

ON THE EXPROPRIATION OF THE CAPITALISTS*

By WACLAW MACHAJSKI

NINETEENTH century socialism—regardless of the convictions of its followers—is not an attack upon the basis of the system of slavery that has been in existence throughout the centuries in the form of the various civilized societies. It attacks only *one* of the forms of this slavery—the rule of the *capitalist class*. Even in the case of its victory it does not abolish the age-long exploitation; it destroys only the *private property of the material means of production*, viz., land and factories; it destroys only *capitalist* exploitation.

The abolition of capitalist property, i.e., of the private ownership of the means of production, implies by no means the abolition of *family* property in general. It is this institution which has made for exploitation throughout the ages, which has secured for the well-to-do minority and for its offspring the exclusive ownership of all riches, the entire heritage of mankind, all its culture and civilization. It is this institution which has doomed the majority of the human race to be born in poverty, as slaves condemned to perform manual labor throughout their lives.

The expropriation of the capitalist class by no means signifies the expropriation of the entire bourgeois society. By the mere elimination of the private employers the modern working class, the modern slaves, do not cease to be slaves condemned to lifelong manual labor. The national surplus value produced by them does not disappear, but passes into the hands of the State, as the fund for the parasitic existence of all exploiters, of the entire bourgeois society.¹ The latter,

¹In Machajski's terminology "bourgeois society" stands for both property-holders (capitalists) and the non-capitalist owners of education—the so-called "new middle class" or "intellectual workers."

* From: *Socialist Science as a New Religion*. Geneva, 1904. p. 3. (being Section II of Part III of *The Intellectual Worker*)

after the elimination of the capitalists, remains the same ruling society as it was before, the educated master, the world of the "white-hands."² It remains the owner of the national surplus value which is distributed in the form of high salaries paid to the intellectual workers. Due to the institute of family property and to the family form of life that fund is maintained and reproduced in their offspring.

Socialization of the means of production means only the abolition of the right of private ownership and control of factories and land.

By attacking the factory-owner the socialist does not touch in the slightest the salary of his manager and engineer. The socialism of the past century leaves inviolate all the incomes of the "white-hands," as the "labor wage of the intellectual worker," and, in the words of Kautsky, it declares that "the intellectuals are not interested in exploitation and are not taking part in it."

Modern socialism is unable and unwilling to abolish the age-long exploitation and slavery.

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ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE REVOLUTION OF THE MANUAL WORKERS

WHATEVER the further development of the events now unrolling in Russia (this was written in April, 1905, during the first months of the First Russian Revolution) the *cause of the workers* consists in that economic struggle [for higher wages] which is being waged by the masses themselves in spite of all democratic and socialist formulas and programs; in that struggle which by all the active socialist parties is looked upon as a necessary evil, as a means of enticing the workers into the bourgeois revolution and of keeping them there; in that economic struggle which is concerned *exclu-*

²The equivalent of "white-hand" is often used in Russian to designate a) those who are *not* engaged in manual ("black") labor.

sively with the conditions of manual wage labor—of the labor of the slaves of modern society.

Whatever the further developments of the events now unrolling in Russia the cause of the workers demands *that all the revolutionary strength of the masses should be concentrated upon the increase of the economic demands and upon the extension of the strike movement*; upon the liberation of that struggle from the socialist traps placed against it; traps which, more successfully than the liberal and democratic preachers, ensnare the mind of the workers with fairy-tales about the rule of the people in and the liberties of, the democratic states.

The cause of the workers can find its adequate expression only in a movement aiming at an economic general strike that would embrace all of Russia; in a movement which would transform that strike into a workers' revolution, into a united attack upon bourgeois society and its government power with concrete demands to be granted immediately; a movement whose militant forces are united in a secret, underground organization.

A movement of this kind will unite the workers striking for higher wages with the unemployed struggling for their immediate protection against hunger; and for this purpose it will be able to attract to the big cities all the starving masses of the Russian towns and villages.

On a higher phase of its development, at a moment of vast uprisings, fruitful in tangible gains for the working class, a movement of this kind will find a response among, and stir up, the Western European workers who have been lulled to sleep by peaceful socialist sermons. It will thus mark the beginning of the workers' revolution in the civilized world.

From *The Intellectual Worker. Part I. The Evolution of Social Democracy.*
Preface pp. XXIII-XXIV.—Geneva, 1905

Contrary to the theories of 19th century socialism, contrary to both the social-democratic and anarchist theories, the

working class stands before a new era of struggles, an era of *world-wide workers' conspiracies, dictating the laws to the governments by means of world-wide strikes.*

During this new era of struggles, waged exclusively in the interests of the *manual workers*, that is, for purely economic demands, and in proportion as their secret organization extends and their uprisings gather momentum, the workers will carry out the expropriation not only of the capitalists, but of all the educated classes³ as well, of all consumers of incomes exceeding those of the manual workers.

