

Moscow and Ourselves

Rühle, Otto
1920

Published in Die Aktion Volume 10, no 37/38, 18 September 1920.
Translated by Mike Jones. Prepared for the Marxist Internet Archive by
Paul Flowers. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/ruhle/1920/moscow-and-ourselves.htm>.

I

The First International was the International of the awakening. It had to appeal to the proletariat of the world, to arouse it; it had to issue the great slogan of socialism. Its task was propagandistic.

The Second International was the International of the organisation. It had to gather, to educate the aroused class-conscious masses, to prepare them for the revolution. Its task was organisational.

The Third International is the International of the revolution. It has to set the masses in motion and to unleash their revolutionary activity; it has to undertake the world revolution and establish the proletarian dictatorship. Its task is a revolutionary one.

The Fourth International will be the International of communism. It has to establish the new economy, organise the new society, realise socialism. It has to dismantle the dictatorship, dissolve the state, and create the society without rulers – finally free. Its task is the accomplishment of the communist idea.

II

The Third International called itself communist. It wants to be more than it can be. It is the revolutionary one, no more and no less. It thereby stands on the highest level of the Internationals so far, and fulfils the highest task needing to be accomplished, and which it is possible to accomplish, today.

One could call it the Russian International. Its foundation emanated from Russia. It has its seat in Russia. It is ruled over from Russia. Its brain is wholly the brain of the brains of the Russian Revolution, the Russian Communist Party.

For that reason, however, it certainly cannot be the Communist International.

What attracts the gazes of the world towards Russia – gazes of horror and of admiration – is not yet communism. It is the revolution, the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie conducted with unprecedented determination, heroism and consistency; it is the dictatorship.

Russia is still far, miles away, from communism. Russia, the first country to undergo the revolution and to fight it through victoriously, will be the last country to arrive at communism.

No, no – the Third International is no Communist International.

III

The Bolsheviks in Russia came to power not so much through the revolutionary struggle for the socialist idea, but rather through a pacifist coup. They promised the people peace. And land to the peasants – private property. Thus bringing all the people behind them. And the coup succeeded.

They skipped a whole era, the period of capitalist development. From feudalism, whose collapse began in 1905, which the war had accelerated and completed, they changed with an amazing somersault into socialism. Few imagined that the political seizure of power by socialists is sufficient to open up a socialist era.

What must slowly develop and mature as the product of an organic development, they believed themselves able to complete by construction. Revolution and socialism were for them primarily a political affair. How could such admirable Marxists ever forget that they are primarily an economic affair?

The most mature capitalist production, the most developed technology, the most educated labour force, the most abundant productive yield – just to mention these – are indispensable preconditions of the socialist economy and thereby of socialism at all.

Where were these preconditions to be found in Russia? A quicker completion of the world revolution will be able to provide what is lacking. The Bolsheviks have done everything to bring it about. But so far it has stayed away.

A vacuum resulted. A political socialism without an economic basis. A theoretical construction. A bureaucratic pile of regulations. A collection of paper decrees. An agitational phrase. And a terrible disappointment. Russian communism is suspended in the air. And it will hang there until the world revolution in the most developed countries, the most mature for socialism, have created the conditions for its realisation.

IV

The revolutionary avalanche is on the move. It has come to a halt over Germany. Soon it will have reached other countries.

In each country it meets different economic conditions. Another social structure. Other traditions. Other ideologies. The level of the political development of the proletariat is different in each country; its relationship to the bourgeoisie, to the peasants, is different; therefore its methods of class struggle are also different. In each country the revolution assumes its own face. Creates its own forms. Develops its own laws.

However much the revolution develops into the international affair, it is above all an affair of each country, of each people for itself. Though the revolutionary experiences of Russia may be valuable to the proletariat of a country, as thankful as it will be for fraternal advice and neighbourly help – the revolution itself is its own affair; it must be independent in the struggles, free in its decisions, and unbiased and unimpeded in its evaluation and exploitation of the revolutionary situation.

The Russian revolution is not the German revolution, is not the world revolution.

In Moscow they have another opinion. There they have the standard revolutionary schema. The Russian revolution supposedly took place according to this schema. The Bolsheviks undertook their struggles according to this schema.

V

Consequently, the revolution in the rest of the world also has to develop according to this schema. Consequently, the parties of the rest of the world have to conduct their struggle according to this schema. Nothing is easier and simpler than this.

Here we have a revolution... there we have a revolutionary party – what is to be done? We take the standard revolutionary schema (Lenin's patent) out of the pocket, apply it... Hurrah! It works – and bang! The revolution is won!

And what does this wonderful standard schema look like? "The revolution is a party affair. The dictatorship is a party affair. Socialism is a party affair."

And in addition: "Party is discipline. Party is iron discipline. Party is leadership. Party is the strictest centralism. Party is militarism. Party is the most strict, most iron, most absolute militarism."

Concretely formulated, this schema means: Above the leaders; below the masses. Above: Authority. Bureaucratism. Personality cult. Leader dictatorship. Power of command. Below: Slavish obedience. Subordination. Stand at attention. A multiple boss order.

A KPD Zentrale in the superlative.

VI

There is no possibility of realising for a second time in Germany the Ludendorff system¹, even were it to be in the uniform of Bolshevism.

The Russian methods of revolution and socialism is out of the question for Germany, for the German proletariat.

We oppose them. Absolutely. Categorically. They would be a calamity. More than this, they would be a crime. They would lead to ruin.

Therefore we want – are able – ought to have nothing in common with an International which aims to impose, indeed force, the Russian methods upon the proletariat of the world.

We must preserve our complete freedom and independence.

The German proletariat will make its German revolution, like the Russian proletariat has made the Russian revolution. It has arrived later at the revolution. It has to struggle harder. Because of that it will arrive earlier and more surely at communism.

¹ An allusion to the strict form of state mobilisation of society in Germany during the First World War, presided over by General Erich von Ludendorff. It was often known as "War Socialism." – MIA

Table of Contents

I	1
II	1
III	2
IV	2
V	3
VI	3