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# THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN JAPAN

One manifestation of the antagonisms between British and American imperialism is the difference in attitude towards Germany and Japan. As has been previously pointed out Great Britain would like to see the reduction to insignificance of Germany, but is desirous of maintaining Japan with reduced power, but still an existing power as a counterbalance to the United States of America. The reverse is the case with regard to the United States of America. American imperialism would like to see the lessening of the power of Germany but would still like to maintain it as a counterbalance to British interests on the continent of Europe. It aims at the complete destruction of Japan and the reduction of Japan to colonial status. The lines of propaganda follow the above political lines.

American imperialism over the radio, through the press, in the pulpits, and through every avenue appealing to the eye and ear, represents the Germans as brutal humans but the Japanese as sub-human beasts. It is hardly worth while wasting time with individuals who accept this junk absolutely, but two more serious variations of this main theme do affect large sections of the United States population, and even the working class. One is to the effect that Japan is a united whole without the presence of any class struggle. The second is that in the present period of war the Japanese workers and peasants have been so permeated with imperialist nationalism in the form of devotion to the Emperor that there is no possibility of revolutionary action. Both deductions are false, but in order to expose their falsity it is necessary to quote rather extensively from some facts in history.

Capitalism developed very rapidly in Japan, and on the basis of large industrial establishments superimposed upon a feudal peasant sub-structure. This has caused not only the co-mingling of bourgeois and dynastic elements in a purely capitalist form but it has also led to intense class struggle within Japan. Immediately subsequent to the close of the first World War tremendous rice riots took place all over Japan involving hundreds of thousands of peasants rising against the feudal land lords and shaking the very foundations of Japanese economic and political life since that time the peasantry has been drained in every way. Its sons have been yanked into the army and kept there for year after year. The tax and interest burden has increased. At the same time the interrelations of the agricultural economy of Japan with world economy have intensified the contradictions by entangling the peasants in every world crisis in capitalism. It

is true that the crushing of the peasant revolts in 1919-20 temporarily discouraged further revolt, but none of the contradictions have been solved and the peasantry by their actions on this occasion gave the lie to the triple assumption that they were sub-human, or incapable of class struggle, or devoted to the God-Emperor.

The history of the Japanese working class is still more instructive in this regard. From the very beginning of capitalism, the bourgeoisie was confronted with its opposite, the proletariat and a militant proletariat. It is typical that before the last World War practically every variety of so-called radicalism flourished in Tokyo. As far back as 1905 there was the historical gesture of Katayama shaking hands with Plekhanov at a time when their respective imperialists were engaged in the Russo-Japanese War. Upon the formation of the Communist International in 1919, a Japanese Communist party came into existence and attracted large support. Despite the horrible methods of Japanese imperialism, such as strangling to death Ogawa, his wife, and son in prison in 1923, and similar methods on large scale against radicals and trade-unionists, the Japanese working class continued to struggle. On two occasions the subway workers in Tokyo conducted militant and successful strikes in which they barricaded themselves in the subways. Mining, textile, and even munitions strikes have been conducted by the Japanese workers over a long period of years. When the great shipping strike occurred in the past, Japanese sailors joined in and refused to scab to the very end.

Not only has there been economic struggle on the part of the Japanese workers but political struggles that broke through the confines of the proletariat and reached into all classes. Just a few years ago Miss Hayashi and a group of women artists about her were arrested for distributing the Red Flag magazine. Nine judges of higher courts were sentenced for communism. Six clerks were arrested in the very stronghold of finance capitalism, the Mitsubishi bank of Tokyo. Even since the beginning of the war against China in 1931, there have been demonstrations against this, embracing groups as far to the right as the WCTU. One of the most sensational cases was that of Jasuko, granddaughter of Prince Iwakura, who was arrested at the age of 21 for soliciting funds from the nobility for a proletarian revolution. She cut her throat while in prison but did not die and had to serve a prison sentence.

It is true that the continued success of the Japanese armies, and still more the demoralization of the working class by stalinism, has led to a temporary ascendancy of imperialist nationalism over proletarian internationalism in the ranks of the Japanese working class. But that this is only temporary is testified to, not only by individual revolutionary acts, on the part of the

Japanese worker and peasant soldiers, which have been particularly numerous in China, but still more by the fact that the tremendous victories of Japanese imperialism have led to little improvement in the condition of the masses.

