

Class War

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

A Contribution to the Communist Critique of the Proletarian Movement
in the Czech Lands of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1914-1918)



Class War

Red Flag

*Down with tyrants and traitors all,
let the old mean world die!
We want a new life on the earth,
in which any miseries must not be.*

*Further and further raise the song!
Our flag is fluttering over thrones,
carrying a thunder of revenge, anger of the people,
sowing a reality of freedom
and it is flaming in blood-like red,
there is workers' blood on it!*

*Our blood is shed by executioners
we abound with tears,
but once the vengeance day will come,
when we will be the judges!*

*Further and further raise the song!
Our flag is fluttering over thrones,
carrying a thunder of revenge, anger of the people,
sowing a reality of freedom
and it is flaming in blood-like red,
there is workers' blood on it!*

*Well, brothers, hand in hand head towards
a concordant array, powerful as a torrent,
like a sharply flowing big river,
we must achieve our goal.*

*Further and further raise the song!
Our flag is fluttering over thrones,
carrying a thunder of revenge, anger of the people,
sowing a vision of freedom
and it is flaming in blood-like red,
there is workers' blood on it!*

The Red Flag was one of the most traditional revolutionary proletarian songs. Especially among Czech speaking workers it was enjoying even greater popularity than the International until the counter-revolutionary Czechoslovakian Communist Party (the CCP) was formed. Its verses, "Down with tyrants and traitors all, let the old mean world die", accompanied the combative part of our class in the whole totality of its life: from singing of our great-grandmothers while tidying up their poor homes to crowd thundering during strikes, riots, mutinies and attempts at insurrections. Exactly by singing the first two lines the most militant proletarians often replied to social democratic efforts to calm down their struggle, precisely through these lines they pointed at enemies of social revolution. Perhaps this is also the reason, why the CCP gradually pushed this song out by its own version of the International, emptied of all the class content originally put into it by Eugène Pottier. We dedicate this text to the memory of all our class brothers and sisters, who – (not only) with the Red Flag on their lips – waged their battle against Capital and wage labour and thus practically helped to formulate the historical programme of communist revolution.

Foreword

"We do not think the revolution was perfidiously wasted by those, who fell wrapped into an unfortunate flag of the defeated revolution, but by those, who, from behind their desks of wisdom or from their platforms, were subsequently unable to deduce from this sacrifice anything more than a few phrases of a demagogical admiration accompanied by defeatist comments."

Amadeo Bordiga

(From the Commune to the Third International, 1924)

What a deep truth is contained in this quotation from a contradictory Italian Leninist, Amadeo Bordiga (1), even in relation to a revolutionary working class movement in Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia, Slovakia as well as the Carpathian Ukraine since 1917 till 1921! This class movement abounding in a revolutionary desire to do away with capitalism and create a truly human society went as far as it was allowed by objective conditions and its own weaknesses. On one hand a Bolshevik counter-revolution, which at the end devoured and destroyed all revolutionary potential of the movement, celebrated it and on the other robbed it of any revolutionary content. Bolsheviks elevated its weaknesses to virtues and used all this proletarian experience only as a myth supporting its own ideology. Now this movement is forgotten even by those, who consider themselves as classist revolutionaries. Frequently it is only because of a lingering burden of the Bolshevik myth, but also because the then class militants did not flock under this or that flag and did not adhere to this or that single right ideology.

What you are holding in your hands, is the first from a series of texts which we intend to devote to the topic. This text deals with the first stage and context of the class movement in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's Czech Lands. That is why it starts off with the outbreak of the world war in 1914, which was accompanied by many expressions of anti-war resistance, which roughly in 1917 began acquire a revolutionary proletarian perspective, arduously striving at its own realisation in our class' direct actions till its ultimate defeat in 1921. The movement's first stage, however, concludes around the end of 1918 by the first temporary defeat of proletariat. And this defeat also represents the end of this pamphlet.

In general, proletarian struggles on a territory of former Czechoslovakia in years 1917-1921 are an integral part of the revolutionary wave, which at the end of the World War One began to shake the world, and they are also an important part of our class's history. If today we are returning to them – almost after one hundred years – we are not doing this out of a kind of need to be historians of proletariat. We are classist militants, Communists, and it is social revolution what is our goal and purpose of all our endeavor. That is why an excavation of our class brothers' and sisters' experience – an experience for a long time drowned and distorted by deposits of bourgeois ideology (Stalinist, liberal...) – would be by itself an interesting and meritable act, nevertheless as Communists we strive to break the ideological separation between theory and practice, between a mere enumeration and description of past class struggles and drawing practical lessons for current and future struggles.

In other words, it is not our aim in this text to imitate bourgeois historiography and pile up facts, whom we will ascribe either positive or a negative sign according to an ideological key. Facts are important for us only as a source of appropriating – based on practical experience of the then proletarian movement – all points and levels, which represent a then classist militants' rupture with capitalism and an affirmation and development of our class' historical programme. Of course, we do not want only to affirm strengths of the movement, but also to criticise its weaknesses.

We do not see the revolutionary proletarian movement in the Czechoslovakian Republic and before its foundation as an isolated one. It was just one of many parts, one of many moments of a worldwide proletarian movement. In the same way as Capital is a global social relation, proletariat is a global class and the communist movement arising from it and aiming at subversion of the capitalist world is global as well. The movement on the Czechoslovakian territory definitely was not one of peaks of the then revolutionary wave. Elsewhere (primarily in Germany) the proletarian revolution went further in some aspects and brought a much higher level of historical communist programme's clarification. In the same way as for example classist militants, who led in December 1920 an insurrection in the region of Hodonín, we are also a particular expression of a sum of experience gathered by the communist movement throughout its existence in time and space. This is why we view workers struggles from 1917 till 1921 on one hand as a source of practical lessons for the future and on the other hand while analysing them we apply to them practical lessons from all big confrontations, which our class has gone through.

To conclude this it is necessary to add that our text is definitely not fully exhaustive, for it is out of our possibilities to excavate and study all the materials, which it has been still possible to find today. This weakness can be also seen from a disproportionate length of individual subchapters: some very important topics got lesser space than others, which is purely due to the fact that we did not obtain a bigger amount of detailed information. This is why the text needs to be discussed, developed and deepened further. That is also why we call all militants, who understand the meaning of our class history's programmatical discovering, to involve themselves in the process of further development of this text through looking for and studying new sources that could be useful. This text is also not an academic text, thus do not expect it to match all criteria of bourgeois scientism. It is meant as a first contribution not only towards a recovery of a proletarian memory, but also towards a clarification and appropriation of its historical revolutionary programme. This is why we primarily deal with an analysis of the class movement itself in it, since it is only this movement, where the communist movement and revolution come from. We are not looking for a sort of ideological ancestors, who were sure and exclusive bearers of a communist consciousness and programme, in order to incorporate them into a genealogy of this or that "sacred" ideological family (which is typical for all possible social democratic ideologists). We are looking for lessons to be used in confrontations, which are only awaiting proletariat.

Chapter I: War and Revolutionary Defeatism

"It is better to bleed to death in class struggle, together with our class friends from other countries, than to bleed to death on a battlefield for profits of our enemies!"

Jugend Internationale
(No. 1, September 1, 1915)

In 1914 the World War One – vitally important for Capital and long awaited – erupted and should have renewed the valorisation cycle of Capital through a mass destruction (2). A part of proletarians (70 millions) was forced to put on uniforms, it was gathered under national flags and under the command of its "own" bourgeoisie and in the interest of Capital should destroy its variable form (its class brothers, surplus labour power – about 10 million people died) as well as the fixed one (surplus means of production) and conquer new markets. Apart from this part, which was directly exposed to the danger of physical liquidation on the war-front, there was also another one. That was subjected to a higher level of exploitation in the rear: more work for lesser wages, war taxes and later only thinner and thinner rationing, hunger and military discipline at workplaces. It was proletariat, who – in peace as well as in war (which is only an extension of capitalist competition and social peace) – was paying with suffering and death for the reproduction of Capital as a social relation.

From its very beginning the war was not as unambiguously popular among Austro-Hungarian proletarians as it could appear according to the official pro-war enthusiasm. As a Czech left-wing poet, Josef Hora, wrote:

*"I did not want, but I had to
With cartridges on my waist.
They ordered me to shoot:
Defend your motherland, you swine!" (3)*

Some tried to avoid conscription by simulating a serious disease or hid themselves in the countryside despite harsh penalties for desertion. Since August 1914, when the war began, we can see more or less individual acts of class resistance – beginnings of revolutionary defeatism. Probably the most class conscious resistance against conscription appeared in Vienna districts Döbling and Simmering, where there were already in 1915 occasional gunfights between workers on one side and gendarmes and conscription commissioners on the other side.

German proletarians from the Czech Lands were also far from being all dull Austro-Hungarian patriots and they were quickly developing their own anti-war consciousness. For example, in September 1915 a German worker and front-line soldier, called Emil Friedrich, was arrested in the town of Ústí nad Labem for singing a song "Ich bin Soldat", which was quite popular among German speaking soldiers and contained following verses: "...they forced me, drove me as a beast / instead of being at work I am standing on patrol / instead of being free I am saluting now... when we march to the battlefield, I have to murder my brothers..." Many German-speaking proletarians deserted, sabotaged carrying out orders and voluntarily chose captivity in the same way as "Czech" proletarians did (4).

However, since the beginning of the war an unclearly defined unwillingness to die (5) for the hated empire predominated among Czech and Slovakian speaking soldiers. This distaste often resulted from a mixture of rudimentary, instinctive class resistance against the war and an influence of national liberationist and Pan-Slavistic bourgeois ideologies. For example, when in September 1914 another battalion of the 28th Regiment was leaving Prague, soldiers were singing together with Prague inhabitants a Pan-Slavistic song called „Hey Slavs“ and they had a banner with a modified strophe of a well-known folk song: "The little red scarf, dance around, we are going against the Russians, and we do not know why!" It is obvious, that anti-war attitudes transformed themselves into a practical resistance. It did not take a long time and on April 3 1915, during heavy fights in the Dukla Pass two battalions of the same 28th Prague regiment surrendered without a single shot being fired to a single Russian battalion, because the soldiers were not willing to serve as the cannon fodder in the war massacre any more. And they were not the only ones. Already on March 11 1915 three companies of the Terezín 42nd Infantry Regiment and nine companies of the Písek 11th Infantry Regiment voluntarily let themselves to be taken as POW on the Russian front. On May 6 1915, during a Russian assault, their example was followed by a battalion of the Mladá Boleslav 36th Infantry Regiment, whose another two field battalions numbering 31 officers and 1.543 men surrendered without fighting in the night between May 26 and 27. Pan-Slavism would later lead a part of soldiers, who instead of fulfilling their duties, waging the war and dying, let themselves to be taken by Russians as prisoners of war (in 1917 there were about 300.000 Czechoslovakian POW in Russia), to join the tsarist army. Individuals and small groups of Austro-Hungarian soldiers were not deserting into captivity only on the Russian front, but also on the Serbian and later on the Italian ones.

In what way most Czech and Slovakian soldiers understood the meaning of desertions and surrendering without combat can be aptly illustrated by a statement made by one of them, Josef Hrubín. When a drunken Slovenian soldiers laughed at him, that the Czechs were not good soldiers, because they could only put their hands up and surrender to an "enemy", he answered him, "If everybody acted in the same way, it would be the end of this suffering. Let emperors fight among themselves..." However, the Slovenian soldier was indeed a slavish person and denounced those subversive words to a Czech staff doctor, who did not hesitate and denounced Hrubín to his superiors. On January 7 1915 a military court in Lublin sentenced this coach driver from Prague-Žižkov to death and he was shot dead...

So called shirking was also a widespread phenomenon. In fact it meant sabotaging orders and avoiding combat. Today this invisible anonymous resistance can be primarily testified by "treacherous" songs of front-line soldiers as for example this one:

*"The millstone is turning round
but we will not be turned round by the war..."*

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

*On the river Drina, on the river Drina
we are sitting all the time on a latrine...*

*The fourth call up stand up!
But there is no body left!
Theresia lost Silesia!
Franz will lose everything!"*

There is a clear expression of the fact, that proletarians consciously contributed to the defeat of "their own" state through their resistance, echoing in the last strophe. And here is an excerpt from one more such song:

*"When a bugle will order us
to go into an attack
God knows, that all of us
will throw their rifles away!"*

Acts of individual as well as collective desertions, sabotaging orders and voluntary captivity were definitely practical expressions of class antagonism, for workers in uniforms immediately refused to be a cannon fodder in interests of their own exploiters. And through this disobedience they were subverting the war effort of "their own" state and bourgeoisie and contributed to their defeat. We can talk – without exaggerating – about a practical resistance against their own bourgeoisie even among proletarians from Czech Lands and Slovakia. Not only against the German and Hungarian bourgeoisies, which was "their own" in the same sense as the Czech and Slovakian ones: they immediately organised workers' exploitation. Moreover an overwhelming majority of the Czech and Slovakian bourgeoisies was standing on positions of so called Austro-Slavism from the outbreak of the war almost till its end. This means it was a loyal faction of the Austro-Hungarian ruling class and it was also interested in the war.

The reason for this was quite simple. To an important extent the Czech bourgeoisie was an agrarian one and even an essential part of its industrial faction was linked to immediate processing of crops and meat and to doing trade with agricultural products. Agrarian and industrial capital managed by the Czech bourgeoisie was closely connected by supplier and trade links with mostly industrial capital of the German bourgeoisie from the Austro-Hungarian Czech Lands' border areas. Everything was intertwined by financial capital of both national bourgeois factions. These factions were formed as national ones in a process of capitalist relations' development in the Czech Lands. As one of the bearers of capitalist production and social relations the historically younger Czech bourgeoisie had to assert itself not only against a late feudal shell of the political system, but also against its own little bit older German sister, who could more easily use the German character of the absolutist state and thus had a stronger political position. This is why the Czech bourgeoisie ideologized its power aspirations as national, which was to a certain extent equal to anti-German, aspirations. However, since 1848 till 1908 it had achieved a more or less equal social position as well as political representation and its economic interests were firmly anchored in the Austro-Hungarian framework and pretty overlapped with interests of the German bourgeoisie. Which means, that it identified its interests with the Habsburg state interests and strived only for as profitable position in its power structure as possible – a position corresponding to its own increasing economic importance. Thus in 1914 it did not even come to the mind of a large part of Czech bourgeoisie to question Austro-Hungary or war and to establish its own independent national state.

But at the outbreak of the WWI emperor proceeded to a considerable restriction of parliamentary power and political life and strengthening the very bureaucratic governmental apparatus, which again underlined its German character. Particularly Pan-Slavists (who had a problem with waging a war against Serbian and Russian "Slavic brothers") radical bourgeois liberals and dyed-in-the-wool nationalists could not cope with all this. Thus a part of the Czech bourgeoisie more and more felt, that "everything Czech" was repressed again, but only several of its political factions and often just mere political personages took immediately at the beginning of the war a "treacherous" attitude, while believing, that the Czech bourgeoisie's future would never be ensured in Austro-Hungary and that it could profit far more in a different political system. A more realistic part of these nationalist dissidents orientated itself towards the Western part of Entente powers in a longing for a profound transformation of socio-political relations and a traditionalist part – in the newly brushed up Pan-Slavic sentiment – dreamed that it will put the Czech crown on the Russian czar's head. But they were mere minorities. Still in 1916, when Czech bourgeois political parties united themselves in the Czech Union, whose supreme body was the National Committee, they did not do it against the monarchy, but in order to coordinate joint reform actions within its framework.

As for Slovakia (part of the Hungarian Kingdom), it is necessary to say, that at the beginning of the WWI it was still almost untouched by industrialization. Slovakian and Hungarian bourgeoisie were at the time still numerically relatively weak and concentrated into a few industrial isles. Therefore it was predominantly an agrarian country. Though the Catholic Church and Hungarian nobility were still the biggest landowners, we can not talk about Slovakia as about a feudal country. Land was a commodity, agricultural production was quickly capitalizing itself, wage labour became its essence and profit its aim. However, unlike its Czech fellow-traveller, in the time of the world war the Slovakian bourgeoisie was so weak, that its own perspective of Slovakian national liberation could not occur to it at all, since it had nothing to lean on except of an uncertain anti-Hungarian sentiment. This is why in Slovakia the national liberation ideology was represented by mere individuals (Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Vavro Šrobár, Ivan Dérer...), who had no other choice than to join their aspirations with the Czech national liberation resistance for the time being and together with its leading ideologists to create the concept of "Czecho-Slovakian nation". The rest of the Slovakian bourgeoisie was binding their interests to the monarchy up until its effective collapse in October 1918, when only the blind could not see, that Slovakia was going to become either a part of a new Czech state or it will stay in the Hungarian framework. Only then the most decisive part of the Slovakian bourgeoisie gambled on the Czech pledge (supported by the victorious Entente military power – so in fact there was no choice for them), that the new state would be the „Czechoslovakian“ one and would give it a stronger guarantee of an equal position and development than Hungary.

But let's stay for the moment in years 1914-1918 and before arriving at struggles of our class, let's have a brief look at the Left-wing of the bourgeois political spectrum.

1. Social-Democratic Alliance with Bourgeoisie

"Closed until the war ends."

(Robert Danneberg, the secretary of the Socialist Youth International, placed a sign with exactly the same inscription as above – putting the counter-revolutionary role of Social Democracy well – on its Vienna office.)

Let's start off with the Czecho-Slavic Social Democratic Workers Party (CSSDWP). Facing the world war it continued its policy of class collaboration as the whole Second International. Although it did not support the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's war effort as openly and actively as for example the SPD in Germany, it suspended its reformist political and trade-unionist activities and was telling workers to wait with their struggle against exploitation till the end of the war. *Právo lidu* (the People's Cause) (6) and its other printed organs were no different from another bourgeois newspapers. Thus the social-democratic party became an accomplice of the war slaughter, which proletariat was dragged into. In this situation, in 1916, a later leader of the left opposition in Social Democracy, Bohumír Šmeral, arranged an alliance of the party with other bourgeois parties in the Czech Union, because according to his marxist view this should have supported progressive reformist tendencies. In fact this step only further affirmed the counter-revolutionary character of the party.

