated and thickened the village population, but thinned it out; it has not raised but lowered the material and general cultural level of the rural worker; it has led the evolution of the agrarian order into a dull, hopeless blind alley.

Reality has shown even more than this. It has shown the instability of the dogma of “concentration” and “proletarianization” in the sphere of agriculture. True, Engels still does not notice this even in his last article. He notices it so little that Mr. Plekhanov must correct his teacher in passing, hastily and with some embarrassment: “Recent investigations, on the whole, have fully confirmed Engels's view of the position of the small peasant under the domination of capitalism. True, the probable consequences of this position did not appear to our teacher to be exactly what they now appear to us. He spoke with certainty of the fact that small peasant property is condemned to disappearance. But the facts...” and so on.

It is not difficult to see that, if the “teacher” had avoided this mistake, he could only have emphasized still more strongly, brought together, and developed further many of his practical views. Steps toward the socialization from below of landed property, as part of a minimum program, together with a positive attitude toward the peasant commune, acquire all the greater significance the less faith one has in the creative capacities of agrarian capitalism.

To use communal forms, communal views, and communal habits among the peasantry for spreading the socialist idea that the land belongs to the people; to use the artel habits of the same peasantry in order gradually, along the line of least resistance, to accustom its mind to the idea of a social, socialist organization of production - this is the task which, in the present state of the question of the viability of small peasant farming, follows logically and directly from the propositions of F. Engels just cited. For, after all, “the main task in all this is and remains one thing: to make it clear to the peasant that we can save and maintain his house and field property only by transforming it into cooperative property and cooperative farming.” Nothing else than the isolated character of private farming, conditioned by the isolated character of private landownership, is the factor that drags the peasantry toward ruin. If the peasants insist on this isolation, “they will necessarily be driven from house and farm, and their obsolete mode of production will be displaced by large capitalist production. Such is the state of affairs. And so we come and offer the peasants the possibility of introducing large-scale farming themselves, not for capitalist account, but for their own common account.” How could it not be made clear to the peasant that this is in his own interest, that it is perhaps the only means of his salvation?

Since we wish in the future to use and raise to higher forms the peasant association and the land commune, it is clear that even before public power passes into our hands we must relate to them positively. This, in some of its parts, was also what the agrarian program of the French Guesdists demanded; and it is not surprising that Engels had nothing against those parts. Let us recall that they came down to increasing communal landed property and to an economic policy favorable to the development of cooperation and communal use of improved means of production.

Having begun in 1848 by singing, so to speak, the funeral service over the peasantry, Engels ended in 1895, to a certain extent, by wishing it health. “We stand resolutely on the side of the small peasant,” he wrote; “we shall do everything possible to make his lot more bearable and to ease his transition to cooperation, if he decides on it, and even, if he cannot yet make such a decision, to give him time on his parcel to think it over. We do this not only because we regard the independently working peasant as potentially ours, but also out of direct party interest. The greater the number of peasants whom we save from an actual fall into the proletariat, whom we win over to our side already as peasants, the sooner and more easily the social transformation will be accomplished. We have no need to wait with it until capitalist production has developed everywhere to its final results, until the last peasant and the last handicraftsman have fallen victim to capitalist large-scale production. The material sacrifices which in this sense must be made in the interests of the peasantry out of public funds may appear, from the standpoint of bourgeois economy, to be money thrown away; in fact, however, they are an excellent investment, because they mean the saving of a probably ten-times larger expenditure in the costs of the whole social reorganization.” With the qualifications indicated, we sign both hands under these views of Engels. They illuminate well the essence of the work that lies ahead, on the common foundation of the economic and legal basis of “socialization of the land.”

It goes without saying that the abolition of land hunger will by no means abolish all the misfortunes weighing on the laboring peasantry. Socialization of the land will only prepare certain premises upon which the working class, under better conditions, will enter a new struggle; and when it defeats its enemies and becomes full master of the situation, it will be able to pass over to the creative work necessary for the realization of socialism as a whole. In industry the process of concentration of the instruments of production has gone so far that for an enormous part of the proletariat the task is simultaneously to take possession of these instruments and to undertake the social organization of production itself - only a portion of the very small craftsmen in the towns forms an exception. In the countryside the matter stands otherwise. The stubborn and not unsuccessful struggle of small farming for its existence does not give us the simplified formulation in which it remains only to strip the capitalist form from already concentrated property and concentrated enterprise, replacing that obsolete form with a new socialist one. Here one must think of a process of socialization of property and labor proceeding from below. In this process, two moments - the

