

**Anton Pannekoek**

**Class Struggle and  
Nation**

## Introduction

Not being Austrian, perhaps I should apologize for writing on the national question. If it were a purely Austrian issue, anyone who is not intimately acquainted with the practical situation and who is not obliged to be acquainted with it through everyday practice would not get involved in examining it. But this question is acquiring increasing importance for other countries as well. And thanks to the writings of the Austrian theoreticians, and especially to Otto Bauer's valuable work, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* [1], it is no longer an exclusive preserve of Austrian practice and has become a question of general socialist theory. Currently, this question, the way it has been addressed and its implications cannot but arouse lively interest in every socialist who considers theory to be the guiding thread of our practice; at the present time one can also make judgments and engage in criticism outside the realm of specifically Austrian conditions. Since we shall have to combat certain of Bauer's conclusions in the following

pages, we shall say in advance that this by no means diminishes the value of his work; its importance does not reside in having established definitive and irrefutable results in this domain, but in laying the groundwork for further debate and discussion on this question.

This discussion seems to be especially timely at this juncture. The separatist crisis puts the national question on the agenda in the party and obliges us to re-examine these questions, and to subject our point of view to thorough scrutiny. And maybe a debate concerning theoretical basics would not be totally useless here; with this study we hope to make our contribution in this debate to our Austrian comrades. The fact that comrade Strasser, in his study *Worker and Nation*, has arrived at the same conclusions as we have, by a completely different route, on the basis of Austrian conditions (guided of course by the same basic Marxist conception), has played a determinant role in the decision to publish this pamphlet. Our labors may therefore complement one another in regard to this question.

# **I. The Nation and its Transformations**

## **The Bourgeois Conception and the Socialist Conception**

Socialism is a new scientific conception of the human world which is fundamentally distinct from all bourgeois conceptions. The bourgeois manner of representing things considers the different formations and institutions of the human world either as products of nature, praising or condemning them depending on whether or not they contradict or conform to “eternal human nature”, or as products of chance or arbitrary human decisions which can be altered at will by means of artificial violence.

Social democracy, on the other hand, considers the same phenomena to be naturally-arising products of the development of human society. While nature undergoes practically no change—the genesis of animal species and their differentiation took place over very long periods—human society is subject to constant and fast-paced development. This is because its basis, labor for survival, has constantly had to assume new forms as its tools have been perfected; economic life is thrown into turmoil and this gives rise to new ways of seeing and new ideas, new laws, and new political institutions. It is therefore in relation to this point that the opposition between the bourgeois and socialist conceptions resides: for the former, a naturally immutable character and at the same

time, the arbitrary; for the latter, an incessant process of becoming and transformation in accordance with laws established via the economy, upon the basis of labor.

This also applies to the nation. The bourgeois conception sees in the diversity of nations natural differences among men; nations are groupings constituted by the community of race, of origin, and of language. But at the same time it also believes that it can, by means of coercive political measures, oppress nations in one place, and extend its domain at the expense of other nations somewhere else. Social democracy considers nations to be human groups which have formed units as a consequence of their shared history. Historical development has produced nations within its limits and in its own way; it also produces change in the meaning and essence of the nation in general with the passage of time and changing economic conditions. It is only on the basis of economic conditions that one can understand the history and development of the nation and the national principle.

From the socialist point of view, it is Otto Bauer who has supplied, in his work *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, the most profound analysis; his exposition constitutes the indispensable point of departure for the further examination and discussion of

the national question. In this work, the socialist point of view is formulated as follows: “The nation is thus no longer for us a fixed thing, but a process of becoming, determined in its essence by the conditions under which the people struggle for their livelihood and for the preservation of their kind” (p. 107). And a little further on: “the materialist conception of history can comprehend the nation as the never-completed product of a constantly occurring process, the ultimate driving force of which is constituted by the conditions governing the struggle of humans with nature, the transformation of the human forces of production, and the changes in the relations governing human labor. This conception renders the nation as the historical within us” (p. 108). National character is “solidified history”.

## **The Nation as Community of Fate**

Bauer most correctly defines the nation as “the totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate into a community of character” (p.117). This formula has frequently but mistakenly been attacked, since it is perfectly correct. The misunderstanding resides in the fact that similarity and community are always confused. Community of fate does not mean submission to an identical fate, but the shared experience of a single fate undergoing constant changes, in a continuous

reciprocity. The peasants of China, India and Egypt resemble one another in the similarity of their economic conditions; they have the same class character but there is not a trace of community between them. The petit-bourgeois, the shop-keepers, the workers, the noble landowners, and the peasants of England, however, although they display many differences in character due to their different class positions, nonetheless still constitute a community; a history lived in common, the reciprocal influence they exercise upon one another, albeit in the form of struggles, all of this taking place through the medium of a common language, makes them a community of character, a nation. At the same time, the mental content of this community, its common culture, is transmitted from generation to generation thanks to the written word.

This is by no means meant to imply that all characters within a nation are similar. To the contrary, there can be great differences of character within a nation, depending on one's class or place of residence. The German peasant and the German industrialist, the Bavarian and the Oldenburger, display manifest differences in character; they nonetheless still form part of the German nation. Nor does this imply that there are no communities of character other than nations. We are not, of course,

referring to special organizations, limited in time, such as joint-stock companies or trade unions. But every human organization which comprises an enduring unity, inherited from generation to generation, constitutes a community of character engendered by a community of fate.

The religious communities offer another example. They are also “solidified history”. They are not just groups of people who share the same religion and who come together for a religious purpose. This is because they are, so to speak, born in their churches and rarely pass from one church to another. In principle, however, the religious community includes all those who are connected socially in one way or another by origin, their village or their class; the community of interests and conditions of existence simultaneously created a community of basic mental representations which assumed a religious form. It also created the bond of reciprocal duties, of loyalty and protection, between the organization and its members. The community of religion was the expression of social belonging in primitive tribal communities and in the Church of the Middle Ages. The religious communities born during the Reformation, the Protestant Churches and sects, were organizations of class struggle against the dominant Church, and against



each other; they thus correspond to a certain extent to our contemporary political parties. As a result, the different religious faiths expressed living, real, deeply-felt interests; one could convert from one religion to another in much the same way that one can quit one party and join another in our time. Later, these organizations petrified into communities of faith in which only the top stratum, the clergy, maintained relations within its own ambit which set it above the entire Church. The community of interests disappeared; within each Church, there arose, with social development, numerous classes and class contradictions. The religious organization became more and more an empty shell, and the profession of faith, an abstract formula lacking any social content. It was replaced by other organizations which were living associations of interests. Hence the religious community constitutes a grouping whose community of fate increasingly belongs to the past, and is progressively dissolving. Religion, too, is a precipitate of what is historical in us.

The nation, then, is not the only community of character which has arisen from a community of fate, but only one of its forms, and sometimes it is hard to distinguish it from the others without ambiguity. It would serve no purpose to attempt to discover which human units of

organization could be defined as nations, especially in ancient times. Primitive tribal units, great or small, were communities of character and of fate in which characteristics, customs, culture and language were passed on from generation to generation. The same is true of the village communes or the peasant regions of the Middle Ages. Otto Bauer discovers in the Middle Ages, in the era of the Hohenstauffens, the “German nation” in the political and cultural community of the German nobility. On the other hand, the medieval Church possessed numerous traits which made it a kind of nation; it was the community of the European peoples, with a common history and common mental representations, and they even had a common language, the Latin of the Church, which allowed educated people to mutually influence one another, the dominant intellectual force of all of Europe, and united them in a community of culture. Only in the last years of the Middle Ages did nations in the modern sense of the term slowly arise, each with its own national language, national unity and culture.

A common language is, insofar as it forms a living bond between men, the most important attribute of the nation; but this does not justify identifying nations with human groups speaking the same language. The English

and the Americans are, despite the fact that they speak the same language, two nations with different histories, two different communities of fate which present strikingly divergent national characteristics. It is also incorrect to reckon the German Swiss as part of a common German nation which would embrace all German-speaking peoples. No matter how many cultural elements have been allowed to be exchanged between them by means of an identical written language, fate has separated the Swiss and the Germans for several centuries. The fact that the former are free citizens of a democratic republic and the latter have lived successively under the tyranny of petty princes, foreign rule, and the weight of the new German police state, had to confer upon each group, even if they read the same authors, a very different character and one cannot speak of a community of fate and of character in this case. The political aspect is yet more evident among the Dutch; the rapid economic development of the maritime provinces, which surrounded themselves on the landward side with a wall of dependent provinces, and then became a powerful mercantile State, a political entity, made Low German a separate modern written language, but only for a small segment separated from the mass of those who spoke Low German; all the others have been excluded from this language by political barriers and

have adopted, as residents of Germany who have been subject to a common history, the High German written language and culture. If the Austrian Germans continue to emphasize their German qualities despite their long history of separate development and the fact that they have not shared in the most important of the most recent historical experiences of the Germans of the Empire, this is essentially due to their embattled position in relation to Austria's other nationalities.

## **The Peasant Nation and the Modern Nation**

The peasants have often been described as being stalwart guardians of nationality. Otto Bauer, however, also calls them the tenants of the nation who do not participate in national culture. This contradiction starkly reveals that what is "national" in the peasantry is a very different thing than what constitutes the modern nation. Modern nationality does of course descend from peasant nationality but differs from it in a fundamental way.

In the ancient natural economy of the peasants, the economic unit was reduced to its smallest scale; the operative interest did not extend beyond the borders of the village or the valley. Each district constituted a community which barely maintained relations with its nearest neighbors, a community that had its own history,

its own customs, its own dialect and its own character. Some of them were connected by ties of kinship with the villages of neighboring districts, but they did not have much influence on one another. The peasant clings powerfully to the specificity of his community. To the extent that his economy has nothing to do with the outside world, to the extent that his seeds and his crops are only in exceptional cases affected by the vicissitudes of political events, all the influences of the outside world pass over him without a trace. He is in any case unconcerned and remains passive; such events do not penetrate his innermost being. The only thing which can modify man's nature is that which he actively grasps, which obliges him to transform himself and in which he participates out of self-interest. This is why the peasant preserves his particularism against all the influences of the outside world and remains "without history" as long as his economy is self-sufficient. From the moment that he is dragged into the gears of capitalism and established in other conditions—he becomes bourgeois or a worker, the peasant begins to depend on the world market and makes contact with the rest of the world—from the moment that he has new interests, the indestructible character of his old particularism is lost. He is integrated into the modern nation; he becomes a member of a

much more extensive community of fate, a nation in the modern sense.

The peasantry is often spoken of as if the preceding generations already belonged to the same nation as their descendants under capitalism. The term “nations without history” implies a concept according to which the Czechs, Slovenes, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians have always been so many different and particular nations but that somehow they have long remained dormant as such. In fact, one cannot speak of the Slovenes, for example, except as a certain number of groups and districts with related dialects, without these groups ever having constituted a real unity or a community. What the name faithfully conveys is the fact that, as a general rule, dialect decides which nations are to be claimed by the descendants of its original speakers. In the final analysis, however, it is the real developments which decide whether the Slovenes and the Serbs, or the Russians and the Ukrainians, must become one national community with one written language and one common culture, or two separate nations. It is not language which is decisive but the political-economic process of development. By identifying language as the decisive factor one could just as well say that the peasantry of Lower Saxony is the faithful guardian of German nationality, and also of

Dutch nationality, depending on which side of the border it inhabits; it only preserves its own village or provincial particularity; it would be just as foolish to say that the peasant of the Ardennes tenaciously preserves a Belgian, Walloon or French nationality when he clings to the dialect and the customs of his valley, or to say that a Carinthian peasant of the precapitalist era belonged to the Slovene nation. The Slovene nation only made its appearance with the modern bourgeois classes which formed a specific nation, and the peasant would not willingly have become a part of it unless he was linked to that community by real self-interest.

