

**Paul Mattick**

## **The Inevitability of Communism (1936)**

[The publication of *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* by Sidney Hook in January 1933 served as the signal for the release of a virtual flood of controversial and interpretative literature on Marxism. Hailed and denounced, respected and suspected in different radical quarters, Hook's book sharply posed the question : *Who are the Marxists?* Sentiment both for and against the validity of his interpretation was rapidly crystallized and the key-note was sounded for discussions that were to become heated and prolonged. That the controversies revolving around *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* have often bordered on bitterness and personalisms speaks emphatically for the relevant character and challenging brilliance of Hook's work. Few heads have been broken or egos aroused by the appearance of a new book on Etruscan pottery. Whatever else has been said of Hook's book, its vividness and pertinence have not been brought into question.

*The Inevitability of Communism* by Paul Mattick is a criticism of Hook's interpretation from what Mattick regards as the position of the orthodox dialectic materialist. The pamphlet, in effect, proposes to serve a dual purpose. First, it attempts to disprove Hook's right to the title : *dialectic materialist*. It attempts to show that Hook's interpretation of Marx is the viewpoint of latter nineteenth century revisionism in present-day fashionable philosophic clothing. To remove the principles of inevitability and spontaneity from Marxism, says Mattick, is to emasculate the teachings of Marx. It is to deny the concept of the universal operation of dialectic materialism and to ascribe to human consciousness a vastly over-rated role. Second, Mattick's essay serves as a positive presentation of the position of dialectic materialism as he interprets it. He takes issue with what he regards as the errors of Leninism, the viewpoint of which, he holds, does not differ in essence from the stand of social democracy. To him, social democracy and Bolshevism ( "revolutionary social democracy" ) issue from the same seed : Both-regard the highly centralized political party whose efficacy in the last analysis must depend on the activity of "great men," as an absolute prerequisite for the freedom of the working class. From this position, says Mattick, flow the evils of organizational bureaucratism with the possibilities of betrayal, misleadership and counter-revolutionary activity when it is necessary for the party to so behave in order to retain power and affluence.

The centralized "revolutionary" party, states Mattick, will be – if anything – only an insignificant instrument of the revolution. It will not be the prime mover of the revolution nor will the success of the struggle depend on its existence.

The workers gathered together in their industrial units, the factories, shops, offices, etc., will be increasingly exploited by a capitalism which in its death throes will try desperately to keep the rate of profit at a workable level. Finally, there will be only one way out for the proletariat which Mattick regards as "the *actualization* of revolutionary consciousness." Hungry, they will seek food; naked, they will seek clothing; shelterless, they will repossess living quarters. At that time, says Mattick, preceded by a "training period" of riots, local clashes with the ruling class and terror, will come the revolution. At the helm will stand not the centralized party but the "spontaneously" organized Workers' Councils created in the factories and shops.

The role of "great men" and their conscious ideologies plays its part only within narrow limits. Precisely how much they can accelerate or hinder the revolution can be determined not generally but only by reference to the specific, concrete situation.

At least to one observer Sidney Hook's answer to certain of the criticisms leveled against him will be awaited with no small measure of interest. Coming after the publication of various reviews of his interpretation, his reply will serve to complete the controversial balance sheet. It will then be possible, if we are permitted to extend the metaphor, to take account of the debits and credits of his position.

A word in conclusion : In the heat of controversy both participants and readers are often inclined to ascribe excessive significance to what may be called the *vocabulary barrage*. It is thus well to bear in mind what Mattick implies throughout his essay and what Marx succinctly stated in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* : "*Not criticism, but revolution, is the motive force of history*". S. L. SOLON.

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The viewpoint of totality in the materialist dialectic is something different from the longing of the economically distracted bourgeoisie for harmony, for a self-contained system, for eternal truths and an all-embracing philosophy of the Whole ending up in the

Absolute. To Marxism, there is nothing closed off. All concepts, all knowledge is the recognition that in the material interaction between man and nature social man is an active factor, that historical development is conditioned not only by objective relations arising through nature but quite as much so by the subjective, social moments. Precisely by reason of the fact that the materialist dialectic regards the economic relations as the foundation of historical development, it becomes impossible to accept a bourgeois and necessarily metaphysical philosophy of eternity. Society, which aids in determining the being and consciousness of man, changes perpetually and hence admits of no absolute solutions. The dialectical process of development recognizes no constant factors, either biological or social; in it these factors, themselves, vary continuously, so that one is never in a position really to separate them and must deny them any sort of constancy. The dialectical, comprehensive view, the consideration of the Whole is accordingly to be understood in the sense that here every separation between the objective and subjective historical factors is rejected, since these are always influencing each other and thus are themselves always changing. The one cannot be understood without the other. For science, that means that its concepts are not only objectively given but are also dependent upon the subjective factors, and these in turn aid in determining scientific methods and their goals.

To the interpretation of the Marxian dialectic Hook devotes the larger part of his book. (1) On the *totality factor* and *dialectical interaction* he bestows the utmost attention in order that the *active role* of man, the *revolutionary consciousness* in the historical process may stand out in stronger relief. To his frequently happy and also frequently unhappy formulations, so far as they deal with the totality factor, we shall devote little attention in the following pages, because his work is almost exclusively designed to refute theoretically, the many mechanistic and idealistic emasculations of Marxist thought at the hands of the epigones, and here we agree on the whole with what he has to say. If in what follows we adopt a standpoint which is opposed to that of Hook, we wish at the same time to emphasize that we fully accept in detail many of his ideas. If we neglect to bring out these common points, it is because of lack of space. We wish further to state that this review cannot be exhaustive; the aim is merely to draw attention to those factors which in our opinion must be placed in the center of the discussion in order to make it really fruitful.

## I

In the introductory remarks to his book (page 6) Hook states that "science" cannot be identified with "Marxism," since the two deal with different things. The one with nature, the other with society. Marx distinguished between development in nature and that of human society and he saw in human consciousness the differentiating factor (page 85). Marxism presupposes class goals; hence it is a subjective, a class science; science itself, however, stands above classes, it is objective. Hook sees in Marx's philosophy a synthesis of the objective and subjective moments of truth. As an instrument of the class struggle the Marxian theory can function only in so far as it is objectively correct. Yet as an objective truth it can function effectively only within the framework of the subjective class purposes of the proletariat. If these class purposes are also socially and historically conditioned, still this is not true of the will and the specific act by which they are realized. Consequently, quite as much value must be ascribed to the subjective as to the objective historical moments. The human-active element is subjective, however, only in relation to the socio-economic situation; to the participants in the class

struggle it is thoroughly objective. With this distinction in mind, it would be impossible to speak of Marxism as an "objective science" without at the same time taking away its revolutionary character (pages 7-8).

At first sight, there is nothing to be objected to in these formulations of Hook. Apart from the fact that with the acceptance of the Marxian synthesis such concepts for example, as "objective science" and "biologically constant" (thesis) and "variable social nature of man" as well as "subjective class willing" (antithesis), as Hook puts it later, can still have validity only as methodological abstractions and no longer correspond to reality; apart from the fact that with the acceptance of the Marxian dialectic any one-sided overemphasis on the objective or subjective, historical factors, without the *most precise searching of the actual situation*, is a blunder, it being quite possible that in certain situations the subjective factor plays a smaller and in others a greater role; and apart from the many defects in the Hook formulation, one can fully accept Marxism offhand as a synthesis of objective science and of subjective class science. But if Hook sets objective, matter-of-fact science, "*science proper*," above classes, he has *not* shown the *rational kernel* concealed behind the concept. If one is unable to materialize science, if it remains a mere matter of concepts, then the concept "objective science" can only confuse and becomes unserviceable for the real explanation of the dialectical content of Marxism, since *all* scientific methods, regardless of the material with which they deal, are in part subjectively conditioned.

When Hook says with Marx that we are not concerned with explaining but with changing, he implies that it is only the proletariat which can realize Marxism. But through this realization Marxism would then become "objective science." If we take as our starting point the Marxian synthesis, then this synthesis alone is still capable of passing as "objective science." But this theoretical synthesis is at first only the theoretical method for grasping the connection of historical reality. Historical reality is nothing but . . . historical reality; it is not a science. Only as human beings comprehend and conceptually employ this reality with a view to determining within it their own actions, only that produces the content of science, the objectivity of which at any particular time must be demonstrated in practice.

The materialist dialectic is today the only method which confirms itself in practice. It is applicable and is demonstrated experimentally. Hence this dialectic is "objective science"; it, too, stands above classes, as further seen from Hook's admission that it would continue to operate in a communist society. It is otherwise, however, with the three leading principles of the Marxian doctrine. These are bound up only with the proletariat, so long as it is a proletariat; they are historically conditioned. Historical materialism, the theory of the class struggle and the theory of surplus value are only conceivable and practically applicable in bourgeois society (pages 97-98). They are the theoretical weapons of the strongest force of production . . . the proletariat. They help in the *full* development and realization of this greatest force of production and are thus, in a materialistic sense, themselves nothing more than *productive elements*. However, even what Hook denotes by the concept "objective science" is, rationally considered, nothing but an expression of the increasing forces of production. Behind science are concealed the social forces of production; if these latter develop, so also science, and likewise, in dialectical interaction, the reverse process is accomplished. Hook will no doubt grant us that science must be reckoned among the human forces of production, but his cloudy definition of science and other factors which we shall take up later on prove that his mind is not clear regarding the close connection between science and the

forces of production. Yet if one has recognized science as a force of production, one sees also that even "*science as such*" stands as little above classes and is exactly as historically conditioned as the historical factors of Marxism, which are valid only for the society of class struggle. Or, inversely, that the historical elements of Marxism, as social forces of production, only *add new ones* to the available productive forces, or to "objective science," and so are *a part* of science. If commodity fetishism was one form in which the social forces of production developed, then Marxism is a higher form of the development of the productive forces.

If one wants to *illustrate* the development of the Marxian dialectic, one can without doubt take the road followed by Hook and draw a distinction between objective and subjective science. But on the *basis* of the dialectic which flatly *rejects* such a distinction, one can no longer appeal to that distinction except at the risk of introducing confusion into the ranks of Marxism. The divorce between "science" and Marxism is itself historical and only another expression for the separation of the workers from the means of production.

## II

In his essay *The Part Played by Labor in the Ape's Evolution to Man* (1876) Friedrich Engels wrote in brief the following :

"Labor first, and in close step with it, speech . . . those are the two essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of an ape passed over gradually into that of a man. With the cultivation of the brain went hand in hand the cultivation of the sense organs . . . . The reactive effect of the development of the brain and its subject sense of consciousness growing clearer and clearer, of the capacity for abstraction and forming conclusion, upon labor and speech . . . all of this served continually to induce the further development of these two forces; a development which never came to a close and which, on the one hand, was powerfully promoted and, on the other, swung in a more definite direction by the new element added on with the appearance of the finished man . . . namely, society."

Thus, in this opinion, consciousness and science has its basis in the development of labor, or the growth of the human-social forces of production. It is first the labor of man applied to the world existing independently of man which fashions the contradiction between being and consciousness, a contradiction, moreover, which cannot be done away with except through the elimination of labor. Through the growth of the productive forces, bringing with it a change in the forms in which the material interaction between man and nature is accomplished, nature, society and consciousness, mutually interacting, also change. It is only because of the fact that man alters external nature by means of labor that his own nature and the whole complex of his life and interests are altered, and these having been changed, they change again the external world. If the human-active element is at first only the most primitive, corporeal activity, yet in connection with that activity arises intelligence, which by reaction transforms the simple activity into the more complicated.

From this point of view, "science" stands above classes only in that, like labor, it *progressively* develops with the forces of production in *all forms* of social life; for the necessity of labor remains intact in any form of society. But the *more the productive forces develop, the more does the social elements condition the total process of development*. Marx pointed out, for example, the fact that "in all forms of society where property in land prevails, the *natural relation* is still predominant; but in those where

capital prevails, the *social element* outweighs." The closeness of the connection between the labor process and consciousness is clearly revealed by Marx in the Feuerbach section of *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, where he says:

The division of labor really becomes a division only from the moment when a division enters between material and intellectual labor. From that moment, consciousness *can really fancy itself* as something other than the consciousness of existing practice." With the accelerated growth of the productive forces under capitalism, their theoretical expression, "science," also underwent such a development that its own influence upon the total process grew more and more significant. And as formerly labor developed new moments . . . the senses and consciousness . . . so later science also developed new tendencies *peculiar to itself*, which, however, leave untouched the basic fact that science is conditioned by the social needs, which in turn depend on the stage of development of the productive forces. Nothing perhaps shows this dependence more clearly than the present general crisis of bourgeois science, which runs parallel with the general economic crisis of capital. If capitalism restricts the further unfolding of the productive forces, it also restricts the extension of science. Neither the one nor the other can throw off its fetters except through the proletarian revolution; which is to say that only this revolution can still be regarded as "objective science." The further development of the rational elements immanent in science, that is, of the social forces of production, is the historical mission of the working class, which accordingly is to be identified with science. The scientists themselves become revolutionists, or else they cease to be scientists.