He was criticised for this step by a nationalist faction (led by František Modráček), which emerged inside the CSSDWP during the war and which was already then – unlike the Czech Union – pursuing the national liberationist line and was accusing Šmeral from betraying national interests by this alliance with the Austro-Slavist faction of the Czech bourgeoisie (7). But his head was also targeted by a partially classist critique for selling out proletarian interests by tying them to the bourgeois interests. This criticism was not coming only from left ranks in the CSSDWP, but also from so called "Centralists", who were grouped in the Czech Social Democratic Party (the CSDP) working mainly in Moravia. The CSDP split from the CSSDWP long ago to protest against a nationality based destruction of international trade unions in Austro-Hungary.

Though then left critics of Šmeral were thinking in a framework of bourgeois political parties, we have to affirm their critique in an extent, up to which they recognised that proletariat can never be allied with bourgeoisie and it must fight alone against the ruling class for its historical interest, which is the overthrow of Capital's dominance. National liberation is in no way a part of this interest. One of the essential points of the historical communist programme – expressed and appropriated by proletariat in its struggles – is the watchword, "A proletarian has no country!" In this respect even "Centralists" were quite weak, because they were sometimes able to take a classist standpoint, but only to immediately neutralise it by their own variant of Social Democracy, which certainly did not disavow the right of nations for self-determination. This is why they became a part of a "socialist" wing of the national liberationist movement in the autumn 1918.

Inside the Czech Union the CSSDWP co-operated mainly with the Czech National Socialist Party (CNSP), which was another representant of historical Social Democracy in Czech Lands. It was formed in the 19th century, when the Austro-Hungarian social democratic party still had a unified international character and on a basis of radical slogans tried to organise the most militant proletarians. Even though it was recuperating workers' struggles for better conditions into the capitalist framework (its destruction and overcoming by Socialism belonged to the realm of frequent but rhetorical exercises), it appeared to the then bourgeoisie, which was not willing to negotiate with workers almost at all, as a dangerous organisation. That is why petty-bourgeois radicals then established for workers the CNSP, which was meant to weaken the "anti-national" Social Democracy (in its very beginning it really still had some internationalist and classist elements), to organise workers on the national basis and strive for improvement of their lives through a peaceful collaboration with the Czech bourgeoisie. Since that time the CNSP had always been a party of scabs, socialpatriots and denouncers, but, nevertheless, it had an important capacity to tame many workers' struggles.

However, a few decades later both parties will find a common counter-revolutionary language within the so called Socialist Council, which they would form in the nick of time in 1918 as a socialist body – subordinated to the National Committee – of the national liberation movement. It will be formed by all particular materializations of historical Social Democracy as a reaction towards working class dissatisfaction and militancy, which began to appear at the end of 1916 and beginning of 1917 and culminated in 1918 and tended to escape from control of bourgeois socialist political parties and trade unions.

This effort of the CSSDWP and national socialists to recuperate proletarian struggles against exploitation back into a bourgeois politics' framework was eventually joined also by the Federation of Czech Anarchists-Communists (the FCAC). Though at least prior to 1910 Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists were to a certain level an expression of class militancy, before the outbreak of the war a faction represented by Bohuslav Vrbenský prevailed inside the FCAC. This faction held counter-revolutionary national liberation positions and Anarchist Communism of the FCAC, as conceptualised by this social democratic tendency, in fact became a kind of political movement heading towards self-managed capitalism. At the beginning of the war the FCAC took the same stand as for example Kropotkin did: they stood against German imperialism, but sided with the Entente. (8) Thus, even though these libertarian Social Democrats in co-operation with National Socialist youth organised many anti-militarist actions and later participated to proletarian revolutionary defeatism, they did not stand on positions of classist internationalism and revolutionary defeatism, but on positions of Czech nationalism and pro-Entente pacifism. Wartime repressions forced "anarchists" to go underground, weakened them and even more deepened counter-revolutionary tendencies among them: a strive to subordinate class emancipation to national one and a desire for a massive influence. Thus the FCAC in its practice began to contradict historical class interests of our class, to which corresponded an effort to become an important force within bourgeois politics. Which means they stopped to be a force for its revolutionary destruction.

Intensifying proletarian struggles in the Czech Lands, gaining another impetus thanks to the Russian Revolution (beginning with the February one), got the most bourgeois local "socialist" party, the CNSP, to move. In order not to be left behind on a scrap heap of history, it had to integrate radical rhetoric, about revolution, destruction of monarchy, "socialization" of economy and an independent socialist republic, into its social-patriotic framework. This ideological manoeuvre was accompanied by a tactical one: the CNSP was calling for a formation of a united Czech socialist party. Though the FCAC (more and more sinking into bourgeois politics) at the end of the year 1917 rejected – because of its traditional ideological antipathy to "marxism" – an initiative directed towards merging with the CSSDWP, it enthusiastically heard the national socialist call and during Easter 1918 affiliated with them to form the Czechoslovakian Socialist Party (the CSSP) and to become its "Anarchist-Communist" Section. Eventually even representatives of both ideological families set against each other - "anarchist" anti-marxist Vrbenský and "marxist" Šmeral – sat next to each other in the Socialist Council to jointly realize the historical task and essence of Social Democracy's existence (whether it waves an "anarchist", "marxist" or national flag): to take over the class movement and channel it in a harmless direction for Capital – in this case it was to be the national liberation.

2. Radical Proletarian Movement Is Emerging

"It is better to finish with the horrors, than to live in endless horrors! It is better to make a revolution, than slowly die from hunger!"

(Proletarian women's slogan from the WWI wildcat strikes and hunger riots.)

But in this respect we are running ahead events themselves. What was the material reason for unification and co-operation of all forms of Social Democracy previously set against each other, was a rapid and sharp emergence of a new class movement, which to a large extent acted outside of the social democratic structures' framework, but for the moment not against them. The then class movement was unable to make a conscious and programmatic rupture with Social Democracy and this is why it could be later recuperated by old and new forms of historical Social Democracy.

In 1916, however, working class had already been fed up with the war, exploitation and hunger and it set on the move, for by that time huge industrial centres had strongly experienced a lack of necessities of life: their prices as well as speculation with them were increasing and food or eg. fuel rations were insufficient, moreover decreasing and on many occasions were not delivered to proletarians at all. Shortages of raw materials and labour power – despite an intensified involvement of working class women and youth in the wage relation – finished the temporary war boom and there was a fall in production, especially in consumer goods industry. For example textile factories in the city of Brno were at the time employing only 2/3 of their antebellum staff. It is for example memoirs of a female textile worker, Karla Pfeiferová, from Northern Bohemia, what allows us to have a look in a daily misery and consciousness of the then proletarians:

"Together with my two younger sisters I was working as a weaver in Mauthner's textile factory in the town of Šumburk. The longer the war was, the bigger was the hunger in the country. We were starving while working and suffered from hunger also in the night. Workers – mostly women, because men were on the fronts – lived on chicory infusion and boiled beet without any fat. There was not enough of corn and bean flour bread and thus in the fourth year of the war female workers shambled weakened by malnutrition and many of us had swollen legs. However, the rich had enough of everything and working people were forced to watch, how backdoors of shops were opened for mistresses and their maids and how they took away from there packages of meat, sugar and everything, what working class families had not seen for years. We were working under military supervision and commanded by an Austrian first lieutenant. The director of the Mauthner's textile factory, called Hamburger, was exempted from conscription as an indispensable person. Bourgeois sons were also indispensable. Masses were roused by this fact. I can remember, that once female workers were standing around the director's car, in which baskets of food from a factory canteen's store were carried away. "How long will the war slaughter last, when children will stop terribly starving?" This was a question moving minds of us all. But our anger was increasing even further, when bells were taken away from churches and priests gave them a god's blessing. There were no more iron fences, brass doorhandles were replaced, and the awareness that church bells should be turned into murdering bullets, so that the bloody war could be prolonged, outraged religious people and churches were half empty. Nobody believed the news in papers anymore, not even in the social democratic press, which was – in the same way as the bourgeois press – propagating a necessity to go on with fighting till a victory over the enemy."

Another female proletarian, Františka Hrabálková from the town of Kroměříž, recalled the war suffering of workers in a similar way and described also how experience of proletarians from the front got into the rear:

"I went to a hospital to take care about the wounded. There were only news about victories and heroism in newspapers, but soldiers in the hospital told us something completely different. I was reading out to wounded soldiers, we discussed the news in the papers and in this way I learnt how to read between the lines. Every day I saw all around me young and strong men to die and suddenly I realised that after the war we would have to do something against this. I swore to myself, that when the war would be over I would join an organisation, which would really struggle against capitalism, which brought about such a hell."

When in October 1916 in Vienna a left-wing socialist, Friedrich Adler (9), shot dead the prime minister, count Stürgkh, his act of proletarian terror was just the most visible top of a much wider and powerful movement smouldering and roaring under the surface of wartime Austro-Hungary.

At the end of 1916 and beginning of 1917 the first smaller wave of wildcat strikes swept through the Czech Lands. Further waves followed. Especially since March till August 1917 there were – many times repeatedly – spontaneous strikes, hunger demonstrations and riots in Prague, Nymburk, Prostějov, Pilsen, České Budějovice, Mladá Boleslav, Hradec Králové, Most, Liberec, Pardubice, Kladno and Ostrava. Proletarians provoking these strikes did not wait for a blessing of trade unions and "socialist" parties keeping social peace, they bypassed them and hit Capital and its war machine with strikes for higher wages, hunger riots and mass anti-war demonstrations. An important role in these class struggles was played by women, who had to replace many men drafted from factories to the front. According to a nationalist "anarchist", Luisa Landová-Štychová (who will together with the FCAC join the CSSP and personally will take part in counter-revolutionary activities of the Socialist Council – thus her recollections are primarily those of a social democrat participating in the effort to contain then class struggles, which she unwittingly also describes):

"...it was mainly women, who incited men for revolts and drove them towards strikes, sabotages and demonstrations. Women, the terrible avengers of their men suffering in the war and their children languishing because of hunger, were the ones to shout most loudly during strikes and demonstrations: "It is better to finish with the horrors, than to live in endless horrors! It is better to make a revolution, than slowly die from hunger!" It was then, when gendarmes and policemen were sending frightened reports to their superiors, that in the Czech Lands it was no more a question of mere hunger riots, but of a dangerous political movement."

Though all these struggles were fought only by a minority of our class, while the rest was continuing the reproduction of capitalist slaughter in a suffering passivity, the struggles hit perceptibly all industrial centres, disrupted the war production and started to subvert the suicidal discipline and obedience of other workers. But at the moment the state still could – thanks to inactivity of the rest of our class – send the army against the strikes and demonstrations to repress them quickly and violently. In several places troops shot at rebellious proletarians. At the end of April 1917 a wildcat strike and a hunger demonstration in the town of Prostějov was suppressed in such a bloody way – soldiers mortally wounded also a thirteen year old schoolboy. Other cases of shooting at struggling workers followed: Pilsen, Kladno, Nymburk. On July 2 in the city of Ostrava there were six participants to mighty demonstrations

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

against extortionate prices and poverty shot dead: four of them aged 16-22.

However the repression did not break the class movement. Workers continued to be driven into struggle by their exploitation and February revolutionary events in Russia gave them a perspective of their own. Because despite all capitalist barriers, separating us from our class brothers and sisters in other corners of the world, everywhere we are exploited in the same way and daily killed (on the front or at work) for Capital's valorisation and everywhere we fight the same struggle against our position of an exploited and working class. Even then it was not otherwise and that is why the fall of tsarism and high level of Russian proletariat's class struggle, which found its organisational form in soviets, had a tremendous impact on workers of all the world. The Czech Lands were no exception.

Thus in May 1917 the first workers council in the Czech Lands was formed in Prague. Of course, it was an illegal grouping, uniting workers' feduciaries from several Prague factories in order to incite Prague proletarians into anti-war and anti-state actions. However, its activity was soon weakened by persecution, since many feduciaries were arrested and punished by marching to the front. The second workers council came into existence on November 18 under an influence of the news about the October revolution in Russia. Limits of this council were precisely criticised by the then Kladno militant from the Poldi steel mill, Karel Verner:

"Opportunists succeeded in getting moderates from the ranks of workers and party officials elected and representing a majority of members in this workers council. These subsequently let themselves to be diverted by a member of parliament, Ludvík Aust. He did not want to lead workers into revolutionary actions at all. He was a chairman of a district commission for nutrition, which was a wartime Austrian state authority. So he took the members of the workers council to beg for higher food rations at Prague and Vienna authorities. This is how a "revolutionary" mission of this workers council, from which workers expected to be led into struggles for liberation from the Austrian subjection, from hunger and poverty and for finishing the war, was fulfilled. Pleas at the authorities did not help anyway and workers had to defend themselves from starvation by spontaneous strikes." (10)

The October revolution in Russia – an armed proletarian insurrection used and framed by the Lenin's faction of the Bolshevik party – was generally speaking an important impulse for spreading class militancy into other, so far passive, sectors of proletariat. However, in Russia itself Bolsheviks took over the bourgeois state apparatus through the insurrection and under the label of "proletarian dictatorship" immediately started to reconstruct it and restore the dictatorship of Capital over proletariat. Nevertheless, for the moment the rest of the world did not have a slightest idea about this counter-revolutionary development in Russia. So, when the news about another revolution in Russia, the news, which was saying that proletariat took power and proclaimed peace, got in November 1917 in the Czech Lands, a new wave of wildcat strikes, riots and anti-war demonstrations arose and the formation of the powerless workers council in the town of Kladno was only one of its moments (a weaker one). In factories, mines, manors, in one word everywhere, workers were spontaneously stopping their work, gathering and discussing about the proletarian revolution in Russia and about a necessity to make such a revolution also at home. For example, a female worker, Růžena Rollová, who was working at the time in the Czech & Moravian car factory in Prague-Libeň, described in her memoirs a situation, which was characteristic for hundreds of workplaces:

"When the news about Russian events arrived, we stopped the machines and an unusual moment of silence set in the spacious car factory. Someone shouted: "Long live the revolution in Russia!" Foreman Fleischmann dashed out of his office, all ruddy in his face, and yelled: "Who stopped the machines?" A clear, joyfull burst of laughter was an answer to him. Instantly all the Czech & Moravian was stopped."

In the Slovakian town of Vrútky the influence of revolutionary events in Russia found its reflection in a strike of local railway workers. This was crushed and its organisers went to a military prison in Prešpurk (today's Bratislava).

Unrest and subversive tendencies among proletarians were getting more and more widespread. In the middle of January 1918 a general strike broke out in Vienna and some of the local proletarians were calling for the dictatorship of workers and soldiers councils. Very quickly and moreover spontaneously the strike spread via the South Moravian industrial centre, Brno, into the Czech Lands, where tens of thousands of workers join the strike and demand an immediate end of the war and an improvement of their living conditions. The strike was going on since January 18 especially in Brno, Kladno, Prague, where it was preceded on January 17 by hunger riots and demonstrations, in Nymburk, Most and Moravian Ostrava. The Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Workers Party immediately tried to gain control over the general strike. It imported a counter-revolutionary demand of national self-determination inside the strike, in order to rob it of its subversive content and to divide Czech and German workers. Wherever it was able to do so, it sabotaged the strike and eventually, hand in hand with the Austrian social democratic party, quickly finished it, in order to prevent workers from taking much more decisive and internationalist steps.

A relative ease, with which Social Democracy was able to crush the general strike, points out at an importance of a previously mentioned weakness of the wartime proletarian movement: unlike for example communist minorities in Germany or Holland it had not realised yet, that social democrats, national socialists and so called "anarchists" are not their parties, but parties of their class enemy, bourgeoisie. But in spite of its short-windedness the January general strike also meant another step in radicalization of proletariat in the Czech Lands, for it gave our class a sense and awareness of its own strength. Sabotages in the industrial production and demonstrations against the imperialist war multiply. Luisa Landová-Štychová brought us a testimony about efforts of the state to militarily suppress the demonstrations, but also about beginnings of army units moral decomposition in the rear and about their fraternization with revolting sisters and brothers proletarians:

"These demonstrations were not an easy thing. They sent soldiers against us. But our women were very much ready. I think it was on January 22 1918. Women baked pancakes from few resources they had at home and prepared coffee or tea, for example only from morello leaves and coffee from acorns, collected tobacco from their fathers pockets, tobacco they were issued with in factories, and made cigarettes. Armed in this way we marched against soldiers. They were also fed up in 1918. Soldiers were marching against us with bayonets, but our women were not frightened. They speared the pancakes on their bayonets and dispersed among them with cans of coffee and tea. So we treated them and talked about fraternization of soldiers with the people and tried to persuade them to throw away their rifles and go along with us to make a revolution. And suddenly workers poured out of all factories to Prague, to Old Town Square or Wenceslaw Square."

The last repercussion of the general strike was a widespread wildcat strike of miners in the region of Ostravsko. Work in mines as well as in all important plants was militarized and premises were guarded by military units. Moreover miners were conscripted for the army, but because of an important place their work had in the monarchy's war effort, they were mobilized for a work front, where they were subordinated to a military command and could be shot

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

dead for disobeying orders. Despite this starving miners inspired by struggle of their class brothers and sisters at home and in Russia staged at the end of January a strike, through which they opposed their exploitation and defied the armed state power. Immediately next day the military command proclaimed a martial law and announced that everybody, who would not resume work in 24 hours, would be executed. For this purpose a whole battalion of Bosnian soldiers was brought to Orlová-Lazy. But they refused to fulfill their police function. The command got uneasy, withdrew them and brought Hungarian soldiers, but in a general atmosphere of class struggles, revolutionary spirit, weakening of discipline, desertions on the fronts it did not dare to start with executing. So the soldiers led by foremen early in the morning went through workers colonies, dragged miners out of their beds, in order to take them on a morning shift. But in the twilight outside it was easy for bunches of miners to escape. The strike went on for 14 days and eventually was crushed by arresting every tenth miner and sending them to the front.