Modern nations are integral products of bourgeois society; they appeared with commodity production, that is, with capitalism, and its agents are the bourgeois classes. Bourgeois production and circulation of commodities need vast economic units, large territories whose inhabitants are united in a community with a unified State administration. As capitalism develops it incessantly reinforces the central State power; the State becomes more cohesive and is sharply defined in relation to other States. The State is the combat organization of the bourgeoisie. Insofar as the bourgeois economy rests upon competition, in the struggle against others of the same kind, the organizations which are formed by the

bourgeoisie must necessarily fight among themselves; the more powerful the State, the greater the benefits to which its bourgeoisie aspire. Language has not been a crucial factor except in the effort to draw the boundaries of these States; regions with related dialects have been forced into political mergers where other factors do not intervene, because political unity, the new community of fate, requires a single language as a means of intercourse. The written language used for general concourse is created from one of these dialects; it is thus, in a sense, an artificial creation. So Otto Bauer is right when he says: "I create a common language together with those individuals with whom I most closely interact; and I interact most closely with those individuals with whom I share a common language" (p. 101). This is how those nation States which are both State and nation arose. [2] They did not become political entities simply because they already constituted national communities; it was their new economic interests and economic necessity which was the basis of men's joining together into such solid groupings; but whether these States or others emerged—if, for example, southern Germany and northern France did not together form a political entity but this was instead the case with southern and northern Germany—is due principally to the ancient kinship of dialect.



The spread of the nation State, and its capitalist evolution, have brought about a situation where an extreme diversity of classes and populations coexist within it; this is why it sometimes seems dubious to define the nation State as a community of fate and of character, because classes and populations do not act directly upon one another. But the community of fate of the German peasants and big capitalists, of the Bavarians and the people of Oldenburg, consists in the fact that all are members of the German Empire, within whose borders they wage their economic and political struggles, within which they endure the same policies, where they must take a position regarding the same laws and thus have an effect upon one another; this is why they constitute a real community despite all the diversity of this community.

The same is not true of those States which emerged as dynastic entities under absolutism, without the direct collaboration of their bourgeois classes, and which consequently, through conquest, came to include populations speaking many different languages. When the penetration of capitalism begins to make headway in one of these States, various nations arise within the same State, which becomes a multinational State, like Austria. The cause of the appearance of new nations

alongside the old resides once again in the fact that competition is the basis for the existence of the bourgeois classes. When the modern classes arose from a purely peasant population group, when large masses were installed in the cities as industrial workers, soon to be followed by small merchants, intellectuals and factory owners, the latter were then compelled to undertake efforts on their own behalf to secure the business of these masses who all spoke the same language, placing the accent on their nationality. The nation, as a cohesive community, constitutes for those elements that form part of it a market, a customer base, a domain of exploitation where they have an advantage over their competitors from other nations. To form a community with modern classes, they must elaborate a common written language which is necessary as a means of communication and becomes the language of culture and of literature. The permanent contact between the classes of bourgeois society and State power, which had hitherto only known German as the official language of communication, obliges them to fight for the recognition of their languages, their schools and their administrative apparatuses, in which fight the class having the most material interest is the national intelligentsia. Since the State must represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and must give it material support, each national bourgeoisie

must secure as much influence over the State as possible. To win this influence it must fight against the bourgeoisie of other nations; the more successfully it rallies the whole nation around it in this struggle, the more power it exercises. As long as the leading role of the bourgeoisie is based upon the essence of the economy and is acknowledged as something which is self-evident, the bourgeoisie can count on the other classes which feel bound to it on this point by an identity of interests.

In this respect as well the nation is utterly a product of capitalist development, and is even a necessary product. Wherever capitalism penetrates, it must necessarily appear as the community of fate of the bourgeois classes. The national struggles within such a State are not the consequence of any kind of oppression, or of legal backwardness, it is the natural expression of competition as the basic precondition for the bourgeois economy; the (bourgeois) struggle of each against all is the indispensable precondition for the abrupt separation of the various nations from one another.

## **Tradition and the Human Mind**

In man, nationality is indeed part of his nature, but primarily of his mental nature. Inherited physical traits eventually allow the various peoples to be distinguished

from one another, but this does not serve to separate them, nor, even less so, does it make them enter into conflict with one another. Peoples distinguish themselves as communities of culture, a culture transmitted by a common language; in a nation's culture, which can be defined as mental in nature, is inscribed the whole history of its life. National character is not composed of physical traits, but of the totality of its customs, its concepts and its forms of thought over time. If one wishes to grasp the essence of a nation, it is above all necessary to get a clear view of how man's mental aspect is constituted under the influence of his living conditions.

Every move that man makes must first pass through his head. The direct motor force of all his actions resides in his mind. It can consist of habits, drives and unconscious instincts which are the expressions of always similar repetitions of the same vital necessities in the same external living conditions. It could also enter into man's consciousness as thoughts, ideas, motivations or principles. Where do they come from? Here, the bourgeois conception sees the influence of a higher supernatural world which penetrates us, the expression of an eternal moral principle within us, or else the spontaneous products of the mind itself. Marxist theory, however, historical materialism, explains that everything

which is mental in man is the product of the material world around him. This entire real world penetrates every part of the mind through the sensory organs and leaves its mark: our vital needs, our experience, everything we see and hear, that which others communicate to us as their thought appears as if we had actually observed it ourselves. [3] Consequently, any influence from an unreal, merely postulated supernatural world is excluded. Everything in the mind has come from the external world which we designate with the name of the material world, which is not meant to imply that material constituted of physical matter which can be measured, but everything which really exists, including thought. But in this context mind does not play the role which is sometimes attributed to it by a narrow mechanistic conception, that of a passive mirror that reflects the external world, an inanimate receiver that absorbs and preserves everything thrown at it. Mind is active, it acts, and it modifies everything that penetrates it from the outside in order to make something new. And it was Dietzgen who has most clearly demonstrated how it does so. The external world flows before the mind like an endless river, always changing; the mind registers its influences, it merges them, it adds them to what it had previously possessed and combines these elements. From the river of infinitely varied phenomena, it forms

solid and consistent concepts in which the reality in motion is somehow frozen and fixed and loses its fugitive aspect. The concept of “fish” involves a multitude of observations of animals that swim, that of “good” innumerable stances in relation to different actions, that of “capitalism” a whole lifetime of frequently very painful experiences. Every thought, every conviction, every idea, every conclusion, such as, for example, the generalization that trees do not have leaves in the winter, that work is hard and disagreeable, that whoever gives me a job is my benefactor, that the capitalist is my enemy, that there is strength in organization, that it is good to fight for one’s nation, are the summaries of part of the living world, of a multiform experience in a concise, abrupt and, one could say, rigid and lifeless formula. The greater and the more complete the experience which serves as documentation, the more deep-rooted and solid the thought and conviction, the more true it is. But all experience is limited, the world is constantly changing, new experiences are ceaselessly being added to the old, they are integrated into the old ideas or enter into contradiction with them. This is why man has to restructure his ideas and abandon some of them as mistaken—such as that of the capitalist benefactor—and confer a new meaning to certain concepts—such as the concept of “fish”, from which the

whales had to be separated—and create new concepts for new phenomena—like that of imperialism—and find other causal relations for some concepts—the intolerable character of labor is a result of capitalism—and evaluate them in a different manner—the national struggle is harmful to the workers—in short, man must ceaselessly begin all over again. All of his mental activity and development consists in the endless restructuring of concepts, ideas, judgments and principles in order to keep them as consistent as possible with his ever-richer experience of reality. This takes place consciously in the development of science.

The meanings of Bauer's definitions of the nation as that which is historical in us, and of national character as solidified history, are thus placed in their proper context. A common material reality produces a common way of thinking in the minds of the members of a community. The specific nature of the economic organization they jointly compose determines their thoughts, their customs and their concepts; it produces a coherent system of ideas in them, an ideology which they share and which forms part of their material living conditions. Life in common has penetrated their minds; common struggles for freedom against foreign enemies, common class struggles at home. It is narrated in history books and is

transmitted to the youth as national memory. What was desired, hoped for and wanted was clearly highlighted and expressed by the poets and thinkers and these thoughts of the nation, the mental sediment of their material experience, was preserved in the form of literature for future generations. Constant mutual intellectual influence consolidates and reinforces this process; extracting from the thought of each compatriot what they all have in common, what is essential and characteristic of the whole, that is, what is national, constitutes the cultural patrimony of the nation. What lives in the mind of a nation, its national culture, is the abstract synthesis of its common experience, its material existence as an economic organization.

Therefore, all of man's mental qualities are products of reality, but not only of current reality; has the whole past also subsisted there in a stronger or weaker form. Mind is slow in relation to matter; it ceaselessly absorbs external influences while its old existence slowly sinks into Lethe's waters of oblivion. Thus, the adaptation of the content of the mind to a constantly renewed reality is only incremental. Past and present both determine its content, but in different ways. The living reality which is constantly exercising its influence on the mind is embedded within it and impressed upon it in an



increasingly more effective manner. But that which no longer feeds off of the present reality, no longer lives except in the past and can still be preserved for a long time, above all by the relations men maintain among themselves, by indoctrination and artificial propaganda, but to the extent that these residues are deprived of the material terrain that gave them life, they necessarily slowly disappear. This is how they acquire a traditional character. A tradition is also part of reality which lives in the minds of men, acts upon the other parts and for that reason frequently disposes of a considerable and potent force. But it is a natural mental reality whose material roots are sunk in the past. This is how religion became, for the modern proletariat, an ideology of a purely traditional nature; it may still have a powerful influence on its action, but this power only has roots in the past, in the importance that the community of religion possessed in other times; it is no longer nourished by contemporary reality, in its exploitation by capital, in its struggle against capital. For this reason the process leading to its extinction among the proletariat will not stop. To the contrary, contemporary reality is increasingly cultivating class consciousness which is consequently occupying a larger place in the proletariat's mind, and which is increasingly determining its action.

## Our Task

I have framed the task assigned by our study. History has given rise to nations with their limitations and their specific characteristics. But they are not yet finished and complete definitive facts with which one must contend. History is still following its course. Each day it continues to build upon and modify what the previous days built. It is not enough, then, to confirm that the nation is that which is historical in us, solidified history. If it were nothing but petrified history, it would be of a purely traditional nature, like religion. But for our practice, and for our tactics, the question of whether or not it is something more than this assumes the utmost importance. Of course, one must deal with it in any case, as with any great mental power in man; but the question of whether nationalist ideology only presents itself as a power of the past, or whether it sinks its roots into today's world, are two completely different things. For us, the most important and decisive question is the following: how does present-day reality act upon the nation and everything national? In what sense are they being modified today? The reality in question here is highly-developed capitalism and the proletarian class struggle.