transfer of land into common property and the establishment upon it of common farming - may be separated in time. The first, accomplished through the socialization of land, is entirely possible and attainable even with the preservation of commodity-capitalist economy. And, of course, this commodity-capitalist economy will continue to press upon the peasantry even after the socialization of land has been accomplished, especially if the process of socialization is prolonged, if it appears not as the result of the peasantry's seizure of the land, but as a series of gradual concessions by the bourgeoisie under the pressure of the growing organization of the peasant masses.

Even a peasant secured in land for his labor needs will still have to reckon with the force of merchant capital, usurer capital, and even industrial capital - especially where factories process agricultural products, for example sugar mills and the like. This struggle will, of course, become a stimulus toward introducing common production, developing communal farming, agricultural cooperatives, syndicates, and so on. Immediate advantages will push peasants toward the transition from individual to collective production, toward completing that collective, conscious intervention of the working masses into the regulation of the conditions of their economic existence which begins with the socialization of the land. Legislation that now serves the expropriators and exploiters of the peasantry will finally be torn from their hands by the peasants together with the proletarians. Then it will be possible to proceed to the “crowning of the edifice,” to the realization of the ultimate aim of the whole movement. Peasant associations working on collective land will be assisted in combining agricultural and industrial labor. If by that time remnants of unsocialized land remain, they too will be handed over to public hands. The associations will be placed in a better economic position, and at the same time the organ administering the affairs of society as a whole will have over them the influence necessary gradually to transfer the peasant association into a higher form, and to equalize the rights and duties of the association as a whole and of its individual members with the other branches of socialist society. How this is to be carried out in detail in each separate case will depend on the given circumstances and on the conditions under which we enter into possession of public power.

In representing the course of social evolution in this way, we are guided only by the indications of living experience, by the search for paths to embody our socialist ideas in life. Science and life are our only guides. But since for the Social-Democrats this is not enough; since science and life interest them only insofar as they coincide with their “dogma,” insofar as they can be confirmed by reference to authority, to Marx or Engels - we considered it useful to refer to the excellent page in Engels's article “The Peasant Question in France and Germany.” For us personally, of course, the matter would not change in the slightest if Engels had looked at this question quite differently. His opinion, as the opinion of a man of science, is subject for us to the same verification by criticism and by life as the opinions of other scholars. But for those who swear by the name of the teacher, it is not useless to learn the difference between the thinking of a broadly educated scholar and the stereotyped phrases of a narrow dogmatist.

In response to our reference to Engels, however, Mr. Plekhanov, in the preface to his new separate Russian edition of Engels's article, tried to convict us of falsehood. He exclaims pompously: “The publicist V. Ch. refers precisely to the work of Engels which we are now publishing in Russian translation. The reader may therefore judge for himself how much truth there is in this reference.”

Since we consider inadmissible for ourselves that more than liberal attitude toward quotations which kindred organs of Mr. Plekhanov systematically practice, we would be deeply distressed if his reproach proved just. But the whole point is that, in attempting to convict us of an imaginary falsehood, Mr. Plekhanov became a prisoner of his own position and committed three actual falsehoods.

Mr. Plekhanov corrects our “falsehood” on three points. First, “of the Danish socialists Engels says only that already twenty years earlier they had begun to work out a plan for organizing productive agricultural associations among small peasants. He does not express his opinion as to what the efforts of the Danish socialists led to,” confining himself, Plekhanov says, to the passing remark that in Denmark small peasant landownership plays a secondary role. Second, “as for those countries where small landownership is very

widespread, the strengthening and development of associations is attached by him to one indispensable condition, of which Mr. Chernov did not think it necessary to mention: to the seizure of power by the working class. Engels says directly that in each separate case the organization of such associations will depend on the circumstances under which public power passes into our hands." Third, "and in general all this reasoning in Engels is an answer to the question how 'we' - the Social-Democrats - will treat the small peasantry on the day when power comes into our hands."

Thus, if Mr. Plekhanov is to be believed, in one reference to Engels we have contrived to include three inaccuracies calling forth on his part the necessity of three corrections. Let us see what these corrections are worth.