The resistance was growing also in other coal mining districts. Miners were going down into the pits, but did not mine. The slogan of the day was: "If our spoons are empty, our shovels are empty as well". We can learn more about miners struggle in the region of Mostecko from the class militant, Robert Brožík:

"Following October (11) things were getting really tough and strikes, at first mere strikes against starvation, as they were called, suddenly gained a different, political character. We started to make sabotages, we made a passive resistance in the mines, shirking was on the rise, we did not feel like working for Austria. (...) In the fields we stole grain and potatoes, simply everything what the night offered us at the moment, but our lives were in danger while doing this. More than once a mate of ours was shot or even killed – and jailing for stealing in the fields was a daily matter. We did not want to mine, but foremen in shafts ordered us around: "If today you do not make at least 20 coal-carts, we will put you in the jail, you scoundrel!" they yelled at us. Miners were often jailed for not fulfilling a norm or absenting on a shift. If we absented on a shift, we were reported to the command and it made sure that we will rest on Sunday – in the pit jail. In spite of this our self-confidence was growing, our discipline was weakening, our spirit changed into a more spontaneous resistance and slowly we also lost our fear of persecution. We tried to avoid being chased by field and local gendarmes by escaping into the woods, where we were meeting soldiers from "Green Cadres". They were deserters, who did not return to their regiments after a leave and had to hide in the woods. Revolts of the hungry did not stop. There was a lot of foreign soldiers in the mining region, who immediately dispersed every bigger assembly of ours. There were Hungarians, Polish, but the most violent of them were Germans from the Salzburg 59th Regiment. We fought them almost as soon as we just spotted them somewhere, even children were stoning them. They chased us everywhere and when ordered from above they often accompanied us up to the pits; but they were afraid to go down with us, so they did not. There was a revolt after revolt, there were even demonstrations in distant villages. We were going for mass meetings to Most, Lom and frequently from Litvínov up to Duchcov, where the Revolutionary Workers Committee was stationed at the time."

As we can see from the Brožík's tale, the struggle against a high rate of exploitation began to take new and deeper dimensions. Since strikes themselves did not lead to meeting demands for better living conditions of proletariat, they gained even more classist character. Moreover, they were crowned by the revolt against labour discipline, the daily resistance against wage labour and the practical negation of exchange value materialized in stealing crops in the fields. All this naturally stemmed from the class antagonism and more and more favourable balance of powers between proletariat and bourgeoisie, which gradually strengthened miners' self-confidence. Perhaps nothing of all this immediately transformed itself into a full-blown proletarian autonomy and formation of a conscious communist nucleus, but the miners from the region of Mostecko practically affirmed in their actions essential points of the historical communist programme: the struggle against wage labour, exchange value and exchange relations. Moreover, they centralized their struggle not only among themselves, but also with other sectors of proletariat, including deserters, formed their own revolutionary class associations and set on to violently confront repressive forces of the state.

They were nowhere near to being the only ones representing such a level of militancy and development of the class movement. A similar situation existed in many other places of the Czech Lands: for example in Rosicko-Oslavansko mining region and particularly in Kladensko region. Proletariat was led by the necessity imposed by class antagonism onto the same level of struggle also there. For example, in April 1918 hunger riots swept over the Rumburk district (we will hear more about this place). On April 4 in the evening hunger demonstrations broke out in the town of Šluknov. They were led by looting wives and children of front-line soldiers and lasted up till the next day's afternoon, when they were suppressed by the army. On April 6 riots and looting spilled over to the village of Staré Křečany and town of Varnsdorf. At the end they swept the town of Rumburk itself on April 16. At six p.m. about a thousand women and children gathered in the streets and while shouting, "Hunger," and, "Bread," they started to smash windows and display windows and plunder shops. Soon some soldiers from the local garrison and other proletarians joined them. Only after five hours they were dispersed by gendarmery and military. On the following day a crowd of roughly 500 hundred workers violently prevented municipal potatoes to be transported away from a nearby village of Chříbská. But four days later a military assistance allowed this requisition.

On May 7 1918 there were hunger riots in Kladensko region. Predominantly working class women assaulted mills concentrated along the Kačák creek and looted stocks of flour and potatoes stored there. Looting as a very practical critique of commodity and exchange – ie. of production of goods to be sold and not directly used as needed – when proletarians directly appropriate, without money mediation, all, what they need, accompanied every hunger riot of that time and necessarily brought a violent clash with Capital and State. Thus during May hunger riots in Kladensko region one of workers expropriating commodities was shot dead by an owner of a mill, who was subsequently lynched by the furious mob. Once the riots were over, gendarmery arrested and imprisoned a lot of male and female workers.

The unbearable situation, a non-existence of reserves and clear awareness, that they had nothing to lose, but could gain everything, drew even proletarian children to a practical critique of commodities. When on June 21 1918 soldiers in Pilsen were loading up bread from a bakery, starving children begged them for at least a piece of bread, but in vain. So they stormed the wagon and took the bread themselves. The military patrol intervened and its commander ordered to shoot. Following this defence of private property five dead boys laid on a pavement of Koterovská street in Pilsen and others were seriously wounded. Their funeral was turned into a massive demonstration against war, hunger, exploitation and the Habsburg state.

Proletariat in the Czech Lands, but also in the whole Austro-Hungary, was becoming more and more militant and revolutionarily spirited. At this stage proletariat began to make ruptures – through its class struggle practice – with capitalism and many aspects of Social Democracy. It set on its journey towards class autonomy, which leads via breaking free from cages and collars, which exist in thousand forms being used by Capital to tame us and contain in its social relations, and ends with communist revolution. And beginnings of workers autonomy were not developing only in the rear, but also on fronts.

3. Subversion in the Armed Forces

"We are no longer afraid of death and nothing worse can happen to us."

František Noha

(one of the Rumburk mutiny leaders)

In the same period (1917-1918) the Austro-Hungarian military was quickly disintegrating and poorly inhabited areas of the monarchy were swelling with deserters penetrated by a revolutionary spirit – these were the already mentioned "Green Cadres". In the Czech Lands they gathered in woody areas, particularly in Moravia (in the Beskydy mountains and East-wards from the city of Brno), where only during the first half of the year 1918 gendarmes and the police arrested 7.380 deserters. Suspiciously hundreds of "Green Cadres" were hiding in the Šumava mountains and North-Bohemian woods. Groups of them frequently engaged in smaller expropriating actions against bourgeoisie while attacking mainly large-scale farmers and appropriating their profiteered food stocks, in order to directly satisfy their own needs, but also money. (12) In September 1918 there were also mutual violent clashes between gendarmery on one hand and "Green Cadres" and local inhabitants on the other in villages Chvalnov (13) and Zástřizl in Kroměřížsko region. However, a far more massive and radical phenomenon were revolutionary bands of deserters – called "Green Guards" – in border areas between Hungary and Croatia. In Slavonia there were about 30.000 deserters in the so called "Green Brigade". There they were attacking gendarmes clearly intentionally (14) and besides that they engaged in larger expropriations of bourgeoisie.

However, mass desertions were followed by open mutinies in the military. Revolutionary defeatism engulfed not only proletarians in the rear, but also whole military units, which disobeyed their officers, left their combat positions and their only slogan and aim was an immediate end to the war and/or revolution.

3.1. Sailors' Mutiny in Boka Kotorska

In February 1918 sailors of the Austro-Hungarian war fleet in Boka Kotorska mutinied. Poorly fed sailors, exhausted by the war and enthusiastic about the news, that revolutionary Russia proclaimed peace, but also influenced by a strike in the town of Pula, which took place on January 25 and among other things it demanded peace, they defied their officers.

A more radical nucleus of sailors (15) planned its own anti-war action for a lunch time on Friday February 1. The commanding staff somehow disclosed this plan and on February 1 in the morning ordered the crew of the admiral's ship, Sankt Georg, to line up and warned them that any disobedience towards a will of officers will be punished. Nevertheless, precisely at the lunch time the mutiny broke out on a canton ship Gää: the crew shouted, "Hooray – Peace – Hooray," and the crew of the cruiser Sankt Georg, anchored nearby, answered with the same words. Red signal flags No. 2 were erected on the poles of both ships as a set symbol of the mutiny. On the admiral's ship there was a bucket and a dirty rag hanged from the pole too. This symbolic hanging of the two hated work instruments, which sailors had to use everyday for tiding up the board, provoked bursts of laughter.

Development on the Sankt Georg was decisive for the mutiny, because there was the most numerous crew (about 900 men). A radical minority seized several rifles from powder stores beforehand, quickly gained the others on their own side and in few minutes they controled the whole admiral's ship. In the course of this they seriously shot an officer, who tried to stop them. A ship brass band was originally supposed to play for officers during lunchtime, was eventually playing brassy marches and sirens were beeping. A cannon was also fired against a torpedo boat, which wanted to sail away without the red flag. 10 days after the cannoneer was sentenced to death for this by a martial court. Successively other ships joined these two, some of them only in the evening.

Revolting sailors swelled with an anger against everything, what embodied their subjection, but also with happiness from a sudden liberation. They celebrated, drank ship wine, cheerily shouting threw office machines, gymnastic gears, pots full of awfull food into the sea and destroyed china in an admiral's dining room. Hundreds of them packed their personal things and wanted to get on the land and leave for home.

On some of the ships officers were interned, on the others they were just disarmed and could freely move around. The mutineers forgot to prevent an interned squadron's commander, viceadmiral Hansa, from accessing his personal radio, so he could send a message for the ground command about the mutiny. In order to gain time and channel the mutiny spirit into negotiation limits, he asked the mutineers to write down their demands. So instead of trying to expand their mutiny to the dry land (the only thing, which could have not only taken this class revolt further, but also saved their lives) they lost half a day by organizing a sailors committee and putting together a nine-point document called *What we want*. Their demands included a conclusion of peace, social demands and a guarantee of impunity for participants of the mutiny, which sailors themselves called "a demonstration, a manifestation for peace".

Viceadmiral Hansa promised for example better food, more leaves and impunity for those, who did not shoot. Sailors began to split: some of them were satisfied, radicals did not believe him. Meanwhile the ground command was preparing counter-actions and repeatedly sent an ultimatum to the sailors committee to surrender and pull down the red flags, otherwise their ships would be shelled from coastal fortress batteries.

The mutiny in Boka Kotorska is usually connected with the name of the Czech noncommissioned navy officer and the Social Democrat, František Rasch. Though stalinists praised him as a revolutionary leader of the mutiny, nothing can be further from the truth. We can not identify even with a view of present-day bourgeois historians, who depict him more or less as Jesus Christ trying to save a bunch of running-wild sailors from sure death at the eleventh hour, while sacrificing his own life. From the classist point of view, Rasch used weaknesses of the mutiny in order to help to put it down.

Rasch got on the Sankt Georg's board only on February 2 with an intention to play the role of a firefighter. He clearly testified his own understanding of what he did during the mutiny, when he was brought to a military court, which accused Rasch of inciting and organizing the mutiny. Rasch replied:

"There can not be any talk about incitement. What was there to incite, when I came the second day before noon on the board of Sankt Georg? On the contrary, I wanted to give this action back its character of a manifestation for peace, to prevent anarchy and to endow the action with order and organisation."

Although he was not a member of the cruiser's crew, many sailors knew him and trusted him. After several minutes they elected him as the ship committee

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

chairman and he became the mutiny's spokesman. Immediately he wrote down five new demands known as *Memorandum*. Through the Sankt Georg's radio station he tried to get in touch with social democratic members of parliament in Vienna, the Czech Union's leader and also count Karoly in Budapest, but as the ship senders were weak none of these telegrams reached their destinations. The leitmotif of all his calls was the demand of peace and asking for protection. He wished, that any of the political personages came to Kotor and took part in negotiations between mutineers and the navy command.

Meanwhile the ground army besieged the anchorage of the ships. The mutiny had no further direction and was drowning in dead-end negotiations with the command. Thus scepticism was gaining strength among the sailors. Some of the ships pulled down the red flag already on February 2 and returned under their officers' control. During the night between February 2 and 3 the second centre of the mutiny, the ship Gaa, gave up and ship council pulled down the red flag. Rasch tried to wheedle them into persisting, while promising to make a line up of the Sankt Georg's crew in the morning and organize a democratic voting on either continuation or finishing of the mutiny. He kept his promise. But only a handful of radicals wanted to continue. Thus Rasch ordered to finish the mutiny saying: "Pull down the flag and I am going to the under deck to surrender to Hansa." On February 7 he was brought along with other mutineers to the court and on February 11 several of them were executed. It is not always gratitude, that is the wage paid by bourgeoisie to social democratic gravediggers of class mutinies...

From the events in Boka Kotorska we can clearly see how democratic practices, negotiation and mediators are alien and contradictory to the communist movement. When war ships were engulfed by the mutiny and revolutionary defeatism triumphed within their crews, at the beginning there was no general assembly and voting. The militant core of the sailors simply did what they wanted to do and must have done and through their deed and example expressing also desires and class interests of other sailors they gripped the rest of the crews. On the contrary in the moment, when mutineers accepted formulating partial demands, negotiating them, electing spokesmen, etc. – shortly, when they accepted democratism inherent to capitalist relations based on the fact that all people are isolated units, which can achieve a mutual unity only on an alienated level of mediation – they lost their organic unity established between the natural vanguard and the rest in the moment of the direct action. They abandoned a logic of their class struggle and returned back into the framework of Capital's logic, where bourgeoisie represented by officers and the social democrat, Rasch, wanted to get them. Another lesson from this navy mutiny is, that if a proletarian insurrection does not strive and/or does not have a chance to generalize itself, it necessarily ends in slaughtering class fighters by bourgeoisie.

3.2. Behind the Rumburk Mutiny

Another mutinies in the Austro-Hungarian military were the result of developments on the Russian front. The German army made a successful offensive against the revolutionary Ukraine in February 1918. Many Austro-Hungarian soldiers, who voluntarily let the Russian military to take them prisoners of war in preceding years, got again in the monarchy's hands during the occupation of the Ukraine. Moreover, because of this offensive the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty was ratified in March 1918 and thanks to this fact other prisoners of war were handed over to the Austrian military. The bolshevik government signed the peace with German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism in order to gain time and power to reconstruct the dictatorship of Capital in Russia. Bolsheviks thus yielded carrying out counter-revolutionary terror against Ukrainian proletarians to Germany and Austro-Hungary, which allowed them to carry out the same terror against Russian proletarians.

The grabbed prisoners were immediately sent in transports to the rear, where they were supposed to be formed into reinforcements for the Italian front. Because of their poor health status and political unreliability (a lot of them was influenced by the Russian events and started to think about making a proletarian revolution at home) they were first sent into reception camps. But these soldiers were fed up with the war and were refusing to continue fighting and dying for Capital's interests. When they returned to the monarchy their anger was even strenghtened by poverty, hunger and death raging among their relatives at home. This is why for example the military command in the town of Litoměřice stated on May 15 1918, that, "it has been found out, that military men, who are on their holidays in their home-dwellings, negotiate supply matters with political authorities as elected speakers and spokesmen of the population or as members of sent delegations. There were even cases, when such military men took part in gatherings, demonstrations, manifestations and riots, which broke out in connection to a lack of food."

So while proletarian revolutionaries in Russia opposed Lenin's and Trotsky's counter-revolutionary politics and waged a revolutionary war in the Ukraine, the returned prisoners of war at the end provoked a series of mutinies in Austro-Hungary during May and June 1918 in these military camps: Rumburk, Rimavská Sobota, Šumperk, Bratislava, Trenčín, Kragujevac, Judenburg, Piotrków, Miskolc, etc. All these mutinies were drowned in blood.

Let's have a closer look at what happened in Rumburk, the German speaking town at the Northern border of the Czech Lands. It was exactly there, where the substitutive battalion of the Pilsen 7th Rifle Regiment was moved in 1915 during a large-scale moving around of army units. In that time units, in which German and Hungarian speaking soldiers prevailed, came to Czech cities and towns, while predominantly Czech units travelled to German and Hungarian cities and towns. The Austrian government tried to prevent a destructive influence, which wartime misery and exploitation had on troops morale in a home environment. In spring 1918 the Rumburk "ersatzbatalion", as all substitutive battalions, was also preparing recruits, newly conscripted reserves and returnees (so called Heimkehreren) from the Russian captivity for a deployment on the front. In Rumburk itself there were stationed only the battalion's headquarters, a staff company and the III. substitutive company. The rest of the battalion (which altogether numbered 1.200-1.600 soldiers) was accomodated in surrounding villages and towns.

There were very bad living conditions in the battalion. There was a desperate lack of food and moreover it was frequently rotten. Cramped lodging spaces were overcrowded with soldiers, sanitation was more than poor and all this was crowned with a military drill. Former prisoners of war from the Russian front prevailed in the garrison (in May 1918 there had already been 839 of them in Rumburk). In addition to this, the state sent into the Rumburk camp workers (mainly from Pilsen and its surroundings), who were punished for their participation in wildcat strikes by conscription and a planned deployment on the front. In April 1918 some soldiers of the "K.u.K. Landwehr-Infanterie Regiment Pilsen Nr. 7" together with local female proletarians took part in hunger riots in the Rumburk region, while the rest helped to suppress them. Ordinary soldiers were in no way enthusiastic about these police operations against their own class, for they realized, that in the Pilsen region their own relatives were persecuted in the same way by German and Hungarian soldiers. However, their dissatisfaction gained a direction only with men, who returned from prison camps in the Ukraine and who were nicknamed as "Bolsheviks".