This, then, is our position in regard to Bauer's study: in other times, the nation played no role at all in the theory and practice of social democracy. There was no reason to take it into consideration; in most countries it is of no use to the class struggle to pay any attention to the national question. Obligated to do so by Austria's situation Bauer has filled this gap. He has demonstrated that the nation is neither the product of the imagination of a few literati nor is it the artificial product of nationalist propaganda; with the tool of Marxism he has shown that it has sunk its material roots into history and he has explained the necessity and the power of national ideas by the rise of capitalism. And the nation stands revealed as a powerful reality with which we must come to terms in our struggle; he gives us the key to understand the modern history of Austria, and we must thus answer the following question: what is the influence of the nation and nationalism on the class struggle, how must it be assessed in the class struggle? This is the basis and the guiding thread of the works of Bauer and the other Austrian Marxists. But with this approach, the task is only half-finished. For the nation is not simply a self-contained and complete phenomenon whose effect on the class struggle must be ascertained: it is itself in turn subjected to the influence of contemporary forces, among which the proletariat's revolutionary struggle for emancipation

is increasingly tending to become a factor of the first order. What effect, then, does the class struggle, the rise of the proletariat, for its part exercise upon the nation? Bauer has not examined this question, or he has done so in an insufficient manner; the study of this issue leads, in many cases, to judgments and conclusions which diverge from those he provided.

## **II. The Nation and the Proletariat**

### **Class Antagonism**

The current reality which most intensely determines man's mentality and existence is capitalism. But it does not affect all men in the same way; it is one thing for the capitalist and another for the proletarian. For the members of the bourgeois class, capitalism is the world of the production of wealth and competition; more well-being, an increase in the mass of capital from which they try to extract the maximum possible profit in an individualistic struggle with their peers and which opens up for them the road to luxury and the enjoyment of a refined culture, this is what the process of production provides for them. For the workers, it is the hard labor of endless slavery, permanent insecurity in their living conditions, eternal poverty, without the hope of ever getting anything but a poverty wage. Consequently,

capitalism must exercise very different effects on the minds of the bourgeoisie and the minds of the members of the exploited class. The nation is an economic entity, a community of labor, even between workers and capitalists. Capital and labor are both necessary and must come together so that capitalist production can exist. It is a community of labor of a particular nature; in this community, capital and labor appear as antagonistic poles; they constitute a community of labor in the same way that predators and prey constitute a community of life.

The nation is a community of character which has arisen from a community of fate. But with the development of capitalism, it is the difference of fates which is increasingly dominant in considering the bourgeoisie and the proletariat within any particular people. To explain what he means by the community of fate, Bauer speaks (p. 101) of the “relations constituted by the fact that both [the English worker and the English bourgeois] live in the same city, that both read the same posters and the same newspapers, take part in the same political and sporting events, by the fact that on occasion they speak with one another or, at least, both speak with the various intermediaries between capitalists and workers”. Now, the “fate” of men does not consist in reading the same

billboards, but in great and important experiences which are totally different for each class. The whole world knows what the English Prime Minister Disraeli said about the two nations living alongside one another in our modern society without really understanding it. Did he not intend to say that no community of fate links the two classes? [4]

Of course, one does not have to take this statement literally in its modern sense. The community of fate of the past still exercises its influence on today's community of character. As long as the proletariat does not have a clear consciousness of the particularity of its own experience, as long as its class consciousness has not been awakened or is only slightly stirred, it remains the prisoner of traditional thinking, its thought is nourished on the leftovers of the bourgeoisie, it surely constitutes with the latter a kind of community of culture in the same way that the servants in the kitchen are the guests of their masters. The peculiarities of English history make this mental community all the more powerful in England, while it is extremely weak in Germany. In all the young nations where capitalism is just making its appearance, the mentality of the working class is dominated by the traditions of the previous peasant and petit-bourgeois era. Only little by little, with the awakening of class

consciousness and class struggle under the impact of new antagonisms, will the community of character shared by the two classes disappear.

There will undoubtedly still be relations between the two classes. But they are limited to rules and regulations of the factory and to carrying out work orders, so that the community of language is not even necessary, as the use of foreign-born workers speaking various languages proves. The more conscious of their situation and of exploitation the workers become, the more frequently they fight against the employers to improve their working conditions, the more that the relations between the two classes are transformed into enmity and conflict. There is just as little community between them as between two peoples who are constantly engaged in frontier skirmishes. The more aware of social development the workers become, and the more socialism appears to them as the necessary goal of their struggle, the more they feel the rule of the capitalist class as foreign rule, and with this expression one becomes aware of just how much the community of character has dissipated.

Bauer defines national character as the “difference in orientations of the will, the fact that the same stimulus produces different reactions, that the same external

circumstances provoke different decisions” (p. 100). Could one imagine more antagonistic orientations than those of the will of the bourgeoisie and the will of the proletariat? The names of Bismarck, Lassalle, 1848, stimulate feelings which are not just different but even opposed in the German workers and the German bourgeoisie. The German workers of the Empire who belong to the German nation judge almost everything that happens in Germany in a different and opposed way to that of the bourgeoisie. All the other classes rejoice together over anything that contributes to the greatness and the foreign reach of their national State, while the proletariat combats every measure which leads to such results. The bourgeois classes speak of war against other States in order to increase their own power, while the proletariat thinks of a way to prevent war or discovers an occasion for its own liberation in the defeat of its own government.

This is why one cannot speak of the nation as an entity except prior to the full unfolding within it of the class struggle, since it is only in that case that the working class still follows in the footsteps of the bourgeoisie. The class antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat results in the progressive disappearance of their national community of fate and of character. The



constitutive forces of the nation must therefore be separately examined in each of the two classes.

## **The Will to Form a Nation**

Bauer is completely correct when he views the differences in orientation of the will as the essential element in differences of national character. Where all wills are oriented in the same way, a coherent mass is formed; where events and influences from the outside world provoke different and opposed determinations, rupture and separation result. The differences of wills have separated the nations from one another; but whose will is involved here? That of the rising bourgeoisie. As a result of the preceding proofs concerning the genesis of modern nations, its will to form a nation is the most important constitutive force.

What is it that makes the Czech nation a specific community in relation to the German nation? That which is acquired by life in common, the content of the community of fate which continues to practically influence the national character, is extremely weak. The content of its culture is almost totally taken from the modern nations which preceded it, above all the German nation; this is why Bauer says (p. 105): "It is not completely incorrect to say that the Czechs are Czech-

speaking Germans. . . .” One might also add some peasant traditions rounded off with reminiscences of Huss, Ziska and the battle of White Mountain, 5 exhumed from the past and without any practical meaning today. How could a “national culture” have been erected upon the basis of a particular language? Because the bourgeoisie needs separation, because it wants to constitute a nation in relation to the Germans. It wants to do so because it needs to do so, because capitalist competition obliges it to monopolize to the greatest possible extent a territory of markets and exploitation. The conflict of interests with the other capitalists creates the nation wherever the necessary element exists, a specific language. Bauer and Renner clearly demonstrate in their expositions of the genesis of modern nations that the will of the rising bourgeois classes created the nations. Not as a conscious or arbitrary will, but as wanting at the same time as being compelled, the necessary consequence of economic factors. The “nations” involved in the political struggle, which are fighting among themselves for influence over the State, for power in the State (Bauer, pp. 218-243), are nothing but organizations of the bourgeois classes, of the petit-bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals—classes whose existence is based upon competition—and here the proletarians and the peasants play a secondary role.

The proletariat has nothing to do with this necessity of competition of the bourgeois classes, with their will to constitute a nation. For it, the nation does not mean the privilege of securing a customer base, positions, or opportunities for work. The capitalists immediately learned to import foreign workers who do not speak German or Czech. By mentioning this capitalist practice it is not our basic intention to expose nationalist hypocrisy, but above all to make the workers understand that under the rule of capitalism the nation can never be synonymous with a labor monopoly for them. And only infrequently does one hear among backward workers, such as the American trade unionists of the old school, of a desire to restrict immigration. The nation can also temporarily assume its own significance for the proletariat. When capitalism penetrates an agrarian region, the landlords then belong to a more developed capitalist nation, and the workers leave the peasantry for the other nation. National feeling can then be for the workers an initial means of becoming aware of their community of interests against the foreign capitalists. National antagonism is in this case the primitive form of class antagonism, just as in Rhineland-Westphalia, during the era of the Kulturkampf, the religious antagonism between the Catholic workers and their liberal employers was the primitive form of class antagonism. But from the

moment when a nation is sufficiently developed to have a proper bourgeoisie which takes responsibility for exploitation, proletarian nationalism is uprooted. In the struggle for better living conditions, for intellectual development, for culture, for a more dignified existence, the other classes in their nation are the sworn enemies of the workers while their foreign language-speaking class comrades are their friends and allies. The class struggle creates an international community of interests. Thus, for the proletariat, one cannot speak of a will to become a separate nation based on economic interests, on its material situation.

## **The Community of Culture**

Bauer discovers another nation-building force in the class struggle. Not in the economic content of the class struggle, but in its cultural effects. He defines the politics of the modern working class as a national-evolutionary politics (p. 135) that will unite the entire people in a nation. This has to be more than just a primitive and popular way of expressing our goals in the language of nationalism, with the intention of making them accessible to those workers who have gotten mixed up with nationalist ideology and who have not yet become aware of the great revolutionary importance of socialism. So Bauer adds: "But because the proletariat necessarily

struggles for possession of the cultural wealth that its work creates and makes possible, the effect of this politics is necessarily that of calling the entire people to take part in the national community of culture and thereby to make the totality of the people into a nation.”

At first glance this seems to be completely correct. As long as the workers, crushed by capitalist exploitation, are immersed in physical misery and vegetate without hope or intellectual activity, they do not participate in the culture of the bourgeois classes, a culture which is based on the labor of the workers. They form part of the nation in the same way as livestock, they constitute nothing but property, and they are nothing more than second-class citizens in the nation. It is the class struggle which brings them to life; it is by way of the class struggle that they get free time, higher wages and therefore the opportunity to engage in intellectual development. Through socialism, their energy is awakened, their minds are stimulated; they begin to read, first of all socialist pamphlets and political newspapers, but soon the aspiration and the need to complete their intellectual training leads them to tackle literary, historical and scientific works: the party's educational committees even devote special efforts to introducing them to classical literature. In this manner they accede to the community

of culture of the bourgeois classes of their nation. And when the worker can freely and without coercion devote himself to his intellectual development under socialism, which shall free him from the endless slavery of labor—unlike his present situation where he can only appropriate in scarce moments of leisure, and then only with difficulty, small fragments of culture—only then will the worker be able to absorb the entire national culture and become, in the fullest sense of the word, a member of the nation.

But one important point is overlooked in these reflections. A community of culture between the workers and the bourgeoisie can only exist superficially, apparently and sporadically. The workers can to some extent, of course, read the same books as the bourgeoisie, the same classics and the same works of natural history, but this produces no community of culture. Because the basis of their thought and their world-view is so different from that of the bourgeoisie, the workers derive something very different from their reading than does the bourgeoisie. As pointed out above, national culture does not exist in a vacuum; it is the expression of the material history of the life of those classes whose rise created the nation. What we find expressed in Schiller and Goethe are not abstractions of

the aesthetic imagination, but the feelings and ideals of the bourgeoisie in its youth, its aspiration to freedom and the rights of man, its own way of perceiving the world and its problems. Today's class-conscious worker has other feelings, other ideals and another world-view. When he is reading and comes across William Tell's individualism or the eternal, indomitable and ethereal rights of man, the mentality which is thus expressed is not his mentality, which owes its maturity to a more profound understanding of society and which knows that the rights of man can only be conquered through the struggle of a mass organization. He is not insensitive to the beauty of ancient literature; it is precisely his historical judgment which allows him to understand the ideals of past generations on the basis of their economic systems. He is capable of feeling their power, and is thus capable of appreciating the beauty of the works in which they have found their most perfect expression. This is because the beautiful is that which approaches and represents in the most perfect way possible the universality, the essence and the most profound substance of a reality.

