COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM

A Review of Capitalism and the Cause of Its Collapse

The Advent of Communism, its Claim of the People’s Right to Self-Determination and the Emancipation of the Workers through a Proletarian Dictatorship

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I.
CAPITALIST SLAVERY

General Characteristics of Capitalism as a System of Exploitation
At the present time almost the whole globe is under the rule of capitalism. This rule is based upon private property and the production of commodities for the market.

A small group of persons is in possession of the monopoly of the means of producing these goods, and of the means of distributing them; this group is the capitalist class. This monopoly assures to this class an undivided economic domination over millions of proletarians, who possess no means of production, and who are forced to sell their labor power.

The economic domination of the bourgeoisie is secured by its political rule, and by its state organization, which gives it a monopoly over all arms and means of applying physical force.

The Rule of the bourgeoisie is also secured culturally, for it possesses the monopoly of education, this being in the hands of the capitalists.

Wage Labor and the Conditions of Exploitation
The working class, which forms a constantly growing majority of the population, thus serves as a living source of profit to the bourgeoisie exploiting its labor.

(a) The Worker as Wage Slave. The working class, economically oppressed, subjected politically and culturally, is the slave of capital.

(b) Private Property and the Production of Commodities for Sale.
(c) The Monopoly of the Means of Production.
(d) State Power as a Monopolist Organization of the Ruling Class; Monopoly of Arms.
(d) The Monopoly of Education.

Contradictions in the Development of the Capitalist System
The hunt for profits forced the bourgeoisie to develop its productive powers continuously and increasingly, and to extend the sphere of operations of capitalist production. But the fundamental defects of the capitalist system revealed themselves at the same time with ever growing distinctness; these defects inevitably lead to the complete breakdown of the capitalist system.

The rule of private property imparts an anarchic character to production, and leads to blind production regulated by no conscious power. This is shown on the one hand in the severe conflicts between various competing concerns and groups of concerns, causing an enormous waste of energy; on the other hand the unregulated production causes periodically recurring crises, accompanied by destruction of productive forces and mass unemployment among the proletariat.

To the anarchy of production must be added the class conflicts. Capitalist society, built up on the exploitation of an overwhelming majority of the population by an incon siderable minority, is torn in two, and its whole history is one of conflicts between the classes.

(c) The Struggle of Capitalism for Domination; Wars.
(d) The Process of Centralization of Capital reflects the Contradictions of Capitalism.

The struggle of the capitalist system for world domination leads to a special form of competition among the capitalist states, finally expressed in wars which are equally inevitable accompaniments of capitalism, as are crises and unemployment.

The extension of capitalist production, involving the development of productive forces, is accompanied by the decay of pre-capitalist economic forms in the competitive struggles, by the decay of a part of the peasantry, by the disappearance of handicrafts, by the economic defeat of small and medium capital, and by the open plundering and merciless exploitation of the colonial countries. This process leads on the one hand to an accumulation of capital, to its concentration (centralization) in the hands of a few multi-millionaires, and is, on the other hand, accompanied by a tremendous increase in the numbers of the proletariat which, having passed through the severe school of the capitalist system, becomes the deadly enemy of the bourgeoisie and its system of society.

The process of the centralization of capital, and of the extension of the capitalist system, constantly reproduces the fundamental defects of capitalism on an ever-increasing scale. The competition among small capitalists ceases, only to be replaced by one among big capitalists; where competition among big capitalists comes to a standstill, it widens its radius and becomes a competition between the gigantic associations of the millionnaires.
and their states: the crises change from those of local and national character to crises extending over the number of countries, and finally to world crises, the local wars are replaced by alliances and world wars; the class war develops from isolated actions of single groups of workers, first to a national struggle, and then to an international struggle of the world proletariat against the world bourgeoisie.

The inevitable sharpening of the class antagonisms is accompanied by a simultaneous consolidation of the antagonistic class forces. On the one side the capitalist bourgeoisie forms its associations, secures its state power, and organizes its armed forces; on the other side the working class, brought into one camp and united by the mechanism of capitalist production itself, creates its own powerful organizations, which are sooner or later transformed into weapons of the proletariat in the war against the bourgeoisie and its main support,—state power.