But the Heimkehreren were not "Bolsheviks" in the today known counter-revolutionary meaning of the word. In fact, what was hidden under this denomination, was not very clear belief – formed by their own experience and Russian Revolution – that a general rebellion of the exploited could immediately stop the imperialist war, in which they were refusing to fight any more. Their "Bolshevism" also meant a strong mutual community and

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

disrespect towards officers as they wanted to make meetings about every order. As far as we know, only a bricklayer from Pilsen, private Václav Burda, had a direct experience from a practical participation in the social revolution, as he fought some time in the Red Guard ranks in the Ukraine. (16) However, the key organizer of a minoritarian vanguard, which was to lead the mutiny, was private František Noha (a former turner from the Pilsen Škoda factory and subsequently a scene-shifter in the local theatre). It was him, who was clandestinely agitating among Rumburk soldiers for the mutiny and gathering a hard core numbering 19 men. He believed, that a mere direct action of the revolutionary minority is enough to incite a revolution:

"We will stir it up here as soon as there is more of us, Heimkehreren. Once we will start, we will immediately seize railways and telegraphs and things will get going. Our men are in all regiments, Czech, German, Hungarian and even Polish, simply everywhere. If the rear collapses, it will be the end of the war, the front will collapse because of a revolution at home..."

In line with this Noha's conception, that everything will get going somehow automatically, the vanguard in fact almost did not prepare anything for the mutiny. They neither attempted at drawing a joint plan with local civilian workers nor subverted substitutive battalion's units stationed in other towns and they did not even put together at least a rough plan of the action. All these shortcomings soon showed themselves in a chaotic course of their revolt and some of the rebels paid for them with their lives.

It is said, that they wanted to spark off the mutiny during June, but events imposed a much earlier date on them. Many Heimkehreren were to be included into the XLI transport and sent to the front already on June 6 1918, so they needed to hurry up. It is said, that the rebel minority started to spread a slogan among soldiers, which was saying, "On the 21st we will go for holidays!" On Monday May 20 a day ration of bread per person was decreased to 1/12 of bun, which only enriched a general dissatisfaction in the garrison. On the same day Noha and his "Bolsheviks" sharpened this discontent, when they unsuccessfully demanded payments of withdrawn soldier's pay for the time they spent in captivity in the company commander's office. On that Monday in the evening conspirators had a prolonged meeting followed by chanting, "Break down the war – heave-ho," which could be heard for a while from dormitories of the III. substitutive company. After that it was calm up till the morning...

On May 21 1918, after six p.m., 67 men from the 7th platoon – whom the "Bolsheviks" had agitated – came for a line-up with loaded rifles in their hands and bayonets on, which was a direct breach of orders. When noncommissioned officers ordered them to lay down their weapons, private František Paur answered them shouting, "We won't lay down our rifles, may be we will need them today!" Armed men started to demand food, soldiers' pays and commandant Klepfer tried to calm them down with fairytales, that he was also suffering from hunger. A memorable cry sounded from the lined-up ranks of soldiers:

"Bullshit..."

The surprised commandant yelled several times a question, "Who said that," and than started to scold soldiers as bolsheviks, social democrats and Czech swines. But someone else from the platoon shouted, "Punch him!" Klepfer was hit with a rifle butt into his head and fell to the ground. Mutineers immediately beat present noncommissioned officers and seized another weapons, ammunition and hand grenades. As a conscript, Karel Honsa, testified, "Bolsheviks ran into the school building and took out ammo boxes and rifles. They shouted: Come on, come on to get weapons..." Further they occupied a unit kitchen, freed prisoners and incited to revolt lodgings of the second part of the company.

Their act, expressing a revolutionary spirit of the III. substitutive company's majority, became a stimulus for its general mutiny. There was no difference between Czech and German speaking soldiers (who constituted about 40% of the regiment) – one of them, Wenzel Plass (17), was even a member of the hard core and machinegunner Franz Schuss was to become an important figure of armed struggles awaiting the mutineers. At the given moment of a militant class action there was an organic unity among them, in which they took (though somewhat chaotically and insufficiently) necessary steps for the triumph of their mutiny and for its generalization into a general proletarian uprising.

In this spirit mutineers stormed the town, while occupying the post office and the battalion's headquarters and cutting a telegraph and phone connections. But they did not do this quickly enough and consistently, so the battalion's headquarters managed to inform (at the time, when the HQ was seized by the rebels!) a military command in the town of Litoměřice, which immediately started to mobilize all available units to crush the mutiny. While taking the HQ building in Rumburk, present officers were driven out and their stripes were cut off. It was precisely there, where 23 years old corporal candidate, Stanko Vodička, a Czech nationalist, who would try to give the mutiny a national character (largely in vain) through his speeches, joined the rebels. Other dishonored and/or beaten officers were hiding in all possible places in the town and some even tried to save themselves by escaping into Saxony. Only a Slovenian major, Zupanc (popular among soldiers for his human approach), tried to talk the rebels into calming down, but all in vain. Noha climbed on a wagon in front of the HQ and interpreted major's words to the others, "Major told me, that if I don't stop this, I'll be shot dead. And he gave us time till noon to calm down. What do you think about it? I think, that if we have started off something, we will finish it. An injury to one is an injury to all."

Mutineers, who were provably joined by a proletarian freed from the prison (certain Růžička) as well as several local workers (18), really wanted to finish, what they had just started. Noha and Vodička were first at the head of some mutineers, who marched towards a nearby village of Horní Jindřichov, where they gained on their side a majority of the machinegun company (64 men) and four machineguns. Another part of the rebels, led by Vojtěch Kovář, went to incite to revolt another part of the battalion in the village of Dolní Křečany. Commandant Weiser tried to stop them, but he was able to gather mere 18 men, who were quickly disarmed without fighting. Rebels beat the commandant and called soldiers of the I. substitutive company to join them and 149 conscripts and 18 other members of the unit really did. At about 9 p.m. all revolters gathered on the Rumburk square and then occupied local railway station. However, even here the stationmaster easily managed to warn the Litoměřice command (again only after the occupation of the station!). Following that the mutineers set on a journey in two marches towards the city of Česká Lípa, where they wanted to incite to revolt the Hradec Králové 18th Infantry Regiment. This would have made any counter-action of the state more complicated and rebels could have continued in their journey towards Mladá Boleslav, Prague and Pilsen hoping, that their direct action would generalize itself into a revolutionary movement.

But the already realized revolutionary steps and this foggy conception were the end of the hard core's plans. They did not even think about using a train for their journey to Česká Lípa, even if Noha and his company knew very well, that they are short of time. They also did not try to subvert another nearest parts of the 7th regiment stationed in Šluknov and Varnsdorf, let alone to suppress the bourgeois domination in general and realize the social dictatorship of proletariat, ie. revolutionary communization of social relations (19), in order to try to get the local German proletariat moving, as it was supportive towards the mutineers, but it more or less just passively watched their struggle and was unable to identify with it immediately and fully. Precisely these fatal weaknesses undoubtedly played their role in the mutiny's defeat.

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

As mutineers did not undertake an imposition of a social dictatorship of human needs against the dictatorship of value valorizing itself, wage labour, exchange relations..., and at the same time they were determined to go on struggling a necessary military aspect of the mutiny began to get a character of a purely military operation. Stanko Vodička became an expression of this fact, when at the foot of Hill Dymník easily persuaded Noha and other "Bolsheviks" to form military units from the rebels, which would advance in a formation. Vodička commanded the advanced unit, Noha the main squad, Václav Burda the left flank, corporal Adolf Heinrich (a coffee roaster from Pilsen) the right flank and the marching formation was closed by unarmed fresh conscripts. Those, who rose up against the war, thus again accepted the capitalist logic of war. And without a general revolution they stood no chance to victory in this war. And the Heimkehreren militant core's failure to assume the communization aspect of the revolutionary struggle was also Noha's order, that mutineers could not loot and steal on their journey. There is no doubt, that he wanted to avoid hostility of a civilian population, nevertheless it would have been much more appropriate to organize expropriations of food from shops, warehouses and manors and its redistribution among civilian as well as military proletarians, who were starving.

At 11:30 revolters arrived at Krásná Lípa, where they occupied the post office, dispersed gendarmes and expropriated a train, which was however too small for all of them, and thus the main forces continued marching on their feet. In the railway station in Chříbská-Rybníště there was a gunfight with gendarmes, who escaped in a prepared cargo train. Rebels again occupied the post office, where they seized a wagon and horses for transportation of their machineguns. 30 mutineers led by Ladislav Frenl were ordered by Noha to travel on the seized train and make a scouting towards the small town of Jedlová. There was an unsuccessful fight with a gendarmery assisting unit and a part of those mutineers was arrested. The rest of them escaped to woods, where they successively caught. In Falknov-Kytlice the main march of mutineers seized a lorry and they installed their machineguns on it. At about five p.m. they captured a scouting patrol of borderline riflemen, which was a forerunner of loyal army units sent to suppress the mutiny.

In Horní Arnultovice at Nový Bor they waged a short victorious fight against a borderline riflemen unit led by commandant Flibor. Under a fire of 35 years old Schuss and other machinegunners riflemen fled through Nový Bor (without being persuaded!) and dugged in behind the town near Chotovický Hill. Their positions were on the hills along both sides of the road to Česká Lípa, which they blocked with fell down trees and turned wagons. Meanwhile the Rumburk mutineers entered Nový Bor, where they occupied the local military headquarters. Inside the building they seized some rifles, which they handed out to fresh conscripts, freed two prisoners, who joined them, but they searched in vain for some food... Despite this, not even after a 30 kilometres long march and fights it did not occur to the Heimkehreren vanguard to expropriate bourgeoisie! Following a short meeting they decided to continue marching towards Česká Lípa in spite of a nearing sunset and to incite soldiers of the 18th Infantry Regiment to revolt as soon as possible.

However, in the meantime a machinegun company of exactly the same regiment arrived at Chotovický Hill to reinforce Flibor's positions. At the same time units of the 18th Infantry Regiment (20) led by lieutenant Michael were closing in on the mutineers from North of Nový Bor. When mutineers left the town and after seven p.m. bumped into fortified positions of borderline riflemen, Vodička at the head of roughly ten rebels tried to get as close as possible to the lines of the 18th regiment, waving a white scarf and shouting, "Hello, the 18th regiment don't shoot," in a hope, that he would get Czech soldiers from Eastern Bohemia on the side of the mutiny. The first volley was the answer. Subsequently, commandant Flibor called mutineers to lay down their weapons. Rumburk private Jan Pelnář sharply replied, "We have enough time for this! We will do this only when objective conditions will force us to do so, but not earlier! Fire!" (21) Even though Rumburk soldiers were in an unfavourable position they started to shoot, took cover in ditches, tried to outflank riflemen through the wood. But soon they were attacked from the rear by Michael and his company and the situation became hopeless. Franz Schuss from the unit of the "Red Guardist" Burda died behind his machinegun and the left flank collapsed. Subsequently, other skirmishing orders of the mutineers started to fall apart as they were surprised by the strong resistance of loyal units, which were, according to original naive ideas, supposed to immediately join the mutiny. In the middle of all this Vodička in a nationalist fear of a fratricidal combat of the Czechs against the Czechs discouraged rebels from further fighting and shouted, "Prevent a bloodbath! Cease fire! Everything is lost, let's surrender!" But more than him it was unreadiness of most revolting soldiers for a hard combat and the fact, that in the given moment they did not stand a chance for victory, what made them to surrender.

The freed civilian prisoner, Růžička, also fell on the battlefield behind Nový Bor. One day later 18 years old Vojtěch Krumpas died from his wounds. Another four rebels were seriously wounded and a lot of them lightly. 380 Rumburk soldiers, including Vodička, surrendered on the spot, others were dispersed and were escaping on their own from the reach of repressive forces. Only handfuls of them succeeded in withdrawing into the town, where they went on putting up an armed resistance. Only before 2 a.m. the army managed to clear the Post Office Street, where the last group of rebels was invincibly fighting. The first captured rebels were gathered in Nový Bor in a house of Jewish-German bourgeois (an exporter of glass and a retired commandant) Schwarz, who was sitting on a sofa in front of his house, smoking a cigar, and was railing against captives, threatening them with hanging and spitting at them, because they betrayed the emperor. Their 15 hours long attempt at self-emancipation of proletariat was over...

In following days there were massive gendarmery and military maneuvers going on around in an effort to catch groups of dispersed mutineers and thus prevent the revolutionary infection from spreading – it was intended to cover up the Rumburk mutiny as much as possible or at least to obscure it. Some of the groups had up to 50 members, who tried to get to Prague and Pilsen, where they wanted to hide and perhaps even to go on spreading their subversive spirit. There is plenty of evidence, that local poor German population did, what it could, to help fleeing rebels, "bolsheviks", but despite of this fact, they were not able to get through the sanitary cordon. Might be this was the reason, why František Noha along with another Heimkehrer from the militant core, Josef Zelenka, returned back to North towards Germany. On Thursday May 23 they were both arrested by a military patrol in Rumburk in the then Schönbornergasse Street. Private Josef Veselý managed to escape home to the Pilsen region. Influenced by rumours, that a part of mutineers had formed a "Green Cadre" and was fighting in woods, he travelled back Northwards to join his struggling comrades – in Prague he was arrested by the military police, whose officer said, "Again, there is another one from the unfortunate 7th regiment." One of the mutiny's leaders, Adolf Heinrich, and six his companions also succeeded in escaping home to Pilsen. For some time they were hiding at their relatives', but at the end they were forced by circumstances to denounce themselves at the regiment. Unlike his ten comrades Heinrich escaped execution. All Rumburk soldiers, who refused to join mutineers or deserted them at the very beginning and returned back to the town, were sent to front, because they were inconvenient witnesses of the mutiny...

On Saturday May 25 there was a drumhead court-martial with František Noha, Josef Zelenka, Vojtěch Kovář, Wenzel Plass and Stanko Vodička. Noha was identified as the leader of the whole mutiny and sentenced to death by a firing squad. There were another two death penalties: for Vodička, because he led one of the armed mutineers units, and for Kovář, because he incited to mutiny, arrested and assaulted officers in Horní Jindřichov. Plass and Zelenka were considered as ordinary rebels by the court and thus the first received 5 and the later 10 years of imprisonment. On May 29 1918, at 05:45, Noha, Kovář and Vodička were executed on an exercising ground behind the Rumburk cemetery. To get a deterrent example disarmed Czech-speaking soldiers of the 7th shooter regiment had to watch the execution. The firing squad's commander was already mentioned philanthropist, major Zupanc. German speaking soldiers of the Salzburg 59th Infantry Regiment were selected to carry out the execution. None of them, however, volunteered for the firing squad and one of those

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

picked out for this "task of honour", threw away his rifle and helmet immediately after the execution and started to cry, for which he was arrested.

Other mutineers were first held in extraordinarily inhuman conditions in Nový Bor and from there they were transported to the military fortress in the town of Terezín on May 29, where another trials followed (22). 21 rebels suspected of belonging among mutiny's leaders stayed in Nový Bor. A drumhead court-martial sentenced to death all 21, but sentences of fourteen of them were changed into a longterm imprisonment, because they were said to be "mentally inferior". The remaining seven, who really belonged to the original militant core, were executed on May 29 in the evening, in a wood behind a cemetery next to a road to Radvanec. They were: František Paur, Jindřich Švehla, Jakub Nejd, Jan Pelnář, Jiří Kovářik, Antonín Štátný and Jakub Bernard. The firing squad's commander was the victor over mutineers, commandant Rudolf Flibor (23), and hundreds of bourgeois ladies, striving to take a revenge for those 15 hours of fear and dread, what would happen with their domination, came to feast their eyes on death of the "Bolsheviks".

In spite of its weaknesses the Rumburk mutiny certainly belonged to the most important proletarian uprisings in the Czech Lands. It is important to understand that this mutiny, as well as revolutionary defeatism in general, did not originate from marvelous ideas, which hatched out of the blue in Noha's head, but from the Capital's attack on our class, carried out in the form of war slaughter and exploitation. Heaps of corpses on battlefields, suffering in imprisonment of war, starvation at home in the rear – exactly this material reality provoked the revolution in Russia, Noha's and other Heimkehrers' revolutionary positions, readiness of other soldiers to mutiny and thus the mutiny in Rumburk. Trotskyists will be disappointed, as were previously Stalinists (and all the heirs of the Kautskyst version of Social Democracy), that the soldiers' hard core arrived at more than just a trade-unionist consciousness; just from their own experience and without a leadership of a bourgeois socialist party they developed their own conception of social revolution and revolutionary minority's role in it. Despite vagueness and insufficiency of this conception they managed to subvert and attack repressive forces of the state in order to provoke a revolutionary ending of the war. Through their direct action they expressed spirit and desires of many other proletarians in uniforms or without them. But it is not possible to think that the whole mass of mutineers was on the same level of consciousness. Many of them probably did not think even that far as Noha's "invisible leadership" did; they just wanted the end of the war and misery and thus they rose up irrespective of consequences. But in the given moment their revolutionary defeatist action united them as a class – across separated categories of nations and professions imposed on us by Capital. Various "anarchist" and councilist social democrats will be surely disappointed by the fact, that omnipotent spontaneity of masses, which is so much ideologized by them, did not really work. Noha, Kovář and other our comrades lost their lives, because among other things they relied exactly on this revolutionary spontaneity. It would not make any sense to ponder over the question, whether things would have gone differently, if they had been able to assume the role and tasks of an organic vanguard much more widely – they might get the passive civilian proletariat moving and might be not. But we can say for sure, that the spark of the mutiny did not started a revolutionary fire it, though undoubtedly the mutiny gained proletariat's warmhearted fondness and passive support. Even though the Rumburk mutiny was an expression and a specific partial materialization of our class' communist programme.