To this one must add that, in many respects, the feelings of the bourgeois revolutionary era produced a powerful echo in the bourgeoisie; but what is found as an echo in

the bourgeoisie of that era, is precisely what is lacking in the modern bourgeoisie. This is all the more true in regard to radical and proletarian literature. As for what made the proletariat so enthusiastic about the works of Heine and Freiligrath, the bourgeoisie does not want to know anything. The way the two classes read the literature which is available to both, is totally different; their social and political ideals are diametrically opposed, their world-views have nothing in common. This is to a certain extent even truer of their views of history. In history, what the bourgeoisie considers to be the most sublime memories of the nation arouse nothing but hatred, aversion or indifference in the proletariat. Here nothing points to their possessing a shared culture. Only the physical and natural sciences are admired and honored by both classes. Their content is identical for both. But how different from the attitude of the bourgeois classes, is that of the worker who has recognized these sciences as the basis of his absolute rule over nature and over his destiny in the future socialist society. For the worker, this view of nature, this concept of history and this literary sentiment, are not elements of a national culture in which he participates, they are elements of his socialist culture.



The most essential intellectual content, the determinant thoughts, and the real culture of the social democrats do not have their roots in Schiller or Goethe, but in Marx and Engels. And this culture, which has arisen from a lucid socialist understanding of history and the future of society, the socialist ideal of a free and classless humanity, and the proletarian communitarian ethic, and which for those very reasons is in all of its characteristic features opposed to bourgeois culture, is international. This culture, despite its various manifestations among different peoples—since the proletarians' perspectives vary according to their conditions of existence and the form assumed by their economies—and despite the fact that it is powerfully influenced by the historical background of each nation, especially where the class struggle is underdeveloped, is everywhere the same. Its form, the language in which it is expressed, is different, but all the other differences, even the national ones, are progressively reduced by the development of the class struggle and the growth of socialism. Indeed, the gap between the culture of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat is constantly expanding. It is therefore inaccurate to say that the proletariat is fighting for the ownership of the national cultural goods which it produces with its labor. It does not fight to appropriate the cultural goods of the bourgeoisie; it fights for control

over production and to establish its own socialist culture upon that foundation. What we call the cultural effects of the class struggle, the workers' acquisition of self-consciousness, of knowledge and the desire to learn, of higher intellectual standards, has nothing to do with a bourgeois national culture, but represents the growth of socialist culture. This culture is a product of the struggle, a struggle which is waged against the whole bourgeois world. And just as we see the new humanity developing in the proletariat, proud and sure of victory, freed from the vile slavery of the past, comprised of brave combatants, capable of an unprejudiced and complete understanding of the course of events, united by the strongest bonds of solidarity in a solid unit, so from now on the spirit of the new humanity, socialist culture, weak at first, confused and mixed with bourgeois traditions, will be awakened in this proletariat, and will then become clearer, purer, more beautiful and richer.

This is obviously not intended to imply that bourgeois culture will not also continue to rule for a long time and exercise a powerful influence on the minds of the workers. Too many influences from that world affect the proletariat, with or without its consent; not only school, church, and bourgeois press, but all the fine arts and scientific works impregnated by bourgeois thought. But

more and more frequently, and in an ever-more comprehensive fashion, life itself and their own experience triumphs over the bourgeois world-view in the minds of the workers. And this is how it must be. Because the more the bourgeois world-view takes possession of the workers, the less capable of fighting they become; under its influence, the workers are full of respect for the ruling powers, they are inculcated with the ideological thought of the latter, their lucid class consciousness is obscured, they turn on their own kind from this or that nation, they are scattered and are therefore weakened in the struggle and deprived of their self-confidence. Our goal demands a proud human species, self-conscious, bold in both thought and action. And this is why the very requirements of the struggle are freeing the workers from these paralyzing influences of bourgeois culture.

It is, then, inaccurate to say that the workers are, by means of their struggle, gaining access to a “national community of culture”. It is the politics of the proletariat, the international politics of the class struggle, which is engendering a new international and socialist culture in the proletariat.

## **The Community of Class Struggle**

Bauer opposes the nation as a community of fate to the class, in which the similarity of fates has developed similar character traits. But the working class is not just a group of men who have experienced the same fate and thus have the same character. The class struggle welds the proletariat into a community of fate. The fate lived in common is the struggle waged in common against the same enemy.

In the trade union struggle, workers of different nationalities see themselves confronted by the same employer. They must wage their struggle as a compact unit; they know its vicissitudes and effects in the most intimate kind of community of fate. They have brought their national differences with them from their various countries, mixed with the primitive individualism of the peasants or the petit-bourgeoisie, perhaps also a little national consciousness, combined with other bourgeois traditions. But all of these differences are traditions of the past opposed to the present need to resist as a compact mass, and opposed to the living community of combat of the present day. Only one difference has any practical significance here: that of language; all explanations, all proposals, all information must be communicated to everyone in their own language. In the

great American strikes (the steelworkers strike at McKee's Rocks or the textile workers strike at Lawrence, for example), the strikers—a disjointed conglomeration of the most varied nationalities: French, Italians, Poles, Turks, Syrians, etc.—formed separate language sections whose committees always held joint meetings and simultaneously communicated proposals to each section in its own language, thus preserving the unity of the whole, which proves that, despite the inherent difficulties of the language barrier, a close-knit community of proletarian struggle can be achieved. Wanting to proceed here to an organizational separation between that which unites life and struggle, the real interests of those involved—and such a separation is what separatism implies—is so contrary to reality that its success can only be temporary.

This is not only true for the workers in one factory. In order to wage their struggle successfully, the workers of the whole country must unite in one trade union; and all of its members must consider the advancement of each local group as their own struggle. This is all the more necessary when, in the course of events, the trade union struggle assumes harsher forms. The employers unite in cartels and employers' associations; the latter do not distinguish between Czech or German employers, as they

group together all the employers in the whole State, and sometimes even extend beyond the borders of the State. All the workers of the same trade living in the same State go on strike and suffer the lock-outs in common and consequently form a community of lived fate, and this is of the utmost importance, trumping all national differences. And in the recent sailors' movement for higher wages which in the summer of 1911 confronted an international association of ship-owners, one could already see an international community of fate arising as a tangible reality.

The same thing happens in the political struggle. In the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, one may read the following: "Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie." [7] In this passage it is clear that the word "national" is not used in its Austrian sense, but arises from the context of the situation in Western Europe where State and nation are synonymous. This passage only means that the English workers cannot wage the class struggle against the French bourgeoisie, nor can the French workers wage the class struggle against the English bourgeoisie, but that the English bourgeoisie and

the power of the English State can be attacked and defeated only by the English proletariat. In Austria, State and nation are separate entities. The nation naturally arises as a community of interests of the bourgeois classes. But it is the State which is the real solid organization of the bourgeoisie for protecting its interests. The State protects property, it takes care of administration, puts the fleet and the army in order, collects the taxes and keeps the masses under control. The “nations”, or, more precisely: the active organizations which use the nation’s name, that is, the bourgeois parties, have no other purpose than to fight for the conquest of a fitting share of influence over the State, for participation in State power. For the big bourgeoisie, whose economic interests embrace the whole State and even other countries, and which needs direct privileges, customs duties, State purchases and protection overseas, it is its natural community of interests, rather than the nation, which defines the State and its limitations. The apparent independence which State power has managed to preserve for so long thanks to the conflicts between nations cannot obscure the fact that that it has also been an instrument at the service of big capital.

This is why the center of gravity of the political struggle of the working class is shifting towards the State. As long as the struggle for political power still remains a secondary issue, and agitation, propaganda and the struggle of ideas—which naturally must be expressed in every language—are still the highest priority, the proletarian armies will continue to be separated nationally for the political struggle. In this first stage of the socialist movement, the most important task is to free the proletarians from the ideological influence of the petit bourgeoisie, to snatch them away from the bourgeois parties and inculcate them with class consciousness. The bourgeois parties, separated by national boundaries, then become the enemies to be fought. The State appears to be a legislative power from which laws can be demanded for the protection of the proletariat; the conquest of influence over the State in favor of proletarian interests is presented to the barely-conscious proletarians as the first goal of proletarian action. And the final goal, the struggle for socialism, is presented as a struggle for State power, against the bourgeois parties.

But when the socialist party attains the status of an important factor in parliament, our task changes. In parliament, where all essential political questions are



settled, the proletariat is confronted by the representatives of the bourgeois classes of the entire State. The essential political struggle, to which educational work is increasingly subjected and into which it is increasingly integrated, unfolds on the terrain of the State. It is the same for all the State's workers, regardless of their nationalities. The community of struggle extends to the entire proletariat of the State, a proletariat for whom the common struggle against the same enemy, against all of the bourgeois parties and their governments in all nations, becomes a common fate. It is not the nation, but the State which determines for the proletariat the borders of the community of fate constituted by the parliamentary political struggle. As long as socialist propaganda remains the most important activity for the Austrian and Russian Ruthenians, [8] the two national groups will be closely linked. But from the moment when developments reach a point where the real political struggle is waged against State power—the bourgeois majority and its government—they must go their separate ways, and fight in different places with sometimes completely different methods. The former intervene in Vienna in the Reichsrat together with Tyrolean and Czech workers, while the latter now carry on the fight under clandestine conditions, or in the

streets of Kiev against the Czar's government and its Cossacks. Their community of fate is sundered.

All of this is all the more clearly manifested as the proletariat becomes more powerful and its struggle occupies a larger and larger share of the field of history. State power, along with all the potent means at its disposal, is the fief of the owning classes; the proletariat cannot free itself, it cannot defeat capitalism unless it first defeats this powerful organization. The conquest of political hegemony is not a struggle for State power; it is a struggle against State power. The social revolution which shall issue into socialism consists essentially of defeating State power with the power of the proletarian organization. This is why it must be carried out by the proletariat of the entire State. One could say that this common liberation struggle against a common enemy is the most important experience in the entire history of the life of the proletariat from its first awakening until its victory. This makes the working class of the same State, rather than the same nation, a community of fate. Only in Western Europe, where State and nation more or less coincide, does the struggle waged on the terrain of the nation-state for political hegemony give rise within the proletariat to communities of fate which coincide with nations.