### III

The reformist identification of "science" with "Marxism," which Hook regards (page 25) as one of the reasons for the turning away of the old labor movement from true Marxism, has its origin not in "misunderstanding" or in the false interpretation of Marxism, but in the *actual fact of the increasing capitalization of the old labor movement*. It is really not a question here of an identification, but of the acceptance of bourgeois science, together with the acceptance of the bourgeois relations in which one fought with other groups for one's share of the surplus value. Marxism was *not* converted into a science but, first practically and then also theoretically, completely *abandoned*. Since capital released the forces of production and also developed science, and at the same time made life, in so far as "Official Marxism" was concerned, a continual feast, reformism identified itself with this development. The capitalist world was also the world of reformism, which saw in the development of this capitalist world and of its science the developing "absolute consciousness" which one day would usher in socialism through the mere change of place between private capital and the bureaucratic state, and which saw in historical development nothing but the adaptation of the true relation through the spirit. This ideology was historically bound up with the upgrade period of capitalism and was only the *intellectual expression of the economic counter-tendencies which delayed the rapid collapse of the capitalist system*.

In the capitalist crisis, the identification of Marxism with science is not only the subjective class expression of the proletariat but actually, really the only science, for only Marxism admits any longer of a *progressive* social practice. Whether a thing is "true," (not for eternity, but for the time-conditioned process of material interaction between man and nature, a process whose form is continually changing), is revealed only by practice. So long as science furthered the forces of production and these in turn

promoted science, this (bourgeois) science was objective and "true," since it enabled a practice and was at the same time a result of this practice. Even though change occurred with *false consciousness*, since class society sets ideology in place of consciousness, change occurred. And if reality was changed, so necessarily also consciousness, which expresses itself in the weakening of capitalist ideology. The level of the productive forces in capitalism, the capitalistic relation of production, bourgeois science in all its aspects, that was "objective" science: science proper. It is faced by the proletariat as its antithesis. For the proletariat in the advancing stage of capitalism, there was no science at all, the proletariat still had no *practice of its own*. The "class struggle," which was held in leash by reformism, lent vigor only to bourgeois science, because that struggle too served as an incentive to the further development of the productive forces under capitalism. If the wages of the workers increased, the exploitation increased faster. This practice, too, was a thoroughly bourgeois practice. But this practice was necessary in order to develop the capitalistic productive forces quantitatively to such an extent that the productive relations are obliged to assume other forms. And first at the point which marks the limit of capitalist development of the productive forces, only then is the class struggle divorced from bourgeois practice and hence, because the class struggle through this divorce does away with every bourgeois practice, it becomes the only practice: *the class struggle becomes science*. And at this point, nothing outside of this struggle is science any longer. The negation of the negation determines, with the disappearance of bourgeoisie and proletariat and their conversion to human beings, also the disappearance of "objective" and "subjective" *concepts* of science and their conversion to "science," the rational elements of which then form its natural and obvious content.

If the means of production in capitalism appear in the form of capital, if labor power appears as capital, so no less does science. The task of the proletariat consists in throwing off the capital relation. Even in their fetishistic, their capitalistic integument the forces of production, and hence also science, are thorough going realities, the fetishism being of course only the objectified relation between persons who make no difference in the material character of the actual elements of life. The proletariat opposes nothing to these realities, but merely releases them from their fetishistic integuments. "Its own social movement," says Marx, speaking of capitalist society, "seems to it to possess the form of a movement of things by which it is controlled instead of controlling them." Communism, the proletariat, abolishes this fetishism, which, in fact, was capable of developing the productive forces only for an historical period and which, through the accumulation of this process, is converted into its opposite, into a hindrance to the further development of the productive forces.

#### IV

Bourgeois science meant a progressive social practice; in so far as it helped to develop the social forces of production, it stood "above classes." It was a *stage* in the process of general development, and so long as it did not practically restrain the process, the *attained* stage of science. Marx opposed to the science of the bourgeoisie not that of the proletariat but the revolution. Likewise he opposed to Hegel's dialectic not a dialectic of the proletariat, but the proletariat was to him the *actualization of the dialectical process of development of capitalist society*. From the realm of the concept he transplanted dialectics into the realm of reality, just as he did not set over against the

bourgeois theory of value the theory of value of the proletariat, but by uncovering the fetishism of commodities he revealed the *actual content of value*.

Bourgeois philosophy could not go beyond Hegel; commodity fetishism forbids the materializing of dialectic, just as the idealist dialectic, economically expressed, is nothing but the fetishism of commodities. Only the *existence* of the proletariat enabled the *materialization* of dialectic, made Marxism possible. The period of the class struggle necessarily still contains bourgeois elements and will continue to do so until it is ended. But the growth of the class struggle is already the process of actualization of the new society. The victorious revolution ends with the complete destruction of bourgeois science, for then the proletariat which ceases to be proletariat, has *completely taken up into itself the rational elements of that science*.

By way of summary, one might say that for Marxism, science, in the last analysis, is accumulated human labor. A certain quantity of human-social labor alters, that is, enlarges, increases, the social forces of production. This necessitates a change in the relations of production, and this in turn the change of the whole intellectual superstructure. The productive relations, by reaction, again condition the labor process and lead to ever new, progressive outer forms.

If Marx never tired, as Hook insists (page 85), of distinguishing between the natural processes of development and those of man in society, it was because Marx's materialistic dialectic consists in pointing out the manner in which, throughout all forms of society, the process of interaction between man and nature develops the productive forces. This process is illustrated in the development of the forms of production, that is, how and with what instruments and methods production is carried on. The determining contradiction is the one between man and nature, between being and consciousness, and this contradiction developed out of labor. *Within this process new contradictions develop*, which by reaction again drive the general process farther forward. In this process the conscious factors become developed to such an extent, especially through the social division of labor, that there is no longer any sense in distinguishing between cause and effect; any separation between being and consciousness has become impossible . . . they are always fusing. The thing taken as a base has nothing to do any more with our end results, and these end results are always forming new starting points, so that to be continually distinguishing between cause and effect becomes impossible. And yet in this dialectical process the final basis continues to be the human necessities of life; it remains material, actual. What holds for the past holds also for the present, which permitted Marx, in *Capital*, to say for the future also:

"The realm of freedom begins, in reality, only there where that labor, which is determined through need and outer purposiveness no longer exists; hence it lies, from the nature of things, beyond the sphere of real material production . . . Freedom here can only consist in the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulate this interaction between themselves and nature, bring it under their communal control, instead of being ruled by it as by a blind power; accomplish it with the least expenditure of energy and under condition most worthy of and adequate of their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human force which serves as its own end . . . the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its base."

In the preface to his book, Hook (page x) has taken pains to anticipate the reproach of smuggling idealistic factors into Marxism. But his dialectic, which fails to take a rational view of science and which is a purely conceptual one, is bogged in idealism none the less. He doesn't know, for instance, what to look for behind the category value or behind political economy. In his distinction between "science" and "Marxism" on a *purely* scientific basis, he has actually got no further than Hegel. The theoretical science of the proletariat is either practice or is not science. The Marxian dialectic is not a special, "subjective" science; it is the practice of the proletarian revolution, and theoretical only insofar as this theory is concrete, actual practice.

That Hook is far from being clear on this point is proved by the fact that although he is willing to have a distinction made between science and Marxism, he rejects the application of this distinction in regards to economy. From *our standpoint*, there is no distinction to be made between science and Marxism, and hence also none between economics and *political economy*. But the refusal of this distinction for economics, while allowing it to science, is, on the *basis of the Hook argumentation*, a sign of complete confusion and a throwback into idealist dialectics. When, for example, Hook reproaches Engels with lending support to reformism, which made Marxism a science, through his monistic tendency, which comes to light most clearly in his preface to the second and third volumes of *Capital*, Hook illustrates only his own incomplete grasp of the real nature of Marxism. He writes (pages 29-30):

"But more important still, in bringing to completion and publishing the second and third volumes of *Das Kapital* Engels gave final currency to the notion that the economic theories of Marx constituted a hypothetic-deductive system of the type exemplified by scientific theories *überhaupt*, instead of being an illustration of a method of revolutionary criticism. In so doing Engels failed to develop the important sociological and practical implications of Marx's doctrine of the "fetishism of commodities." He devoted himself to the task of explaining how the law of the falling rate of profit could be squared both with the empirical fact that the rate of profit was the same irrespective of the organic composition of capital, and with the labor-power definition of exchange value ...

Nowhere, so far as I know, does Engels properly comment on Marx's own words in the preface to the second edition of the first volume, 'that political economy can remain a science only so long as the class struggle is latent or manifests itself only in isolated or sporadic phenomena.' It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that Marx did not conceive *Das Kapital* to be a deductive exposition of an objective natural system of political economy, but a critical analysis – sociological and historical – of a system which regarded itself as objective. Its sub-title is *Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*. Criticism demands a standpoint, a position. Marx's standpoint was the standpoint of the class-conscious proletariat of Western Europe. His position implied that a system of economics at basis always is a class economics."

Later, Hook goes on to assert, Engels perceived his error; and Hook produces in the appendix of his book a series of Engel's letters designed to confirm this statement. But it is impossible, even for Hook himself, to get more out of these letters than that Engels here laments the fact that Marx and himself, in the press of work, had devoted too little attention to the subjective moments of history. There is not a word of revision of the standpoint represented by him in the preface to *Capital*, which was regarded there not only as a critique of political economy but the analysis of the laws of social movement in general.

According to Hook, *Das Kapital* consisted *only* in a critique of political economy, which revealed *from the standpoint of the proletariat* the purely historical character of capital. But *how* does this critique reveal the transitory character of capitalist production? *Why* is criticism able to uncover this? "Because the proletariat wants to change society," Hook in effect asserts later, "therefore the will discovers in the mode of economic production the decisive factor in social life." (page 181). To Marx, however, it is not the will *but the existence of the proletariat*, not the relations of production, but the development of the productive forces, (which determines the willing as it determines the social relations), which is the *starting point* for his historical survey. *Das Kapital* reveals the broader contradiction between man and nature as a contradiction which all social orders have conditioned and which compelled the development of the productive forces. It indicates too the narrower contradictions arising within this process by which relations of production are formed and again destroyed. If bourgeois science to Hook is not the only science, science *überhaupt*, then he has no right to regard bourgeois political economy as economics *überhaupt*. But whereas in the former case, following Hook, science stands above classes, one is not justified, again according to Hook, in setting economics above classes. To us, however, political economy, like bourgeois science is an *attained level* of general human development, objective and true insofar as it is progressive. To recognize it as an historical level presupposes a knowledge of the character, the *general traits*, of the laws of social change. This recognition was hindered through class rule; it was first the existence of the proletariat as a *class which abolishes all classes*, which enabled awareness of the laws of social change, an awareness which, however, must first become *practical* to enable *living* in accordance with those laws.

*Political economy* is not an eternal category, for the reason that it is only the *verdinglichte*, objectified (exchange)-relation between human beings who overshadow the real content of economics. The economic categories with which Marx operated were objectively given; they belong to bourgeois society. Marx's critique consisted in the fact that he illumined them with the *correct consciousness*, that of the proletariat, not with the *necessarily false* one of the bourgeoisie. The *fetishistic, false consciousness* conditioned by the level of the productive forces, and which *had* to stop with Hegel, Ricardo, and Adam Smith, could not, like Marx, who saw in the proletariat the antithesis of bourgeois society, theoretically see the synthesis which first disclosed the feature *common to all societies*. Marx pointed out, for example, how manufacture developed out of the social division of labor, out of manufacture the modern factory system, which in turn presses on to become monopoly capital. The dynamicist, Marx, directed himself to such a "senseless" matter as simple reproduction merely to prove the impossibility of the thing. In all of which Marx wished to show that the productive forces are the basis of all relations of production. In communism too, the productive forces, "economics," will be further developed. If the increasing productive forces bring about the bourgeois relations of production and further develop the productive forces, so these latter in turn determine the tempo of their further development, and at a certain point of their development are restrained by the relations of production. Since no equilibrium (Statik) exists, these relations must be changed. In this general process of necessity, in this material process, "political economy" merely represents a certain level, but a significant level in that it is the preliminary condition for a period of human history which works with correct consciousness and therefore controls matters instead of being determined by them. Already in the introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy* Marx makes this

connection clear; which proves to us that the criticism of bourgeois society was *at the same time* the uncovering of the laws of economic movement *in general*. He says:

"Bourgeois society is the most highly developed and the most complicated historical organization of production. The categories in which its relations are expressed, the understanding of their structure, at the same time furnish insight into the structure and productive relations of all the bygone forms of society, on the ruins and elements of which it has been built up. Of these societies there drag along in it, side by side, still unsubdued remnants as well as mere hints which have developed into perfected meanings. *The anatomy of man is a key to the anatomy of the ape.*"

So in laying bare the laws of capitalist movement Marx has laid bare the laws of social movement in general. Engels was therefore right when he saw in *Das Kapital* more than Hook has seen, to whom it is merely a critique. And when Engels, to Hook's regret, instead of concerning himself with the fetishism of commodities, engaged with the problems of the average rate of profit, the theory of value, etc., in order to show that all capitalist phenomena can be traced back to the law of value, he was doing nothing other than what in Hook's opinion he failed to do: he was revealing the *fetishist character of commodities*. This fetishism conceals the actual process, but does not change it. Only a false consciousness, caught in the net of commodity fetishism, puzzles itself with market and price problems and fails to realize that all movements of capital are governed by the law of value as by an *inner law*. That Marx held the same view and, as Engels asserted, intended more than a critique, is shown by the following passage from a letter written by Marx in 1886 with reference to a critic of his concept of value:

"The poor fellow fails to see that even if my book contained not a single chapter on value, the analysis I give of the real relations would contain the proof and the demonstration of the real relations of value. The twaddle about the necessity of proving the concept of value rests only upon the most complete ignorance both of the matter in question and of the methods of science. That any nation which ceases to work, I will not say for a year, but for a few weeks, would die of hunger, is known to every child. He also knows that the masses of products corresponding to the different needs demand different and quantitatively determinate masses of the total social labor. That this necessity for the division of social labor in determinate proportions can absolutely not be abolished by reason of the determinate form of social production but can only change its *manner of appearance*, is obvious. Natural laws cannot be abolished at all. What can be changed in historically different conditions is only the *form* in which these laws operate. And the form in which this proportional division of labor operates, in a state of society in which the connection of social labor asserts itself as *private exchange* of the individual products of labor, is nothing other than the *exchange-value* of these products."