The natural course of capitalist evolution thus inevitably sharpens the contradictions of the capitalist system, and finally renders the existence of the system itself impossible. The living force which overthrows the capitalist system is the proletariat, which revolts against its bondage, annihilates the regime of capital, and organizes the systematic economics of Socialism, the premises of which are created by capitalism itself.

These premises of the new form of society which has to replace capitalism, are: the concentration of the means of production, a powerful capitalist technique, the science created by capitalist evolution, the workers' organizations, which will be able to furnish the first organizers of the new order of society.

The last decades of the rule of capital are characterized by special features of evolution, rendering the internal contradictions intensely acute, and leading to the unheard of war crisis of 1914 and the years following.

Capitalism became world capitalism, a form of economics which subordinated all other forms on the whole surface of the globe.

The numerous private undertakings competing with one another and destroying each other in this competition, have been replaced by mighty associations of industrial magnates (syndicates and trusts), consolidated by the banks. This new form of capital, in which banking capital amalgamates with industrial capital, in which the possessions of the large landowners also become a part of the general organization through the agency of the banks, where there are cliques of enormously rich financial oligarchies almost possessing the character of hereditary dynasties, bears a sharply accentuated monopolist character. The new form of capital, which has taken the place of the feuds of the feudal monopolist economics now changed into a monopoly of finance capital.

This organization of capital, essentially monopolist in nature, and frequently causing separate groups of the bourgeoisie of different branches of industry to unite, also gives rise to substantial changes in the type of competitive struggle. Instead of competing by means of low prices, there is a growing tendency to use force openly: boycotts and other forms of pressure within the country itself; high protective duties, tariff wars, the employment of armed force backed by state power—in international relations. This increasing acuteness of competition is in international economic relations largely due to two facts: first to the general division of the colonies among the greatest capitalist states; secondly, to the extraordinary increase in the export of capital, accompanied by the increased endeavor to fully occupy the territories to which the exported capital flows.

Under such conditions state power and its armed forces assume a special significance for the bourgeoisie. The policy of finance capital is directed to rapacious activity of the utmost intensity (Imperialism), requiring enormous reinforcements for armies, air fleets, and every description of means of annihilation. The gigantic development of militarism becomes one of the causes of international competition, increasing the acuteness of the competitive struggle and leading to disastrous wars.

The process of the centralization of capital on a world scale has thus led to the creation of mighty state capitalist trusts, great powers of finance capital, which have become the central points of the capitalist pressure extending throughout the world, of the capitalist predatory raids, and of the exploitation and enslavement of enormous numbers of proletarian, semi-proletarian, and peasant elements. The weaker bourgeois states exist in direct or indirect dependence on these mighty powers, and live at their mercy. A direct object for enslavement and exploitation is finally formed by the colonies, which number hundreds of millions of inhabitants.

There are two main forces organizing against the mighty organized forces of finance capital: on one side the workers of the capitalist states, on the other the oppressed peoples of the colonies. This basic revolutionary tendency is however temporarily paralyzed by the corruption of a considerable section of the European and American proletariat by the imperialist bourgeoisie. The most powerful imperialist states, which have reaped enormous profits by plundering colonies and semicolonies, have raised the wages of continental workers out of the booty of their plunder, thereby interesting these workers in allegiance to the imperialist "Fatherland" and in its plunderings. This systematic bribery has taken special effect among the labor aristocracy and among the leading bureaucratic elements of the working class, Social Democrats, and trade unions, which have been perfect tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The keen competition among the most powerful of the great powers for the possession of the colonies led to the world war of 1914. This war shook the foundations of capitalism to such an extent, rendered the position of the working class so much worse, destroyed so many illusionary promises among the proletariat, that it brought on a new historic phase in the disintegration of capitalist production.