But even in this case the international character of the proletariat develops rapidly. The workers of different countries exchange theory and practice, methods of struggle and concepts, and they consider these topics to be matters common to all. This was certainly the case with the rising bourgeoisie; in their economic and philosophical concepts, the English, French and Germans were mutually and profoundly influenced by their exchange of ideas. But no community resulted from this exchange because their economic antagonism led them to organize into mutually hostile nations; it was precisely the French bourgeoisie's conquest of the bourgeois freedom long enjoyed by the English bourgeoisie which provoked the bitter Napoleonic Wars. Such conflicts of interest are utterly lacking in the proletariat and for that reason the reciprocal intellectual influence exercised by the working classes of the various countries can act without constraint in forming an international community of culture. But their community is not limited to this aspect. The struggles, the victories and the defeats in one country have profound impacts on the class struggle in other countries. The struggles waged by our class comrades in other countries against their bourgeoisie are our affairs not only on the terrain of ideas, but also on the material plane; they form part of our own fight and we feel them as such. The Austrian

workers, for whom the Russian Revolution was a decisive episode in their own struggle for universal suffrage, know this quite well. [9] The proletariat of the whole world perceives itself as a single army, as a great association which is only obliged for practical reasons to split into numerous battalions which must fight the enemy separately, since the bourgeoisie is organized into States and there are as a result numerous fortresses to reduce. This is also the way the press informs us of struggles in foreign countries: the English Dock Strikes, the Belgian elections, and the demonstrations on the streets of Budapest are all of interest to our great class organization. In this manner the international class struggle becomes the common experience of the workers of all countries.

## **The Nation in the State of the Future**

This conception of the proletariat already reflects the conditions of the future social order, in which men will no longer know State antagonisms. Through the overthrow of the rigid State organizations of the bourgeoisie by the organizational power of the proletarian masses, the State disappears as a coercive power and as the terrain of domination which is so sharply demarcated in relation to foreign States. Political organizations take on a new function: "The government

of persons gives way to the administration of things,” Engels said in his *Anti-Dühring*.<sup>[10]</sup> For the conscious regulation of production, you need organization, executive organs and administrative activity; but the extremely strict centralization such as that practiced by today’s State is neither necessary nor can it possibly be employed in pursuit of that goal. Such centralization will give way to full decentralization and self-administration. According to the size of each sector of production, the organizations will cover larger or smaller areas; while bread, for example, will be produced on a local scale, steel production and the operation of railroad networks require State-sized economic entities. There will be production units of the most various sizes, from the workshop and the municipality to the State, and even, for certain industries, all of humanity. Those naturally-occurring human groups, nations—will they not then take the place of the vanished States as organizational units? This will undoubtedly be the case, for the simple practical reason, that they are communities of the same language and all of man’s relations are mediated through language.

But Bauer confers a totally different meaning upon the nations of the future: “The fact that socialism will make the nation autonomous, will make its destiny a product

of the nation's conscious will, will result in an increasing differentiation between the nations of the socialist society, a clearer expression of their specificities, a clearer distinction between their respective characters" (p. 96). Some nations, of course, receive the content of their culture and their ideas in various ways from other nations, but they only accept them in the context of their own national cultures. "For this reason, the autonomy of the national community of culture within socialism necessarily means, despite the diminishing of differences between the material contents of their cultures, a growing differentiation between the intellectual cultures of the nations" (p. 98). . . . Thus "the nation based on the community of education carries within it the tendency for unity; all its children are subject to the same education, all its members work together in the national workshops, participate in the creation of the collective will of the nation, and enjoy with each other the cultural wealth of the nation. Socialism thus carries within itself the guarantee of the unity of the nation." (p. 98). Capitalism already displays the tendency to reinforce the national differences of the masses and to provide the nation with a stronger inner coherence. "However, it is only a socialist society that will see this tendency to triumph. Through differences in national education and customs, socialist society will distinguish peoples from

one another to the same extent that the educated classes of the different nations are distinguished from one another today. There may well exist limited communities of character within the socialist nation; but autonomous cultural communities will not be able to exist within the nation, because every local community will be subject to the influence of the culture of the nation of the nation as a whole and will engage in cultural interaction, in the exchange of ideas with the entire nation" (p. 117).

The conception which is expressed in these sentences is nothing but the ideological transposition of the Austrian present into a socialist future. It confers upon the nations under socialism a role which is currently played by the States, that is, an increasing isolation from the outside and an internal leveling of all differences; among the many levels of economic and administrative units, it gives the nations a privileged rank, similar to that which falls to the State in the conception of our adversaries, who loudly complain about the "omnipotence of the State" under socialism, and here Bauer even speaks of "national workshops". In any event, while socialist writings always refer to the workshops and means of production of the "community" in opposition to private property, without precisely delineating the dimensions of the community,

here the nation is considered as the only community of men, autonomous in respect to other nations, undifferentiated within its borders.

Such a conception is only possible if one totally abandons the material terrain from which the mutual relations and ideas of men have arisen and only insists on the mental forces as determinant factors. National differences thereby totally lose the economic roots which today give them such an extraordinary vigor. The socialist mode of production does not develop oppositions of interest between nations, as is the case with the bourgeois mode of production. The economic unit is neither the State nor the nation, but the world. This mode of production is much more than a network of national productive units connected to one another by an intelligent policy of communications and by international conventions, as Bauer describes it on pages 413-414; it is an organization of world production in one unit and the common affair of all humanity. In this world community of which the proletariat's internationalism is henceforth a beginning, one can no more discuss the autonomy of the German nation, to take an example, than one could speak of the autonomy of Bavaria, or of the City of Prague or the Poldi Steelworks. All partially manage their own affairs and all depend upon the whole, as parts of that whole. The



whole notion of autonomy comes from the capitalist era, when the conditions of domination led to their opposite, that is, freedom in respect to a particular form of domination.

This material basis of the collectivity, organized world production, transforms the future of humanity into a single community of destiny. For the great achievements which are hoped for, the scientific and technological conquest of the entire earth and its transformation into a magnificent home for a race of masters [ein Geschlecht von Herrenmenschen], happy and proud of their victory, who have become rulers of nature and its forces, for such great achievements—which we can hardly even imagine today—the borders of States and peoples are too narrow and restrictive. The community of fate will unite all of humanity in an intellectual and cultural community. Linguistic diversity will be no obstacle, since every human community which maintains real communication with another human community will create a common language. Without attempting here to examine the question of a universal language, we shall only point out that today it is easy to learn various languages once one has advanced beyond the level of primary instruction. This is why it is useless to examine the question of to what degree the current linguistic

boundaries and differences are of a permanent nature. What Bauer says about the nation in the last sentence quoted above therefore applies to all of humanity: although restricted communities of character will subsist within humanity, there cannot be independent communities of culture because every local (and national) community, without exception, will find itself, under the influence of the culture of all of humanity, in cultural communication, in an exchange of ideas, with humanity in its entirety.

## **The Transformations of the Nation**

Our investigation has demonstrated that under the rule of advanced capitalism, which is accompanied by class struggle, the proletariat cannot be a nation-building force. It does not form a community of fate with the bourgeois classes, nor does it share a community of material interests, nor a community which could possibly be that of intellectual culture. The rudiments of such a community, which were sketched at the very beginning of capitalism, will necessarily disappear with the further development of the class struggle. While powerful economic forces generate national isolation, national antagonism and the whole nationalist ideology in the bourgeois classes, these features are absent among the proletariat. They are replaced by the class struggle, which

gives the lives of the proletarians their essential content, and creates an international community of fate and of character in which nations as linguistic groups have no practical significance. And since the proletariat is humanity in the process of becoming, this community constitutes the dawn of the economic and cultural community of all of humanity under socialism.

We must therefore respond in the affirmative to the question we posed above: For the proletariat, national phenomena are of no more significance than traditions. Their material roots are buried in the past and cannot be nourished by the experiences of the proletariat. Thus, for the proletariat the nation plays a role which is similar to that of religion. We acknowledge their differences, despite their kinship. The material roots of religious antagonisms are lost in the distant past and the people of our time know almost nothing about them. For this reason these antagonisms are totally disconnected from all material interests and seem to be purely abstract disputes about supernatural questions. On the other hand, the material roots of national antagonisms are all around us, in the modern bourgeois world with which we are in constant contact, and this is why they preserve all the freshness and vigor of youth and are all the more influential the more capable we are of directly feeling the

interests they express; but, due to the fact that their roots are not so deep, they lack the resistance of an ideology petrified by the passage of centuries, a resistance which is so hard to overcome.

Our investigation therefore leads us to a completely different conception than Bauer's. The latter imagines, contrary to bourgeois nationalism, a continuous transformation of the nation towards new forms and new types. So the German nation has assumed, throughout its history, continually changing appearances from the proto-German to the future member of the socialist society. Under these changing forms, however, the nation remains the same, and even if certain nations must disappear and others arise, the nation will always be the basic structure of society. According to our findings, however, the nation is just a temporary and transitory structure in the history of the evolution of humanity, one of numerous forms of organization which follow one another in succession or exist side by side: tribes, peoples, empires, churches, village communities, States. Among these forms, the nation, in its particular nature, is a product of bourgeois society and will disappear with the latter. A desire to discover the nation in all past and future communities is as artificial as the determination to interpret, after the fashion of the

bourgeois economists, the whole panoply of past and future economic forms as various forms of capitalism, and to conceive world evolution as the evolution of capitalism, which would proceed from the “capital” of the savage, his bow and arrows, to the “capital” of socialist society.

This is the weak point of the basic underlying idea of Bauer’s work, as we pointed out above. When he says that the nation is not a fixed object but a process of becoming, he implies that the nation as such is permanent and eternal. For Bauer, the nation is “the never-finished product of an eternally-occurring process”. For us, the nation is an episode in the process of human evolution, a process which develops towards the infinite. For Bauer the nation constitutes the permanent fundamental element of humanity. His theory is a reflection on the whole history of humanity from the perspective of the nation. Economic forms change, classes emerge and pass away, but these are only changes of the nation, within the nation. The nation remains the primary element upon which the classes and their transformations simply confer a changing content. This is why Bauer expresses the ideas and the goals of socialism in the language of nationalism and speaks of the nation where others have used the terms people and

humanity: the “nation”, due to the private ownership of the means of labor, has lost control over its destiny; the “nation” has not consciously determined its destiny, the capitalists have; the “nation” of the future will become the architect of its own destiny; we have already referred to his mention of national workshops. So Bauer is led to describe as national-evolutionary and national-conservative the two opposed trends in politics: that of socialism, oriented towards the future, and that of capitalism, which is trying to preserve the existing economic order. Following the example cited above, one could just as well call this kind of socialism the socialism of capitalist-evolutionary politics.

Bauer’s way of approaching the national question is a specifically Austrian theory, and is a doctrine of the evolution of humanity which could only have arisen in Austria, where national questions totally dominate public life. It is a confirmation of the fact that, and this is not meant to stigmatize him, a researcher who so successfully masters the method of the Marxist conception of history in turn becomes, by succumbing to the influence of his surroundings, a proof of that theory.

It is only such influence which has placed him in such circumstances that he can make our scientific understanding advance to such a point. Along with the

fact that we are not logical thinking machines but human beings who are living in a world which obliges us to have a full knowledge of the problems which the practice of the struggle pose for us, by relying on experience and reflection.

But it seems to us that the different conclusions also involve different basic philosophical concepts. In what way have all our criticisms of Bauer's conceptions always converged? In a different evaluation of material and intellectual forces. While Bauer bases himself on the indestructible power of mental phenomena, of ideology as an independent force, we always put the accent on its dependence on economic conditions. It is tempting to consider this deviation from Marxist materialism in the light of the fact that Bauer has on various occasions represented himself as a defender of Kant's philosophy and figures among the Kantians. In this manner, his work is a double confirmation of the fact that Marxism is a precious and indispensable scientific method.