And so *Das Kapital* is constructed upon a two fold view of development: On the one hand, it observes development as a natural process and on the other, Marx treats it according to the historical-social form it assumes at any particular time. In the chapter on the fetishist character of commodities Marx shows what exchange value really is. It is not something natural, but a social relationship by which society is determined as by an actual thing. Exchange value, value production, is just an expression of social backwardness, and has its source in the still insufficient development of the forces of production. It is therefore an historical category, which is overcome by the increasing forces of production. So that the fetishism of commodities merely shows that man is not yet in a position to master production, and consequently production governs man.

In the Robinson Crusoe example, which Marx employs in discussing communism, he shows what is back of exchange value, and then in the third volume of *Capital* he says: "however prices may be regulated, it is seen that the law of value governs their movement." According to Hook, in the so much less important excursions of Engels in his preface to the second and third volumes of *Capital*, Engels merely emphasizes this phrase of Marx, which is nothing but an *illustration of the fetishistic character of commodities*, a character which does not admit the socially necessary labor time as the measure of value, though in reality it operates in spite of all modifications. So that political economy is the expression of the social form in which, at a certain plane of history, natural laws operate. And on this capitalistic plane, value cannot be comprehended by the false consciousness of the bourgeoisie. If bourgeois economy is interested in the way the market price was determined, if accordingly it was satisfied with the law of supply and demand, then Marx inquired about the origin of price and found it in the law of value. He thus uncovered the fetishism of commodities as the social "consciousness" under capitalism, in which the workers are separated from the means of production. It is not until this separation of producers and means of production is abolished that commodity society, with the false consciousness that is necessarily a part of it, can be brought to an end. And it is only on the basis of this fetishism that the distinction between "science" and "Marxism" is possible. The abolition of the one is bound up with the abolition of the other. Theoretically, this is already presupposed in Marxism, for man constructs in his head before he acts. Marx was able to actualize the Hegelian dialectic, Marxism can be actualized only through the Revolution. Or, as Marx put it: "It is not enough that thought presses on to become actuality, actuality must *itself* press on to become thought."

Since Hook does not see in *Das Kapital* the uncovering of the laws of social movement but only the critique (conditioned by the will of the proletariat) of bourgeois economics, so *Das Kapital* is not to him the theoretical actualization of materialist dialectics but "the application of historical materialism to the 'mysteries' of value, price, and profit (page 187)." In other words, since, according to Hook, the relations of production determine the thinking and actions of human beings, Marx developed from the standpoint of the proletariat his critique of bourgeois economics, which is simply criticism and nothing else. If the proletariat wins, then as a consequence Marx's *Capital* remains merely as an historical document, filled with the thoughts of a class which suffered under the rule of capitalism. Historical materialism here is *not a part* of the dialectical development but *divorced from it*; not a *productive element*, but a view of life (*Weltanschauung*). "Yet," as Marx wrote concerning his Russian critic in the preface to the first volume of *Capital*, "what else is he describing but the *dialectical method*?" But to Hook, *Das Kapital* is only an ideology, and from this point of view he says (page 181):

"What justifies Marx and Engels in holding that the mode of economic production is the *decisive factor* in social life is the revolutionary will of the proletariat which is prepared to act upon that assumption . . . It is only because we want to change the economic structure of society that we look for evidence of the fact that in the *past*, economic change has had a profound effect upon all social and cultural life. Because we want to change the economic structure of society, we assert that this evidence from the *past* together with our revolutionary act in the *present* constitutes a sufficient cause for believing that the general proposition 'in the last instance the mode of economic production determines the general character of social life', will be true in the near *future*."

Even though he follows this up with the statement that *what* we want and *when* we want it cannot be derived from an independent, absolute desire to action, but are historically conditioned, still in his interpretation the will remains divorced from consciousness. There is here no interaction and no dialectical whole. In spite of all materialistic concessions and idealistic inconsistencies, the viewpoint still is that we see the determining factor in the mode of economic production merely because we want to change the economic relations. The willing, however much it may be conditioned, remains for Hook at bottom decisive. The seriousness with which he accepts this view is seen in his description of the way in which social change arises. He writes (page 84): "From objective *conditions*, social and natural (thesis), there arises human *needs* and *purposes* which, in recognizing the objective possibilities in the given situation (antithesis) set up a course of *action* (synthesis) designed to actualize these possibilities." Action, to Hook, which is identical with willing, forms the synthesis. To Marx, however, the synthesis is something different; here the *proletariat*, as *the antithesis of bourgeois society*, already contains what forms the content of the Hook synthesis. The Marxian synthesis presupposes successful action; it lies behind willing. It is the result of the negation of the negation, it is the communist society. The growth of the proletariat itself is not only the growth of proletarian misery but also of class-consciousness and of action. This whole process turns off, at a certain level of development, into the revolution. "Was der Mensch will, das muss er wollen." Willing is inseparable from the proletariat; the existence of the proletariat as a material force of production is at the same time the existence of willing. Every setting apart and over-emphasis of the will should be eschewed. We may rather say with Engels : "A revolution is a pure phenomenon of nature, conducted more in accordance with physical laws than according to the rules which in ordinary times condition the development of society. Or rather, these rules assume in the course of a revolution a much more physical character, the material power of necessity comes out more forcefully." The material power is identical with will as well as with consciousness. In ordinary times (Reformism) these faculties are necessarily ascribed more value than they possess, so that they again become idealistic and false. In revolutionary times no matter how much will and consciousness exist, these factors always remain far behind the actual material power of the revolution.

## VI

The actual revolutionary process is much more closely related to the processes of nature than we are capable of conceiving in an unrevolutionary period; the "human" (ideological) factor in the development becomes more insignificant. Ten thousand starving human beings with the clearest consciousness and the strongest willing mean nothing in certain circumstances; ten million starving under the same circumstances, without consciousness and the specific human willing, may mean... revolution. Men die of hunger with and without consciousness and will, but in either case they do not die of hunger in sight of food. And when Hook in the course of his exposition refers to the millions of human beings who perished from the lack of class consciousness, he is after all merely pointing out the fact that even the presence of class-consciousness could not have prevented starvation. In the other hand, he produces no instance in which millions of human beings went hungry in sight of food. For in such a case they would not have starved, but would have gained possession of the food and in so doing become . . . *class conscious*.

This overestimation, or rather wrong estimation of the role of consciousness leads Hook also to overestimate the rôle of the party and, in the narrower sense, of the role of the individual in the historical process; a rôle which he does not conceive historically, but quite absolutely. In order to get at the rôle of the genius, he asks, for example (page 169):

"Would the Russian Revolution have taken place in October, 1917, if Lenin had died an exile in Switzerland? And if the Russian Revolution had not taken place when it did, would subsequent events in Russia have taken the same course?»

The same game is continued with other statesmen and scientists, and then Hook turns sharply against Engels, Plekhanov and others who held the view that every period which needs great men also creates them. Hook replies (pp. 171-172):

"With all due respect, this position seems to me to be arrant nonsense.... To argue that if Napoleon had not lived, someone else and not he would have been Napoleon (i.e. would have performed Napoleon's work) and then to offer as evidence the fact that whenever a great man was necessary he has always been found, is logically infantile ... Where was the great leader hiding when Italy was objectively ready for revolution in 1921 and Germany in 1923? . . . There are no musts in history; there are only probabilities."

To answer on the same plane, we may say, first, as Hook has stated in another place, that only practice shows whether a truth is true, hence also whether a great man is really such. And this practice is social practice. If, for example, society had not presupposed (mechanism in manufacture), actualized (division of labor) and applied Newton's knowledge, Newton's genius would have died with him. If the capitalization process had not given France such power in offense and defense, the genius Napoleon would perhaps have died as a lieutenant still more lonely than on St. Helena. *Society* determines what is genius. The Russian Revolution is independent of Lenin, and even its time of occurrence was not in the least conditioned by him *but by an endless series of interweaving factors in which the genius Lenin is swallowed up, and without which he cannot be understood*. The fact that the Bolsheviks succeeded in seizing political power in a revolution *over which they had no control* stands, of course, in part in direct relation to the Bolsheviks and also in part to the personality of Lenin. But the idea that without Lenin the course of Russian history would have been *decidedly* different is beneath the level of Marxist inquiry, which constantly traces history back to the needs of social life. The Russian Revolution did not adapt itself to Lenin, but Lenin adapted himself to the Russian Revolution. It was only because he accepted the revolutionary movement that he won influence over it, that he became an executive organ for it. The great degree to which Lenin was conditioned by the actual course of the revolution and how little he himself determined its development is shown by the way he revised his work after the revolution. This is very clearly expressed in a speech he delivered in October 1921, when he said:

"The democratic-bourgeois revolution has been carried through to the end by us as by no one else . . . We had not calculated sufficiently in connection with our design of putting into operation socialized production and the communist mode of distribution of the products among the small peasants, by direct order of the proletarian state. *Life has shown us our errors*. A series of transitional stages –state capitalism and socialism – was required in order to prepare the way for communism. This will involve labor extending over a great number of years. Not directly by way of enthusiasm, but with the aid of personal interests, of personal interestedness, with the aid of economic

calculation, you must first build a substantial bridge which, in the land of the small peasants, leads through state capitalism to socialism; in no other way can you arrive at communism. *This was revealed to us by the objective process of development of the Revolution...*The proletarian state must become a provident, careful and skilful proprietor, the future wholesale dealer; in no other way can the land of the small peasants be raised to a high economic level. A wholesale dealer; that appears to be an economic type just as far removed from communism as heaven is from earth. But that is simply one of the contradictions which in actual life lead from the farming enterprise of the small peasants through state capitalism to socialism. Personal interestedness raises production. Wholesale trade serves to unite millions of small peasants economically, arouses their interest, leads them to the next stage: the various forms of connection, of union in production itself."

The course of the Revolution rejected, first, all the old Bolshevik ideas which were still closely connected with the state capitalism of Hilferding, and forced the adoption of war communism as the new doctrine; and then the actual course of developments rejected also this new "construction" and took a purer turn to state capitalism. So that the Russian Revolution is a classic example of the fact that the course of development is determined not by the ideas of great men but by the socially necessary practice. Whether the Russian Revolution without Lenin would have taken any other course than the state-capitalist one is perhaps not worth discussing, for Lenin himself held that capitalism, not only in Western Europe but also in Russia, was sufficiently advanced that the next phase could only turn into socialism. Lenin regarded imperialism as "capitalism in its transitional form, parasitic or stagnating capitalism." Imperialism led, according to Lenin, simply to the universal socializing of production: "It drags the capitalist, against his will, into a social order which offers a transition from complete freedom of competition to complete socialization." The war, according to Lenin, had transformed monopoly capitalism into the "state-monopolist" form; the "state-military-monopolist capitalism" is, however, a "thorough-going material preparation for socialism, the entrance gate to it." With the conquest of state power and the taking over of the banks, he thought that state capitalism could be very quickly transformed into socialism. *The carrying out of state-capitalist economy in Russia was therefore, in Lenin's view, only the anticipation of the real movement of capital.* What was accomplished was the necessary capitalist consequence of advancing monopolization. The Party accelerated what would necessarily come about, finally, even without this acceleration.

That this capitalistic course was modified through the influence of the Bolsheviks is incontestable, but it remained capitalistic, and furthermore, the modification was limited to veiling the real nature of the reversion to capitalism, or of the forming of a new false consciousness. So we find Bukharin, at a government conference toward the end of 1925, expressing himself as follows: "If we confess that the enterprises taken over by the State are state capitalist enterprises, if we say this openly, how can we then conduct a campaign for a greater output? In factories which are not purely socialistic, the workers will not increase the productivity of their labor."