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The Results of the War and the Beginning of the Decay of Capitalism

(a) The Costs of the War and the Destruction of the Productive Forces.

The war of 1914-1918 brought about a destruction of productive forces never before experienced in history; it led to the immediate annihilation of gigantic means of production and of the best living working forces of humanity; it caused an unheard of waste of energy as a result of productive power being used for unproductive purposes. The attempt made by the national state capitalist trusts to compensate for this wastage by the perfection of the forms of organization (the subjection of private capitalist enterprises to the state, the so-called State Capitalism) only served to render the struggle between the separate states the more acute.

The total disorganization of the world's traffic thus brought about, the chaos in the division of labor hitherto obtaining throughout the world, the collapse of the reciprocal and regulated modes of settlement, the disturbed rates of exchange, and the unheard of state debts, all these factors intensify the ruin of capitalist world economics.

The imperialistic economic systems undergo essential changes, for the colonial and semi-colonial countries take advantage of the slackening of the imperialist grip to gain for themselves greater economic independence. This circumstance underlines the sources of the influence of the mother countries, and intensifies the general crisis.

(b) Disorganization of the World's Traffic.

All the above stated fundamental facts of the war and post-war periods are expressed in the sinking of the total income of society.

(c) Liberation of Colonial Reserves.

The sinking of the collective income of society leads in the first place to an acuter struggle in the re-division of the income, not only in the competitive struggles of the various groups of the financial oligarchies, and in the struggles of the colonies with the mother countries, but in the class war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, in which the intermediate groups show the tendency to join the proletariat in those cases where they have particularly suffered during the war.

(d) The Redistribution of the Sinking Income of Society.

The post-war position of capitalism can in general be characterized as being absolutely unstable in every sphere of its existence: economic, political, social, and even on the ideological and cultural fields; for in the background of the general crisis there appear obvious signs of the decomposition of the bourgeoisie, the return to religion, to mysticism, to occultism, and so forth, plainly showing the coming fall of bourgeois civilization.

(e) The Acuter Struggle between the Imperialist Oligarchical Groups.

The war of 1914-1918 destroyed the last remnants of the capitalist society, brought about a destruction of productive forces never before experienced in history; and this destruction was not compensated for by the capitalist powers. The war of 1914-1918 brought about a destruction of productive forces never before experienced in history; it led to the immediate annihilation of gigantic means of production and of the best living working forces of humanity; it caused an unheard of waste of energy as a result of productive power being used for unproductive purposes. The attempt made by the national state capitalist trusts to compensate for this wastage by the perfection of the forms of organization (the subjection of private capitalist enterprises to the state, the so-called State Capitalism) only served to render the struggle between the separate states the more acute.

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(f) The Acuter Struggles between Colonies and Mother Countries.

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(g) The Sharpening of the Class Struggle.

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(h) The Absolute Instability of the Capitalist System.

The growing intensification of the class war, which became apparent during the war itself, led to a breach being made through the imperialist front at its most sensitive spot—Russia.

The November Revolution of the Russian proletariat, which was able to overthrow the bourgeois regime thanks to specially favorable fighting conditions, started a new era of international revolution, and became the first link in the chain.

The proletarian uprisings which followed the Russian Revolution, and which ended in the defeat of the proletariat after a brief victory (Finland, Hungary, Bavaria), or which remained standing halfway, due to the treachery of the Social-Democrats, who were actively engaged against (i.e. revolutionizing) the workers, or in the struggles of the colonies with the mother countries, but in the class war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, in which the intermediate groups show the tendency to join the proletariat in those cases where they have particularly suffered during the war.

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The Breach in the Imperialist Front and the Epoch of Social Revolution

(a) The November Revolution of the Russian Proletariat as the First Link in the Chain of International Revolution.

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It is just for the above reasons that the mere fact of the existence of Soviet Russia is of such significance as an organizing centre of the proletarian world movement. By the mere fact of its existence Soviet Russia draws a fourth part of the globe (despite the fact that it comprises one-sixth of the globe), and its structure is in principle opposed to the capitalist regime. Besides this, it represents the most powerful vanguard of the proletarian movement, for here the working class has all the means and auxiliaries of state power at its disposal.