Only Marxism has allowed him to enunciate numerous noteworthy results which enrich our understanding; it is precisely at those points which are in some respect lacking that his method is most distant from the materialist conceptions of Marxism.

### **III. Socialist Tactics**

#### **Nationalist Demands**

Socialist tactics are based on the science of social development. The way a working class assumes responsibility for pursuing its own interests is determined by its conception of the future evolution of its conditions. Its tactics must not yield to the influence of every desire and every goal which arise among the oppressed proletariat, or by every idea that dominates the latter's mentality; if these are in contradiction with the effective development they are unrealizable, so all the energy and all the work devoted to them are in vain and can even be harmful. This was the case with all the movements and attempts to stop the triumphant march of big industry and to reintroduce the old order of the guilds. The militant proletariat has rejected all of that; guided by its understanding of the inevitable nature of capitalist development, it has put forth its socialist goal. The leading idea of our tactics is to favor that which will inevitably realize this goal. For this reason it is of paramount importance to establish, not what role nationalism is playing in this or that proletariat at this moment, but what will its long-term role be in the proletariat under the influence of the rise of the class



struggle. Our conceptions of the future meaning of nationalism for the working class are the conceptions which must determine our tactical positions in relation to the national question.

Bauer's conceptions concerning the nation's future constitute the theoretical basis of the tactics of national opportunism. The opportunistic tactic itself presents the very outline of the basic premise of his work, which considers nationality as the sole powerful and permanent result of historical development in its entirety. If the nation constitutes, and not just today but on an ever expanding scale in conjunction with the growth of the workers movement, and under socialism totally does so, the natural unifying and dividing principle of humanity, then it would be useless to want to fight against the power of the national idea in the proletariat. Then it would be necessary for us to champion nationalist demands and we would have to make every effort to convince the patriotic workers that socialism is the best and the only real nationalism.

Tactics would be completely different if one were to adopt the conviction that nationalism is nothing but bourgeois ideology which does not have material roots in the proletariat and which will therefore disappear as the class struggle develops. In this case, nationalism is not

only a passing episode in the proletariat, but also constitutes, like all bourgeois ideology, an obstacle for the class struggle whose harmful influence must be eliminated as much as possible. Its elimination is part of the timeline of evolution itself. Nationalist slogans and goals distract the workers from their specifically proletarian goals. They divide the workers of different nations; they provoke the mutual hostility of the workers and thus destroy the necessary unity of the proletariat. They line up the workers and the bourgeoisie shoulder to shoulder in one front, thus obscuring the workers' class consciousness and transforming the workers into the executors of bourgeois policy. National struggles prevent the assertion of social questions and proletarian interests in politics and condemn this important means of struggle of the proletariat to sterility. All of this is encouraged by socialist propaganda when the latter presents nationalist slogans to the workers as valid, regardless of the very goal of their struggle, and when it utilizes the language of nationalism in the description of our socialist goals. It is indispensable that class feeling and class struggle should be deeply rooted in the minds of the workers; then they will progressively become aware of the unreality and futility of nationalist slogans for their class.

This is why the nation-State as a goal in itself, such as the re-establishment of an independent national State in Poland, has no place in socialist propaganda. This is not because a national State belonging to the proletariat is of no interest for socialist propaganda purposes. It is a result of the fact that nationalist demands of this kind cause the hatred of exploitation and oppression to easily take the form of nationalist hatred of foreign oppressors, as in the case of the foreign rule exercised by Russia, which protects the Polish capitalists, and is prejudicial to the acquisition of a lucid class consciousness. The re-establishment of an independent Poland is utopian in the capitalist era. This also applies to the solution of the Polish question proposed by Bauer: national autonomy for the Poles within the Russian Empire. However desirable or necessary this goal may be for the Polish proletariat, as long as capitalism reigns the real course of development will not be determined by what the proletariat believes it needs, but by what the ruling class wants. If, however, the proletariat is strong enough to impose its will, the value of such autonomy is then infinitely minuscule compared with the real value of the proletariat's class demands, which lead to socialism. The struggle of the Polish proletariat against the political power under which it really suffers—the Russian, Prussian or Austrian government, as the case may be—is

condemned to sterility if it assumes the form of a nationalist struggle; only as a class struggle will it achieve its goal. The only goal which can be achieved and which for this reason is imposed as a goal is that of the conquest, in conjunction with the other workers of these States, of capitalist political power and the struggle for the advent of socialism. Hence under socialism the goal of an independent Poland no longer makes sense since in that case nothing would prevent all Polish-speaking individuals from being free to unite in an administrative unit.

These different views are evident in the respective positions of the two Polish Socialist Parties.[11] Bauer insists that both are justified, since each of them embodies one facet of the nature of the Polish workers: the P.P.S., nationalist feeling, the SDKPiL, the international class struggle. This is correct, but incomplete. We do not content ourselves with the very objective historical method which proves that all phenomena or tendencies can be explained by and derived from natural causes. We must add that one facet of this nature is reinforced during the course of development, while another declines. The principle of one of the two parties is based on the future, that of the other is based on the past; one constitutes the great

force of progress, the other is a compulsory tradition. This is why the two parties do not represent the same thing for us; as Marxists who base our principles on the real science of evolution and as revolutionary social democrats who seek what is ours in the class struggle, we must support one party and help it in its struggle against the other.

We spoke above of the lack of value of nationalist slogans for proletariat. But is it not true that certain nationalist demands are also of great importance for the workers, and should the workers not fight for them alongside the bourgeoisie? Is it not true, for example, that national schools, in which the children of the proletariat can receive instruction in their own language, possess a certain value? For us, such demands constitute proletarian demands rather than nationalist demands. Czech nationalist demands are directed against the Germans, while the Germans oppose them. If, however, the Czech workers were to interest themselves in Czech schools, a Czech administrative language, etc., because these things allow them to enhance their opportunities for education and to increase their independence in respect to the employers and the authorities, these issues would also be of interest to the German workers, who have every interest in seeing their class comrades

acquire as much force as possible for the class struggle. Therefore, not only the Czech social democrats, but their German comrades as well must demand schools for the Czech minority, and it is of little importance to the representatives of the proletariat how powerful the German or the Czech "nation" is, that is, how powerful the German or the Czech bourgeoisie is within the State, which will be strengthened or weakened by this development. The interest of the proletariat must always prevail. If the bourgeoisie, for nationalist reasons, were to formulate an identical demand, in practice it will be pursuing something totally different since its goals are not the same. In the schools of the Czech minority, the workers will encourage the teaching of the German language because this would help their children in their struggle for existence, but the Czech bourgeoisie will try to prevent them from learning German. The workers demand the most extensive diversity of languages employed in administrative bodies, the nationalists want to suppress foreign languages. It is only in appearance, then, that the linguistic and cultural demands of the workers and those of the nationalists coincide. Proletarian demands are those demands which are common to the proletariat of all nations.

## **Ideology and Class Struggle**

The Marxist tactic of social democracy is based upon the recognition of the real class interests of the workers. It cannot be led astray by ideologies, even when the latter seem to be rooted in men's minds. As a result of its Marxist mode of comprehension, it knows that those ideas and ideologies which apparently do not have material bases, are by no means supernatural nor are they invested with a spiritual existence disconnected from the corporeal, but are the traditional and established expressions of past class interests. This is why we are certain that in the face of the enormous density of class interests and real current needs, even if there is little awareness of them, no ideology rooted in the past, however powerful it may be, can resist for long. This basic concept also determines the form assumed by our struggle against that ideology's power.

Those who consider ideas to be autonomous powers in the minds of men, which spontaneously appear or are manifested thanks to a strange spiritual influence, can choose one of two ways to win men over to their new goals: they can either directly fight the old ideologies, demonstrating their erroneous nature by means of abstract theoretical considerations and in that way attempt to nullify their power over men; or they can try

to enlist ideology in their cause by presenting their new goals as the consequence and the realization of old ideas. Let us take the example of religion.

Religion is the most powerful among the ideologies of the past which dominate the proletariat and are used in an attempt to lead it astray from the united class struggle. Confused social democrats, who have witnessed the construction of this powerful obstacle to socialism, have tried to fight religion directly and to prove the erroneous nature of religious doctrines—in the same way previously attempted by bourgeois nationalism—in order to shatter their influence. Or, on the other hand, they have tried to present socialism as an improved Christianity, as the true realization of religious doctrine, and thus to convert Christian believers to socialism. But these two methods have failed wherever they have been tried; theoretical attacks against religion have not succeeded at all and have reinforced prejudice against socialism; similarly, no one has been convinced by ridiculous social democratic attempts to cloak socialism in Christian attributes, because the tradition to which men are firmly attached is not just Christianity in general, but a particular Christian doctrine. It was obvious that both of these attempts were destined to fail. Since the theoretical considerations and debates which



accompanied these attempts focus the mind on abstract religious questions, they detour it away from real life and reinforce ideological thinking. In general, faith cannot be attacked with theoretical proofs; only when its basis—the old conditions of existence—has disappeared and a new conception of the world occurs to man, will doubts arise concerning doctrines and ancient dogmas. Only the new reality, which more and more clearly penetrates the mind, can overthrow a faith handed down from generation to generation; it is, of course, necessary that men's consciousness should clearly come to grips with this reality. It is only through contact with reality that the mind frees itself from the power of inherited ideas.

This is why Marxist social democracy would not even in its wildest dreams think of fighting religion with theoretical arguments, or of trying to use religion for its own purposes. Both such approaches would help to artificially preserve received abstract ideas, instead of allowing them to slowly dissipate. Our tactic consists in making the workers more aware of their real class interests, showing them the reality of this society and its life in order to orient their minds more towards the real world of today. Then the old ideas, which no longer find any nourishment in the reality of proletariat life, yield without being directly attacked. What men think of

theoretical problems is no concern of ours as long as they struggle together with us for the new economic order of socialism. This is why social democracy never speaks or debates about the existence of God or religious controversies; it only speaks of capitalism, exploitation, class interests, and the need for the workers to collectively wage the class struggle. In this way the mind is steered away from secondary ideas of the past in order to focus on present-day reality; these ideas of the past are thus deprived of their power to lead the workers astray from the class struggle and the defense of their class interests.

Of course, this cannot be achieved all at once. That which remains petrified within the mind can only be slowly eroded and dissolved under the impact of new forces. How many years passed before large numbers of the Christian workers of Rhineland-Westphalia abandoned the Zentrum [12] for social democracy! But the social democracy did not allow itself to be led astray; it did not try to accelerate the conversion of the Christian workers by means of concessions to their religious prejudices; it was not impatient with the scarcity of its successes, nor did it allow itself to be seduced by anti-religious propaganda. It did not lose faith in the victory of reality over tradition, it clung firmly to principle, it opted for no

tactical deviations which would give the illusion of a quicker route to success; it always opposed ideology with the class struggle. And now the fruits of its tactic continue to ripen.

It is the same with regard to nationalism, with the sole difference that in dealing with the latter, due to the fact that it is a more recent and less petrified ideology, we are less prepared to avoid the error of fighting on the abstract theoretical plane as well as the error of compromise. In this case as well it suffices for us to put the accent on the class struggle and to awaken class feeling in order to turn attention away from national problems. In this case, too, all our propaganda could appear to be useless against the power of nationalist ideology; [13] most of all, it could seem that nationalism is making the most progress among the workers of the young nations. Thus, the Christian trade unions of the Rhineland made their greatest gains at the same time as the Social Democracy; this could be compared to the phenomenon of national separatism, which is a part of the workers movement that concedes more importance to a bourgeois ideology than to the principle of class struggle. But insofar as such movements are in practice capable only of following in the wake of the bourgeoisie

and thus of arousing the feeling of the working class against them, they will progressively lose their power.