3.3. The „Tinkers“ Mutiny

Another large-scale mutiny in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army – though from the classist point of view it seems to limp behind the Rumburk struggle – was a mutiny in the Serbian town of Kragujevac. It was exactly there, where soldiers of the 71st Supporting Infantry Regiment were sent from the Russian front, following the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty. They were predominantly proletarians conscripted in the region around the Slovakian Váh river and in Western Slovakia. Before the war many of them made their living as skilled hobos and this is why they were also called the "Tinkers Regiment".

Conditions in the Kragujevac camp were as harsh as in all other Austro-Hungarian military camps. Soldiers had to sleep on the ground, received small food rations and a minimum soldier's pay. Officers behaved in an exasperated way, they often bullied the soldiers and punished them. On the top of all this June 10 1918 was set as a date of departure for the Italian front. All this was contributing to a poor discipline of the men and so officers put an informer (Hubert Jindra) among the soldiers, who denounced to them every offence. It is necessary to add, that a lot of soldiers got tainted with the atmosphere of revolutionary Russia and all of them were fed up with the war.

One of the rebels, who were preparing the mutiny, was Viktor Kolibík, who made friends among Serbian soldiers and wanted to cross mountains and join them. It is hard to say now, whether he meant it as an attempt at fraternization with proletarians on the other side or just as a change of the imperialist camp. Given the influence of nationalist and Pan-Slavic ideologies, the latter possibility seems to be more probable. But to judge the Kragujevac mutiny on the basis of stupid ideas of one or several figures, who took part in it, is good only for bourgeois historians. What is important, is the general character and meaning of the mutiny, which unambiguously stemmed from class antagonism and which was a mutiny against their "own" bourgeoisie and its war effort – it was a refusal of any further participation in the war and an effort to violently attack the bourgeois state in its immediate form of officers.

The mutiny itself started on June 2 1918 in evening hours. It was initiated by Martin Riliak, originally a tinker from the village of Horná Maríková. Soldiers quickly armed themselves and took over an ammunition store. Subsequently they looted a camp canteen and seized a cashbox containing 110.000 crowns, which was a huge amount of money in that time. On the other hand they did not succeed in looting a food store. In Kragujevac they assaulted the railway station and interrupted a phone connection. They also destroyed all the files of conscripted soldiers.

What is really unknown is the number of mutineers. Probably all the soldiers, supposed to leave for the front, took part and a lot of new recruits, without even a basic training, joined them as well. Nevertheless the mutineers were able to collect about 500 rifles (but the garrison had 3.000 men) and several machineguns.

The fate of the mutineers was sealed beforehand by their isolation, which was probably caused more by an impossibility than incapacity to subvert other military units and perhaps unite with local Serbian proletarians. The 6th Bosnian Regiment along with dragoons, machinegunners and mountain artillery had to be called in to crush the mutiny. Eventually the mutineers ran out of ammunition and had to surrender. A provost court sentenced 44 soldiers to death and they were executed on the spot. Another 81 soldiers were sentenced up to 15 years of heavy jail. But they did not finish their terms...

3.4. The Final Desintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Military

After the social revolution in Russia and fraternization of Austro-Hungarian and Russian soldiers caused the collapse of the Eastern front, it was the turn of Italian and Balkanian fronts, where army units were also infected by a wave of unrest. Soldiers disobeyed orders, avoided combat and deserted. In the middle of September the Bulgarian army (the Austro-Hungarian ally) completely desintegrated. Bulgarian soldiers surrendered en massé or retreated home, where they spread a revolutionary spirit. In Radomir they directly mutinied, invaded military headquarters and attacked their own officers. Thus on

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

September 29 the Royal Council in Sophia was forced to accept an armistice equal to a capitulation. At the beginning of October 1918 it was absolutely obvious, that the Habsburg monarchy was collapsing and would have to surrender. A Hungarian diplomat, Julius Andrásy, wrote:

"As soon as I learned about the collapse of the Bulgarians, I did not doubt even for a while, that we would have to make peace at any cost, because if we missed the moment, revolution would be unavoidable."

In the Crown Council meeting, which took place on October 22 in Vienna, the general staff's chief, colonel general baron Arz, warned that there was national as well as social radicalism increasing in the military and that its behaviour was unpredictable. He could not rule out a possibility, that the army would "bolshvize itself" in a few days and gangs of "looting and plundering" soldiers would roll towards their homes. On the same day the Hungarian House of Representatives decided to single out honveds from the Austro-Hungarian army and to withdraw them home to defend the integrity of the Hungarian territory. This decision weakened the discipline also in the Hungarian military, whose units began to rebel against orders and strive for an immediate return home.

In spite of this fact, a part of them – because of Greater-Hungarian nationalism – was still able to actively carry out repression tasks in the Balkans. On October 23, 9 a.m., in the city of Terst the Croatian 79th Infantry Regiment, so called Jelačić's Regiment, mutinied. Mutineers invaded honved barracks and disarmed Hungarian soldiers. Then they occupied the city, including a tobacco factory, a court and many other public buildings and captured a chairman of the city council. Following this they freed prisoners and in short street fights dispersed the city police, conquered the railway station and prised up rails. On October 25 another two Croatian regiments mutinied in the town of Karlovac. In Rjeka and other towns there were riots and bloody clashes with the Hungarian military. In Lublin huge anti-monarchist demonstrations broke out and workers announced a general strike for October 28 to protest against the Hungarian repressions in Croatia and Rjeka. The desintegration of the military was approaching its climax, but the revolutionary defeatist classist reply to the was slaughter was mixing with an influence of nationalism, which was at the same time decomposing and and state-composing. The consciousness of proletarians in uniforms was not a purely class one, on the contrary, to an important extent it was a false consciousness. Nevertheless, their practice was a class one. But the ideology and forces of national liberation, which were living and prospering from those weaknesses, in the same moment also led their attack against the Austro-Hungarian state in order to create new national states. In this way they were sometimes able to immediately recuperate revolutionary defeatism.

A good example of this is a mutiny of the Czech 30th Vysoké Mýto Regiment on the Piave front, which broke out on October 26 – on the same day when the German sailors mutiny started in the Wilhelmshaven harbour. According to recollections of the then non-commissioned officer, J. Kubišta, when soldiers of the 1st battalion were ordered to march into trenches and replace two Austrian divisions destroyed by a gas attack, they disobeyed the order and while "singing national songs" set on the march away from the front. They met the 2nd battalion, which also mutinied and was standing on a road to Sacila. But officers of the 2nd battalion were trying to persuade their soldiers, thus creating disunity, quarrels and confusion among them. In this moment the non-commissioned officer Kubišta called for soldiers to camp on the spot and each company to elect two delegates. The delegates meeting decided to form guards out of the most reliable men and to close with them all exits from the village, where the troops were camping. The regiment's phone connection to the division command was immediately interrupted. German speaking officers and men were put under a supervision. Five delegates were sent to Sacila to incite the 29th České Budějovice Regiment to mutiny. At 2 a.m. on October 27 the 30th Regiment – more than 2.500 men – began to retreat towards the Slovenian border and Austrian units did not try to prevent it from doing this. On the contrary, many Austro-German soldiers spontaneously joined it. We can clearly see, that as soon as the original refusal to continue the war, which was surely contradictory (with both practically class and ideologically nationalist moments), was put into a democratist straitjacket, nationalist influences and elements quickly prevailed. So while Czech non-commissioned officers and officers, elected for delegates, in fact put all the Germans under arrest as dangerous people for the mutiny, at the same time they were leading Czech soldiers into a new capitalist prison – a "beautiful" Czech one.

During the night between October 26 and 27 1918 the Italian army launched an attack on the left bank of the Piave river. Austro-Hungarian soldiers, exhausted and full of an anger against the war and the old world, which drew them into the war, refused to fight, took their weapons, packed their things and left trenches. The Austrian minister of interior, Gayer, together with the general staff colonel Ronge asked the Czech social democratic member of parliament, Tusar, to take his colleagues and immediately go to the front, in order to stop the soldiers, until Austria ratifies a peace treaty. But Tusar refused, for the Czech bourgeoisie had already been pursuing a completely different policy at the time – no more it was a question of supporting the monarchy, but a question of national liberation from the monarchy. On October 28 Tusar was visited by admiral Holub, the fleet commander in the Balkanian harbour of Pula, and asked by him, that Czech deputies went to persuade soldiers to persist a little bit longer, while he said: "Sailors in Pula are revolting..., if the Italians attack, they will grab immense values." However, he was also turned down. (24)

In several hours the front got unimaginably weakened and crowds of armed proletarians in uniforms were heading towards their homes – many of them determined to finish not only with the monarchy, but also with capitalism. They seized railway stations, trains, cars... everything they needed to get home. Hundreds years old idiotic respect towards private property and exchange value disappeared at the moment without leaving a slightest trace – it was one big "free ride". On October 30 *Právo lidu* wrote, that the 35th Infantry Regiment left "the Piave front and along with other regiments set for a journey home. It is said, that the whole 40th Division forced its way into trains and ordered engine-drivers to go to Pilsen." And more: "We have learnt, that after the news of the changeover (25) ... many (Czech) soldiers and workers employed in Fischamend (26) factories seized 60 military lorries and said their farewells to Fischamend going across the border to Bohemia."

When they got home, they arrived to a newly established Czechoslovakian state. In a bourgeois propaganda this seemed to be an end of the old world and a promise of a shining tomorrow. There was nationalist euphoria all around and railway stations were guarded by the first reliable armed forces of the new bourgeois state: members of Sokol (27), former Austro-Hungarian officers, non-commissioned officers and also ordinary soldiers, Boy Scouts and members of social democratic Workers Sport Unions, etc. They disarmed returning soldiers and deprived them of modest canned food supplies looted from military stores in an effort to prevent a general armament of proletariat and to make docile wage workers from rebellious soldiers again. New guardians of the capitalist order also tried to identify carriers of the revolutionary infection in the ranks of soldiers. The ruling class started to consolidate its dominancy...

Chapter II: From Class Struggle to National Liberationist Counter-Revolution...

"Today any Czech must be more dear to us than a member of a foreign nation, even if this foreigner is a socialist. Today there are higher interests and there is also not a universal workers solidarity anymore. This is why the party does an all-national policy today directed to an establishment of the Czech state."

a social democrat **F. V. Krejčí**

(November 25 1917, a public youth meeting in Prague)

But let's return to the desintegration of the monarchy and establishment of the Czechoslovakian Republic. Since the middle of 1918 the Austro-Hungarian state apparatus more or less just helplessly watched an endless high-tide of strikes, hunger riots, desertions, mutinies and growing national liberation efforts of bourgeoisie in the Czech Lands, Slovakia, Poland, the Western Ukraine and the Balkans. The Entente powers had not been absolutely clear about the question of maintaining Austro-Hungary, but nevertheless they recognized the Czechoslovakian National Council in Paris (Masaryk, Beneš and Štefánik faction) as an official representative of Czech and Slovakian bourgeoisie and a de facto government of a would-be national state. This was mainly due to the Czechoslovakian Legion in Russia, which constituted an important counter-revolutionary force for the Entente, suppressing the social revolution and occupying cities along the Volga river, Siberia and all the Trans-Siberian Railway. (28) Another reason for this recognition was the doctrine of "the oppressed nations' right to self-determination", pushed forward by the US president, Woodrow Wilson, in an effort to build a nationalist barrier against the revolutionary flood. (29)

It was the awareness of an inevitable defeat of the monarchy and an effort to join the winning camp, what made a majority of Czech bourgeois factions to discard their Austro-philism and accept the effort to establish their own national state. An official rupture with the pro-Austrian policy was a speech of an Agrarian Party member and a chairman of the Czech Union of the Empire Council Deputies, František Staněk, and it was on October 2 1918. The national liberation faction and its representatives quickly gained a decisive role. Besides Masaryk's foreign resistance it was an illegal organisation connected to this resistance, called Maffie, which had been trying to clandestinely influence the Czech bourgeois politics and public opinion and to spy for the Entente. (30)

On July 13 1918 the National Committee was re-organized according to the election results for the Empire Council from 1911, by which step bourgeois political parties affirmed their hegemony in the national liberation movement. The National Committee began to prepare for seizure of power and based on its model district and local National Committees were coming into existence. In order to strengthen its own position in the movement and to endow it with a potential to channel proletarian militancy, the Czechoslovakian Social Democratic Workers Party, who took a full part in the counter-revolutionary national liberation politics, additionally tried to create a certain counterweight and along with the Czechoslovakian Socialist Party established the Socialist Council (31) at the beginning of September 1918.

But the tendency of Czech bourgeois forces to adopt the national liberation line was also determined by an effort to contain the wave of proletarian revolution. Subversive direct actions of our class were not endangering only the Habsburg dynasty's domination, but also the Capital's domination as such and on all the sides of the imperialist war. In this situation the national liberation ideology proved to be an important weapon of bourgeois counter-revolution. So the national liberation movement in the Czech Lands and Slovakia also gradually got to be of an essential importance not only for the triumphant Entente powers, but also for the dying Austro-Hungarian monarchy. An establishment of a new national state and a wave of enthusiasm from a newly gained "national freedom" could prevent a diffusion of social revolution in this region or at least make it slower thus allowing bourgeois counter-revolution to isolate its epicentres more easily and absorb and crush them one by one.

This is why in 1918, when militancy and a revolutionary spirit affected a great part of the working class and this started to show first practical elements of its autonomy, which did not transform into clear programmatical conclusions, bourgeois socialists come into the class movement with all their might and resolution in order to use its weaknesses and recuperate it into the national liberation movement. Thus for example in 1918 for the first time during the whole war socialists organize May Day manifestations, but under the slogan "Socialist Nation". When the Socialist Council was formed it was an expression of both an effort to recuperate and an increase of this effort by combining forces of historical Social Democracy.

To a certain extent it was not a too difficult task to redirect the proletarian movement from an overthrow of capitalism to a struggle for the national state. If this movement in many respects set for a journey of ruptures with capitalism, it had never made a conscious and programmatical rupture with Leftist parties and trade unions, which it had to bypass in the class struggles of preceding years – despite all its criticisms and discontent it had never directed the class struggle directly against them. Thus when these parties come back on the stage in an active way and pretend to be radical and militant, workers return into their embrace believing, that through their own militancy they made social democrats to act practically as a "pro-workers" political party again. But social democrats in fact just took an advantage of proletariat's incapacity to recognize them as enemies and they redirected all the militancy towards another question, in which the class movement was unable to make a total rupture with the bourgeois ideology domination – the question of national liberation, which was one of the biggest weaknesses of the movement.

In the Czech Lands nationalism was the most powerful component of bourgeois ideology domination over workers for a long time. Both Czech and German bourgeoisie developed this ideology through overcoming feudal social relations. Nationalism was a tool for defence of their interests in a mutual competition; but also in a mutual co-operation against monarchy's conservation efforts and the workers movement. Nationalism had been dividing our class already since the 19th century. The material basis of his success was a specific division of labour. Given the originally stronger position – both economical and political – of the German bourgeoisie, this division of labour partially favoured skilled "German" workers (however, by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th this division disappeared and from the viewpoint of labour forces' skillfulness there was not an important difference between "Czech"

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

and "German" workers). On one hand a German national community was reproduced in this way and on the other a Czech national community was reproduced in an opposition against the dominant position of the German national community. Both were false, alienated and alienating communities dividing proletariat and setting it against its own interests antagonistic towards bourgeoisie.

It was not only the already mentioned Czech National Socialists Party, but also social democratic parties (both Czech and German), what expressed an influence of nationalism. A pre-war level of this influence can be clearly seen from nationalist riots, which took place at the end of September and beginning of October 1905 in Brno around a question of establishing a Czech university in this city. (32) During these riots it was mainly "German" and "Czech" workers, who fought in the streets, who was bleeding and dieing in fratricidal clashes, but also in confrontations with repressive forces. In a certain way, a rapid development of capitalist relations, the growth of the Czech national community connected to that development and the world war prepared conditions for both overcoming this national divide (in the form of an autonomous proletarian movement) and its deepening (in the form of the national liberation movement). The actively anti-Austrian part of the bourgeoisie got into a conflict with the state in a similar way as struggling proletarians did and in this conflict an illusory unity between Czech workers' and bourgeois' interests seemed to be affirmed and social-patriotic traditions of the idiotic self-negation as a class revived. And they revived up to the point of an important (but not total!) desintegration of the war-time proletarian movement into the Czech and the German movement and for a certain time and to a certain extent it turned to be its own exact opposite – it became a tool for bourgeois interests...

1. The General Strike of October 14 1918

"The national idea of new times is not the same national idea as before the war. ...the national idea is gaining an appropriate social shading. Equality among nations – equality inside the nation!"

České slovo (the Czech Word)

(a National Socialist paper, October 1918)

In the autumn 1918 even the Austro-Hungarian state itself is in a state of decay, so frequent demonstrations, strikes, riots, sabotages and protest actions in fact got out of control and from its viewpoint were almost uncontainable. For example on October 7 there was a tram-drivers strike in Vienna because of wage demands and shortcomings in supplying. Strikers stopped scabing trams in the streets and removed fuses out of them, thus rendering them unable to ride. In the same day there were also strikes of railway yards workers in the town of Chomutov and about 10.000 Prague factory workers. 4.000 workers were marching towards the Prague governorate's premises to protest against a bad state of supplying. On October 8 workers of the Prague sole works won their strike for a higher minimum wage and shorter hours. We could continue in this way endlessly, for similar events were on a daily agenda. In some plants capitalists even had to promise either free or very cheap lunches and snacks.