They will do away with the present-day family property, and will win the opportunity for every human being to *share, from the day of his birth, on equal terms with everybody else, in the benefits of the earth and of civilization; to acquire by virtue of his birth the right and the material means for spending his childhood and youth in the same manner as everyone else, the right to the same upbringing and education.*

Only with the expropriation of all propertied and educated classes will the age-long exploitation and slavery crumble.

From *The Intellectual Worker. Part I. The Evolution of Social-Democracy.*
Preface p. VIII.—Geneva, 1905.

ON THE INTELLECTUALS AND SOCIALISM

“The intellectual workers’, as a privileged layer of population, are antagonistic to the proletariat which, as the lowest class, wishes to make an end of all privileges. . . . During the feudal period military service and the Church represented a means of providing for those members of the nobility who could not become direct owners. Under the capitalist system of production the intellectual occupations serve the same purpose. The intelligentsia is the mental aristocracy, and its interests under the existing system compel it to maintain its aristocratic apartness at any price. Hence its anti-Semitism, its anti-feminism, and so on. The insistence of the

³ Machajski uses his specific term “educated society” under which he understands the sum total of all capitalists and all members of the “new middle class.”

social-democratic party upon equal opportunity for all in the matter of acquiring education and its endeavor to remove the obstacles which *at present* prevent women and workers from rising into the ranks of the intellectual professions may affect the intelligentsia more than anything else—by bringing about an *overproduction of the educated*. In this respect the interests of the proletariat and those of the intelligentsia are *diametrically opposed to each other.*”

In the above passage Kautsky apparently understands something about the parasitism of the existence of the intelligentsia as a class in bourgeois society, which endeavors to maintain its monopoly by every means, and whose interests are “diametrically opposed” to the interests of the proletariat. Now, in Russian Poland this privilege of the intelligentsia “suffers most from the Russian government.” Kautsky is aware of this fact, yet it does not occur to him to draw the only conclusion that could be drawn from it in accordance with the socialist theory; namely that “the sufferings of the Polish intelligentsia” are giving birth to a definite, very strong class interest of the Polish bourgeois society which is impelled to use the labor movement as an instrument for reducing these “sufferings” of the privileged, for the full development of the parasitic life of the intelligentsia. . . .

This opportunist attitude of Kautsky with regard to Polish patriotism is an inevitable consequence of his ability to refrain, in time, from “alluring” investigations in order not to infringe upon some social-democratic formula or other. The new phenomenon of capitalist evolution compels him to point out that the intelligentsia is a definitely growing privileged class, that it is aristocratic in character and that it is closely related to the bourgeoisie. However, his social-democratic principles do not permit him under any circumstances to call it directly a bourgeois class, that is, an enemy of the proletariat, because, as everybody knows, the bourgeoisie—the enemy of the proletariat—is only “a relatively small number of capitalists and big landowners.” True, the intelligentsia “is a privileged layer of the bourgeois society,” “a means for providing for the offspring of the bourgeoisie”—

yet nevertheless it consists of "workers," even though they may be privileged, because the "non-workers" in the capitalist system are "only the capitalists and the big landowners" (Section 5 of the Erfurt Program).

Thus the infallible social-democratic principles have decided once for all that the "new strong and growing middle layer," the "intelligentsia," is an element that stands outside of the classes of a class-system, and that, according to these principles, it is destined to remain so, no matter how much it will expand and gain in strength. No matter how its privileges multiply, how its parasitic life grows, how the "diametrical opposition" between its interests and those of the proletariat manifests itself, it is destined "not to take part, as a class, in the class struggle of the bourgeoisie" against the proletariat; and consequently, in accordance with the social-democratic theory, it is for all eternity endowed with the ability, to a larger or smaller degree, to "rise above the narrow class horizon." It was shown before that according to these social-democratic principles "the sale of the special knowledge and abilities" by the intelligentsia as a class, is essentially not connected with "capitalist exploitation" and altogether at variance with it. The social-democratic principles do not even suspect that *the ability of the intelligentsia, as a class, from generation to generation, to sell its "special knowledge and abilities," presupposes a "special" hereditary property in the possession of this class, and that consequently, this sale is directly connected with exploitation and directly interested in its existence.*

The social-democratic principles, in their "pure" form, reject the possibility of any increase of the middle layers of society, and declare that "all the benefits of the capitalist development are monopolized by a relatively small number of capitalists and big landowners." In reality, however, capitalist evolution shows an indubitable growth of bourgeois society. Even if the small enterprises are inevitably doomed to disappear, the middle classes, as represented by the ever increasing number of privileged employees of capitalism, are

growing nevertheless, and thus "all the benefits of the gigantic growth of the productive forces are monopolized" *not merely by "a handful" of plutocrats, but by the growing bourgeois society.*⁴

The evolution of the social-democratic party, from its subversive intentions to its modern efforts to direct the proletarian movement into reformist channels, does not reflect merely the changed situation of the proletariat. The contradictions of the capitalist system are, of course, not weaker at present than they were half a century ago. True, the revolutionary struggle of the Western European proletariat has enabled some of its layers to improve their situations; but the position of the unemployed whose numbers are growing continually is all the more miserable and hopeless, and the situation of the entire proletariat in such countries as Italy and Hungary, not to speak of the starving masses of Russia, is of course not better than that of the English and German paupers of the forties. Consequently the social-democratic evolution reflects something else as well: *the evolution which is going on within the bourgeois society itself.*