The Russian practice is not directed according to communist principles, but follows the laws of capitalist accumulation. What other laws would it follow if Lenin and the Bolsheviks had not won? We have in Russia also, even though in modified form, a surplus-value production under the ideological camouflage of "socialist construction." The wage relation is identical with that of capitalist production, forming also in Russia

the basis for the existence of a growing bureaucracy with mounting privileges, a bureaucracy which, by the side of the private capitalist elements which are still present, is strictly to be appraised as a new class appropriating to itself surplus labor and surplus value. The very fact of the existence of the wage relation signifies that the means of production are not controlled by the producers but stand over against them in the form of capital, and this circumstance further compels a reproduction process in the form of capital accumulation. This latter, on the basis of the Marxian law of value, with which the Russian situation also must be illuminated, leads necessarily to crisis and final collapse. The law of accumulation is at the same time the accumulation of impoverishment, and hence also the Russian workers are actually growing poorer at the same rate as capital accumulates. The productivity of the Russian workers increases faster than their wages; of the increasing social product they receive a relatively ever-smaller share. To Marx, this *relative pauperization* of the working population in the course of accumulation is only a phase of the *absolute pauperization*; it is only another expression for the increasing exploitation of the workers, and there can hardly be any doubt that even *without Lenin and the Russian Revolution* nothing but increasing exploitation could have occurred in Russia. Only one who, like Hook, mistakes the content of the Russian Revolution can raise the question as to whether Russian history without Lenin would have taken any other course than it actually did. It would, to be sure, have proceeded with different ideologies, different banners, different leaders, and with a different tempo, but *for the living proletariat these differences are entirely insignificant*. And since the revolution we are talking about is proletarian in name, one can only ask: what has been changed, as a result of the Revolution and the existence of the genius Lenin, as regards the situation of the Russian workers? Nothing essential! For the proletariat, Lenin was no more than Kerensky, no more than any bourgeois revolutionary, who does not abolish exploitation but only changes its forms.

There are not two kinds of wage labor, one capitalistic and the other bolshevistic: wage labor is the form in which, under capitalist production, the surplus value is appropriated by the ruling class or element. To be sure, the means of production have here passed from the hands of the private entrepreneurs into those of the State; as regards the producers, however, nothing has changed. Just as before, their only means of livelihood is the sale of their labor power. The only difference is that they are no longer required to deal with the individual capitalist but with the *general capitalist*, the State, as the purchaser of labor power. The economic relationship between producer and product still corresponds here to the capitalistic one. The means of production are only further centralized; which is not the end of a communist economy, but only a means to the end. The influence of Lenin, the policy of the Bolsheviks, stand revealed as a great capacity for adapting itself to the necessary course of development, in order, as the Bolshevik Party or as genius, to stay in power, which can only be the power of necessity. Had Lenin attempted to carry through a communist policy, his greatness would have been reduced – or elevated, as one likes, – to that of a tipsy Utopian. Where were the great leaders of Italy in 1921 and of Germany in 1923 (and again in 1933)? If an answer must absolutely be made, one may point no doubt to Mussolini and the leadership of the Third International, Zinoviev at the time. Mussolini, who *accelerated the objectively necessary process of concentration of capital in Italy*, the leadership of the Third International, which *maintained the "status quo," in Europe in the interest of the Russian Bolshevik regime by preventing the German revolution*. Thus Radek declared (by order of Zinoviev) before the thirteenth conference of the Russian

Communist Party on February 16, 1924: "The central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as well as the executive committee of the Comintern unequivocally recognizes that the Communist Party of Germany acted correctly when, in view of the superior armed-force of the enemy and the division within the ranks of the working class, it avoided an armed conflict." (This was repeated in 1933-34). But this question can also be approached dialectically, and we shall then recognize that the problem of great men is itself a quite historical one. Particularly in capitalist society, in which the symbol is more "real" than reality, the problem of leadership acquires such importance that ideologically it becomes the problem of history. The market-price problem is the obverse side of the leader problem. Hegel stopping short with the Prussian State, the money form of commodities, the leader-mass problem, are all one and the same expression for the level of the social forces of production in their capitalist integument. The real working class movement knows no leader "problem." In it the decisions are made by the soviets, who carry on the action as also later the economic life.

But this change in the role of the personality can be recognized not only in the political domain; it holds also for science. The specialization of science goes hand in hand with its development. The social division of labor is not being restricted but extended. Each invention and discovery necessarily bears a more and more collective character. This socialization leads to ever more socializing. In the beginnings of capitalist society there were inventors, today there are invention shops. Inventions are produced almost in the same manner as automobile tires. In modern capitalism the individual counts less, all innovations come from the laboratories of work in common.

The fact that this does not become politically visible is due to the necessity of the bourgeoisie of becoming ideological ever more reactionary in the same measure as it drives forward the actual relations. If the bourgeoisie once required a Napoleon, today the stupidity of Hitler serves as the symbolic glueing together of its centrifugal tendencies. And yet for the German bourgeoisie Hitler looms as an over-towering personality; for if Napoleon assisted the development of capitalist society, Hitler assists in staving off its collapse. But even without Napoleon capitalism would have taken up its victorious march, and it will collapse in spite of Hitler. The two of them can contribute a small part to determining the *tempo*, while the upgrade or the collapsing tendency operates, but the *general tendency* is beyond their power to alter. Through all temporary modifications the march of history, the development of the human forces of production makes its way. But even within these modifications the real significance of "great men" is not inherent in themselves but only theirs in connection with all other social circumstances. It is only because history under capitalism works with a false consciousness that the actual movement lies concealed behind the leader fetishism. When this movement takes place with a correct consciousness, it will put even the genius in his proper place.

Throughout his disquisition upon the role of the leader and that of chance in the broader sense, Hook has forgotten his own starting point, which *demand*s that every problem be regarded as an historical one. The alternative presented by the *Communist Manifesto* – communism or barbarism – points not to the determining role of human will but to its limitations. Since there is no equilibrium, a tarrying human race will necessarily perish if objective necessities are not carried through. But the tarrying itself is a temporary one. Barbarism is not the end of each development, but only an interruption which is dearly paid for. Barbarism is not the return to the ox-cart and into the primitive, but the

barbarous condition of self-laceration in the death crisis and wars of a rotting capitalism. There is only one way out . . . the way which leads forward, salvation through communism.

The starting point of the communist mode of production is the elevation already attained by the productive forces of capitalism. If the youthful capitalism needed Napoleon and the expiring one required Hitler, if capitalism always needed fancies – since reality, which had no common interests, also permitted no common struggle – the communist revolution needs only itself, that is, the action of the masses. It has no need of fetishism, of fancy, in order to carry on in reality, for it knows only common interests and permits a *genuine* common struggle.

To the eminent personage, as also to the role of chance in history generally, no more can be ascribed than Marx ascribed to them in a letter to Kugelmann quoted by Hook. But the content of this letter does not support but opposes Hook's absolute, idealistic, unhistorical conception of the leader problem. (2) "These 'accidents' themselves," says Marx, "naturally fall within the *general path of development* and are compensated by other 'accidents'. But *acceleration and retardation* are very much influenced by such 'accidents', among which must be reckoned also the 'accidental' character of the people who *first* stand at the head of the movement." The significance of these "accidents" must be grasped historically. The question as to how far they still have importance today is not resolved from theory but from practice. Here also "*the investigation of the real situation*", as this was conceived by Lenin, "*forms the true essence and the living soul of Marxism*".

## VII

Since, to Hook, *Das Kapital* is *only* a critique of political economy, so also the Marxian theory of value, to Hook, can indicate nothing more than is already known. He writes (page 220) : "*Yet neither the labor theory of value nor any other theory of value can predict anything which is not already known in advance.* War and crisis, centralization and unemployment, were already quite familiar phenomena when Marx formulated the theory of value." It is a mistake to assume, Hook goes on to say, that one can predict anything specific with the labor theory of value. Now, after all, capitalism is still far from having collapsed, and yet the Marxian law of accumulation, on the basis of value, is the law of collapse of the capitalist system. That is already shown in the first volume of *Capital*, as "the general law of capitalist accumulation." However, this law of collapse does not operate "purely" but, like any other law, is more or less modified in reality. These modifications are set forth in more detail in the third volume, especially in the section dealing with the law of the falling rate of profit. Just as the law of gravity operates in reality only in a modified form, so also the law of capitalist collapse, which is nothing more than capitalist accumulation on the basis of exchange value. When Hook takes away from the Marxian law of value its predictive power, he has *completely renounced Marx*. And when he further states that "one may accept the Marxist evolutionary metaphysic and not forthwith be committed to its theory of the social revolution (page 251)," the statement is false for the very reason that, in the first place, Marxism has no evolutionary metaphysics, secondly, we cannot really be committed to a theory of social revolution without practicing it. If Liebknecht in the scientific sense was a worse Marxist than Hilferding (page 249), and yet in practice a better one, as Hook asserts, the comparison is still quite uncalled for. For Marx himself "was no

Marxist" but he identified Marxism with the acting proletariat, which can act Marxistically and not otherwise. Marxism is simply not an ideology, but the practice of the class struggle! *The revolution is made by the masses who may know nothing about Marx: the revolution makes them Marxist!*

As regards theory, however, it is impossible to reject the economic doctrine of Marx and at the same time expect to be a Marxist in all other matters, as the reverse also is impossible. With the rejection of the predictive power of the theory of value, that is, the rejection of the Marxian theory of crisis and collapse, Hook, even though against his will, *rejects Marxism not partially but completely*. The rejection of the real content of the theory of value, by Hook, explains at the same time the idealistic content of his dialectic, as the latter in turn is the explanation of the first.

Hook's weakness in the economic theory is illustrated in the very fact that only twenty-two pages of his book are devoted to the Marxian economics. In this connection it is also interesting to refer to the passage in which he deals with the difference between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin.

The dispute between these two turned on the question of the realization of surplus value. Regarding Luxemburg, Hook writes (page 61) : "In her *Akkumulation des Kapitals* she contended that, with the exhaustion of the home market, capitalism must stride from one colonial country to another and that capitalism could only survive so long as such countries were available. As soon as the world would be partitioned among the imperialist powers and industrialized, the international revolution would of necessity break out, since capitalism cannot expand its productive forces and continue the process of accumulation indefinitely in any relatively isolated commodity-producing society, no matter how large."

Lenin, he goes on to state, denied that capitalism would ever collapse in any such mechanical fashion. And he then quotes with great approval from a speech of Lenin's dating from 1920 a passage which has no connection whatever with the debate about the realization of surplus value in non-capitalistic countries – a debate which had been waged eight years previously. Capitalism needs a non-capitalist market: that had been the position of Rosa Luxemburg. Lenin maintained that it creates its own market. But *both* held to the basic thought of *Das Kapital*, namely, that the capitalist mode of production has an *absolute economic limit*. While Luxemburg looked for this limit within the sphere of circulation, Lenin already glimpsed it correctly in the sphere of production. In so doing both of them, in the knowledge that the process of accumulation on the basis of value is the process of collapse of capitalism, *which is identical with the revolution*, attacked the whole reformist position, for which Hilferding in a speech as late as 1927 said: "I have always rejected any theory of economic collapse. The overthrow of the capitalist system will not come about from any inner laws of this system, but must be the conscious act of the will of the working class."

If in the heat of debate that phrase of Lenin's which has been quoted ad nauseam that, "no position exists for capitalism from which there is absolutely no way out," possessed a certain political justification in a determinate situation, namely the "death crisis epidemic" arising in 1920, it nevertheless lends no comfort to reformism, which had always denied to the theory of value any predictive power and which was pleased to reject the theory of economic collapse. The whole economic-theoretical work of Lenin, which only consciously repeated Marx, is opposed to such assertion. To Lenin, the law of value is the law of collapse.

One is surprised, however, when Hook, after having "with Lenin" *rejected* Rosa Luxemburg's "mechanical" theory of collapse presents, in *his own economic exposition*, *nothing but a repetition of Luxemburg's position*. After outlining the theories of value and surplus value, of the capital relation in production, the fall of the rate of profit with the increase in the productivity of labor, the value-price relation, accumulation and crisis, he then sums up (pp. 204-209):

"With the increase in the organic composition of capital the rate of profit falls even when the rate of exploitation, or surplus value, remains the same. The desire to sustain the rate of profit leads to improvement of the plant and the increase in the intensity and productivity of labor. As a result ever larger and larger stocks of commodities are thrown on the market. The workers cannot consume these goods since the purchasing power of their wages is necessarily less than the values of the commodities they have produced. The capitalists cannot consume these goods because (1) they and their immediate retainers have use for only a part of the immediate wealth produced, and (2) the value of the remainder must first be turned into money before it can again be invested. Unless production is to suffer permanent breakdown, an outlet must be found for the surplus of supplied commodities ... Since the limits to which the home market may be stretched are given by the purchasing power of wages . . . resort must be had to export."

He then further shows how in the course of development the importing countries themselves become exporting countries. At this point Hook has reached the limit set by Luxemburg; but while she came out with it, Hook does not, for of course he rejects with Lenin the "mechanical nature" of this idea of collapse. Instead, *he merely repeats once more his starting point* (page 207):

This process is accompanied by periodic crises of over-production. They become progressively worse both in local industries and in industry as a whole. The social relations under which production is carried on, and which make it impossible for wage-workers to buy back at any given moment what they have produced, leads to a heavier investment of capital in industries which turn out production goods than in industries which produce consumption goods. This disproportion between investment in production goods and investment in consumption goods is permanent under capitalism. But since finished production goods must ultimately make their way into plants which manufacture consumption goods, the quantities of commodities thrown on the market, and for which no purchaser can be found, mounts still higher. At the time the crisis breaks, and in the period immediately preceding it, the wageworker may be earning more and consuming more than usual. It is not, therefore, underconsumption of what the worker *needs* which causes the crisis, . . . but his underconsumption in relation to what he *produces*. Consequently, an increase in the absolute standard of living under capitalism, . . . would not eliminate the possibility of crises."