We would therefore have gone completely off the rails if we wanted to win the working masses over to socialism by being more nationalist than they are, by yielding to this phenomenon. This nationalist opportunism could, at the very most, allow these masses to be won over externally, in appearance, for the party, but this does not win them over to our cause, to socialist ideas; bourgeois conceptions will continue to rule their minds as before. And when the decisive moment arrives when they must choose between national and proletarian interests, the internal weakness of this workers movement will become apparent, as is currently taking place in the separatist crisis. How can we rally the masses under our banner if we allow them to flock to the banner of nationalism? Our principle of class struggle can only prevail when the other principles that manipulate and divide men are rendered ineffective; but if our propaganda enhances the reputation of those other principles, we subvert our own cause.

As a result of what has been set forth above, it would be a complete error to want to fight nationalist feelings and slogans. In those cases where the latter are deeply-rooted in people's heads, they cannot be eliminated by

theoretical arguments but only by a more powerful reality, which is allowed to act upon the people's minds. If one begins to speak about this topic, the mind of the listener is immediately oriented towards the terrain of nationalism and can think only in terms of nationalism. It is therefore better not to speak of it at all, not to get mixed up in it. To all the nationalist slogans and arguments, the response will be: exploitation, surplus value, bourgeoisie, class rule, class struggle. If they speak of their demands for national schools, we shall call attention to the insufficiency of the teaching dispensed to the children of the workers, who learn no more than what is necessary for their subsequent life of back-breaking toil at the service of capital. If they speak of street signs and administrative posts, we will speak of the misery which compels the proletarians to emigrate. If they speak of the unity of the nation, we will speak of exploitation and class oppression. If they speak of the greatness of the nation, we will speak of the solidarity of the proletariat of the whole world. Only when the great reality of today's world—capitalist development, exploitation, the class struggle and its final goal, socialism—has entirely impregnated the minds of the workers, will the little bourgeois ideals of nationalism fade away and disappear. The class struggle and

propaganda for socialism comprise the sole effective means of breaking the power of nationalism.

## **Separatism and Party Organization**

In Austria after the Wimberg Congress, the social democratic party was divided by nationalities, each national workers party being autonomous and collaborating with the others on a federalist basis.[14] This separation of the proletariat by nationalities did not cause major inconveniences and was frequently considered to be the natural organizational principle for the workers movement in a country which is so profoundly divided by nationalities. But when this separation ceased to be restricted to the political organization and was applied to the trade unions under the name of separatism, the danger suddenly became palpable. The absurdity of a situation where the workers in the same workshop are organized in different trade unions and thus stand in the way of the common struggle against the employer is evident. These workers constitute a community of interests; they can only fight and win as a cohesive mass and therefore must be members of a single organization. The separatists, by introducing the separation of workers by nationalities into the trade union, shatter the power of the workers in the same way the Christian trade union schismatics did

and significantly contribute to obstructing the rise of the proletariat.

The separatists know this and can see it as well as we do. What, then, impels them to take this hostile stance towards the workers despite the fact that their cause was condemned by an overwhelming majority at the International Congress at Copenhagen? [15] First of all, the fact that they consider the national principle to be infinitely superior to the material interests of the workers and the socialist principle. In this case, however, they make reference to the rulings of another international Congress, the Stuttgart Congress (1907), according to which the party and the trade unions of a country must be intimately linked in a constant community of labor and struggle.[16] How is this possible when the party is articulated by nationality and the trade union movement is at the same time internationally centralized throughout the State? Where will the Czech social democracy find a trade union movement with which it can be intimately linked, if it does not create its own Czech trade union movement?

To proceed, as have many German-speaking social democrats in Austria, by referring to the total disparity of political and trade union struggles as an essential argument in the theoretical struggle against separatism,

is to literally choose the weakest position. There is, of course, no other way out if they want to simultaneously defend international unity in the trade unions and separation by nationalities in the party. But this argument does not produce the sought-after results.

This attitude is derived from the situation which prevailed at the beginning of the workers movement when both party and trade union had to assert themselves slowly while fighting against the prejudices of the working masses and when each of them was trying to find its own way: at that time it seemed that the trade unions were only for improving the immediate material conditions, while the party carries out the struggle for the future society, for general ideals and elevated ideas. In reality, both are fighting for immediate improvements and both are helping to build the power of the proletariat which will make the advent of socialism possible. It is just that, insofar as the political struggle is a general struggle against the entire bourgeoisie, the most distant consequences and the most profound bases of the socialist world-view must be taken into account, while in the trade union struggle, in which contemporary issues and immediate interests come to the fore, reference to general principles is not necessary, and could even be harmful to momentary unity. But in reality



it is the same working class interests which determine the two forms of struggle; it is just that in the party they are somewhat more enveloped in the form of ideas and principles. But as the movement grows, and the closer the party and the trade union approach one another, the more they are compelled to fight in common. The great trade union struggles become mass movements whose enormous political importance makes the whole of social existence tremble. On the other hand, political struggles assume the dimensions of mass actions which demand the active collaboration of the trade unions. The Stuttgart resolution makes this necessity even more clear. Thus, every attempt to defeat separatism by positing the total disparity of trade union and political movements is in conflict with reality.

The error of separatism, then, lies not in wanting the same organization for the party and the trade unions, but in destroying the trade union to accomplish this goal. The root of the contradiction is not found in the unity of the trade union movement, but in the division of the political party. Separatism in the trade union movement is merely the unavoidable consequence of the autonomy of the party's national organizations; since it subordinates the class struggle to the national principle, it is even the ultimate consequence of the theory which considers

nations to be the natural products of humanity and sees socialism in the light of the national principle, as the realization of the nation. This is why one cannot really overcome separatism unless, on all fronts, in tactics, in agitation, in the consciousness of all the comrades, the class struggle rules as the sole proletarian principle compared to which all national differences are of no importance. The unification of the socialist parties is the only way to resolve the contradiction which has given birth to the separatist crisis and all the harm it has done to the workers movement.

In the section above entitled “The Community of Class Struggle” it was demonstrated how the class struggle develops on the terrain of the State and unifies the workers of all the State’s nationalities. It was also confirmed that during the early days of the socialist party, the center of gravity was still located in the nations. This explains historical developments since then: from the moment that it began to reach the masses through its propaganda, the party split up into separate units on the national level which had to adapt to their respective environments, to the situation and specific ways of thinking of each nation, and for that very reason were more or less contaminated by nationalist ideas. The entire workers movement during its ascendant phase

was stuffed full of bourgeois ideas which it can only slowly rid itself of in the course of development, through the practice of struggle and increasing theoretical understanding. This bourgeois influence on the workers movement, which in other countries has assumed the form of revisionism or anarchism, necessarily took the form of nationalism in Austria, not only because nationalism is the most powerful bourgeois ideology, but also because in Austria nationalism is opposed to the State and the bureaucracy. National autonomy in the party is not only the result of an erroneous yet avoidable resolution of this or that party congress, but is also a natural form of development, created incrementally by the historical situation itself.

But when the conquest of universal suffrage created the terrain for the parliamentary struggle of the modern capitalist State, and the proletariat became an important political force, this situation could not last. Then one could see if the autonomous parties still really comprised one single party (Gesamtpartei). It was no longer possible to be satisfied with platonic declarations about their unity; henceforth a more solidly-grounded unity was needed, so that the socialist fractions of the various national parties would submit in practice and in deed to a common will. The political movement has not passed

this test; in some of its component parts, nationalism still has such deep roots that they feel closer to the bourgeois parties of their nations than to the other socialist fractions. This explains a contradiction which is only apparent: the single party collapsed at the precise moment when the new conditions of the political struggle required a real single party, the solid unity of the whole Austrian proletariat; the slack bonds connecting the national groups broke when these groups were confronted by the pressing need to transform themselves into a solid unity. But it was at the same time evident that this absence of the single party could only be temporary. The separatist crisis must necessarily lead to the appearance of a new single party that will be the compact political organization of the whole Austrian working class.

The autonomous national parties are forms from the past which no longer correspond to the new conditions of struggle. The political struggle is the same for all nations and is conducted in one single parliament in Vienna; there, the Czech social democrats do not fight against the Czech bourgeoisie but, together with all the other workers deputies, they fight against the entire Austrian bourgeoisie. To this assertion it has been objected that electoral campaigns are conducted within each nation

separately: the adversaries are therefore not the State and its bureaucracy, but the bourgeois parties of each nation. This is correct; but the electoral campaign is not, so to speak, any more than an extension of the parliamentary struggle. It is not the words, but the deeds of our adversaries, which constitute the material of the electoral campaign, and these deeds are perpetrated in the Reichsrat; they form part of the activity of the Austrian parliament. This is why the electoral campaign coaxes the workers out of their little national worlds; it directs their attention to a much greater institution of domination, a powerful organization of coercion of the capitalist class, which rules their lives.

The State, which in other times seemed weak and defenseless against the nation, is increasingly asserting its power as a consequence of the development of large-scale capitalism. The growth of imperialism, which drags the Danubian monarchy in its wake, puts increasingly more potent instruments of power into the hands of the State for the purposes of international policy, imposes greater military pressure and tax burdens on the masses, contains the opposition of the national bourgeois parties and completely ignores the workers' sociopolitical demands. Imperialism had to provide a powerful impulse to the joint class struggle of the workers; in comparison

with their struggles, which shake the entire world, which set capital and labor against each other in a bitter conflict, the goals of national disputes lose all meaning. And it is not to be totally ruled out that the common changes to which the workers are exposed by international politics, above all the danger of war, will unite the now-divided working masses for a common struggle more quickly than is generally thought.

It is true that, as a result of linguistic differences, propaganda and education must be conducted separately in each particular nation. The practice of the class struggle must acknowledge nations as groups distinguished by different languages; this applies to the party as well as the trade union movement. As organizations for struggle, both the party and the trade union must be organized in a unitary manner on an international scale. For purposes of propaganda, explanation, and educational efforts which are also of common concern, they need national organizations and structures.

## **National Autonomy**

Even though we do not get involved in the slogans and watchwords of nationalism and continue to use the slogans of socialism, this does not mean that we are

pursuing a kind of ostrich policy in regard to national questions. These are, after all, real questions which are of concern to men and which they want to solve. We are trying to get the workers to become conscious of the fact that, for them, it is not these questions, but exploitation and the class struggle, which are the most vital and important questions which cast their shadows over everything. But this does not make the other questions disappear and we have to show that we are capable of resolving them. Social democracy does not just simply leave men with the promise of the future State, it also presents in its program of immediate demands the solution it proposes for every one of those questions which constitute the focal points of contemporary struggles. We are not merely attempting to unite the Christian workers with all the others in the common class struggle, without taking religion into consideration, but, in our programmatic proposal, Proclamation Concerning the Private Character of Religion, we are also showing them the means to preserve their religious interests more effectively than through religious struggles and disputes. In opposition to the power struggles of the Churches, struggles which are inherent in their character as organizations of domination, we propose the principle of self-determination and freedom for all men to practice their faith without risk of being harmed by others for

doing so. This programmatic proposal does not supply the solution for any particular question, but contains a blanket solution insofar as it provides a basis upon which the various questions can be settled at will. By removing all public coercion, all necessity for self-defense and dispute is simultaneously removed. Religious questions are eliminated from politics and left to organizations that will be created by men of their own free will.