As for the first point, Engels indeed does not "express" what the efforts of the Danish socialists led to - as Plekhanov very correctly prints in italics. But did we ever attribute such an "expression" to him? Where did Mr. Plekhanov find this? Why did he not quote our false testimony about Engels? Strange coincidence: in his quotation he breaks off our rendering of Engels's view precisely in the middle of the sentence about the Danish socialists. "As an example," he quotes, "he points to the example of the Danish socialists..." But our reference to the Danish example had only the purpose of showing that Engels considered possible and permissible already under bourgeois society socialist work among the peasantry in the direction of agricultural association. We did not say that Engels had reported the success of this work. The first "correction," therefore, corrects something we never said.

The second correction is no better. It is true that Engels says the further transfer of peasant associations into a higher form will depend on the conditions under which social power comes into our hands. But what depends on those conditions is precisely the further transfer into a higher form - not the very beginning of the associations, not propaganda in their favor, and not the positive attitude toward them before the conquest of power. This difference is of great importance. After the conquest of public power one can "transfer into a higher form" only that which already exists by the moment of that conquest. Mr. Plekhanov's rendering of Engels's words is therefore falsehood number two.

Finally, it is false that Engels's whole reasoning about associations is an answer to the question how the Social-Democrats will treat the small peasantry "on the day when power comes into their hands." Engels raises not one but two questions: what is our attitude to the small peasantry now, and what shall we have to do with it when we possess state power? In the sequel he answers both questions.

Need proof? Take even this passage, already cited: "If they insist on their individual farming, they will inevitably be driven from house and farm, and their obsolete mode of production will be displaced by large-scale capitalist production. Such is the state of affairs; and so we come and offer the peasants the possibility of introducing large-scale farming themselves, not for capitalist account, but for their own common account." Of what time is Engels speaking here? Is it, perhaps, under the scepter of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" that its agents will drive the peasants from house and farm by writ of execution, and install capitalism in their place? If so, Mr. Plekhanov has a strange idea of the order that the dictatorship of the proletariat will bring with it. If not, how will he reconcile this astonishing contradiction?

He does not reconcile it. He simply removes the contradiction - and very simply, reader. The words "they will be driven from house and farm" Mr. Plekhanov translates in softened form, etching out of the phrase every violent shade of meaning and leaving a general and indefinite "will lose both land and farm." Thus the contradiction becomes less noticeable. Translator and commentator have, as it were, a touching alliance: one hand washes the other.

But even this is not enough. Elsewhere Engels says that even now one may oppose the unjust means by which large landowners and capitalists struggle against small peasants, obstruct direct swindling and robbery, and the like; and he continues: "This will succeed only in exceptional cases. Under the developed capitalist mode of production, no one knows where honest business ends and swindling begins. But it will always

make a great difference whether public power stands on the side of the swindler or on the side of those who suffer from swindling. We stand resolutely on the side of the small peasant; we shall do everything possible to make his lot more bearable, to ease his transition to cooperation if he decides on it, and even, if he is not in a position to make such a decision, to give him as much time as possible for reflection on his parcel." And further he says that the social transformation will come the sooner "the greater the number of peasants whom we save from an actual fall into the proletariat." It seems clear enough that the work of this "saving" precedes the "social transformation," that it is one of the preliminary conditions that hastens its arrival, and does not begin only "on the day after the social revolution."

And if all this were still not convincing enough, there is still clearer testimony. In discussing the practical demands of the Marseilles program of the French Workers' Party - the purchase by communes of agricultural implements, the formation of all sorts of peasant associations, the establishment of experimental agronomic stations, free agricultural education and other measures of improvement, and so forth - Engels not only does not postpone these measures to "the day after the social revolution," but on the contrary expressly emphasizes that these demands do not go especially far and fully fit within the framework of the existing order. And, evidently so as not to mislead Mr. Plekhanov, he adds: "All this is said simply to characterize the program; in this there is no reproach - rather the opposite." How, then, can Engels, who according to Mr. Plekhanov attaches the organization of associations only to the time after the dictatorship of the proletariat, not blame but rather approve the formation of peasant associations as a point of the minimum program?

No softened translations will help matters here, nor will they conceal the fact that in this point also, in trying to correct us, Mr. Plekhanov could resort only to one thing: falsehood number three. Thus his accusation that we made three inaccuracies is one continuous falsehood cubed.