All the factors involved in the Luxemburg interpretation are here repeated in a more primitive form. The difference is that Hook doesn't share with her the conclusion she drew. We have here in Hook the disproportion between the two great departments of social production, the overproduction of commodities, the impossibility of realizing surplus value in the absence of fresh markets in non-capitalist countries. In short, as with Luxemburg, so with Hook, the capitalist world stifles under its superfluity of surplus value which cannot be turned into money (realized). The only difference between the two formulations is that where Luxemburg speaks of collapse, with Hook the process

stops at crisis. But all of these crisis factors have their points of support in the process of circulation, and hence are not imbedded in the *essence* of capitalism.

We know, however, that Marx developed his theory of accumulation first upon the basis of the total capital; in this, no circulation problems exist, there being neither an overproduction nor an absolute or even relative "underconsumption," and where the workers constantly receive the value of their labor power. Even in this "pure" capitalism pictured by Marx, *though all the crisis factors given by Hook are absent*, Marx still proves that even such an ideal capitalism must collapse, and on no other ground than that of the contradiction contained in value production. When Engels, in the passage Hook quotes from the *Anti-Dühring* (page 213), says that "in the value form of the commodity there is already concealed in embryo the whole form of capitalist production, the opposition between capital and labor, the industrial reserve army, the crisis," it goes without saying that the grounds of crisis are to be sought in the sphere of production, not of circulation. Hook himself says (page 213):

"Similarly, in the interest of analysis, he (Marx) was compelled to assume, at the outset, that the exchange of commodities took place under a system of "pure" capitalism in which there were no vestiges of feudal privilege and no beginnings of monopoly; that the whole commercial world could be regarded as one nation; that the capitalist mode of production dominates every industry; that supply and demand were constantly in equilibrium: that having abstracted from the incommensurable use-values of commodities, the only relevant and measurable quality left to determine the values at which commodities were exchanged, was the amount of socially necessary labor-power spent upon them."

Why was it, may we ask, that Marx first demonstrated the working of the law of value upon a "pure" capitalism? We find an excellent answer in the posthumous papers of Lenin: " By proceeding from the concrete to the abstract, thought . . . provided it is correct . . . *does not depart from truth but comes closer to it*. The abstraction of matter, of natural law, the abstraction of value, etc . . . in short, all scientific abstractions mirror nature more profoundly, more completely. From vivid contemplation to abstract thinking and from this to practice ... that is the dialectical road to the knowledge of truth."

The law of value revealed what concrete reality, the superficial world of appearance concealed; the fact that the capitalist system, as through the necessity of a natural law, must collapse. Marx first abstracted all the secondary contradictions of that system in order to show the effect exercised by the law of value as an "inner law" of capitalism, in order later, with the modifications introduced by concrete reality, to point out the purely temporary character of the tendencies arising from the modifications and working against the collapse-tendencies which confirm the *law of value as the determining factor in the last instance*. The law of value explains the fall of the rate of profit—an index of the relative fall of the mass of-profit. It is only for a time that the growth of the profit mass can compensate the fall of the rate of profit. If the mass of profit first fell relatively to the total capital and to the demands of further accumulation, at a later stage it falls absolutely.

It is not what Hook adduces as a crisis factor which can be regarded as the principal one; on the contrary, the matter must be understood exactly the other way round. Hook may quote Marx to support his contention that the cause of crisis is the contradiction between production and consumption. For as a matter of fact, according to Marx, "the final basis of all real crises is the poverty and limited consumption of the masses as against the urge of capitalist production so to develop the productive forces as if their

only limit were the absolute consuming capacity of society." . . . "But there could be *nothing more senseless*," writes Lenin (*The Marxian Theory of Realization*), "than to deduce from this passage of Capital that Marx had contested the impossibility of realizing surplus value in capitalist society or had explained crisis as being the *result of insufficient consumption*." An overproduction or underconsumption (which finally amounts to the same thing) is necessarily bound up with the physical form of production and consumption. But in capitalist society the material character of production and consumption plays no part which could explain prosperity or crisis. However much the thing may offend "logic," capital does in fact *accumulate for the sake of accumulation*. Material production, as well as consumption, is left in capitalism to the individuals; the *social character* of their labors and of their consumption is not *directly* regulated by society but indirectly by way of the market. Capital does not produce things, but (exchange) values. But even though it is not, on the basis of value production, in a position to adapt its production and consumption to the social needs, these real needs must nevertheless be taken into account if the population is not to perish. If the market is no longer in a position adequately to satisfy these needs, then production for the market, value production, will be set aside by the revolution, in order to make room for a form of production which is not socially regulated by the roundabout way of the market but has a *directly social character* and can therefore be planned and is capable of being directed according to the needs of human beings. From the standpoint of *use value*, the contradiction between production and consumption in capitalist society is insanity, but such a standpoint does not hold for capitalist production. From the standpoint of *value*, this contradiction is the secret of capitalist advance, and the greater this contradiction the better does capital develop. But for this very reason, the accumulation of this contradiction must finally arrive at a point which leads to its abolition, since the real conditions of life and production are after all stronger than objectified social relations. So that the *final* basis of all real crises is still the limitation of mass consumption as against the urge for so developing the forces of production as if the consuming capacity were unlimited. In capitalist value production, the appropriation of surplus value is limited by the possibility of exploitation. The workers' consumption cannot be reduced to zero; and it is only for that reason that there is an absolute economic limit, for value production can only tend nearer and nearer to this zero point. The capitalist contradictions arise from the contradiction between use values and exchange value. This contradiction turns the accumulation of capital into accumulation of impoverishment. If capital develops on the value side, it also at the same time, and in like measure, destroys its own basis, in that it continually diminishes the shares of their own products which fall to the producers. This share cannot absolutely be done away with, since the natural instinct of self-preservation on the part of the masses is stronger than a social relation, and also because capital can be capital only so long as it exploits workers and dead workers cannot be exploited.

To take for a moment the impossible position adopted by Hook, one could much rather say that the crisis comes about because this relative and later absolute "underconsumption" on the part of the workers is not great enough, because it cannot sufficiently increase, because too little "underconsumption" is present. It is not the underconsumption, whether relative or absolute, which produces unemployment; but the insufficient underconsumption, or the unsatisfactory mass of profit, the impossibility of increasing the exploitation in the necessary proportion, the loss of prospects for further profitable accumulation, produces crisis and unemployment.

It is not because too much surplus value is present that it cannot be turned into money; but because it does not suffice to meet the needs of further accumulation on the basis of profit production it is not reinvested. Because too little capital was produced, it can no longer function as capital and we speak of the over-accumulation of capital. So long as the mass of surplus value could be increased correspondingly to suffice for further accumulation, we proceeded from crisis to crisis, interrupted by periods of prosperity. So long as it was possible at the danger points of the crisis to increase the appropriation of surplus value through the sharpening of exploitation and through the expansion process, it was possible to overcome the crisis only to have it reproduced on a higher plane of development. At the point where the tendencies working against collapse are eliminated, or have lost their effectiveness as opposed to the needs of accumulation, the law of collapse asserts itself. The Marxian abstraction of "pure" capitalism, the law of value, turn out to be inner laws of capitalist reality; laws which in the last instance determine its necessary development. (3)

## VIII

We have already pointed out the close connection between Hook's peculiar attitude to the Marxian theory of value in particular and to Marx's economic doctrines in general and his idealistic deviation from the Marxian dialectic. All these factors proceed to exercise their pernicious influence upon Hook's theory of revolution. In the chapter entitled *The Class Struggle and Social Psychology* he says (page 228): "The division of the surplus social product is never an automatic affair but depends upon the political struggles between the different classes engaged in production." The struggle for division of the surplus value is, however, a quite *limited* one: a fact which must be referred to because it is *precisely this limitation* which shows what true class-consciousness is. Marx pointed out, for example, how the worker's wage cannot exceed a certain level for any great length of time nor in the long run sink below a certain level. The law of value is finally decisive. And even independently of these variations the collapse of capitalism is manifest from the theory of value alone. Furthermore, the class struggle does not determine in the last instance the share of the surplus value which goes to the middle strata, but *this share determines their struggle*. The process of concentration is stronger than the defensive tactics of the middle classes. That these classes nevertheless exist, is due to the fact that capital, while destroying the middle class elements on the one hand, continues to recreate them on the other. Certainly, the division of the surplus value is not an automatic process, certainly the class struggle in the whole dialectical process contributes to determining this share, but *out of the struggle for the distribution of the surplus value arises in the course of development a struggle for the abolition of the profit system, whether we will or not*.

For years now the workers throughout the world have been paid less than their value, and this fact is only another indication of the permanence of the present crisis. In the death crisis of capitalism the working population can only grow more poverty stricken; if it fights for a larger share of the surplus value, then practically it is already fighting for the abolition of surplus value production, even without being conscious of this fact and of its consequences.

The class opposition inherent in the relations of production determines the nature of the class struggle. Political parties are formed, since portions of the workers become conscious of the necessity of the class struggle more quickly than the great mass. If the party can, on the one hand, accelerate the general development and shorten the birth

throes of the new society, it may also inversely delay the development and act as an obstacle in the way. Accordingly, when one speaks, as Hook does, of the *necessity* of the party and further commits oneself with him to the idea that without a party a successful revolution is out of the question, then in the first place he is talking about an abstraction and, secondly, he identifies the party with the revolution or class consciousness; with the Marxian ideology. As a matter of fact, whether revolutionary class consciousness, which in the party takes the form of an ideology, is obliged to manifest itself in the party, . . . that is a question which cannot be settled in the abstract but only in the practical sense. It is not only in the specific form of the party that class-consciousness which has become an ideology needs to express itself. That consciousness may also assume other forms, for example, the form of factory cells, and these would be what the party still is today. The assertion that without class consciousness crystallized into a ideology a revolution is out of the question is not debatable, if only for the reason that Marxism, which does not separate being from consciousness, presupposes that in a revolutionary period the conscious elements, too, are present as a matter of course. The stronger these are, the better; but however weak they may be, class-consciousness to Marxism is not an ideology but the material life needs of the masses, without regard to their ideological position. Hook's idea of the revolution as a party matter belongs to a period which is already surpassed, – the period of reformism, for which Marxism had frozen into an ideology and whose position Hook, in spite of all his criticism, after all now approves.

Whether in the present situation the party is still to be regarded as a center for the crystallization of class-consciousness can be determined, as already stated, only from the present day practice. And here, if Hook were obliged to furnish proof of the necessity of the party he would dismally fail. Today the party is nothing more than a hindrance to the unfolding of real class consciousness. Wherever *real class-consciousness* has been expressed, in the last thirty years, it has assumed the form of committees of action and workers councils. And in this organizational form of class consciousness expressing itself in action all parties have seen a hostile power which they combated. European revolutionary history of the 20th century will be searched in vain for a single instance in which the party, in a revolutionary situation, had the leadership of the movement; on every occasion that movement was in the hands of the spontaneously formed committees of action, the councils. Wherever parties put themselves at the head of a movement, or identified themselves with it, it was only in order to blunt its edge. Examples: the Russian – and German revolutions.

Neither the Social Democracy nor the Bolsheviks were or are able to conceive a movement which they don't control. The Bolsheviks have never been anything more than *radical* social democrats. In the struggle over the form of organization of the working class movement so relentlessly waged between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, history has finally decided in favor of Luxemburg. The recognition of this historical fact may no doubt be delayed by the Potemkin [4] Russian "socialism," but history itself now rises in the place of Rosa Luxemburg and with the most disgraceful defeats on record pounds it into the heads of the workers that the *revolution is not a party matter but the affair of the class*. Lenin's conception of the party, to which Hook is committed, is a specifically Russian one, completely meaningless for industrial Europe and America.

If the dictatorship of the party – which necessarily leads to bureaucracy – was a necessity for Russia, where, due to the country's backwardness the soviet system can be admitted merely as a phrase and not as a reality nevertheless the genuine soviets

constitute the only form in which the proletarian dictatorship can express itself in developed countries. No longer upon the party, but upon the masses themselves must be laid the weight of the revolutionary decision. The reform party ended with the social treason of the Second International in the World War. The "revolutionary Social Democracy," the party of Lenin, the Third International, went to its ignominious end in the collision with fascism. *The acts of capitalism unmasked the pseudo-struggle carried on by these organizations.* The end of the Third International could be seen as early as 1920, when the revolutionists were expelled in order not to lose contact with the mongrel U.S.P.D. (independent socialists) and the other half reformist mass parties. The struggle against parliamentary cretinism waged with such a show of bitterness by "revolutionary parliamentarism," ended in "revolutionary parliamentary cretinism" which in its eagerness to ward off action inscribed on its banner (1933): "Not Hitler, – Thälmann will give you food and work! Answer fascism on March 5! Elect communists!» What party does Hook mean when he speaks of the party as a necessity? Does he have in mind the clownicalities of the Trotskyists, who in the same breath demand the permanent revolution and long term credits for Russia, or the political joke of the Brandlerites, who once believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat was possible within the framework of the Weimar Constitution? To be sure, Hook speaks (in his book) of the party in the abstract, but nevertheless he always means the party of Lenin, which contains and develops everything which led to the dissolution of the labor movement as it has hitherto existed without for that reason leading to a real labor movement.

