



3 ON DISCIPLINE

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PROLETARIAN DISCIPLINE

LENIN: "The working class exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness. . . socialist consciousness can only be brought to them from without. . . can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge.

"The bearers of science are not the proletariat but the bourgeois intellectuals. It is out of the heads of members of this stratum that modern socialism originated."

The Central Committee will issue commands and local organizations will carry them out, discussing mainly how best to execute the commands. The Central Committee will have the power to approve or reject the personnel of leading committees in the localities. The Central Committee will safeguard the purity of doctrine and action of the Party.

This system is that of "proletarian discipline" and those intellectuals who refuse to accept it are bourgeois and individualistic, and thus are "petty bourgeois" and "opportunistic in the organization question."

This discipline is "proletarian" because the proletariat has been made accustomed to such discipline in the factory. Anyone who is to be revolutionary must adopt this discipline which has been imposed upon the workers by the bourgeois.

ROSA LUXEMBURG: "The discipline which Lenin means is impressed upon the proletariat not only by the factory, but also by the barracks and by modern bureaucratism, in short, by the entire mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state. But it is nothing less than the abuse of a general term which at the same time designates as 'discipline' two such opposing concepts as the willfulness and thoughtlessness of a manylimbed, many-armed mass of flesh carrying out mechanical movements at the beat of a baton, and the voluntary co-ordination of the conscious political action of a social stratum; the corpselike obedience of a dominated class and the organized rebellion of a class struggling for freedom. It is not by making use of the discipline impressed upon him by the capitalist state, with a mere transfer of the baton from the hand of the bourgeoisie to that of a Social Democratic Central Committee, but it is only by breaking through and uprooting this slavish spirit of discipline that the proletariat can be educated for a new discipline: the voluntary self-discipline of Social Democracy."

MIKHAIL BAKUNIN: "I greatly distrust those who always have the word discipline on their lips. . . . most of the time discipline signifies despotism on one hand and automatism on the other. . . . the cult of authority, the love of commanding and the habit of submitting to orders, has destroyed in society, as well as among the vast majority of individuals, every feeling for liberty and all faith in the spontaneous and living order which liberty alone can create.

"Speak of liberty, and they raise an outcry about disorder. . . . nevertheless I recognize that a certain kind of discipline, not automatic but voluntary and thoughtful discipline, which harmonizes perfectly with the freedom of individuals, is, and

ever will be, necessary when a great number of individuals, freely united, undertake any kind of collective work or action. Under those conditions, discipline is simply the voluntary and thoughtful coordination of all individual efforts toward a common goal.

"At the moment of action, in the midst of a struggle, the roles are naturally distributed in accordance with everyone's attitudes, evaluated and judged by the whole collective; some direct and command, while others execute commands. But no function remains fixed and petrified, nothing is irrevocably attached to one person.... No one is raised above the others, or, if he does rise for some time, it is only to drop back at a later time into his former position, like the sea wave ever dropping back to the salutary level of equality.

"In such a system power... is diffused in the collective and becomes the sincere expression of the liberty of everyone.... This is the only true human discipline... necessary for the organization of freedom. It is not the kind of discipline... preached by the republican... automatic... blind discipline."

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