Time was when a rapidly advancing capitalism, an impetuous concentration of wealth and the development of the machine industry not only pauperized peasants and handicraftsmen, but even represented a threat to the privileged classes as a whole. "The middle class is bound to disappear gradually, until the world will be divided into millionaires and paupers, into big landowners and poor laborers" Engels wrote in the forties (Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher). This was a threat directed against privileged society itself, against the savants and other intellectuals whom the millionaire is ready to treat as if they were ordinary laborers.

That period was reflected by a more or less *revolutionary* mood of the social-democratic party. Under its pressure the growing sum total of the national surplus value which is appropriated by the capitalists provides an ever increasing share for the maintenance of all privileged layers. Bourgeois

⁴ See Note 1.

society, "the new middle class which is numerically very strong," expands. The privileged employees of capital are more and more admitted to the task of ruling the country. Science is given an honorary place and proper emoluments, and the bourgeoisie controls the minds of the proletarians with the help of science. The situation thus created found its expression in the determined endeavor of the social-democracy of the nineties to become "the only party of order."⁵

The "new middle class," "numerically strong and growing incessantly," is a class of employees of capital. Consequently, from the point of view of the social-democratic principles, it is, for all that, a class of workers, even though it be privileged. For, according to the Erfurt Program, only the capitalists and the big landowners are non-workers. Thus this class, due to its monopoly of education, acquires merely the ability, as was stated before [by Karl Kautsky] to have no part in capitalist exploitation. . . .

Marx's analysis of the bourgeois system lays bare only the antagonism between the capitalists and the workers and altogether disregards the antagonism between the proletariat and bourgeois society.⁶ Consequently [according to Marx] the entire national surplus value consists only of the products of consumption of the capitalist class and of the fund for "the additional means of production" which is "saved by them." . . .

It apparently results from Marx's analysis that the intellectual workers get their maintenance not from the unpaid product of the proletarian's labor, but as a reward for their skilled labor power. Thus the entire parasitic character of

⁵In an article written in 1895 for the Vienna "Zeit", published by progressive middle class elements of Austria, Wilhelm Liebknecht (father of Karl), one of the founders of the German Social-Democratic Party, emphasized the law-abiding character of his party, concluding one section of the article with the words: "we are the only party of order in Germany."

⁶See Note 1.

bourgeois society is concealed behind the following economic relation:

"All labor of a higher or more complicated character than average labor is expenditure of labor-power of a more costly kind, labor power whose production has cost more time and labor, and which therefore has a higher value, than unskilled or simple labor-power. This power being of higher value, its consumption is labor of a higher class, labor that creates in equal times proportionately higher values than unskilled labor does". (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 220)

At a certain point complicated labor ceases to be labor of mechanical performance, in a broad sense, and becomes labor engaged in directing, managing, superintending the entire labor process of society. This is the labor of the privileged employees of the capitalist system, the labor of the intellectuals, of the army of mental workers. It has a "higher value" because in its value there are contained "higher expenditures for education,"⁷ that is, for the remuneration of the educators and for the maintenance of the pupils.

For the preparation of the intelligent forces needed for the capitalist system the latter uses a special fund, the sum total of the national surplus value. Every generation of privileged employees, that is, of the intellectuals, during the period of its training, swallows a certain amount of the national surplus value. Thus they become highly skilled labor power, a power of "higher character," of "higher value." This means: *for the very reason that they swallowed a certain amount of surplus value, they acquire, under the logic of the system of exploitation, the right to keep on exacting—as payment for their training—the unpaid product of other people's labor, the labor of the proletarian.* Yet, it is supposed to be the payment for their *individual* abilities! The surplus value which bourgeois society has appropriated as remuneration for labor of a "higher character" is transmitted by that society to its offspring, and knowledge, science, mankind's great-

⁷ While the English version of *Capital* speaks merely of "labor power of a more costly kind", the German original speaks of labor power "in which higher expenditures for education are included". The Russian text used by Machajski was a literal translation of the German original.

est patrimony, becomes the hereditary monopoly of a privileged minority. *Only members of this hereditary, privileged minority can become labor power of a "higher character," while all the remaining millions are in possession of the hereditary monopoly of manual slave-labor.*

The social-democratic principles have no compunctions in tolerating within the proletarian movement the presence of a social force which, due to its very nature, could not possibly aim at the abolition of the class system. That social force is the class interest of the intellectual workers. This element keeps the proletariat from striving towards an immediate overthrow of the existing system, by telling the workers that the final emancipation is unthinkable for the time being, and that a long period of political education of the working class is still necessary for that purpose.

From *The Intellectual Worker. Part I. The Evolution of Social-Democracy. Conclusion.* pp. 70-83 (Selected passages).