The party has still to do anything but hinder the development of mass initiative. It has not revealed itself as an *instrument of revolution*, but has imposed its will upon the movement. Identification of the party with the revolution has led to mass organization at any price, for the party now had to take the place of the mass movement. At best, however, the party is nothing more than an instrument of the revolution, not the revolution itself.

The *mechanical conception of dialectical materialism held by Lenin*, which Hook takes up in the most varied connections throughout his book, a conception which saw in consciousness nothing but the reflection of the external world; – necessarily led also to underestimating the role of spontaneity in history. If Hook discards Lenin's mechanism, he does now eschew the errors to which this mechanism gives rise – as, for example, the rejection of spontaneity. Lenin shared with Kautsky the idea that "not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia must be regarded as the exponents of science." To Kautsky, the socialist consciousness is not identical with the proletariat but is brought to the workers from the outside. This is the task of the party in the Kautskyan sense. To Marx, however, the class struggle is identical with class-consciousness. Neither Kautsky nor his pupil Lenin could grasp this. In his pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin writes: "There can be no thought of a separate ideology matured through the working masses themselves in the course of their development . . . The history of all countries bears witness that the working class, of itself, is only capable of developing a trade unionist consciousness . . . that is, the conviction of the necessity of joining together in unions, of conducting a struggle against the employer, of demanding from the Government this or that legislative measure in the interest of the workers, etc. The socialist doctrine, however, has proceeded from the philosophical, historical, and economic theories which originated with educated representatives of the owning classes the intellectuals."

The whole labor movement up to this time has taken consciousness as identical with socialist ideology. Hence if the organization, regarded as the organized ideology, was

growing, that meant that class-consciousness was increasing. The party expressed the strength of class-consciousness. The tempo of the revolution was the tempo of the party's success. Of course the relations were conditioned by the willingness with which the masses accepted the party's propaganda, but the masses themselves, without the propaganda, were unfit for conducting a genuine movement. The revolution depended on the correct propaganda. This in turn depended on party leadership, and this on the genius of the leader. And so, if only in a roundabout way, history was after all, in the last analysis, the work of "great men."

The extent to which the working class movement is still dominated by this bourgeois conception of "history making" is shown by the impudence of the party-communist defeat strategists, whose only answer to revolutionary criticism today is the assertion that the defeat of the German proletariat in 1933 is nothing less than a masterly move on the part of the professional revolutionists. Thus the party-communist organ *Gegenangriff* writes, under date of August 15, (1933) from its exile in Prague: "There are unintelligent dogs which run after the train and fancy that they are pursuing it. Meanwhile the thesis constructors sit at their tables and calculate the speed of the train in connection with its coal supply, in order to determine the precise moment at which it can most surely be derailed." No criticism, please, only patience; the central committee will do the job. Today it is still calculating, but tomorrow – ah, tomorrow . . .! Meanwhile the great strategists assure each other of their greatness and the working class movement is being swallowed up in the sea of party-communist stupidity, whose greatest wisdom has been well expressed in the simple words of comrade Kaganovich: "The leader of world communism, Comrade Stalin, the best pupil of Lenin, is the greatest materialist dialectician of our age." . . . That is the level of the present day labor movement, which sees in the party the revolution itself and in so doing has degenerated into the strongest bulwark of counter-revolution.

To name Marx and Lenin together as Hook does when he says: "Marx and Lenin realized that left to itself the working class would never develop a socialist philosophy," is perhaps just to Lenin, but never to Marx. For Marx, *the proletariat is the actualization of philosophy*; the proletariat's *existence*, its *life needs*, its *struggle*, without regard to the ideological triflers . . . *that is the living Marxism!*

However much Hook may insist that "class antagonism can develop into revolutionary consciousness only under the leadership of a revolutionary political party," thinking that in so doing he has rendered justice to the role of class consciousness in history; if he thinks he has thereby tagged the spontaneity theory with the mechanistic label, than he has done so *with the mechanism of Kautsky and Lenin* and shares their undialectical view of Marxism – a view which is best illustrated as undialectical precisely in the rejection of the spontaneity factor.

In the same undialectical and absolute manner with which Hook approaches the party question, so he approaches all other questions having to do with consciousness. Merely by way of example, let us take parliamentarism. Hook writes (page 302): "Everywhere a struggle must be waged for universal suffrage . . . not because this changes the nature of the dictatorship of capital, but because it eliminates confusing issues and permits the property question to come clearly to the fore." In reality, however, parliamentarism in a certain historical epoch eliminates not only many confusing issues, but also creates new illusions, which in other historical settings turn completely against the proletariat. If universal suffrage was once a political rallying cry of the proletariat, at the present time this demand may have – and has – become completely meaningless. If the struggle for

the vote was once a political struggle, it is now becoming a *pseudo-struggle* which merely *distracts attention from the real one*. If the old labor movement already went down in parliamentary cretinism, the present-day demand for parliamentary activity is a crime. For the need of today is the quickening of mass initiative and the development of the direct action of the workers – a need which is being diverted into innocuous channels through parliamentary activity. Parliamentarism – inclusive of the "revolutionary brand" – is class betrayal. And we need not be directed to Marx: Marxism would not be Marxism if the proper task of the labor movement in the time of Marx and Engels were still in detail its proper task today.

## IX

Summing up, we may say of Hook's book that in comparison with the hitherto embryonic Marxism in the United States, it is without doubt to be regarded as an advance. It is thoroughly adapted to serve as the point of departure for a new and very much needed discussion in order to build the content of the new labor movement now in process of formation. As opposed to the "orthodoxism" of the Kautskyan school, Hook rightly brings out the active as the essential element of Marxism. But as to what the revolutionary consciousness, to which the whole book is devoted, really is . . . Hook can explain it only in Kautskyan fashion. To Hook also, class consciousness in spite of all his endeavors to the contrary, remains absolutely nothing but ideology. In Marx, however, the existence of the proletariat is at the same time the existence of the proletarian revolutionary class consciousness for from its social needs the proletariat can only act and must act in accordance with Marxism, but for Hook this consciousness already become ideology, the party, is the central point of his conception of revolution. He thus abandons his own starting point, that of the dialectical whole, and even though against his will, falls back into idealism. To be sure, Hook takes the step with Lenin from the "orthodoxism" of the Kautskyan school, but only to stop short with the new edition of "orthodoxism". The need, however, is to complete the half step made by Lenin. To that end there was first required the political collapse of the Third International. But to have recourse anew, as Hook does, to the already historically surpassed position of Lenin, means to stop halfway. After all, as Karl Korsch has so admirably expressed it in his book *Marxism and Philosophy*: "In the fundamental discussions regarding the whole position of present-day Marxism, in all great and decisive questions the old Marxian orthodoxy of Karl Kautsky and the new orthodoxy of the Russian or Leninist Marxism, in spite of all the secondary and passing petty quarrels, will stand together on the one side, and all the critical and progressive tendencies in the theory of the present working class movement will stand on the other."

## X

Orthodox Marxism," writes Georg Lukacs in his book *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (and we think he is right), "does not mean an uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations, does not mean a 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred book.' Orthodoxy in questions of Marxism relates rather *exclusively to the method*. It is the scientific conviction that it is only in the sense of its founder that this method can be expanded, extended and deepened. And this conviction rests on the observation that all attempts to overcome or 'improve' that method have led, and necessarily so, only to triteness, platitudinizing and eclecticism . . ." But though the results obtained by means of the Marxist method can be quite differently appraised,

most of the interpreters rely almost exclusively, as they themselves assert, upon dialectical materialism. The method is often subordinated to the interpretations, just as a tool can be differently employed by different persons for different ends. And thus arises an actual propensity, as illustrated by Herman Simpson, [5] to denote the dialectical method as "a tool for giants," which can be handled better by one person and worse by another, and this circumstance is taken to indicate its revolutionary greatness. But this "respectful" attitude quite overlooks the fact that the dialectical method is only the real, concrete movement taken up into and partially determined by consciousness. The process going on has been comprehended, and one intervenes in the process as a result of that comprehension.

With the advance of general human development, the role of consciousness increases. At a high point of the development, however, as the capitalistic relations of production hinder the further unfolding of the productive forces, so do they also hinder the full application of the conscious factors in the social process. And nevertheless consciousness must finally assert itself and, under such conditions, it can do so only by *growing concrete*. People do from necessity what they would do of their own will under relations of freedom. In the same way that the productive forces (if restricted by the productive relations) assert themselves eruptively, along revolutionary channels, so also does consciousness. Dialectical materialism does not set evolution and revolution over against each other, without at the same time perceiving their unity. Any evolution turns into revolution, and all revolutions have evolutionary phases. That consciousness may manifest itself in various manners is therefore to Marxism quite a matter of course. What is denoted as consciousness in periods of peaceful development has nothing to do with the class consciousness by which the masses are filled in revolutionary times, although the one conditions the other and although we can not separate the two without at the same time perceiving their unity.

Just as the exchange relations in capitalism, though only a relationship between persons and not a palpable thing, fulfills quite concrete functions, objectifies itself, so now in the revolutionary situation the alternative (a quite realistic one for the great mass of human beings) Communism or Barbarism becomes an active practice, as if this activity sprang *directly* from consciousness. If relations can become objectified (*verdinglicht*) and take on palpable form, so also, inversely, things can be transformed into relations. The realistic situation becomes a revolutionary relation, which as such fills and impels the masses, though the whole connection of events is not comprehended by them intellectually. It is only for this reason that that other saying is justified: "Im Anfang war die Tat !" (In the beginning was the deed). The mass uprising, without which a revolutionary overthrow is impossible, can not be developed out of the "*intellect-consciousness*": the capitalist relations of life preclude this possibility, for consciousness is finally, after all, only the consciousness of existing practice. The masses can not be "educated" to become conscious revolutionists; and yet the material necessity of their existence compels them to act as if they had actually received a revolutionary education: they become "*act-conscious*". Their life needs must resort to the revolutionary possibility of expression, and here, to use an expression of Engel's, one day of revolution has more weight than twenty years of political education.

This is no secret to anyone who has directly participated in a revolutionary uprising. In the fields of struggle, the workers who are ideologically the most backward often become the revolutionists who fight the most bitterly, not because they have ideologically changed over night but because there was nothing else left for them to do,

for otherwise they would have been mowed down *merely because of the fact that they were workers*. They have to defend themselves, not because they desire to fight but because they *"want to live"*. In the case of the struggling workers of the red army of the Ruhr district, for example, it was impossible to tell from inspection which of them was a strict Catholic and which a conscious Communist. The uprising abolished these distinctions. And this is true not only of the Ruhr district. A story of revolution without the nameless mass as its "hero" is not a story of revolution.

But if the real class struggle itself takes over the function of consciousness, this is not to say that consciousness is not capable also of expressing itself as consciousness (thought). Quite the contrary. It grows concrete in order to be able to function as consciousness, just as, on the other hand, the *real relations of life* under capitalism assert themselves, to be sure, by way of the market, and yet also in their actuality. The roundabout way, conditioned through value production, explains the malfunctions of the economic mechanism and the necessity of revolution. It is only for this reason that people make their history, as Marx says, not out of whole cloth; the relations, here the capitalistic ones, *compel* them to actions which are devoted to the overcoming of this compulsion.