Summing up we may regard as established the fact that Japan is rent by internal class contradictions, and that all the ideology of the God-Emperor has not served to prevent tremendous collisions. The myth of the Unity of Japan, so sedulously fostered by American imperialism, is on a par with their myth of Japanese being sub-humans. The American working class when it revolts will find comrades and brothers in the ranks of the Japanese workers and peasants. Workers should ponder over the facts set forth in this article and bring them to the attention of as wide circles as possible. This work, seemingly one of mere propaganda and establishment of facts, has become of the highest political importance at the present.

Nov. 20, 1943.

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FIGHTING WORKER

# WAGES & INFLATION

Again the question of inflation takes on acute forms in Congressional debate and among the spokesman for the different classes. The rabid capitalist defenders and the ignorant liberals claim we are threatened with wild inflation if the Little Steel formula is not maintained -- and if the Roosevelt subsidy plan does not go through. Increased inflation is here -- to be sure, but not for these false reasons. Capitalist economy and especially its war economy cannot prevent inflation. They can only slow down the tempo and try to prevent sharp turns from tipping the "apple cart".

## THREE POINTS OF VIEW

Among the exploiters and their agents there are three different positions on inflation. The right wing tendency proposes to hold wages down as long as possible and to keep open the gates for price and profit boosts. Whenever the workers make a gain, after exhausting every trick the government machinery places before them, the exploiters just open the throttles on prices and profits and more than make up for labor's gain.

Next there is the Roosevelt position of "controlled" inflation, the maintenance of the "Little Steel" formula on wages at all costs, and subsidies to the sections of the exploiters where the dams against uncontrolled inflation break down. This position has the support of the majority of the labor fakers and the Stalinists.

Above all, this formula is cleverly designed to direct the class struggle of the masses against inflation and miserable war conditions into safe and sane channels of "struggles" at the point of consumption -- price control; thereby dissipating class energies at the point of production, strikes, etc.

## THE SOCIAL REFORMIST

And third, there is a small left wing middle class and reformist capitalist group, having a feeble voice at present, that proposes to work out a solution similar to the Canadian structure. This too is a system of "controlled inflation". A "wage-cost of living" index is obtained and a sliding scale of prices and wages maintained. If prices go up 3% in a certain period, then wages must also be raised accordingly, etc.

This proposed sliding scale of wages and prices as a special war measure does not make as its **STARTING POINT FOR THE MINIMUM WAGE** -

**THE COST OF LIVING.** Instead of starting at a wage scale necessary to provide the necessities of life - estimated by the U.S. Department of Labor a few years ago as \$ 3,500 for a family of 5, the Canadian system freezes wages at **PREVAILING** starvation rates. Thus the best the worker can get is to maintain the same - but no better - **REAL** wages. Nor can such a plan in any way prevent inflation. It is a reformist plan to give a few concessions to the wage earners in the war period, by not permitting wage cuts and to hold in check as much as possible the class struggle so the real war aims of the imperialists can proceed unhampered while civil peace reigns.

## THE CLASS STRUGGLE

There is nothing wrong of course for the trade unions to propose a sliding scale with the starting point of the minimum wage based upon the actual cost of living (as opposed to the present low **STANDARDS** of living). But this tactical proposal has value for the class **ONLY** when it proceeds within the **FRAMEWORK** of a class struggle policy, a struggle at the point of production, and is based on a struggle for higher **REAL** wages. This is part of the **FOURTH** position, the Marxian position.

To give up the right to strike, the right to demand higher wages and better conditions during the war for a sliding scale of wages and prices is to give up the **CLASS STRUGGLE POLICY** and become the tail of the reformist actions.

## WAGES AND INFLATION

It must be made clear that wage increases are not the cause of inflation nor do they increase inflationary trends. Wage increases merely take away some of the bosses' profits.

Nor is it a question of too much money in the hands of the working class that is causing inflation. This is another lie of the exploiters.

The present war inflation in the United States is due to the war economy of (1) reduced gold content of the dollar, that is, the whole currency policy of the government, (2) the tremendous government borrowing for war needs that has increased credits and the expansion of internal currency to staggering proportions, (3) the withdrawal of consumers goods from the market and its use for war destruction, (4) Profiteering and (5) dislocation of economy and world division of labor due to war needs.