In this crisis Vienna authorities tried to take away from the Czech Lands all they could: especially food stuffs, coal, other raw materials and trains. The National Committee, which had already thought of itself as a new ruling power, did not want to run an empty shop. It wanted to keep under its own control as many means of production, sources and goods as possible and it also wanted to stop food supplies for Austria and to use starvation as a weapon in negotiating an independent state with Vienna. This was why on October 9 the representative of the agrarian bourgeoisie, Antonín Švehla, suggested a protest action, which was to be organised by the Socialist Council. Already one day after the Czech Railway Employees Union Centre heard the Czech bourgeoisie's call and started off a partial passive resistance. Instead of seizing food stuffs carriages and distributing food directly, without any exchange, among proletarians of all nationalities, railway workers just protected commodities for the Czech bourgeoisie and let the particular carriages to roam around railways within the Czech Lands borders.

The Socialist Council's Action Committee (33) began to organize for October 14 1918 a one day general strike of Czech workers, which should have been the most massive mobilization in the Czech Lands directed against the Austro-Hungarian state up till that time. At the same time it was a part of an effort to channel proletariat's struggle and a reflection of a level, to which this effort had been successful. Bourgeois socialists of all denominations also saw the general strike as an opportunity to weaken the so called "citizen camp" (the bourgeois Right-wing) and to become a leading faction in the national liberation movement. They understood very well, that only their traditional massive reformist parties were able to legitimize the nationalist project in workers eyes. As national socialist Jiří Stříbrný said:

"We, socialists, will not desert the united Czech front. But there is no reason for us not to say, that in the future we should be respected as a substantial part of the nation. We will not play an appendage role..." (34)

Though it was the war and cruel exploitation and hunger connected to it, what was the primary incentive of proletarian anger, the Socialist Council built its propaganda on an ideological junk still quite spoiling workers' minds. It even strongly ideologically framed and channeled their class anger by and through nationalism. It endowed the strike with nationalist watchwords and objectives thus doing an enormous favour to counter-revolution, because it used a proletariat's insufficient rupture with Capital and nationalist ideology to subordinate its struggle to the national liberationist one and to support false ideas in workers ranks, that an establishment of a national state would bring about essential changes in workers social position.

This was the meaning of the so called "Circular No. 2", which instructed "socialist" parties' officials how to run the strike. Besides the fact, that the Action Committee warned against violence and emphasized, that for the moment it is just "a rehearsal of preparedness for real fighting", it also exhorted local party organizers to clearly show their "bourgeois" allies in the public speeches, that it is the Left and its social project, who should lead the national movement. This was why an independent Czechoslovakian republic should have been proclaimed at the mass meetings (35). Workers should have been assured that it would be a social democratic republic:

"Let's emphasize a complete realization of democratic principles in our state and a resolution of important socialist problems. Let this part of the speech have not directly pronounced, but nevertheless totally clear tones of voice directed against those members of bourgeoisie, who think, they will be able to transfer their political and property privileges into the state in an unrestricted way." (36)

Let's quote several excerpts from the public proclamation of the Socialist Council's Action Committee, just to have an idea of social democratic demagogy, which had nothing in common with class struggle and only urged "the working people" to defend nation's liberty:

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

"Four terrible years of suffering are enough. Countless graves of our dearest ones, the working people turned into skeletons and mute horrors in our families drive us into a defence. We will not talk anymore to those, who were dictated to us by a foreign government power and it would be a humiliation of the nation to further negotiate with officials, who are not accountable to the nation and whose one hand was continuously promising us something and the other was continuously robbing us."

"The time is ripe. We shook off the chains of dominated slaves. We roused for the independence. Out of our invincible will and sanctioned by all the democratic world we are proclaiming to stand here and today as executors of the new state sovereignty, as citizens of the free Czechoslovakian Republic. We are proclaiming, that any attempt at exporting and plundering our lands is the same robbery and the same crime against the sovereignty of our state as was an invasion to Belgia at the beginning of the war."

"Those, who would defy this will of the working people, will be made accountable to the working people. (...) Our cause is the cause of all the world. Our cause has already gloriously triumphed and woe betide anyone, who would dare to hinder the aroused nation's great march towards a new future!"

The "German" "working people" was mentioned only marginally as the one, who would surely "agree" to this "defence against hunger and death" (a true masterpiece of demagogy if we consider the fact, that the policy of Czech nationalists was to stop food supplies for German areas!). Only the extreme Left represented by Bohumír Šmeral was a miserable exception from general ignoring "German" proletarians. In the spirit of its own already pretty bruised Austro-Marxism it recognized as necessary to address also German speaking workers. Given the rapid radicalization of proletariat and ripening of an worldwide revolutionary situation it believed, that destruction of the monarchy and formation of completely independent national states would be just a transitory stage of development. Naturally the social democratic Šmeralist Left saw itself as entitled to lead working class in this struggle, which equaled in its conception to a clash between two visions and ways of managing Capital. It understood, that in order to victoriously accomplish this clash an international co-operation of bourgeois Left-wing factions, which would establish an international federation of "socialist" republics, would be necessary. From these reasons it – unlike other bourgeois "socialists" – consciously wanted to avoid a chauvinistic rupture in international links of the workers movement. This was why Šmeral personally paid for printing a leaflet entitled „Czech Proletarians Address German Workers of Northern Bohemia“g. It is characteristic to him that he also totally ignores proletariat's real problems and interests and only tries to give a false impression, that the Czech national liberation movement – to which the Šmeralist Left participated – does not make an anti-German politics. Thus among other things it was said in the leaflet:

"In the given circumstances the prepared demonstrations of the Czech proletariat can gain a political character. In this case we inform You, that a participation of the socialist parties is a guarantee, that none of today's Czech proletariat's manifestations can be an expression of a national chauvinistic tendency. While demanding the right for national self-determination for ourselves with all the consequences of the Czechoslovakian state's independence, we recognize the same right also for You... Only representatives of the Czech and German proletariat are entitled in this historical time to decide in the future a mutual relation of both nationalities by a contractual way." (37)

But the other social democrats and national socialists were not combining nationalist and socialists slogans in a kind of conscious "diabolic" plan for taming the class movement. On the contrary they acted in the spirit of their own beliefs and existing practice. Their idea of socialism had always been about reforming management of Capitalism. Economical, military, social and political horrors of the world war led them to believe, that Capitalism was at the end of its historical journey and the only thing which was necessary at the time was to gradually transform Capitalism into "Socialism" from ministerial seats. Bourgeois "socialists" had always shared the capitalist idea of progress and supported everything counter-revolutionary, what seemed to them as progressive, because it was bringing nearer the final goal of "Socialism": one time it was the general suffrage, the other time it was this or that camp in the imperialist war and last time it was national liberation. As the social democratic paper *Právo lidu* wrote on October 13:

"This world war means an absolute breakup of the capitalist economical order, a total collapse of the capitalist, militarist and imperialist state and this is why it is high time to arrange new foundations for nations and their states."

Even so far quite a reactionary leader of National Socialists, Václav Klofáč – faced with the war catastrophe and revolutionization of the world proletariat – declared in the party daily called *České slovo*:

"After 300 years our nation will do an examination, if it is a statist nation. Socialism accepts a great deal of responsibility for future times. The national idea of new times is not the same national idea as before the war. (...) ...the national idea is gaining an appropriate social shading. Equality among nations – equality inside the nation! (...) In the same way as Hus and Žižka complemented each other, the power of the party will support great human objectives, which we are working for and which we have fought for."

The general strike of October 14 itself had a tremendous power and most of industrial centres joined it. The crucial place was Prague, where about 35.000 workers were on strike. But the inner city was occupied by the military armed to its teeth in order to prevent the proclamation of the republic. Chicken-hearted bourgeois "socialists" did not dare to publicly speak about an independent state and limited themselves to protests against exports of food stuffs. In the outskirts of Prague (Žižkov, Holešovice, Smíchov, Královské Vinohrady) Left-wing leaders plucked up their rhetorical courage, but refused a call for leading demonstrators into the centre of Prague. Thus in Prague itself the proclamation of the republic was eventually a complete disgrace. The proclamation turned to be a similar embarrassment also in the town of Mladá Boleslav, where a gathering peacefully dispersed at an order of state authorities' representative. (38) The strike took also place in Pilsen (at least 25.000 workers), České Budějovice, Strakonice, Kolín, Protivín, Poděbrady, Příbram, Nymburk, Chrudim, Hradec Králové, Česká Třebová. In Moravia all factories in Brno, Přerov, Třebíč, Moravian Ostrava and a carriage factory in Kopřivnice stopped work. In many places monarchical symbols were tore down from buildings. There was also a strike and a stor my mass meeting in Kladno (45.000 proletarians participated in it!), where it was possible to hear from workers ranks – waiting too long and in vain for a "revolutionary" speech of social democratic leaders – shouting: "Away with the war!" "Shame on the monarchy!" "Long live the Russian revolution!" "We want a socialist republic!"

The "most successful" proclamation of the Czechoslovakian Republic happened in the town of Písek, where a crowd of 4.000 workers dispersed many times outnumbered gendarmes and the mayor (!) subsequently announced, that the Republic was a fact and an atmosphere of all-national unity and reconciliation hiding class contradictions filled the town. Soldiers, including several officers, were snatching off monarchical rosettes from their caps and replacing them with red and white ribbons or Slavic tricolours. Eventually this national crowd took over a building of the district office and hanged out a red and white flag. However, in the night four military companies from Pilsen marched into the town, immediately began to arrest people and all the pomp was

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

over...

Thus the effort to overtake the Right-wing of the national liberation movement by proclaiming the Republic eventually turned to be a farce. The Socialist Council just loosened a valve of class anger and redirected its energy into its own social-patriotic limits. It allowed workers to strike, demonstrate, attack symbols of monarchy for one day, but it did not have courage to lead the whole action up to the originally set objective and given the dilettantish arrangement of the action it did not even intend to do so. The "citizen camp" was pretty well aware of these general strike's weaknesses and strengths and properly used them to put "socialists" in their place of at best equal partners within the National Committee. As a Masarykian bourgeois politician, J. S. Machar, said:

"Nobody is resenting socialist parties for propagating the Republic – on the contrary, we could be grateful to them. (...) Remarkable revolutionaries, out of whose skulls the plan for proclaiming the Republic arose, left... railways, telegraphs, telephones, post offices to the existing government... and the dear Austrian government was back on the other day along with gendarmes, troops, district authorities, etc. A lot of people is in prison now, officers, who snatched off their cockades..., will be brought to military courts..."

And what about bourgeois "socialists"? They subsequently admitted, through J. Stříbrný's words, that the action was not prepared enough. And first of all they released a conciliatory and apologetic declaration:

"The Socialist Council resolutely raises an objection against attempts of individuals and some papers... to interpret the action... as an attempt to divide the united national ranks. The demonstration of the Czech socialist proletariat... strengthened and encouraged the Czech people in its struggle for the Czechoslovakian democratic state, which we want to wage as before in an united array together with all political layers up to a total victory."

Eventually, they found a scapegoat for the rest of the bourgeoisie and they blamed him for all their operetta-like steps to gain hegemony within the Czech national movement and for all blows proletariat pointlessly suffered from repressive forces. It was Bohumír Šmeral, who became this whipping boy blamed for a "bolshevik adventure" or for a Vienna sponsored attempt to cause a split in the national liberation movement, to provoke a bloodshed and thus give the state a pretext for persecution. Then the Socialist Council called upon him to give up any further activity in this association and Šmeral complied without any resistance.

However, the general strike was not just about a social-patriotic spectacle. Besides the fact, that our class almost generally stopped to work, there were many places, where it acted on its own and for its own interests. Unfortunately, it did so only partially, since it gave up its own autonomous activity in favour of the bourgeois parties' (both Left and Right) initiative. For example: workers in Kladno de facto fraternized with a local Hungarian garrison and disarmed it:

"Workers in Poldi steelworks forced a management of the plant to let them elect their own delegates, who would oversee supplying workers with food stuffs. As soldiers of various nationalities were deployed to work in the factory, Germans and Hungarians were also elected as delegates and all of them sharply asserted our demands. A Hungarian soldier, comrade Tóth, was elected as a chairman of the delegates. Troops were sent to Kladno as well as to Prague and other industrial centres to suppress an obviously erupting revolt. Poldi delegates, who then held their clandestine meetings in the Workers House more frequently, decided, that comrade Tóth, as a Hungarian, would negotiate disarming the Hungarian garrison in Poldi. This was just before October 14 1918. Hungarian soldiers even with their commander were also fed up with the war and they were willing to lay down their arms. They just asked for a responsible member of the National Committee or the Socialist Council, whose authority was increasing in the last time, to come and asked for their weapons in the name of his respective body. We turned to our social democratic deputy Aust and asked him to take care about this business. This workers' „representative“ actually drove us out. He was clutching his head and yelling, that we were loonies and psychos, whom he would never negotiate for." (39)

Limits of proletariat's self-activity – not only at the time of the general strike, but also before and after it – are quite clearly visible from this quotation. Though workers were forced to struggle and organize themselves in fact outside of unions and social democratic parties (40), they failed to fully recognize a counter-revolutionary nature of these institutions and to draw lessons for their own practice. So instead of taking the weapons themselves and keeping them for an inevitably approaching decisive confrontation between proletariat and bourgeoisie, they were ready to hand all the Hungarian garrison's armament over to reactionary elements from the Socialist Council. The radical rhetoric of the national liberation movement (according to which the new Republic would automatically satisfy all workers' needs) apparently played its role here.

Workers resumed work, but knowing that the situation had changed. Especially in places, where our class had been most militant for a long time, there was a complete change in the balance of powers between proletariat and bourgeoisie. The Austro-Hungarian state was in an agony, unable of any further repression and the Czechoslovakian national liberation movement was far from being so strong to control workplaces (factories, mines, steelworks, manors...) and order workers around. Thus for example in Kladensko region workers started again to normally attend shifts, but these shifts were not normal at all. No threat of compulsion, repression and punishment was hanging over the workers for the moment and thus they started to practically express a critique of labour as an alienated, alienating activity forced on them. They did all they could to disrupt a work process by unendurable slow-downs and sabotages, which sometimes stopped the whole plant. (41) This situation lasted until October 28 1918. An event, which happened in Ostravsko region on October 23, testifies to the fact, that Kladno was not the only place, where proletarians were aware of their own power. The minister of public works, knight Homann, had to come there in person to ask miners delegates to increase mining. They refused to do so, until militarization of labour would be lifted and supplying improved. Moreover they announced to the minister, that they stopped coal supply for Hungary (up till that time there were 400 carriages a day), because Hungary stopped food supplies for Ostravsko region.

Class struggle, however, took on also different forms. According to the news from a paper called *Týdenní válečná kronika* (the Weekly War Chronicle from October 17 1918) in Prague and other cities there was a self-organization of proletarians, who had to exchange their last clothes for food stuffs with countryside and urban profiteers. These "associations of the stripped", which were said to be an initiative of soldiers coming back from the front to their homes, where there was nothing waiting for them but poverty, put together precise lists of speculating bourgeois. The purpose was to take a revenge on them, when favourable time would come. Bourgeois press and politicians (eg. V. Klofáč) crucified this form of self-organization as one of expressions of "bolshevik" (42) tendencies, which were increasingly engulfing proletariat as the Prague military command warned. The agrarian leader, Švehla, was seriously affraid of the fact, that "The hungry people can do something out of a sheer despair. (...) ...the people got fanaticized..." Especially, when on October 24 press agencies brought non-confirmed news from Bulgary, that social revolution reached also Sophia, "Bolshevik workers fought a battle against

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

the police and 3.000 people were killed." Besides this there were embryos of workers and soldiers councils beginning to come into existence in Vienna and there were radical proletarians arming themselves in Budapest.

Similar fears were communicated to Berlin also by the German consul von Gebattel, who wrote, that proletariat is furious about an unspoken expensiveness, hunger and exorbitant profits of usurers. This was why he was concerned especially about "security of property". Although he believed, that first to go would be private property of German and German-Jewish bourgeoisies, he warned, that in case of an upheaval workers certainly would not leave property of Czech capitalists untouched.

2. The Political Changeover of October 28 1918

"At the beginning of this great work the National Committee, since now Your government, obliges You to keep Your behaviour and joy worthy of this great moment. Our liberators Masaryk and Wilson must not be disappointed in their belief, that they achieved freedom for the people, which is able to govern itself. Not a single act must spoil current great moments... Everyone of You must unconditionally respect everything, which is sacred for others. You must not infringe on personal freedom and private property. Submit unreservedly to the National Committee's order."

The National Committee's call to the Czechoslovakian people

On October 25 1918 the last Austrian government was appointed. The press called it "the ministry of liquidation", because its main task was hand the power over to newly established national governments of individual monarchy's lands in as orderly fashion as possible in order to avoid social revolution. This development on hand filled the National Committee with hopes and on the other it knew revolutionary moods of revolting proletariat, it knew, that soldiers on the Italian front refused to continue fighting for "the emperor and his family" and deserted en massé, which was at the same time a reason to be worried. So for the moment it was getting ready and waiting, "for a ripe plum to fall down to its hands," as its members later claimed. Moreover Masaryk's ex-patriate resistance discouraged it from any action (particularly an action, which would agree with a national state in the Austro-Hungarian framework) and ordered to wait for its instructions and negotiations with the Entente powers. The leadership of the ex-patriate resistance proclaimed itself to be a de facto Czechoslovakian government already in mid-October and Entente allies successively recognized it. However, the real development was somewhat different from plans of Masarykians, who supposed that the war would last till 1919 and it would be suitable to make a national liberationist coup only when the front would come closer to the Czech Lands.