(b) Other Revolutions.

In the course of development of international revolution, the Social Democracy and the trade unions under its leadership became an extraordinarily powerful counter-revolutionary force. Not only did these abandon the interests of the workers during the war, in that they supported their "own" imperialist governments, but they also supported the rapacious treaties of peace (Brest-Litovsk, Versailles); they stood by the side of the generals (Noske), as an active force, when proletarian uprisings were being drowned in blood; they led an armed resistance against the first proletarian republic (Russia); they treacherously betrayed a proletariat almost in possession of power (Hungary); they became members of the rapacious League of Nations (Thomas); they openly took sides with the employers against the colonial slaves (the English "Labor" Party). International Social Democracy thus forms the last reserve and strongest support of bourgeois society.

(c) The Significance of Soviet Russia.

The breach in the Imperialist front, the overcoming of the counter-revolutionary forces, the strength of the Soviet Republic, the beginning of the decay of capitalism—these have created conditions for the development of a mighty revolutionary association of revolutionary workers: The Communist International. From out of the chaos and the misery, out of the falling debris of shattered capitalism, out of the mad and monstrous new wars in which the bourgeoisie may destroy the last remnants of its own culture—out of all this, the Communist International will lead humanity on a new path, and only those who do not follow the path will fall victims to death and decay.
II.

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKERS AND THE COMMUNIST ORDER

The final aim pursued by the Communist International is the substitution of the capitalist order by the Communist order of Society. The Communist order of society, prepared by the whole course of evolution, is the sole means of escape for humanity; for it alone is able to remove the fundamental defects of the capitalist system leading to inevitable and unavoidable ruin.

By means of abolishing the private ownership of the means of production, and the passing of these means into common property, the Communist society replaces the unregulated force of competition and the blind course of production by a rational organization and an appropriate plan. The abolition of anarchy in production and of competition implies the simultaneous disappearance of war. The colossal waste of productive energy, and the spasmodic development of society will here be substituted by a systematic utilization of all sources of help, and by a harmonious, painless, economic evolution.

The Communist order of society also does away with the division of society into classes, that is, besides exterminating anarchy in production it exterminates social anarchy. The opposing classes are replaced by members of one great equal working community. The gigantic unproductive expenditure caused by human beings combatting one another, in a society composed of classes, now disappears, and the energy thus released is employed in the struggle with nature, and for the progress and development of the power and dominion of Mankind.

The abolition of private property does away with the exploitation of one human being by other human beings. The work done is no longer done for others. Every difference between poverty and wealth disappears. At the same time the organs of class rule vanish also, above all—state power. State power, which is the embodiment of class rule, vanishes in proportion to the vanishing of the classes. All standards of compulsion die off gradually in proportion.

The abolition of classes will be accompanied by the abolition of all monopoly of education. All education, including the very highest, becomes general. Such a state of affairs in the first place renders a dominance of any group of persons over another group impossible, and in the second place, offers a wide field of selection and situating of talent and genius in every branch of culture.

Here there are no barriers of a social nature placed in the way of productive forces. In the Communist society there is no private property, no patent rights, profit making for personal benefit, artificially maintained ignorance among the masses, or gigantic unproductive expenditures.

The uniting of sciences and technology, the scientific organization of production, statistic-social book-keeping, the utilization of every economic possibility (correct apportionment of districts, concentration, the best possible utilization of natural forces) secure the greatest possible productivity of labor, and set human energy free for the mighty task of developing science.

The development of productive forces enables the general well-being of the collective mass of humanity in the new society to be improved, enabling a degree of culture to be attained hitherto unexampled in history.

The new culture of a humanity united for the first time, and having now abolished all limits set by intermediate state forms, will be founded on clear and transparent reciprocal relations among human beings. It will thus bury all mysticism, religion, and superstition for all time, and give a mighty forward impetus to the development of all-conquering Human Mind.