There is a world of difference between the two statements "It is too much money." "It is too few consumers commodities." Too much money means that the people have the necessities of life

and have extra money to squander. But even government facts prove that the majority of the workers of the nation do not EVEN HAVE A WAGE WHICH EQUALS THE COST OF LIVING. If the masses do not have the necessities of life there cannot be too much money.

#### NOT ENOUGH COMMODITIES?

The pet argument used by the imperialists and their socialist-stalinist and trade union agents is the argument that the war needs against the axis is taking all of our commodities, and therefore, there is not enough left to supply consumers' demands. For sake of argument (and only for sake of argument) let us say that we must first supply the army and the lend-lease needs of our allies. Does that leave enough consumers commodities to go around and take care of the necessities of the masses and the money the people have to spend?

Yes, economic facts will prove this. There is sufficient raw material, factories and man power to supply consumers needs too. We grant that certain products could not be had on this basis and substitutes would have to be used. But there is enough substitutes suitable for consumers needs that can be had. Even technocrats, who are defenders of capitalism will admit this argument.

If this is so then why is it not carried out? Above all it is not realized nor even dreamed of because the capitalist system, although having organized production within the individual workshop has anarchy of production as a whole. It is the ORGANIZATION of the raw material, factories and man power that is lacking. It is the organization for use instead of for profit that is lacking. War or no war, victory or no victory, PROFITS COME FIRST.

Another point of no small importance is the imperialist needs of money to pay for their war. Withdraw consumers' goods, "create" too much money (?) and sell Defense (War) Bonds to the working class, and middle class. Withdrawal of consumers commodities from the market is caused in part at least by the conscious desire of the government to lower the standard of living and to siphon off in taxes and bonds the "surplus" funds for war.

#### INFLATION BUNK IS WORKER'S TRAP

It is not those who are asking for higher wages, it is not those who want to smash the Little Steel formula that are causing inflation. Laws and measures against war inflation are about as effective as laws and measures against the trusts and monopolies. As effective as treaties are against imperialist wars.

#### MINOR PALLIATIVES

Neither subsidies nor the wage-price relationship in Canada can avert the inevitable crises of capitalism. The evil lies much deeper - in the contradictions of the system, in the productive process and social structure.

One might ask the question, if prices and wages are correlated, why do prices go up at all? The answer lies not in the distribution or consumption of commodities, nor even exclusively in the "market". The basic problem lies in the social waste of war, in the expansion of currency and credit, and in the well planned steps by the bourgeoisie to lower the standards of living. In a word, inflation results from an "economy of scarcity". Capitalism can not produce any plentitude - except for destruction. The dislocation of economy, rising costs, rising subsidies, rising taxes, and thus again rising costs - this cycle makes for continued inflation. And the wage-price control can not halt this trend; it only attempts to introduce a little order into the inflationary trend. The original evil which gave birth to the whole process is overproduction, and the consequent political manouvers and wars to "correct" the difficulties of the bourgeoisie through conquest.

Roosevelt's subsidies, too, deal only with the surface problem. It attempts to eliminate some of the evils which cause inflation. It attempts to control profiteering, for instance, instead of permitting it to run wild. It attempts to spread the effects of inflation to the whole working class in an orderly way, taxes, forced savings, etc. rather than permit it to get out of control. Subsidies can only keep prices down for a short period. Subsidies must inevitably result in higher taxes. Higher taxes increase the costs of ALL branches of industry, and particularly lower the standards of living of the working class. The result is that more subsidies are needed in other - marginal - branches of industry; more subsidies mean more taxes, more control, and inevitably again a fiasco as in Germany in 1923. The direct cause of the present inflationary trend is the hundreds of billions of dollars of wasteful war production. No minor palliative like subsidies can eliminate the cause of inflation. The whole matter must be traced back to the basic question of overproduction. And for that the only solution is the Social Revolution and establishment of a Workers Council Republic based on production for use.

It is not the workers who are tipping the boat in the struggle against fascism if they ask for more wages.