On October 28 1918 an untimely piece of news began to spread in Prague and later in other Czech and Moravian cities, that Austro-Hungary surrendered and accepted all peace conditions suggested by Entente powers, including an independent development of all monarchy's nations (43). Thanks to a joint effort of all warring bourgeois factions to stop social revolution the end of the war, which was brought about by proletariat's revolutionary defeatism, thus appeared as a result of the Entente's military triumph, which brought the bourgeois right of nations for self-determination to the Czechs and Slovaks. Workers in Prague hurtled from factories to the streets already before noon. They were enthusiastic about the end of the war and destroyed hated symbols of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. However there was not only this classist moment present inside crowds as well as individual proletarians, but also a nationalist and reactionary one. There were red and white national flags fluttering over heads of the crowds, German notices were blackened and tore down, the Czechoslovakian Republic was celebrated. Revolutionary classist songs like "Red Flag" and "A million arms rised up in the darkness" could be heard along with a nationalist worn-out song, "Where is my home", which would become the new state's anthem.

The National Committee was more familiar with the local situation than the ex-patriate resistance, so it awaited events like these and hastily prepared itself for such a development. Sokol's leader, Josef Scheiner, was charged with putting together armed detachments composed of Sokols, students and military veterans. Soon he was joined by Czech officers, who helped to obtain weapons and to win garrisons over to the nationalist side. Beside of this, members of the resistance secured contacts and support inside the gendarmery and the Prague police. Thus, when on October 28 masses of people got moving, the National Committee's presidium – Antonín Švehla from the Agrarian Party, national democrat Alois Rašín, national socialist Jiří Stříbrný and social democrat František Soukup – quickly decided to act and make its own bourgeois, ie. national liberationist and political, "revolution".

First they took over the Grain Institute, which was a key point in supplying. The National Committee thus could whenever stop food supplies for disobedient groups of inhabitants – for example: proletarians. The national liberationist leadership used this lever to achieve neutrality of the Prague military command and its co-operation in keeping bourgeois order. Prearranged Sokol patrols (soon reinforced by Boy Scouts and members of Workers Sport Associations) were immediately deployed in the streets – Rašín apprehended a nearing point of rupture and had them put on alert on October 27 in the evening. The National Committee also immediately strived to gain control over the police – Rašín ordered a high police official, Bienert, who collaborated with the resistance's members, "Take over the police immediately. You will keep a total order, not a single sheet of glass in windows must be destroyed!"

Around noon the National Committee presidium's members arrived in an open car at the foot of St. Wenceslaw statue in the centre of Prague, where they passionately announced, that they seized the power and called the people to keep its countenance and perfect order and fulfill all directions of the national liberationist leadership immediately. It was bourgeois socialists Stříbrný and Soukup, who addressed the crowds and felt obliged to promise not only freedom, but also social justice, in order to continuously keep a revolutionary appearance of their counter-revolutionary action. In Jiří Stříbrný words:

"The Czechoslovakian National Committee announces to you, that the free and independent Czechoslovakian state is a fact. After three hundred years we are free again... We greet Masaryk and Wilson, we greet our Legions! We will build a new future of national liberty and social justice on the ruins of tyranny. We do not know yet, what is in store for us, but we are not afraid of any sacrifices and means... We shall endure and overcome!"

Subsequently they issued an instruction from their headquarters, that all available brass bands go to the streets and through playing loud marches and patriotic songs contribute to as joyful mood as possible and to national ecstasy. The National Committee also tried to prevent a hyper-concentration of workers in the centre of Prague, since it was afraid of possible class actions. It would be difficult to get city centre proletarians, who had already stopped work, off the streets. But through the "socialist" parties it tried (with a partial success) to make workers from the outskirts to continue their work and not to march to the centre. It was promised that the next day would be a day off for proper celebrations of Czechoslovakian statehood. No riots or lootings really

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

happened. Only sporadically Austrian officers were slapped, when they refused to put down the monarchy sign from their caps, and there was also a few anti-Semitic incidents. (44)

Foreign language military units located in Prague posed a certain trouble. The military command did not feel strong enough for an intervention, because more and more soldiers, who were formerly the most reliable ones (from Chebsko region and Hungary), were refusing to carry out orders. In spite of this fact nervous officers, who did not know, whether the monarchy was still existing, and what they should do, several times made their units to march against demonstrators. All these cases resulted in a peaceful agreement with national liberation officials and a withdrawal of the soldiers or a soldiers' sabotage against orders. Eventually, the Sokols headed by Scheiner got into the military command's building and forced the commanding general Kestřánek to agree with neutrality in political affairs, collaboration in keeping bourgeois order, immediate dismantling of plants' militarization (45) and a withdrawal of non-Czech military units from the new state's territory.

In the evening "the men of October 28" ratified a text of the first law, through which they proclaimed the independent Czechoslovakian state and determined the National Committee as the only executioner of the state sovereignty, but at the same time kept in effect "all existing imperial and country laws and decrees" and "all municipal, state and regional authorities". (46) The Czech bourgeoisie's national "revolution" thus went exactly according to directives for handing the power over to new national governments, which were elaborated by the last liquidating Austrian government and consented by the emperor. The leader of the Maffie, Přemysl Šámal, clearly expressed his fear of possible consequences of a violent bourgeois revolution already on October 11 1918 in his letter to Beneš:

"A passive resistance is carried out. Simultaneously... we prepare everything for imposing a provisional government, which would take care about keeping order in the Czech Lands until your and allies' arrival. We can not probably count on revolution at all. There is a fear, that due to the reign of hunger such a revolution would be redirected into bolshevik lines."

Two episodes from October 28 give evidence of how much careful the Czech bourgeois "revolutionaries" were to change the form Capital's political domination in a calm way and not to cause any society-wide conflict (47). When representatives of the National Committee went to "take the power" from hands of the Prague governor, they were not successful. The governor was in Vienna at the moment, so there was no "taking the power" and they had to visit him once more on October 29, when he returned to Prague. But they contracted with him only to "jointly run the public administration" in Bohemia. There was a similar situation in Brno. The Moravian governor was present, but he had no instructions from Vienna what to do, so even there the National Committee had to come for a second time to take the power and it contracted exactly the same treaty as in Prague. Only in the course of next days, when it had become clear, that Vienna would not take any counter-measures and there is no threat of a violent conflict, the National Committee took all the power.

It is self-evident, that in the then heated situation, when proletariat's struggle was on the rise in the last two war years, Russia and the Ukraine were swept by social revolution and the collapsing monarchy was pregnant with inter-bourgeois clashes and class struggles, it was a primary task for the national liberationist leadership to maintain the capitalist order and gain peace for a consolidation of its own power, reconstruction and empowerment of the state. Be it even through old laws and authorities. Alois Rašín said it exactly:

"Our aim was to prevent a lawless situation, to keep all our administration running and to continue working on October 29 as if there was no revolution at all..."

No wonder, because it was not only Prague, where the news of "the surrender" caused a general upheaval (though later than in Prague). It was possible to see the same scenes of work stoppages in factories, mass demonstrations, destruction of state symbols, freeing deserters or "enemy" soldiers from prisons and a nationalist gush in all larger cities. In Pilsen workers from Škoda works and railway workers threw into a river a symbolical coffin with an inscription "War, Deutschland, Austria", in which nationalism combined with an opposition against the capitalist war. In Brno the army had to disperse, "a suburban riffraff, which wanted to liberate prisoners from the Špilberk prison." In all cities the desintegration of the Austro-Hungarian army culminated. The National Committee took over its Czech regiments and did not demobilize them, for they should have been used according to needs of the new state. But proletarians tired of the war did not want to stay in the army anymore or to keep discipline and subordination, so old units were largely unapplicable. According to the gendarmery general, Řezáč, who subordinated gendarmes to the National Committee, "at that time whole regiments scattered... and an unprecedented indiscipline set in the military. Personnel, which stayed because of a provision, refused to obey their officers and did not care about them at all. Those who stayed wondered around the city decorated with national symbols and regularly turned up only for mess, they promised to do something, but rarely kept their promises. It was very difficult to obtain men for patrols or units to be sent out from Prague."

Of course, loyal repressive forces helped to manage the situation and hundreds of local National Committees helped to channel subversive class tendencies in all places. Local representatives of bourgeois political parties (including social democracy) assailed a more radical reform of the state apparatus and consciously breached the order, that all the imperial laws and authorities were to be kept in effect. They themselves acted as decisive power bodies of the state reconstituting itself: they unseated district governors, gendarmes and mayors, formed volunteer armed guards, but also carried out some social reforms as for example: an introduction of the eight hour working day, a minimum wage, etc. (48) In predominantly German regions this pacifying and repressive function was carried out by German bourgeoisie's bodies, for National Committees had no chance to take the power there. (We can quote an example of Opava, where a deputation of a local NC, trying to take over a railway station, had to flee from an enraged German crowd and to hide in a caffè up to late night hours.)

On October 29 there was the already mentioned day off, when workers were supposed to celebrate an emergence of the independent state under a watchful control of social democratic and national socialist parties. A lot of mass meetings and manifestations took place, again under the banner of "the Socialist Nation". A social democratic leader, Antonín Němec, explained to workers in the Prague People's House, that the world war, "ended with the world revolution, in which emperors and kings lose their throns," and new national republics came into existence and they would meet, "economical and social demands of the working people." The day, when proletariat celebrated its own defeat was soon over and the National Committee addressed its own people again on October 30, "The Czechoslovakian National Committee turns to You with an urgent request to unconditionally resume work everywhere since tomorrow. At the same time it thanks for all the unforgettable enthusiasm and love expressed by the Czechoslovakian people while realizing the national ideal. However, it is inevitably necessary to return to business as usual and this is why we ask to prevent any gatherings of the people today."

On November 14th the first meeting of the National Assembly (which came into existence by making the Prague National Committee six times larger) took place in Prague. Only on that day the republican form of the Czechoslovakian state was decided and the first government - "the nation-wide coalition

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

government" – headed by the National Democratic Party's leader, Karel Kramář (till that time he was the National Committee chairman), started off its activities. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who was still abroad, was elected as a president. He returned home before Christmas 1918. Thus the national state of the Czech and Slovakian bourgeoisie, the Czechoslovakian Republic, was established.

3. Proletariat's First Big Defeat

*"To commemorate the days of the Czech resurrection from the suffering of three hundred years long oppression, plant "Freedom Lime Trees" in remarkable places of the landscape."
Právo lidu (October 30 1918)*

Precisely this kind of nice activities was recommended by Social Democracy to "Czech" proletarians in the days following the changeover, when their Viennese brothers and sisters were entering their crucial revolutionary struggle. Indeed, there was an upheaval in Vienna (and not only there) and already on October 31 local proletariat formed its own armed force – the Red Guard, which counted about 6.000 people according to the first news. Thus while behind the "national" border our class was fighting in the first clashes against the police, some of "Czech" workers (useful idiots) instead of launching their own struggle as well, were walking around with spades, hoes and watering cans and planting "Freedom Lime Trees" to celebrate their own defeat! German consul's fears, that, "The Viennese example might be infectious, so obviously a strong hand will be needed soon to tame excited minds," unfortunately proved to be groundless... International links were interrupted. While in January 1918 the general strike immediately spread from Vienna to the Czech Lands, ten months later something like that was impossible.

The changeover carried out by the Czech bourgeoisie on October 28 1918 was a triumph of the national democratic counter-revolution over the international proletarian movement, which began to develop in the Czech Lands during the war years and through successive ruptures with the capitalist system headed towards class autonomy or establishing itself as the class and communist party and eventually making the communist revolution. While using its internal weaknesses – the insufficient rupture with social democracy and nationalism – the counter-revolution first brought this movement back under the control of bourgeois socialists, deprived it of its own internationalist character and made various "nationality" sectors of the working class into allies of "their own" respective bourgeoisies. Originally militant class movement from a large part turned into its exact opposite – into a social-patriotic mass, in which at first particularly "Czech" workers pushed forward "their own" bourgeoisie's interests and in a tragicomic national-democratic community denied their own historical class interests.

However, even patriotic cretinism could not eliminate the class antagonism materialized amidst the all-national jamboree in practical contradictions. Let's take one example. When the German bourgeoisie in Brno did not want to leave the city hall and hand it over to the National Committee, "Czech" proletarians let themselves to be used by "their own" bourgeoisie as a battering ram for conquering the power. Its Left-wing in the form of the Socialist Council declared a strike on November 4 1918. This strike was supposed to show not only to German councilors, but also to right-wing factions of the Czech bourgeoisie, who has got the power and ability to control and use workers. On Monday afternoon work was stopped in all Brno factories and about 50.000 workers gathered on Freedom Square, where they manifested for visions of left-wing factions of bourgeois politics how to manage Capital in the new state, pacify proletariat and integrate it into the capitalist society: for confiscation of war profits, expropriation of manors and big factories, full civil liberties and "the Socialist Republic". On the other hand the same proletarians went beyond their role of a demonstrating herd of citizens, assigned to them by the Socialist Council, and decided to finish with hated politicians at the city hall, who managed workers' misery during all the war and persecuted any attempts at resistance. Class anger streamed into the national framework and a part of the workers attacked the building of Old City Hall. Both German and Czech sectors of the ruling class were delighted by an intervention of the military and the police. Repressive forces saved the city hall from workers, but following this action the German bourgeoisie voluntarily surrendered its posts. As proletarians failed to make the same violent attack against the Czech bourgeoisie, in fact it helped to further strengthen its positions and deepen its own momentary defeat.

The working class in the newly emerged Czechoslovakian Republic (the CSR) was temporarily defeated by the bourgeois counter-revolution. Its majority to a certain extent and for a certain period of time believed – though never had stopped struggling altogether – in "national unity" and "people's" or "non-class" democratic state, which would improve their position soon. This is exactly what Masaryk's ex-patriate resistance promised in its Declaration of Independence, which was saying, that the Republic would, "exclude any special privileges and render class legislation impossible" and would carry out far-reaching social and economical reforms. In spite of this bourgeoisie did not doubt, that its victory is not definitive. So on one hand its leaders Kramář, Preiss, Rašín, Klobučník urged Beneš in Paris to have Entente troops immediately sent into the CSR to aid the consolidation of the Capital's domination and on the other hand Kramář was promising workers a lower rate of exploitation in the new Republic, "it will not be a tragedy, if a capitalist will receive less, much less than before."

Not only liberal politicians like T. G. Masaryk, who claimed, "Tábor is our programme," (49) help the new capitalist state to keep this facade, but also social democrats of all kinds: "marxist" "comrades ministers" Habrman, Soukup, Winter as well as the "anarchist comrade minister" Vrbenský, who claimed the new government to be "revolutionary indeed" and himself to promote anarchist principles within this government. One of the reactionary principles propagated by so called "anarchists" was, "Free man in the free nation!" "Comrade member of parliament", "anarchist" S. K. Neumann produced an extraordinary piece of stupid counter-revolutionary propaganda, whose purpose was to create confusion among proletarians by depriving terms "socialism" and "internationalism" of any revolutionary content and encouraging workers to peaceful and free labour for the new Republic. His article "Nationalism – Socialism" was so much disgusting and at the same time so typical for then Social Democracy, that we can not help ourselves quoting several excerpts of it. The temptation is too big:

" (...) Socialism is a question of freedom of all labourers and not a question of a proletarian power. Socialism can be born only through a slow evolution out of the truly democratic society and not out of passing power from spanking clean hands on dirty hands. (...) However, I can not even ask myself the question: First socialism or liberation of nations?, because something stronger than an individual, has already answered it. The answer is roared by all the world, by all our times. Even those in whose mouths it's either laughable or depressing have been forced to propagate self-determination of nations. (...) Self-determination of nations is not a mere slogan in diplomats' mouths, but also and primarily a goal in hearts and minds of millions – it is not a victory, but a defeat of nationalism, it is a success of fertile internationalism, which wants liberation, lasting peace and solidarity among all nations of the Earth and knows, that it can not achieve them, until a single nation is allowed to be oppressed by another nation. (...) Socialism is going to become an enormous agent in the world

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

of tomorrow, because it is going to be transferred from hands of the organized proletariat into hands of the thinking humankind and while gaining a generally human character, it is going to lose its dependence on a success or a failure of a tiny workers' action. Today, however, it has no other possibility than to wait for settling the main question and slowly orient itself in what is going to come. It will probably have to give up as many "revolutionary" slogans as "scientific" ones and to rebirth itself, to grow naturally out of the new situation. The war, Russian events and other things have taught us, that not even socialism can bang its head against a brick wall. Though I still consider myself to be a radical socialist, I reckon, that precisely current time would be the least favourable one for attempts at this kind of banging. They are, however, going to seem easier and easier. Many of those who were hiding themselves in the right moment and kept their mouths shut will noisily step out to the light, but if the people listens to them, there could be only one result: a dangerous chaos..."

All then modifications of combining national self-determination and socialism – whatever Left-wing faction of bourgeois politics came up with them – found their expression in calling for "the Czechoslovakian Socialist Republic". The content of this slogan was more or less common for all the factions. It was an old social democratic doctrine of a peaceful seizure of power in a bourgeois state by Left-wing parties through parliament and a subsequent gradual socialization of economy, which has nothing in common with the Communist revolution heading towards destruction of private property, economy and wage labour. Even the most radical forms of Social Democracy, which were just starting to form themselves and which would talk about revolution instead of peaceful evolution, would hinder an organic internationalist centralization of proletariat with the counter-revolutionary concept of the right of nations for self-determination, to which they were tying socialist revolution. Their aim of a national socialist republics' federation in fact copied the division of the world and proletariat by Capital.

All these social democratic combinations of nationalism and socialism (while the attitude represented by S. K. Neumann was at the time on the Right and an attitude of bolshevik adherents on the extreme Left of Social Democracy) enormously aided the international counter-revolution: an attempt at proletariat's truly internationalist revolutionary upheaval was postponed by two years and meanwhile the ruling class gained time and peace necessary for suppressing proletarian movements in Russia (through the Czechoslovakian Legion), Hungary, Slovakia and the Carpathian Ukraine and for consolidating its own positions.