III.

THE FALL OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND THE FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM

A. General Characteristics of the Transition Period

Between the Capitalist and Communist systems there lies a long period of proletarian struggle, of its victories and defeats, a period of continuous decay of capitalist relations, of national wars, of colonial uprisings, of armed and "peaceful" warfare of capitalist states against the Socialist states coming into being—a period which comprises temporary agreements between social-economic systems contradictory to one another, and life and death struggles between such systems. Finally, the complete victory of the proletariat, and the firm establishment of the power which it has gained through such much suffering and privation, will be followed by an epoch of accelerated development. The multiplicity of the conditions of the revolutionary process, the variety of types of the new relations being formed,—this will be the main feature of the tedious transition period of development. Not until this epoch has fulfilled its historical task will society begin to become a communist society.

B. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the Unavoidable Premise of the Struggle for Communism

(a) Necessity of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

An unavoidable premise for the transition from Capitalism to Communism,—the starting point without which the further evolution of mankind is entirely impossible, is thus the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois State and the seizure of power by the working class, which has to set itself the first and most important task of suppressing the enemy and firmly establishing the new regime. Dictatorship of the proletariat—that is the most elementary premise for social evolution.
C. Expropriation of the Expropriators and Abolition of the Bourgeois Monopoly of the Means of Production

The victorious proletariat utilizes the power which it has seized, first, to break the resistance of the enemy and to guard the continued rule of the working class against the attacks of the bourgeoisie, and secondly, to utilize this concentrated power for the expropriation of the expropriators, that is, for the revolutionary transformation of the economic, and consequently of all other social relations. As a rule this expropriation will assume the form of confiscation, that is, by the expropriation of the means of production without compensation, and the delivery of these means into the hands of the Proletarian State.

In this regard the Communist International proposes the following fundamental measures:

1. The expropriation of the large industrial undertakings, of the means of transport and traffic (telegraph, telephone), electric works, etc.

2. The proletarian nationalization of large landed estates, which are to be given over to the administration of the organs of the proletarian dictatorship, one part of the landed estates, especially that part being worked by the peasantry under lease, to be handed over to the peasantry. The extent of the ground area to be delivered up to the peasantry is determined by economic expediency, and by the necessity of neutralizing the peasantry, that is, by the social-political importance of the peasantry.

3. Proletarian neutralization of the banks. Delivery of all gold reserves, securities, etc., into the hands of the Proletarian State. Security of the interests of small depositors, centralization of the banks, subordination of all large banking concerns to the Central State Bank of the republic.

4. Nationalization and municipalization (communaffication) of wholesale trade.

5. Annulment (cancellation) of state debts.


7. Monopolization of the most important printing establishments and newspapers.

8. In the execution of these measures, the following principles are to be observed:
The petty bourgeoisie of the cities, which has always stood between extreme reaction and sympathy for the proletariat, is also to be neutralized as far as possible. Their neutrality is assured if their property is not touched, if they are allowed liberty of economic intercourse, aided in their struggles against usurious forms of credit, etc.

With regard to the peasantry, the Communist Party is confronted with the task of winning over a great part of the peasantry for the party. The victorious proletariat must differentiate strictly between the various groupings within the peasantry itself, estimate their specific importance, and aid the landless, semi-proletarian elements of the peasantry by every possible means, give them a part of the large landowners' ground, ease their struggles against usurious capital, etc. The proletariat must neutralize the intermediate elements by leaving their land and their possessions untouched, and by combatting every attack made by the rich peasantry in combination with the rich landowners. In this struggle the proletariat should lean upon the organizations of the poorer population of the country, which are under the leadership of the country proletariat in all countries where the system of agricultural wage labor is developed.

The struggle for the expropriation of the expropriators, requires a most thorough study of all elements of this struggle. The big bourgeoisie and the rich landowner, as well as that part of the officers' and army staff subject to them, are the most consistent enemies of the working class, and a bitter struggle against them is absolutely inevitable. As a rule it is only possible to utilize the organized powers of these circles after the dictatorship has been established, and all conspiracies of exploitation and uprisings have been determinedly suppressed.