The only real effective way to fight fascism abroad is to start fighting capitalism at home. To surrender to capitalism at home, through no strike pledges, little steel formulas, civil peace,

rationing, and social patriotism is to make impossible an effective fight against fascism. Bourgeois democracy paved the way for fascism, and bourgeois democracy cannot defeat fascism. The defeat of the Axis does not equal the defeat of fascism. Inflation is a part of this whole process and only on the basis of the class struggle can an effective fight against inflation be carried out.

Nov. 23, 1943.

# SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION.

## THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF NATIONALISM

Like every phenomenon in nature or society, nationalism, to be comprehended, must be considered dialectically. That means in relation to its present environment, and also historically, with relation to its past and its future. Nor is this merely of theoretical importance. In France, in Norway, in India, in China, the question of nationalism has arisen and has caused endless confusion in all camps except that of the ICC. Outstanding in confusion are both groups of the American Trotskyites. The maturing revolutions in Europe and Asia particularly make this a very practical question on the order of the day. Confusion on this question has led the Trotskyites to support of De Gaulle, Nehru, and Chiang-kai-Shek! And none of us can forget the shiver of horror that swept the world of class-conscious proletarians when Leon Trotsky himself objectively gave theoretical aid to the petty-bourgeois apostles of Ukrainian nationalism just a short time before his murder.

What was the historic genesis of nationalism? In all instances nationalism is born of the need of the rising merchant class to overcome feudal separatism in the interests of the expanding market. This is as true of early India as of Italy and Germany before 1870. Based upon a developing and higher mode of production and exchange, nationalism was at that time historically progressive. The gathering up of the isolated feudal baronies into a bourgeois nation represented social progress. In the fight for a united nation against feudal and semi-feudal obstacles the bourgeoisie, (first the merchant capitalists, and later the industrial bourgeoisie,) deserved and had the aid of the proletariat. Nay more, it was the pressure of the proletariat that compelled the bourgeoisie, generally unwillingly, to fight for the nationalist slogans. Even in the earliest stages of the Marxist movement there was a differentiation between the bourgeois nationalists and the Marxists. Nor did Marx and Engels support nationalist efforts uncritically. Much less did they support all nationalist strivings. In this connection one should reread Engels' "Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany" and Marx' "The Eastern Question". Already capitalism was entering upon the end of its heyday, and the economic bases of nationalism were yielding in importance to the economic bases of internationalism. Just as the natural economy of feudalism gave way to the national economy of capitalism, so already the national economy of capitalism began rapidly to give way to the world market.

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## NATIONALISM IN THE COLONIES

The failure to see this is the basic theoretic vice of the Trotzkyites. If India could be abstracted from the imperialist setting of the whole world nationalism in the classic sense could be on the order of the day. But what is India? A possession of the imperialist giant, Great Britain. This negates the whole line of Trotzkyism. For, having entered into the orbit of world imperialism, the basic task for India becomes its entrance into the struggle for socialism against capitalism. And this also inevitably means that the Gandhis, the Nehrus, the Boses can play no other role than that which they are playing, the tools of one of another imperialist power, Britain, the USA, Japan. It is true that the proletariat, in its social revolution, its proletarian revolution, will have to solve, in passing, the problems of the bourgeois or national revolution, but that is true, even though on a lesser scale of such highly developed imperialist countries as England and the USA, where no one has dared to speak of independent nationalist tasks.

Or let us take China. Here the Cannon Trotzkyites advocate support ("with criticism") to Chiang-Kai-Shek in the midst of an imperialist war. Let this be pondered on by all who assert that it is a slander of the ICC that Trotzkyites would ever support the imperialists in an imperialist war. The line of John G. Wright in his polemics against Hugo Oehler reveals that it is no longer a question of the future. Objectively the Cannon Trotzkyites are already supporting the Anglo-American imperialists. Let no one exclaim against our "uncomradly, libelous, etc. etc." methods of polemic. It is not a question of the subjective wishes of these people. We are prepared to concede that subjectively they want proletarian revolution with capital letters and headline type. But objectively they are supporting ("with criticism") the subordinated army of one group of bourgeoisie against another. Centrism again reveals its inevitable role of lackey to the lackies of the bourgeoisie.