We therefore consider it fully established that socialist agitation among peasants in favor of their union from below, by their own initiative, of property and farming, in favor of their creation of collective forms of labor and various kinds of cooperation - that such agitation was recognized by Engels as desirable, and not only after the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship but now. And precisely because it attracts peasants to collectivism already as peasants, it indicates to them the possibility of bypassing the phase of proletarianization. Engels was only a great skeptic on the question of how far socialists would in reality succeed in these fully expedient efforts. He was such a skeptic because he valued too highly the power of agricultural capitalism and too low the viability of small peasant farming. He believed in the law of concentration. We do not believe in it, just as Mr. Plekhanov himself does not. That is why, in our eyes, the importance and chances of success of the association of the peasantry from below, independently of capitalist concentration, must be greater than they seemed to Engels.

We see that life has in no way confirmed Engels's assumption about the demise of small peasant farming. But we fully agree with him that it is not the business of socialists to strive to preserve and perpetuate small peasant property. The sole way out for socialists is clear. We must struggle against the formation of proprietary ideas in the peasantry. We must, agitating on the ground of its present land hunger and making use of its traditional views on the land, preach to it the socialization of the land and, on the basis of socialization, the development of peasant cooperation and communal farming. This cooperation and communal farming is not yet socialism; it is also only a new step forward within the limits of the existing order. But it is a step that facilitates and brings nearer the social transformation on socialist principles. Under the greater or lesser domination of the bourgeois order these cooperatives will encounter many difficulties. Yet the more widely they spread, the easier it will be for us socialists, after the seizure of power by the working class, "to transfer the associations," in Engels's words, "into a higher form and equalize their rights and duties with the other branches of socialist society." That this point of view was not alien to Engels is shown by his reference to the attempts of the Danish socialists, still under bourgeois society, "to work out such plans." If one judges by the words of Mr. Plekhanov, who exposes us, then Engels wrote according to the method: "an elderberry in the garden and an uncle in Kiev" - he began with cooperatives, jumped to Denmark, and then returned to cooperatives. But surely Mr. Plekhanov himself does not take his own words

seriously. In any case, whether agricultural cooperatives in bourgeois society can count on success or not, for the small peasantry that is not becoming proletarian the road to socialism lies through cooperation and communal farming on the basis of the socialization of the land.

But this is not all. In the same preface of Mr. Plekhanov we find an example of such “qualified bad faith” as is not often encountered in literature.

We urgently draw the attention of all rank-and-file Social-Democrats, all ideological pupils of Mr. Plekhanov, and all our opponents from the Marxist camp to this example. In it, as in a focus, is concentrated Plekhanov's whole polemical manner, which for a long time became a model for a great mass of his followers - a manner that introduced real poison into the literary morals of the extreme left camp, at least one part of it. Until recently, such devices could be found only in the backyards of journalism. Let our “friend-enemies” in the Social-Democratic camp look and judge for themselves. Let them, hand on heart, answer: can a just cause be defended by such methods? Does not the party that resorts to them testify to its own poverty? Does a pure and self-confident cause need such weapons of struggle?

Remembering the rule of one of Shchedrin's characters - “accuse your opponent as loudly as possible of the thing of which you yourself feel guilty” - Mr. Plekhanov is generous with accusations that we have “altered” Marx and Engels, with ironic references to our “love of truth,” and even with talk of some sort of “false quotations.” All this because we indicated that Engels's views on the peasantry, so ultra-orthodox at first, gradually softened, changed, evolved. Mr. Plekhanov disagrees and shouts about “alterations” of Engels in our party literature. And in order to put us to shame he declares: “In the appendix we print two pages from Engels's book The German Peasant War, written by him at the very beginning of the fifties. It is enough to glance through these pages to see that Engels even then held the same view of the peasantry that is expressed in the pamphlet we are offering.”

We looked into these appended “two pages” - and, to confess, rubbed our eyes in amazement. At first we could not believe them. Taking the German original of The Peasant War in hand, we searched in vain for the passages quoted by Mr. Plekhanov. They were not there. What did turn out? It turned out that, contrary to Mr. Plekhanov's positive assurance, these famous “two pages” were not taken from the text of the article itself “on the Peasant War,” written by Engels indeed in 1850, but from the preface to its second edition, which appeared not at the beginning of the 1850s at all, but exactly twenty years later.