The question of the technical brain workers plays a most important role for the proletarian revolution. Every counter-revolutionary action originating in the ranks of the technical brain workers must be rigorously suppressed, but at the same time the proletariat must take into consideration the absolute need for these skilled workers, and carefully avoid any action which could injure them economically, especially those groups which have already suffered through the war. The technical brain workers must be rigorously suppressed, but at the same time the proletariat must take into consideration the absolute need for these skilled workers, and carefully avoid any action which could injure them economically, especially those groups which have already suffered through the war.

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F. The Removal of Imperialist Pressure and the Organization of Voluntary State Associations of the Proletariat

The main support of the gigantic imperialist state were and are the artificially-created relations between the colonies and half-colonies, and imperialist mother countries. The colonial and national questions thus play an exceedingly important role, not only from the viewpoint of the decay of capitalist relations, but also from the viewpoint of capitalist structure.

In this regard the programme of the Communist International makes the following demands, in complete opposition to the policy of the bourgeois and of Social Democracy:

1. The right of self-determination of the peoples, under which is also to be understood the right of complete separation from the state. This principle is binding as a requirement to be demanded of the bourgeois state, where it serves as a weapon against imperialism, and is equally binding under the regime of proletarian dictatorship, where it serves as a means of overcoming the national distrust nurtured through centuries of bourgeois government.

2. The liberation of the colonies, and the support of all colonial movements against imperialism. In the case of a proletarian state embracing former colonies, the latter are accorded the right of separation.

3. Unions of Soviet Republics, at first in the form of federations.

A successful fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat assumes the existence of a Communist Party which is firmly united, determined to fight, disciplined, and centralized. The first step on the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat is the firm consolidation of the Communist Parties. These parties must play the leading role in every sphere of the proletarian mass struggle, must utilize every opportunity of gaining influence over the broad masses of the workers and of extending this influence to the working masses of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie of the towns.

The most important problem towards winning over the masses is to win over the trade unions, and to free these from the ideological and organizational influence of the Social Democracy. Unless the majority in the trade unions is won over, the realization of the proletarian dictatorship is unthinkable. In precisely the same manner, special attention is to be devoted to the working youth and women, for the attitude adopted by these during the first phase of the dictatorship, will largely determine the course of events.

The process of uniting the masses under the Communist flag must be developed in all actual questions of daily life. Above all the fight against imperialism and militarism, the fight against the danger of fresh imperialist wars, etc.

Other questions coming under this heading are those connected with the struggle against the economic results of the war, and post-war crisis. (Fight against increased prices, against unemployment, against longer working hours, against higher taxation, etc.)

The support of Soviet Russia, as a means towards strengthening it and towards mobilizing the masses about this anti-capitalist centre point, constitutes the most powerful organizing instrument in the hands of the international working class.

For the co-ordination of actions, and for the purposeful leadership of the same, the international proletariat requires an international class discipline, which must above all be strictly adhered to in the ranks of the Communist Parties. This international Communist discipline must be expressed by the subordination of all partial and local interests of the movement to its general and permanent interests, and by the unqualified execution of all resolutions passed by the leading organs of the Communist International.
LIST OF POPULAR PRICED PUBLICATIONS

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"The Prospector's" volume of lyrics seems to me to take its place among the books to be reckoned with, by any person who realizes what is going on in the Canadian literary world. To say that he is an excellent story-teller is higher praise than it would have been before the war, when literature was suffering from the effects of an epoch of self-contempt, and Stevenson and Wells had persuaded us that a strange setting and distant epochs were essential to a readable story or to a convincing lyric.


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Communism and Capitalism, by N. Bucharin (Moscow). A review of capitalism and the causes of its collapse, together with a draft programme of the Communist International. In view of the present industrial condition this pamphlet is of absorbing interest. Price ..............................................................15c