But the Trotzkyites go still further. In dealing with these people one is reminded of the "Divina Commedia" of Dante ("Inferno"). In the apparently lowest depths of their theoretical Hell one always finds a lower depth. When it comes to Europe one could hardly expect to find that anyone exposed to, let alone acquainted with, the ABC of Marxism, would dare to theoretically suggest that in such countries as France and Norway there could be any question other than that of socialism versus capitalism. But, No! The Cannon Trotzkyites are falling into the trap of De Gaullism (of course "with criticism") and the Schachtmann Trotzkyites are debating it. It is really sad that, having attacked Robert Minor for his distortion of Lenin on the national

question with relation to such countries as France a short while ago, the Cannon Trotzkyites now come into his national house through the back door.

## NATIONALISM TODAY IS REACTIONARY

But all this is negative. What is the positive Marxist attitude toward the national question today? It is not and can not be the line of the ultra-left, the line that was advocated by Bukharin and Radek in the last war. It is a recognition of the fact that the key to this is the independent action of the working class and the struggle of Communism against Capitalism. In India and in France one includes in the program of the working class the right of self-determination, but one does not necessarily advocate state independence, and under no circumstances does one support either the program or the organization of imperialist elements such as De Gaulle or Chiang-Kai-Shek. The Marxist formula that the workers of the oppressing nation stress the right of self-determination and the workers of the oppressed nation stress revolutionary unity, remains true. Within this formula the advocacy or otherwise of independence becomes a tactical question, varying with circumstances. More and more the importance of two slogans "The Socialist Soviet Federation of Europe" and "The Socialist Soviet Federation of Asia" becomes palpable. These are not slogans for long historical periods, they are fast becoming fighting slogans of the moment. They take into account the economic basis and the important social remnants.

The National Question and its problems can be solved only AFTER the Proletarian Revolution and only on the basis of INTERNATIONALISM - that is the point. To support nationalist movements today is to turn the wheels of history backwards. Nationalist problems (land, suffrage, etc.) do exist, that is true. But a nationalist SOLUTION of these problems is no longer historically possible.

And thus, having covered very sketchily the past and present of nationalism, we come to its future. National differences will not remain forever, but we of this time shall not see the end of them. With the victory of socialism on a world scale these differences will wither away along with the state. Time was, not so long ago, historically, when no one regarded himself as a Frenchman or a German, but as Jean's "man" or Johann's "man". The development of capitalism knocked that out and brought about the very strong feeling of nationalism. Now the development of the world market has rendered the concept of nationalism historically obsolete. But one can not determine strategic and tactical questions in the midst of a struggle for power from the viewpoint of general history solely or mainly. Time will undoubtedly be when one will not consider oneself as "Russian" or "German" or "English"

but as a member of the human race, an inhabitant of the world. To transplant ourselves now to that time, as do the ultra-lefts, is to conceive of Moses, gazing upon the land of Canaan from Mount Pisgah as having already physically entered that land. Alas for the ultra-lefts, Moses never did enter, according to the mythology. Nor shall we. But we can already see it. And it heartens us. And we can point out the way, and fortunately warn workers of the Stalinists and centrists who, in these days of the final conflict, speak to the toiling masses of return to the outworn fleshpots of nationalism, fleshpots without flesh sighed for by prophets without vision.

August 1943.

A LETTER  
ON THE HUNGARIAN  
REVOLUTION OF 1919

(Comrade Louis Basky was one of the first Left Oppositionists in the United States. Before Trotsky had yet publicized his views against Stalinism in any country outside the U.S.S.R. Basky came to similar views independently. Comrade Basky was also one of the leaders in the fight against Trotskyism when it became a centrist tendency following Hitler's victory. His knowledge of the Hungarian Revolution at first hand makes the following letter an interesting document on the history of Revolution in our times. Comrade Basky died some three or four years ago.)

Dear Comrade Okun: -

My answers to your questions:

1. The Hungarian Soviets can be regarded as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Reasons: a. All power was lodged in the Soviets.  
b. The Soviets were elected by the workers, peasants and the soldiers the same way as in Soviet Russia.  
c. The bourgeoisie was deprived of the ownership of the means of production (and of political rights.)  
d. The workers had one party which stood for the same principles as the Bolshevik party of Soviet Russia.