Reference must be made in this connection to the further fact that the movement of the masses is something different from what the individual is capable of comprehending as such, since his understanding is partially determined by his individual conditions. The movement of a group is likewise not the same as that of the mass. Each group, if only by reason of its size, has different laws of self-movement and reacts differently to external influence. The will and the consciousness of the individual, like those of the group, are incapable of adequately recognizing and judging the movement of the mass. The individual or the group can no more be identified with the revolutionary movement than the ocean can be compared with a glass of water. The "leader" and the "party," precisely because they are such, can grasp and seek to determine the revolutionary movement only *with reference to themselves*, but nevertheless this movement *follows its own laws*. To win influence in the movement is possible to the individual or the group only when they subject themselves to those laws. It is only when they follow, not when they strive for a following, that they can be regarded as furthering the movement. This is not to say (to use an expression of Lenin's to denote a tendency which he combated) that the party is to form the "tail-end" of the revolution, but that it shall seek to operate from the standpoint of the revolution, not from that of the party, standpoints which are necessarily different. It can not, of course, succeed in doing so completely, but the extent to which it is able to approach the standpoint of the revolution can serve as a measure of its revolutionary value. If the party does not take itself as the starting point, this already implies a recognition of the fact that the dialectical method, as deduced from reality, is only the theoretical image of reality, and that it can be applied only because the person applying it is subject to it. But the most backward worker is subject to the dialectical movement in exactly the same way as Mr. Simpson's "giant"; the former *has to do* what the other *not only has to do but also wants to do*. Since the dialectical movement of the revolution is a social one, it is only the *must* of the many, not the *will* of the individuals which can be regarded as real consciousness. In fact, the present-day relations quite preclude the possibility of a social will. The social expression of will is only arrived at through the social *must*. So that a misconception of the dialectical method is a misconception of the real movement itself, though the movement

is not at all changed thereby. It also becomes clear, however, that the Simpson "giant" may in certain circumstances serve to further the movement, *but he is not decisive in it.*

## XI

An orthodox Marxist has to reject the "orthodoxism" of the Kautskyan and Leninist schools. Hook opposes the dogmatism of these schools, (6) but without realizing that that "dogmatism" can be combated only from the orthodox standpoint. The pseudo-orthodoxism of the Social Democracy and of the Bolsheviks has nothing to do with orthodox Marxism. Once the Kautskyan "orthodoxism" was opposed with the slogan : "With Lenin back to Marx." Today, one is compelled to turn against Lenin with the orthodox slogan: "Back to Marx." Neither Kautsky or Lenin saw in the dialectical method anything more than a serviceable tool. They disputed about the way to handle it. Their differences are therefore of an exclusively tactical nature (disregarding the arbitrary confusion of tactical questions with questions of principles): there is no difference of principle between the two. With this weapon of dialectic, both wanted to make history *for* the proletariat. That they themselves could only play the part of a weapon was accordingly a thought which remained completely foreign to them; they identified themselves, as "giants of dialectic," with the dialectical social movement itself and were necessarily obliged to hinder the real revolutionary movement to the same extent in which they strengthened their own positions. The more they did for themselves, the less they accomplished for the revolution, for the magnitude of their influence depended for them on the withering away of the initiative of the masses. These latter were to be brought under control, so that they might be led. If, to Kautsky, the Church was unconfessedly the model of organization, so to Lenin that model was by his own confession the factory. By unity of theory and practice they understood nothing more than the mere unification of "leader and mass"; organization from the top downward, orders and obedience, general staff and army. The bourgeois principle of organization was also to serve for proletarian aims.

But the unity of theory and practice is brought about only through revolutionary action itself; it can be attained, under capitalistic relations, only along revolutionary, eruptive channels, not through a "shrewd policy" which guarantees a harmony between leaders and led. But such action can only be furthered or hindered; it can not be made or prevented, since it depends on the economic movements, and these are not yet subject to human will and human intelligence. The old labor movement understood by class-consciousness nothing more than its own insight into the historical process. The party was everything, the movement only perceptible by way of the party. In this way there arose from the class struggle between capital and labor – in so far as that struggle was subordinated to the party – the struggle of different groups for mastery over the workers. There is no better proof of the correctness of the Marxian method than the emasculation which Marxism itself has undergone. Epigonity serves to illustrate capitalist development, and inversely this development furnishes the explanation of epigonism. In other words, the various schools of epigonism, or revisionism, can be traced back to the various stages of capitalist development. The "original" Marxism has survived its degenerate children, and today the revolutionary movement is compelled, in the name of that original Marxism, to a new orientation on the basis of orthodox adherence to the Marxist method. The "misunderstanding" of the dialectical method at the hands of the pseudo-Marxian was nowhere expressed more clearly than in the abandonment of the Marxist theory of accumulation and collapse. The revisionists

boasted of the rejection of that theory, and the "orthodox" Marxists of the time did not venture to defend it. The "misunderstanding" was further expressed in the separation of the Marxian philosophy from the economics. There were and are "Marxists" who "specialize" in one or the other, who fail to understand that the economic laws are dialectical. Anyone who, for example, abandons the Marxist theory of collapse can not at the same time hold to the dialectical method; and anyone who accepts dialectical materialism "philosophically" has no choice but to regard the dialectical movement of present-day society as a movement of collapse.

The world crisis of capitalism had first to become an actuality before the problem of collapse could again be brought into the center of discussion and hence also before the struggle for the Marxian dialectic could be revived. It is not so much theory but rather reality itself which now serves for the further development of Marxism. But this further development is today in reality, only the *reconstruction* of the original Marxism, which is being cleansed of the filth of epigonity. It has become clear that the Marxian "abstractions" were more real than the "realistic" attempts which the epigoni made to supplement them, in wishing to give them "flesh and blood," in trying to "complete" the "torso," etc. Meanwhile, Kautsky has completely rejected the Marxian dialectic, and Lenin recommended, shortly before his death, that the study of Hegel and of the dialectical problem in general be taken up anew. Fifty years of "Marxist theory" offered as its result the most hopeless confusion. It has not furthered Marxism but thrown it back even prior to its starting point. Any real orthodoxism is a hundred times superior to the Marxian "successor." Marxism as a revolutionary theory stood in contradiction to the labor movement which was developing in the upgrade period of capitalism, and it was therefore modified by that movement in accordance with its own needs and this modification was then confused with the essence.

One is not justified in regarding himself as holding an advanced position merely because he is not in agreement with epigonity, or because he has different opinions on this or that question. One must completely reject both, Social Democracy and Bolshevism, as well as all of its offshoots, in order to place himself on a Marxist basis. But while Hook wants to renew Marxism by means of overcoming various "dogmas," he has not, in the struggle against dogmatism, combated the emasculation of Marxism but in his zeal has abandoned Marxism itself. What he attacks as "dogmatism" has not been attacked for the first time; the cry of "dogmatism" has always been used as a political argument against radical currents in the labor movement. The same arguments which Hook now directs against the "dogmatism" of the "official" communist movement were once hurled by Lenin against the left-communist council movement, which was unwilling to sacrifice the world revolution to Russian state capitalism. And still earlier, the Social Democracy directed these same arguments against Lenin and the communist movement in general. The struggle against dogmatism, as it has hitherto been conducted, was limited to a struggle against the radical tendencies in the labor movement, tendencies which threatened to become dangerous to the already established organizations and their owners. The pre-war debates within the Social Democracy, directed against the revolutionary opposition, the argument of the Social Democracy against the Bolsheviks, Lenin's exhortations against the council communists, and now Hook's struggle against "dogmatism" are quite undistinguishable. All were accused of dogmatism: the Social Democracy, so long as it had a revolutionary character; the Bolsheviks, so long as they were revolutionary; and the council movement, because it directed itself against the self-sufficiency of the parties. All the

ideological positions (including that of Hook) directed against the radical movement were taken under the pretext of combating dogmatism. The social democrat Curt Geyer has given the best expression of their common characteristics, and his arguments resemble those of Hook to a hair. Geyer writes (7):

The radical communist fell into the error of confusing probability with necessity, of seeing in the economic and historical tendencies established by themselves, laws in the sense of the natural laws of the earlier natural sciences, laws which are given *a priori* and govern the world like a blind providence . . . Their philosophy of history reveals a highly mechanistic trait. The role of the proletariat as an active factor in the historical development, in general the role of man in history, went far into the background . . . This mechanism rested in part on the derivation of all historical development from an economy, which was thought of as self-moving and in part on a teleological conception of the function of the mass in history. Radicalism ascribes to the mass the capacity of getting a proper grasp of a determinate historical situation and of its function in the general development, not intellectually, to be sure, but instinctively, and hence the capability of taking action instinctively in the direction of social progress. This capability is traced back to a mystical class-consciousness which guides the attitude of the mass and hence the course of history, – a class-consciousness which arises automatically, as through a necessity of nature, through the class position of the masses, as effect from cause. This class consciousness is not viewed by radicalism as the intellectual insight of the individual into his social situation and the conception of that situation from the point of view of a determinate social philosophy, but as a mystical something which may exist outside the content of consciousness of the class member and does not enter consciousness except (and here we have the theological phase of this conception) under determinate conditions, that is, when the social advance requires it. And so, to radicalism, the action of the mass always lies in the direction of social advance . . ."

Geyer's charge of confusing probability with necessity is an empty phrase. Probability presupposes the possibility of decision; according to Geyer, and also according to Hook, one can decide in such or such manner at will. *When* and for *what* does not, according to them, depend directly on man, but *whether* does. This conception presupposes for the social movement the *existence of a social will*, a thing which, however, is not present in capitalistic society. Consequently, this conception relates social movement to the uncertainty of the individual, which is naturally nonsense. But it is precisely this nonsense which explains the lugging in of the charge of mysticism directed against radicalism (or "dogmatism"), since it is obviously impossible for persons holding such a view to conceive of any other than the "intellect-consciousness," or at best to still grant the validity of anything other than "instincts." Geyer's criticism of radicalism, as above exemplified, leaves radicalism quite unscathed; it merely reveals the weakness of the "critic," who failed to realize that in capitalism it is not the "will" but the will-less market which determines the destinies of mankind. It is not man who determines in capitalism – and it is only under these conditions that it is possible to speak of probability – but the will of mankind, as well as the life of society, are completely subjected to the market, their actions are necessary ones, compelled by the market relation. If they do not conform to this market compulsion, they cease to exist, in which case, naturally, so far as they are concerned, every problem vanishes. The disorganization of this market relation, which is actually being disorganized by the increasing forces of production, and without the supplementary addition of will on the part of mankind, is not conditioned but necessary, because it has nothing to do with the

will. If the revolution were dependent upon the party, the leader or the intellect-consciousness, then it would *not* be necessary but conditional. And it is only this will of the party and of the leader which Geyer has in mind when he speaks of the active role of man in history. The role of the proletariat as an active factor in the historical development comes out in much sharper relief precisely with the acceptance of the concept of necessity.

Social advance is identical with the abolition of wage labor. Accordingly the proletariat, as soon as it *acts for itself*, can not act falsely and must of necessity act in accordance with social advance. To characterize this as teleology presupposes a complete misunderstanding of the laws of economic movement. The struggle of the proletariat for its existence – not the ideological struggle of the revolutionists among the proletariat, but the struggle of the proletariat as *it is* – must lead to the abolition of wage labor and thus assures the release of the productive forces restricted by capitalism. The very circumstance that the workers come out in behalf of their specifically material interests makes them revolutionists and enables there to act in accordance with general social progress. This conception has no need whatsoever of any mystical class-consciousness, regardless of its source. Geyer's arguments, which Hook must certainly share, show that in the struggle against dogmatism it is always only the radical movement which is taken as a target. This movement is necessarily self-sufficient, and it can not yield to the demands of the various individuals or groups, but takes literally the idea that the liberation of the workers can only be the result of their own actions.

It might further be noted that the "dogmatism" which Hook ascribes to the "official" communist party movement is still carried on there, at best, as a traditional manner of speech. In reality, the only principle of the communist party movement – to use a phrase of Rosa Luxemburg's with reference to opportunism in general – is "the lack of principles." If the Communist Party were as "dogmatic" as Hook likes to believe, it might perhaps still be regarded as a revolutionary movement; for the "dogmatism" with which it is charged but which is not present would be nothing else than the first beginnings of revolutionary Marxism. But the old labor-movement – from Noske to Trotsky – has no connection with Marxism, and hence it can also not be accused of dogmatism. Never were organizations more undogmatic, more unprincipled, more unorthodox, more venal, more opportune than the two great currents of the "labor movement" and of its various branches which are now past. To reproach them with dogmatism is to confuse the phrase with reality. If one appraises these organizations, not by what they say but by what they do, no trace of dogmatism is to be found.

## XII

In the article already mentioned, (8) Hook has flatly dismissed the conception of the inevitability of communism and the conception of spontaneity which goes with it. According to Hook, the "dogma" that communism is inevitable is to be rejected because "it makes unintelligible any activity in behalf of communism" (Page 153). Granting that this were so (though in our opinion it is not), this argument, as well as the further arguments which Hook employs, offers nothing to disprove the conception of the necessity of social advance, which can be seen only in communism. Hook's argument, rejecting the idea of necessity is just as impossible to accept as the denial that water is wet, merely on the ground that wetness is unpleasant. That this so-called dogma "denies that thinking makes any difference to the ultimate outcome" (page 153) is an argument invented by Hook : those who hold to this alleged dogma do not question

what Hook is pleased to take for granted. In fact, this "dogmatism" has no need whatever to dispute the determining role of thought, *among other factors*; it merely refuses to see in thinking the decisive role. But the idea of necessity *has* to be rejected by Hook, since he takes as his starting point the assumption that it is "absurd (to believe) that the working class by its own unaided power can achieve victory" (page 146). To Hook, accordingly, it is "the task of the communists to educate them (the workers to proper class-consciousness and to lead them" (page 146). On this same ground, as we have already seen, the theory of value had for Hook no predictive power. The movement of capital on the basis of value is, however, nothing else than the dialectical movement of society itself, and the knowledge of the dialectical method is here only the knowledge of this movement. If one rejects the predictive power of the theory of value, one rejects at the same time the dialectical method. If one follows the movement of capital while at the same time holding fast to the dialectical method, it is seen that the alleged dogma with which we are here concerned is nothing other than the realistic recognition of the real movement of capital.

In an article which appeared recently in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (1933, No. 3), Max Horkheimer has taken up the problem of prediction in the social sciences, coming to conclusions which we share and which we cannot refrain from opposing to those of Hook.