What was Mr. Plekhanov counting on here? On the difficulty of checking the quotation? On the bibliographical rarity of the cited work? In any case, he miscalculated cruelly and fell once more into the pit he wanted to dig for us. The evidence is plain; anyone who wishes may verify it. In those very “two pages” which Mr. Plekhanov forced Engels to write at the very beginning of the 1850s, one reads, for example, of the “famous decision of the Basel International Workers' Congress.” But anyone who looks it up can learn that the sessions of that congress took place from 5 to 11 September 1869. One would have to attribute to Engels an excessive gift of scientific foresight to make him write about the decisions of that congress “at the very beginning of the 1850s.”

Perhaps there is no direct bad faith on Mr. Plekhanov's part here, but simply a gross blunder, an oversight? After all, he might not have noticed the words about the Basel Congress. Or he might have forgotten the date of the congress and transferred it to the end of the 1840s. Let us suppose so. But whoever looks through the full text of Engels's preface will have to put aside entirely any thought of an honest mistake. In Engels's text there is more than one reference to events much later than the early 1850s: for example, on page 5 to the influence on Austria of the war of 1866, and on page 8 to the conduct of the German big bourgeoisie during 1870.

And I recall how Lavrov once spoke ironically of Mr. Plekhanov's “hasty manner of quotation,” how N. Kudrin exposed his margarine quotations from ancient classics, and how N. K. Mikhailovsky, accused by Mr. Beltov of giving false testimony about Sieber, documented the false testimony of the accuser himself.

One asks: what did Mr. Plekhanov count on then, and what does he continue to count on? That his ideological opponents will find it too boring and disgusting to expose such “tricks”? That credulous readers will not notice anything? That his supporters, blinded by factional patriotism, will pay no attention no matter how many times their “theoretical leader” is caught red-handed? It is hard to say: perhaps on all three. One thing is certain: naive is the person who would expect from Mr. Plekhanov an honest confession of guilt or error. Perhaps he sometimes feels not entirely comfortable; but presumably, in the best case, he says to himself at such moments the words of one of Gleb Uspensky's characters: “It would long ago be time to remember God, but one keeps going on out of renown, solely out of renown.”

But enough of Mr. Plekhanov. Allah himself has commanded him to act as he acts. In his person we have an advocate who wishes, at any cost, to justify the dogma, to blur its contradictions, to make its ends meet, closing his eyes to the process of its evolution and inner reworking which the first teachers of Marxism themselves began.

We invite all Russian Marxists, and all those who feel drawn toward their views, to think carefully about this evolution of the fathers of “scientific” socialism, and to fix their attention chiefly not on the initial but on the concluding phases of that evolution. Of course we do not invite them slavishly to follow what chronologically appeared as the “last word” of Marx or Engels. Not at all. On the contrary, in our view, even in this “last word,” if one looks at it more closely, there will be found much that is unclear, unfinished, unexplained, and at times contradictory. Now and again there flashes out an echo of the old conviction that the death sentence over the peasantry has long since been pronounced by old Mother History, and that only the utterly inappropriate stubbornness and obstinacy of the muzhik delays its execution. In the striving to reconcile these old views with the new there is always a fair dose of eclecticism. That is why we do not invite the “Marxists of the first hour” of Marx's or Engels's literary activity simply to turn into “Marxists of the last hour” of that activity. We invite them only to think carefully about the general character, the general direction, of the evolution of the views of their “first teachers,” and not only to pass along the whole path in their footsteps, but to go farther along that same road on which only death stopped those first teachers.

Once, in the article on Kriege, Marx wrote:

> “We have never declared our development to be finally completed. We wish to create and learn together with our time, from the content of our time; parallel with the development of real relations, from the content of those real relations; together with the movement of actual humanity, from this movement of humanity. And we shall always preserve the faith that there is no standing still in one place, and that only he who progresses does not regress.”

Marxism, especially Russian Marxism, did not progress and did not wish to progress in the sphere of the agrarian question. And Marx's words have come true with regard to it: it has regressed. Not wishing to go forward, it - as is shown with particular clarity by the example of Mr. Plekhanov - has gone backward at full speed, under full steam.

END OF PART ONE.