2. The causes of defeat given in the order of their importance:

a. Lack of revolutionary experiences, training and traditions. (The Hungarian Communist Party was organized, so to speak, overnight. Neither the leadership, nor the membership were tested and selected on the basis of or through a sufficiently long period of revolutionary activity.)

b. Due to the lack of revolutionary experiences, and a real understanding of revolutionary marxism, the Communist Party made some fatal mistakes. The most important ones were: First, organic unity with the Socialist party, whose leaders offered unity, in order to regain the confidence of the workers, to get into key positions for the purpose of sabotaging and undermining the soviets; second, alienation of the poor peasants, by failing to satisfy their hunger for land; the big estates were turned at once into establishments under direct management by the State; consequently the poor peasants felt that they were left out in the cold; third, acceptance, under pressure from the social-democratic side of the "united" party, of the offer of Clemenceau; he offered to lift the blockade of Soviet Hungary and permit shipment of food and other materials, provided, that the Hungarian Soviet Government stopped the victorious offensive of the Red Army against Czechoslovakia, at that time the army of the Czechoslovakian Government was utterly demoralized, large numbers of troops were joining the Hungarian Red Army in order to overthrow the Czechoslovakian bourgeoisie; the stoppage of the offensive saved the Czechoslovakian bourgeoisie and gave sufficient time to reorganize and rearm the Rumanian Army for an offensive against the Hungarian Soviets.

c. The defeat of the Russian Red Army, forcing it to retreat after it almost reached the border of Soviet Hungary.

d. The smallness of the territory of Soviet Hungary.

3. The phases of the revolution:

a. after the collapse of the front and the complete demoralization and disintegration of the armies of the monarchy, the Hungarian bourgeoisie together with the Socialist Party, proclaimed the dethronement of the Hapsburg dynasty, the independence of Hungary, a republican form of government under the National Council, with John Hoek (a liberal priest) as chairman of the National Council and Michael Karolyi (at that time politically of the Kerensky type) as President of the Republic and with a Government composed of bourgeois liberals and Socialist Party leaders. The role of this Government can roughly be compared to that of the Kerensky government.

b. Practically at the same time soviets were organized by workers and soldiers but not as a dual power. The Communist Party was organized by Bela Kun (who was in Russia as a prisoner of war



and at the outbreak of the Russian revolution joined the Bolsheviks. In Hungary before the war he was a petty office holder in some social welfare institution controlled by the Socialist Party.) As the impotence of the Karolyi Government to accomplish anything for the workers became more and more obvious, the Communist Party began to grow by leaps and bounds, so the soviets in which the Communist Party gained an ever increasing influence, demanding all power to the soviets. At the insistence of the Socialist Party leaders, the Communist Party was declared illegal, its leaders were arrested, thrown into jail and brutally beaten. Shortly after this the peace-terms of the Allies were given to the Karolyi Government. The terms being impossible of acceptance, Karolyi, in sheer desperation, decided to turn the Government over to the Communists. Bela Kun was released after accepting the offer from the Socialist Party leadership for organic unity of the Communist and Socialist Parties on the basis of the platform of the Communist Party.

c. The Soviet Government was organized by the united party on the basis of the soviets already in existence. An offensive was started against it by Czechoslovakia with the above mentioned result. It took the Allies about three months to rearm, reorganize and reinforce the Rumanian army for an offensive by which the Soviet Government of Hungary was overthrown after being in existence for about four months.

d. Under the protection of the Rumanian Government, Hungarian white guards were organized by Admiral Horthy on the Rumanian side of the border. These guards came into Hungary with the Rumanian Army. When the Rumanian Army was near Budapest and the Red Army was completely crushed, the Soviet Government resigned and several short lived Governments were organized by the Socialists who hoped to come to an agreement with Rumania, but Horthy was favored by the Rumanian Army and he was installed under the protection of the Rumanian Army.

#### 4. Historical Lessons:

a. Revolutionary party can be organized in the period of revolutionary situation, but lack of revolutionary training, experiences, and tests is a serious handicap.

b. Social reformers, under pressure, may be willing to change their label. Don't believe them. Keep the revolutionary party clear of them.

c. Beware of the benevolence of the bourgeois governments.

d. Do not fail to win the peasantry as an ally of the proletariat. If they gain nothing for their immediate benefit from the proletarian revolution, they will turn against it.

Comradely

Louis Basky.