The objection" (that the social sciences preclude predictions) writes Horkheimer, "applies only to special cases and not to the principle . . . There are broad fields of knowledge in which we are not limited to the statement: 'in case these conditions are fulfilled, that will happen' but in which we may say: 'these conditions are now fulfilled, and therefore that expected event will occur without any intervention of our will' . . . It is certainly incorrect to say that prediction is only possible when the occurrence of the necessary conditions depends on the person who predicts, but the prediction will nevertheless be the more plausible as the conditioning relations depend more on the human will, that is, the degree in which the predicted effect is not the product of blind nature but the result of reasonable decisions. The manner in which capitalist society maintains and renews its life has more resemblance to the course of a natural mechanism than to an action directed toward a goal . . . It may be stated as law, that with increasing change of the structure (of present society) in the direction of unified organization and planning, predictions also will win a higher degree of certainty. To the degree 'in which social life loses the character of a blind process of nature and society takes on forms in which it constitutes itself as a reasoning subject, the more definitely can the social process be predicted. Hence the possibility of prediction does not depend exclusively on the refinement of methods and on the sensitivity of the sociologists, but equally upon the development of their object, on the structural changes in society itself . . . So that the sociologist's concern with arriving at more exact predictions is converted into the political striving for the realization of a reasonable society.

The Marxian abstraction which first left the real market problem completely out of consideration and which had recourse only to the distribution of the conditions of production between capital and labor (means of production and labor power), thus neglecting the character of a blind natural process which social life possesses under capitalism and holding strictly to the theory of value, led to the recognition that the capitalist system must collapse. In this way it was also possible, on the basis of the situation necessarily created by capitalism in the course of its development, to come to a conclusion regarding the character of the revolution and its results. Capitalist society

has furthered the forces of production in such measure that their *complete* socialization is unavoidable, that they can no longer truly function except under communist relations of production. If, to Marx, the collapse was unavoidable, so also at the same time was communism inevitable. If the present movement is only possible on the basis of the previous one, then we may judge from the present one as to the nature of the future movement. As to how far, that depends on the level which the present movement has attained, but this consideration always remains limited. As to what will come from communist society, that cannot be said before such a society exists: but what will come from capitalist society is revealed by its own material conditions. The more capitalist society develops, and thus at the same time goes to pieces, the clearer become the features of communist society. While Marx, who hated nothing so much as utopians, could go no further than the collapse of capitalism, it is possible today, in the midst of the collapse, to sketch the laws of movement of the communist society with some degree of definiteness. An analysis of capitalist society, which implies looking into its own inner laws of development, permits no other conclusion, on a scientific basis and with the acceptance of the theory of value, than that communism is inevitable. Anyone who takes a hostile attitude to this "dogma" only illustrates the weakness of his understanding of economics, and he has actually nothing left to do but close up inside himself, his will, his intelligence; in short, he must stick fast in the ideological world of the bourgeoisie, and his consciousness must necessarily be clouded. And precisely for that reason his assaults on "dogmatism," on "mysticism," must become ever more savage, the more he succumbs to the capitalistic magic.

It goes without saying that the rejection of the concept that communism is inevitable involves also the rejection of the spontaneity theory. And in fact we find that to Hook "the doctrine of 'spontaneity', which teaches that the daily experiences of the working class spontaneously generates political class-consciousness" is patent nonsense. To him, as we have already seen, it is rather the "education" provided by the communists which takes care of the "proper" class-consciousness. Education is here set over against experience, as if the one were not conditioned by the other, as if both were not two sides of the same process. 'These arguments too, like those which Hook employs against inevitability, are gratuitous. But even if one were to accept them on inevitable grounds, what would they amount to in view of the *fact* that in spite of these arguments *all real revolutionary movements*, as even the self-sufficiency of a Trotsky is often forced to admit, had a spontaneous character. Rosa Luxemburg, in her writings against the Social Democracy as well as against the Bolsheviks, has already proved this with sufficient force, so that it is here superfluous to recount once more the history of the contemporary revolutionary movement. It seems more important to us to dispose in advance of an argument which is frequently advanced against the concept of spontaneity, namely, that even from the standpoint of spontaneity the masses have often shown their inadequacy.

Why was it, these critics like to remark ironically, that the masses failed, for example, to prevent the setting up of the Hitler dictatorship? It is the same sort of question which is opposed to the theory of collapse: why, then, has capitalism never yet collapsed? In both cases, we are merely confronted with a misunderstanding of the theories in question. The so frequently mentioned dialectical formula of the conversion of quantity into quality, which are necessarily separated by the process of development, also furnishes the explanation of our standpoint, that of those who accept the doctrines of spontaneity and collapse. In both cases, the question is one as to the moment of the

conversion. It is, in fact, a conversion which is repeated again and again on a more extensive scale, so that, to employ an expression of Henryk Grossmann's "every crisis is a phenomenon of collapse and the final collapse is nothing but an insoluble crisis." The theory of collapse does not rest upon any automatic process, nor does the concept of spontaneity assume on any mystical ground that the masses sometime or other will break out in revolt. Collapse and spontaneity, both are to be regarded only from the standpoint of the conversion of quantity into quality.

Why is it that, although each crisis is a collapse in miniature, the system is able to pull out of it? Simply because the tendencies directed against the collapse – tendencies arising through the realities of the situation – are not yet exhausted. If they are exhausted with reference to the further needs of accumulation, the crisis can no longer be overcome and must necessarily turn into collapse. It is the same way with the mass movement bound up with this process. So long as the counter-tendencies against revolution are strong enough, the spontaneous movement of the masses will not be able to assert itself. In fact, it will reveal such weakness as to give the impression that it could never be more important than at present and that therefore, by the side of itself (for of course no one denies the spontaneity factor altogether), has need of the party to parcel out and direct this spontaneous factor, like all the other factors, in the interest of the revolution. It is only because the economic-political tendencies directed against the spontaneous action of the masses were so strong that the actual deeds could *appear* to be consciously aroused. The few real revolutionary movements which Germany, for example, could point to came into action against the will of the various parties, even against the will of the Communist Party. (Consider, as a classic example, the March movement of 1921). "While the Communist Party participated in those actions, that was only because it had nothing left to do; in no case did they arise from that party's initiative – the initiative was constantly furnished by the masses themselves. It was not until the size of the party was such as to be decisive that it could refuse to follow the compulsion of the mass initiative, that it could prevent the movements of the proletariat – and it did prevent them, though in so doing it had necessarily to collapse as a party.

It was only after an enormous amount of party "education" that the masses could be decisively defeated for years. In what other way is to be explained that the class-consciousness of the masses continually retrogressed with the growth of the parties and their influence? How is it otherwise to be explained that even in Russia, where the revolutionary party "could be loaded onto a hay wagon," the workers and peasants accomplished their revolution without having been "educated" to it? In fact, that they carried the revolution through with greater thoroughness where the "educators" were completely lacking. The masses, who took steps to expropriate the factories *against the will* of the Bolsheviks, first *compelled* Lenin to give the word for nationalization. No one can deny this without falsifying history. It was not the demagogue Hitler who destroyed the German Communist Party and the Social Democracy, but the masses themselves, in part actively and in part through inactivity. For these parties had got into an untenable position: they did not represent the interest of the workers, and they did not conform with the interests of the bourgeoisie. This latter who could not bind up its imperialistic ambitions with those of Moscow, and its militaristic drive, had to be put through in such proportions and at such a tempo as could not be assured by the tradition-bound "labor movement." The role of these parties was simply the role which the bourgeoisie permitted them. The fact that the spontaneous movements are often unable to assert themselves is no proof of their non-existence. The flood can, to be sure, be held up by a

dam, but the dam cannot do away with it. As to how long the flood can be dammed, that depends on the means at the disposal of the dam builders. The limitations of these means under capitalism are well known. The flood of the spontaneous mass uprising will wash away all dams.

Hook's idea that the doctrine of spontaneity can be and is used as "a justification for the policy of split and schismatic fission" (page 154) is incomprehensible. As if the splits sprang from the will of the splatters and not rather from the nature of the organizations within capitalist society. But leaving this factor to one side, what, according to Hook's conception, will become of the proletarian revolution when it is quite impossible any longer to build up strong, influential parties which are "decisive" in the class struggle? What will become of the revolution when the ruling class has succeeded in destroying all the "giants" – leaders, parties, communist education, etc. – and in depriving them permanently of the possibility of exercising their functions? From Hook's standpoint, the only answer is that then there simply can be no revolution. The revolution, accordingly, in the last analysis – however humorous it may sound – is dependent on the democratic lenience of the bourgeoisie. Just as to Mr. G. D. H. Cole, for example, the prospects of socialism have declined as a result of the capitalist crisis, and who regards socialism as developing much better out of capitalist prosperity, so to Hook, even though not admittedly, the existence of democracy is the presupposition for the proletarian revolution. (It goes without saying that the illegal labor movement can not be embraced in the Hookian concept of the party). In both cases, for Hook as well as for Cole, it is the intellect-consciousness which succeeds in convincing the world, or at least a preponderant percentage of the workers, of the blessings of socialism or of the beauty of the revolution, and thereupon both are "desired." This schoolmasterly attitude may fit in with the course of political instruction, but with respect to the revolution it can only produce a comic effect.

Marx's analysis of the capitalist laws of accumulation ends up in the proletarian revolution. It goes without saying that to Marx there was no *purely* economic problem. Long before the capitalist development has reached the economic end-point fixed by theoretical considerations the masses will already have put an end to the system. The cyclical crisis is converted into the permanent crisis, a condition in which capitalism is able still to exist only through the continuing and absolute impoverishment of the proletariat. This period, a whole historical phase, compels the bourgeoisie to permanent terrorism against the working population, since under such conditions any decrease of profit by way of the class struggle brings into question more and more the system itself. The process of concentration has also made the basis for the rule of the bourgeoisie so narrow that a relatively frictionless social practice is still possible only through open dictatorship. The end of democracy has come. With it there disappear also the labor organizations bound up with democracy, freedom of speech and of the press, etc. The longer capitalism lives, the deeper the crisis and the sharper the terrorism. This capitalist necessity cannot be avoided by way of democracy. The very safeguarding of "formal democracy" compels the fall of capitalism, so that naturally capitalist democracy becomes a thing of the past. The end of democracy involves the end of the labor movement in the Hookian sense; he has nothing left to do but turn away disillusioned from the workers who failed to listen to him soon enough. World history stands still because the workers did not let themselves be "educated." But the concept of spontaneity will also be adequate to this situation. The permanent crisis sharpens the class struggle in the same measure as it suppresses that struggle. Czarism explained

not only the lateness of the Russian Revolution but at the same time its marvelous and fearful power when it broke out, in spite of the absence of "educators" and of preponderant organizations. The action was at the same time the organization, the active fighters were their own leaders. Who was it that "brought over" into the masses the thought of the soviets? Was it not rather born from the relations themselves? From the masses and their needs? It was only *after* they had been formed that the soviets began to be discussed by the "educators." The class struggle is the movement of class society. Organizations can be destroyed, leaders murdered, education transformed into barbarism; but the class struggle cannot be disposed of, except by the setting aside of classes. The very destruction of the legal labor organization is a better indication than anything else of the deepening of the class struggle, though this is not to proclaim the revolutionary quality of the parties destroyed.

There is, however, no fixed point of time for the revolution. Even though one holds the revolution to be inevitable, nothing has thereby been said regarding its time of arrival. And any argument to the effect that the Fascist State is inevitable is nonsense, serving merely to conceal the betrayal perpetrated by the Third International. In 1918, for example, it had become possible for the Social Democracy to suppress the council movement in the blood of the workers. The opposite might equally well have been the case, and it was only later that it became clear why the former occurred rather than the latter. The factor of "accident," of "leadership," etc. is undeniable and shall not be denied, but one must also recognize its limits and its changing role in the historical process. Just as it was possible in 1923 for the Communist Party of Germany to hold the masses off from the revolutionary uprising, it might equally well have failed in that endeavor. The revolution was postponed, but *merely* postponed. It can also break out prematurely, and in this way complicate its own course. But premature or overdue, the revolution – the locomotive of history – and with it the communist society, of necessity asserts itself, and is carried through by the workers themselves, for the previous course of history has created a condition which permits of no other solution, because that solution is identical with the present life necessities of the majority of mankind. And the proletarian revolution, while it changes the world, will not neglect to educate the astonished "educators."

## NOTES

(1) Sidney Hook : *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*. (John Day Company. New York, 1933).

(2) The quotation marks in which Marx encloses his "accidents" show the restricted sense in which he wishes to have them taken. The word *first* (zuerst) toward the end of the passage emphasizes this still more. (The word is omitted in Hook's text). The italics are mine.

(3) It would lead us too far at present to develop more fully the Marxian theory of accumulation and collapse. This subject will be treated at length elsewhere.

(4) Potemkin was the leading minister under Catherine of Russia. When the Czarina took a trip through the provinces, Potemkin had artificial village-fronts constructed along her course to make her believe that all was milk and honey in her domains. The name of the minister has in consequence become a synonym for "spurious."

(5) *The New Republic*, Feb. 28, 1934.

(6) Compare, in addition to Hook's book, also his article in the April (1934) number of *The Modern Monthly*: "Communism Without Dogmas."

(7) *Der Radikalismus in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Jena 1923).

(8) "Communism without Dogmas." The page numbers in parenthesis have reference to this article in *The Modern Monthly*.