Our position in regard to national questions is similar. The social democratic program of national autonomy offers the practical solution which will deprive struggles between nations of their *raison d'être*. By means of the employment of the personal principle instead of the territorial principle, nations will be recognized as organizations which will be responsible for the care of all the cultural interests of the national community within the borders of the State. Each nation thus obtains the legal power to regulate its affairs autonomously even where it is in the minority. In this way no nation finds itself faced with the permanent obligation of conquering and preserving this power in the struggle to exercise influence over the State. This will definitively put an end to the struggles between nations which, through endless obstructions, paralyze all parliamentary activity and prevent social questions from being addressed. When



the bourgeois parties engage in a free-for-all, without advancing a single step, and find themselves to be helpless before the question of how to get out of this chaos, the social democracy has shown the practical way which permits the satisfaction of justified national desires, without for that reason necessitating mutual harm.

This is not to say that this program has any chance of being implemented. All of us are convinced that our programmatic proclamation of the private character of religion, along with the greater part of our immediate demands, will not be brought to fruition by the capitalist State. Under capitalism, religion is not, as people have been made to believe, a matter of personal belief—if it were, the promoters of religion would have had to adopt and implement our program—but is instead a means of rule in the hands of the owning class. And that class will not renounce the use of that means. A similar idea is found in our national program, which seeks to transform the popular conception of nations into a reality. Nations are not just groups of men who have the same cultural interests and who, for that reason, want to live in peace with other nations; they are combat organizations of the bourgeoisie which are used to gain power within the State. Every national bourgeoisie hopes to extend the

territory where it exercises its rule at the expense of its adversaries; it is therefore totally erroneous to think that the bourgeoisie could through its own initiative put an end to these exhausting struggles, just as it is utterly out of the question that the capitalist world powers will usher in an epoch of eternal world peace, through a sensible settlement of their differences. For in Austria, the situation is such that a higher body is available which is capable of intervening: the State, the ruling bureaucracy. It is hoped that the central power of the State will be engaged to resolve national differences, because the latter threaten to tear the State apart and impede the regular functioning of the State machinery; but the State has learned how to coexist with national struggles, and has gone so far as to make use of them to reinforce the power of the government against the parliament, so that it is no longer at all necessary to do away with them. And, what is even more important: the realization of national autonomy, such as the social democracy demands, is based upon democratic self-administration. And this quite justifiably strikes terror into the hearts of the feudal and clerical elements of big business and the militarists who rule Austria.

But does the bourgeoisie really have an interest in putting an end to national struggles? Not at all, it has the

greatest interest in not putting an end to them, especially since the class struggle has reached a high point. Just like religious antagonisms, national antagonisms constitute excellent means to divide the proletariat, to divert its attention from the class struggle with the aid of ideological slogans and to prevent its class unity. The instinctive aspirations of the bourgeois classes to block the proletariat's lucid and powerful efforts towards unification form an increasingly larger part of bourgeois policy. In countries like England, Holland, the United States, and even Germany (where the conservative party of the Junkers is an exceptional case of a sharply-defined class party), we observe that the struggles between the two major bourgeois parties—generally between a “liberal” party and a “conservative” or “religious” party—are becoming more embittered, and the war-cries more strident, at the same time that their real conflicts of interest diminish and their antagonism consists of ideological slogans handed down from the past. Anyone with a schematic conception of Marxism who wants to see the parties as merely the representatives of the interests of bourgeois groups, is faced with an enigma here: when one would expect that they would fuse into a reactionary mass to confront the threat of the proletariat, it seems, to the contrary, that the gap between them grows deeper and wider. The very

simple explanation of this phenomenon is that they have instinctively understood that it is impossible to crush the proletariat with force alone and that it is infinitely more important to confuse and divide the proletariat with ideological slogans. This is why the national struggles of Austria's various bourgeoisies flare up all the more violently the less reason there is for their existence. The more closely these gentlemen cooperate to share State power, the more furiously they attack one another in public debates over issues relating to nationalist trifles. In the past, each bourgeoisie strove to group the proletariat of its nation into a compact body in order to mount a more effective battle against its adversaries. Today, the opposite is taking place: the struggle against the national enemy must serve to unite the proletariat behind the bourgeois parties and thus impede its international unity. The role played in other countries by the battle-cry, "With us for Christianity!", "With us for freedom of conscience!", by means of which it was hoped that the workers' attention would be diverted from social questions, this role will be increasingly assumed by national battle-cries in Austria. It is in relation to social questions that their class unity and their class antagonism against the bourgeoisie will be asserted.

We do not expect that the practical solution to national disputes we have put forth will ever be implemented, precisely because these struggles will no longer have any point. When Bauer says that “national power politics and proletarian class politics are logically difficult to reconcile; psychologically, one excludes the other: national contradictions can disperse the forces of the proletariat at any moment; the national struggle renders the class struggle impossible. The centralist-atomist constitution, which makes the national power struggle inevitable, is therefore intolerable for the proletariat” (p. 252), he is perhaps partly correct, to the extent that he helps to provide a basis for our program’s demands. If, however, he means that the national struggle must first cease so that the class struggle could then take place, he is wrong. It is precisely the fact that we are striving to make national struggles disappear which leads the bourgeoisie to maintain their existence. But this is not how we will be stopped. The proletarian army is only dispersed by national antagonisms as long as socialist class consciousness is weak. It is after all true that, in the final accounting, the class struggle far surpasses the national question. The baleful power of nationalism will in fact be broken not by our proposal for national autonomy, whose realization does not depend upon us, but solely by the strengthening of class consciousness.

It would therefore be incorrect to concentrate all our forces on a “positive national policy” and to stake everything on this one card, the implementation of our national program as a precondition for the development of the class struggle. This programmatic demand, like most of our practical demands, only serves to show how easily we could resolve these questions if only we had power, and to illustrate, in the light of the rationality of our solutions, the irrationality of the bourgeois slogans. As long as the bourgeoisie rules, our rational solution will probably remain just a piece of paper. Our politics and our agitation can only be directed towards the necessity of always and exclusively carrying out the class struggle, to awaken class consciousness so that the workers, thanks to a clear understanding of reality, will become inaccessible to the slogans of nationalism.

Anton Pannekoek

Reichenberg, 1912

## Notes

1. See *Les Marxistes et la question nationale*, pp. 233-272, as well as Arduino Agnelli, “Le socialisme et la question des nationalités chez Otto Bauer”, *Histoire du marxisme contemporain*, II, 10/18, pp. 355-406. (Note from the French edition).

In English, see Otto Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, tr. Joseph O'Donnell, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000. All page references refer to the English language edition.

2. This is why the words “State” and “nation” are used interchangeably in Western Europe. The State’s debt is called the national debt and the interests of the State community are always called national interests.  
(Pannekoek’s note).

3. The relationship between mind and matter has been most clearly set forth in the writings of Joseph Dietzgen, who, by virtue of his analysis of the philosophical foundations of Marxism, well-deserved the title Marx bestowed upon him: the philosopher of the proletariat.  
(Pannekoek’s note).

See Joseph Dietzgen, *L’essence du travail intellectuel*. Écrits philosophiques annotés par Lenin, introduced and translated by J.-P. Osier, Maspero, Paris, 1973; and Joseph Dietzgen, *Essence du travail intellectuel humain*, translated by M. Jacob, with a Preface by Anton Pannekoek, Champ Libre, Paris, 1973. In fact, Marx wrote, in a letter dated October 28, 1868 to Meyer and Vogt, concerning Dietzgen: “He is one of the most brilliant workers I know”; Marx-Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 32, p.

575. As for Engels, he attributed the parallel discovery of the materialist dialectic to Dietzgen. (Note from the French edition).

In English, see Joseph Dietzgen, *The Positive Outcome of Philosophy*, translated by Ernest Untermann.

Introduction by Anton Pannekoek. Charles H. Kerr & Company, Chicago, 1906; and *Philosophical Essays*, translated by M. Beer and T. Rothstein, Charles H. Kerr & Co., Chicago, 1917

4. See the Earl of Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli), *Sybil, or the Two Nations*, London, Longman's, Green and Co., 1913, pp. 76-77.

5. John Huss (1369-1415), Czech reformer, condemned by the Council of Constance and burned at the stake. The date of his death was long celebrated in Bohemia as a national and religious holiday. He was also a proponent of the use of the Czech language.

Jan Ziska von Trocnov (1370-1424), Hussite leader. On July 14, 1420, he repelled the assault of the Emperor Sigismund at Mount Witka, near Prague. After having defeated the Emperor once more two years later, he died of the plague in Pribyslau.



The White Mountain (Bila Hora) is located west of Prague. The battle took place on November 8, 1620. The Protestant army of Bohemia was defeated by imperial troops. According to Bauer's analysis, the defeat at White Mountain, which eradicated the educated elements of the Czech nation, transformed the latter into a "nation without history".

6. Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876), a poet and one of the leaders of the democratic party in the revolution of 1848, collaborated with Marx and Engels on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. His poems are part of the cultural patrimony of social democracy.

7. Manifesto of the Communist Party, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1978, p. 482.

8. I.e., the Ukrainians.

9. The Russian revolution sparked the struggle for universal suffrage in Austria. After a large mass movement in which the social democracy played the leading role at the end of 1905, in January 1907 the Emperor granted his approval to the electoral reform proposal mandating universal suffrage in the territory of Austria (which did not include the other part of the bicephalic monarchy, Hungary or Transleithania).

10. See F. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1978, p. 689.

11. Pannekoek's argument here is identical to Rosa Luxemburg's. On the day after the beginning of the 1905 revolution, however, Rosa Luxemburg called for Polish autonomy within a constitutional Russian Empire.

These parties later underwent restructurings and transformations which we shall not discuss here because we are only providing an example to illustrate the theoretical positions taken by the various groups. (Pannekoek's note).

The PPS split into two fractions. The right wing would take power with Pilsudski as its leader after the First World War. The left wing—the PPS-Levitsa—would merge with the SDKPiL to form the Polish Communist Party.

12. The (Catholic) Social Christian Party of Germany.

13. Thus, in his review of Strasser's pamphlet *Worker and Nation* in *Der Kampf* (V, 9), Otto Bauer expressed his doubt that putting the accent on the proletariat's class interest could have any impact at all in the face of the

glittering attraction of nationalist ideals. (Pannekoek's note).

14. The 1897 Congress of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, meeting in Vienna-Wimberg, approved the structure since implemented in the Austrian social democracy: a federation based on the nationality principle in order to guarantee the autonomy and the individuality of its six component national parties.

15. The 1910 Congress of the Socialist International at Copenhagen unanimously condemned the "separatism" of Czech trade unionism.

16. The resolution adopted at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Socialist International particularly stipulated: "The proletarian struggle can be more effectively conducted and will be all the more fruitful the closer the relations are between party and trade unions, without compromising the necessary unity of the trade union movement. The Congress declares that it is in the interest of the working class that, in every country, the closest relations should be established between the trade unions and the party and that these relations should be made permanent."