4. National Liberation As a Part of the Imperialist Conflict

"We will conquer Budapest and force the Hungarians to pay for damages and expenditures. We will take locomotives, carriages, the Danube fleet and war material."

T. G. Masaryk (1919)

It would be, however, quite undialectical to see only the united action of the international bourgeoisie against revolting proletariat and overlook, that at the same moment distinct bourgeois factions fought a hard competition struggle among each other. In the Habsburg monarchy, which was breathing its last, it was primarily a competition among national bourgeois factions (Austro-German, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Polish, Ukrainian, Southern-Slavic, Jewish and Rumanian), which were striving to grab as many natural sources and means of production at the expense of other factions with a prospect of an early establishment of their own national states. Later on a conflict among factions representing different visions of managing capitalist relations – the conflict between radical Social Democracy (= Bolshevism) with its reactionary utopia of National Workers Councils Republics and classical free market bourgeoisie – was added.

4.1. Annexation of the German Provinces

Even the so called historical Czech Lands were no exception. There were roughly 75% of all the Austro-Hungarian industry concentrated there. 2/3 of this number, however, laid on predominantly German-speaking territories and were owned by the German bourgeoisie. Of course, the Czech bourgeoisie was eminently interested in integrating these economically important territories into its new state. A part of the Austro-German bourgeoisie, however, did not share this project – it was especially afraid of losing its own political influence and perhaps even their property. Which was the reason, why it also claimed its right for national self-determination, postulated by the US president Wilson as a necessary part of the post-war re-arrangement, and intended to form its own national unit (Deutschösterreich), which would be either an autonomous land within a framework of the reformed grouping of states along the Danube river or a part of the German empire. The irredentist movement of German nationalists, nevertheless, did not represent interests of the whole Austro-German bourgeoisie. Especially German heavy and textile industries' tycoons, who were linked with markets in Czech regions and afraid of a greater-German competition, put their hands off the German national liberation. (50) In the same way many proletarians were more or less indifferent to the question, in which capitalist state they would live. This is why German nationalists were unable of important and determined resistance.

The wartime proletarian movement in German provinces suffered from identical weaknesses as its "Czech" counterpart: an insufficient rupture with historical Social Democracy and nationalism. German nationalist propaganda – produced also by the German Social Democratic Party in the Czech Lands headed by Josef Seliger – strived to use dissatisfaction of proletarians, who, particularly in the Northern Bohemian, often mountainous, very industrial, unfavourable for an agricultural production, German areas, enormously suffered from hunger – their situation was perhaps the worst one in the whole Czech Lands. The Czech bourgeoisie aggravated this situation even more, because at least since October 1918 it did everything it could to limit food stuffs supplies for border areas, Austria itself (51), but also for soldiers on the front. Antonín Švehla, the representative of the agrarian bourgeoisie and the president of the Land's Agricultural Council, shrouded this policy of an economic and political speculation with hunger in slogans about nourishing the nation, which he said to be a primary all-national task and even founded a charity organization called the Czech Heart, which was supposed to take care of food and other needs of the poorest proletarians. But workers continued starving even in the Czech hinterland. German nationalists used this situation to stir up anti-Czech chauvinism and called for a violent seizure of food stuffs belonging to all "the Czechs" living on the German territory, even though local Czech speaking workers were starving exactly the same as "German" ones and German bourgeoisies were as well off as their Czech counterparts.

When the independent Czechoslovakian state came into existence on October 28 1918, shortly afterwards the German bourgeoisie proclaimed an independence of German provinces Deutschböhmen (Northern and Western Bohemia) and Sudetenland (North-Eastern Bohemia, Northern Moravia and

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

Silesia), a district Deutschsüdmähren (Southern Moravia) and a region Böhmerwaldgau (Southern Bohemia). Neither the establishment of the CSR led to an absolute end of our class's movement (though a majority of proletarians was paralyzed by it for a certain time) nor the proclamation of independent German provinces resulted in a complete triumph of counter-revolution. Already on November 2 and 3 1918 there were wild hunger riots in Ústí nad Labem, Chomutov, Liberec and Sokolov (Falknov) and on November 5 there was another one in Ostrava. Proletarians of all nationalities rolled down the streets of these cities and towns and through looting shops directly appropriated their life needs (at the same time for example proletariat from Moravian Slovácko expropriated stocks in manors, while an overwhelming majority of "Czech" workers was still celebrating national liberty and a majority of "German" workers was only looking forward to this kind of liberty). Faced with the proletariat attacking private property both competing bourgeois factions (represented by the provincial German government and the Czechoslovakian government) did not hesitate to join forces in order to defend the domination of Capital. Where German bourgeoisie's own repressive forces were not enough to violently suppress hunger riots and looting, it did not hesitate to call in Czech military units and the Czech bourgeoisie willingly sent them!

In fact, it was the CSR, who was to contribute to the victory of national liberationist counter-revolution and to the pacification of a great part of the "German" working class in German areas. The Entente powers did not want to allow merging of these industrial areas with German Austria. They were afraid of their later merging with Germany itself, which they wanted to weaken and eliminate as a competitor in a struggle for markets and profits. This is why the Czech bourgeoisie was allowed to realize its own imperialist project, which was based on the imperative of the Masarykian national liberation ideology, that the new state must not be a "weakling". Since November 27 till mid-December 1918 a hastily formed Czechoslovakian army systematically occupied and annexed above mentioned German provinces, while engaging in occasional clashes with "German" population (for example in Most six German-speaking inhabitants were shot dead and in Moravská Třebová four women and a small boy died). Many times it was undoubtedly an attempt of "German" proletarians to defend themselves against an arrival of a new repressive force, for nationalist politicians openly warned "German" workers against an armed resistance. However, without their own and clear revolutionary perspective "German" proletarians anyway ended in an eager embrace of their own exploiters – the German bourgeoisie. Seeing, that their policy has no chance for success and is even sabotaged by a substantial part of German businessmen, German nationalist leaders and their powerless provincial government fled to Vienna.

How much they abandoned their own class interests and threw their arms around German capitalists is testified by a participation of thousands workers at events of March 4 1919. German bourgeoisie's political parties headed by the Social Democracy and trade unions organized for that day their own version of the "Czech" general strike of October 14 1918. It was a general strike and demonstrations to protest against the fact, that the CSR render it impossible to take part in elections for the German Austria's parliament, whose meeting started on that day. Seliger, the social democratic leader, was passionately destroying class consciousness of "German" workers at a manifestation in Teplice, as he was talking about the Germans' love to their nation, liberty and rights and tried to draw the victorious powers' attention to an "injustice against the Germans in the Czech Lands". In the spirit of their counter-revolutionary political tradition social democrats were imposing an intransigent struggle for national interests, for German bourgeoisie's interests, while talking about socialism:

" We are not united by a hate against the Czech nation, whom we wish its liberation... We want to persist in our struggle for the right for self-determination... We want to enter together (...) great, free, socialist Germany!"

The Czechoslovakian army proved to be a far more effective repressive force than the Austro-Hungarian army was on October 14 1918. It successfully dispersed the demonstrations, in seven cities and towns (Kadaň, Šternberk, Karlovy Vary, Cheb, Hostinné, Stříbro...) by opening fire into the crowds. The result was 54 dead people (among them 20 women, 2 youngsters, 3 children from 11 to 13 years old) and 104 seriously wounded persons. The result was, however, also strengthening nationalism in the ranks of "German" workers, a consolidation of the ideological national community with "their own" bourgeoisie, which would lead, among other things, to an abstention of German speaking proletariat's important part from later struggles of their Czech and Slovakian speaking class brothers and sisters.

4.2. The War Against Poland

Following the proclamation of the independent Czechoslovakian state it was not the National Committee that came into existence in the town of Těšín, but the Polish National Council, which declared the whole region of Těšínsko as a Polish one, for there were more Polish people living in this nationally mixed area than the Czechs. The Polish military occupied the region during the night between October 31 and November 1 1918. On January 23 1919 Masaryk ordered a military assault against Poland, during which the Czechoslovakian army within a week occupied a greater part of Těšínsko region (with coal mines and the only good railway to Slovakia) at the cost of 45 dead on its own side (52). This time Czechoslovakia did not receive a support from its allies and its military had to withdraw. The CSR succeeded in getting a more favourable line of demarcation with Poland, but it was far from obtaining everything it wanted. It was allotted only Frýštát and Karviná districts and just a part of the key railway through Bohumín to Čadca.

4.3. The Slovakian Campaign And War Against Hungary

The CSR held similar expansionist whims also towards Hungary. At first the Czechoslovakian army led quite unsuccessful struggles against the Hungarian army, in which the control over Slovakia was at stake. However, on December 3 1918 the Entente allies forced Hungary to withdraw its army out of Slovakia, but did not specify, which regions should have been abandoned by Hungary, so the Southern border remained unclear. The Prague government was afraid of a Budapest suggested plebiscite on the common border, because there was no important anti-Hungarian opposition in Southern Slovakia, which was a major agricultural area. Only on December 24 1918 allies set also the Southern border and forced Hungary to withdraw its troops behind it. So the army of the Czech bourgeoisie was able to finish the annexation of Slovakia (altogether 200 Czechoslovakian soldiers fell) only in January 1919.

Following an establishment of the Hungarian Council Republic on March 21 1919 Kramář and Beneš persuaded the French government, that the CSR was able to play the role of an anti-Bolshevik bastion, but for this purpose it had to achieve a connection with Rumania in order to jointly cut the Council Republic from a possible connection with Soviet Russia and thus it had to militarily occupy and annex a so far Hungarian territory of the Carpathian Ukraine. Marshal Foch agreed and so on April 27 1919 the Czechoslovakian army started to advance Eastwards and occupied the Carpathian Ukraine. On its way it "accidentally" crossed the Hungarian border and tried to occupy the Szalgótarján coal basin and march against Miskolc. The Hungarian Red Army, however, put it to flight and it was its turn to occupy 2/3 of the Slovakian territory, which it left again following a diplomatic pressure of the allies. We can not doubt about imperialist aims of the war against Hungary, which left 1.018 dead soldiers on the Czechoslovakian side, when we read Masaryk's notes from that time:

"With all our forces we will drive their invasion back and use the victory for our own aims. We will conquer Budapest and force the Hungarians to pay for damages and expenditures. We will take locomotives, carriages, the Danube fleet and war material."

4.4. Impacts of the War Conflicts And Nationalism on the Proletariat

All these miniscule forms of the imperialist war in the first years of the independent Czechoslovakian state necessarily had their impacts on the working class. They contributed to stirring up nationalist rage and to crushing proletariat into atoms of bourgeois national communities. So the German speaking part of the working class was under the leadership of the German Social Democracy drawn in the nationalist opposition against the CSR, which would be soon developed by Nazis.

Both German provinces and Těšínsko (53) became settings of many national riots provoked by Czech, Slovakian, German and Polish nationalists, who were always able to mobilize a smaller part of workers to act against their own interests. Various bourgeois factions and forces intentionally stired up those riots with an obvious aim to strengthen an alienated national community against a real proletarian community of struggle, which was understood as an "anti-national", "Bolshevik" or "Jewish" one.

So for example ultra-nationalist parts of demobilized Czechoslovakian legionaries were roaming in gangs through German areas in Bohemia, destroying local German memorials and sights and provoking clashes with the "German" population. In Cheb, as well as for example in Aš, even a local military garrison took part in tearing down a monument of the emperor Josef II., which provoked gunfights and bloody clashes with German nationalists. In June 1920 there nationalist skirmishes in Jihlava, which took several people's lives. In October of the same year there were again bloody conflicts of the Czechoslovakian military against the "German" population in Teplice and Cheb. In November the clashes spilled over to Prague, where enraged Czech nationalists violently occupied a building of the German Theatre, which deed was hallowed afterwards by Czech authorities. It is no wonder, if we take into account, that the Prague mayor was at the time Karel Baxa, well-known for his anti-German and anti-Semitic attitudes; for example: in 1922 he forbade German songs and Gipsy music in Prague pubs. In the summer 1921 the whole trains of Czech national chauvinists set off for German border areas, where they organized demonstrations and provoked violent clashes. In Ústí nad Labem two Germans were killed and many others injured during such a clash.

The most reactionary legionaries led by Čeřenský formed the Czechoslovakian Legionaries Cohort, which besides anti-German and anti-Jewish pogroms organized breaking of militant proletarian meetings and strikes. Soon it would become together with a part of the Sokol members a promoter and a bearer of Czech fascism in a form of the National Movement. Similar groupings were developing also on the German side of the national divide in order to eventually merge in the Nazi party, the DNSAP (54).

All these nationalist and fascist movements were themselves favoured by proletariat's weakness, they were expressions of an inability of its significant – but so far not a decisive – part to realize its own historical interests and to organize themselves as a class. They also expressed weaknesses beared by the more conscious and militant part of our class – precisely these weaknesses were later ideologically exploited by fascists, when they took over a certain form of radical Social Democracy and developed the struggle for the right of nations to self-determination into a radical nationalism. Following the definitive defeat of the proletarian movement at the end of 1920 and beginning of 1921 all those expressions of counter-revolution had an immense political and social profit from the mentioned weaknesses, for due to them they were able to tame and dominate an overwhelming majority of workers. But we are now moving faster in our analysis than historical events themselves...

Conclusion

This is the end of the first part of our critical tract about the militant proletarian movement in the Czech Lands, which contributed in its own way to finishing the World War One and gave rise to the revolutionary perspective and tendencies. Preceding pages contain a lot of factual information, some of which are essential for understanding to the given class movement and others only place it into the context and emphasize interesting details and episodes that should not fall into oblivion. All of them are intertwined by attempts at articulation of programmatical lessons, which we have arrived at through the analysis of the then movement. We are aware that precisely these conclusions may finally get lost for the reader. Which is the reason, why we consider it as necessary to make a balance sheet of all strengths and weaknesses of the 1914-1918 struggling proletariat in a purely programmatical text trying to underline all lessons elucidated for us by the then working class' brave struggles as well as tragic defeats.

It is an undeniable fact that the movement analysed by us was born from contradictions distinctive in the capitalist society and leading to the outbreak of the world war too. Irrespectively of bigger or smaller resistance of some proletarians, at the beginning the great majority of our class obediently marched to be slaughtered. Thus it negated itself as a class in the same way as it does in times of peace, when social peace rules – the war is just a continuation of this situation, in which bourgeoisie is winning in class struggle up to the point, where proletariat loses its conscious being and Capital dominates and exploits it without bigger problems. During wars inhumanity of our existence, however, reaches its highest degree as Capital is solving productive forces' surplus through destruction and strives to maximize exploitation. Increasing work norms, militarisation of labour, decrease in real wages, a mass engagement of women and youngsters in the industrial production, decreasing amount of food available on market, falling rations and... hunger became faithful fellow-travellers of the bloodbath on battle fronts.

It was precisely the war massacre and the brutal increase in the rate of exploitation what led an important minority of the working class towards a revolt against horrible conditions of life. This minority did not want to passively put their lives on the altar of Capital's prosperity and reproduction anymore and set on struggling for satisfaction of their human needs. Its struggle for bare physical survival, epitomised by an "economic" or "reformist" demand of "bread" and "peace", was in practice directly attacking "its own" state's politics and contributed to the state's defeat. Which means that its struggle was implicitly (and many times even explicitly) "political" – revolutionary defeatist.

The vanguard proletarian minority was rebelling spontaneously – it did not need any leftist missionaries, bringing "class consciousness" to the masses drop by drop and leading them through knotty paths of radically appearing reformism up to the revolution (it is not important whether in the form of trotskyst

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

campaigns for transitional programmes or anarcho-syndicalist unionism which is supposed to be a "school of revolution"). As the Left (or Social Democracy in all its forms) was standing then on the side of Capitalism, as it is standing there now, the proletarian movement came into existence outside of the framework, initiative and effective control of traditional left-wing organisations: bourgeois-socialist political parties/federations and unions. From the viewpoint of proletariat's historical movement, the war, growing international class movement and the global communist perspective's birth tore down leftists' revolutionary mask and exposed their pro-capitalist face. Formerly sworn enemies – "marxists", national socialists and "anarchists" – were combining their forces in a prefiguration of the People's Front, in order to effectively nullify all weaknesses of the working class' movement and to get a reform and maintenance of bourgeois state on order of the day instead of the social revolution. Which for example means that almost two decades before Spanish "anarchists" from the CNT-FAI joined the Republican government and thus preferred an anti-fascist alliance with bourgeoisie to the revolution, Czech "anarchists" threw away their revolutionary tendencies and anti-statism in favour of the national-liberationist counter-revolutionary project and enthusiastically integrated themselves into the capitalist state's structures.

Unlike inheritors of leftist ideological families, we do not fetishize any forms of organisation. No organisational form has ever been and will ever be a guarantee of the revolutionary content, a guarantee of the revolutionary victory, an eternally valid answer to the question of how proletariat should organise itself as the revolutionary class. Social Democrats' formal political organisations and unions (parliamentary "marxist" or national socialist parties, legal or illegal disciplined parties of professional "revolutionaries", synthetic or platformist "anarchist" federations, trade unions with a correct political leadership, "anarchist" or "apolitical" syndicates) have been expressions of workers movement's weaknesses and a counter-revolutionary tendency since their beginning. Other forms of our class' association were materialisations of working class' self-organisation in particular moments of its movement: soviets or workers councils, factory committees, free collectives and communes, "red" armies, guerilla units, autonomous zones... The 1917-1918 movement in the Czech Lands gives evidence that not even self-organisation is necessarily a guarantee of complete unfolding of the revolutionary content.

Let's have a look at particular examples. As far as our limited knowledge allows us to say something, we can state that the then associations of struggling proletarians had essentially several forms stemming from specific conditions and experiences of their participants. For instance, deserters' gangs, so called Green Cadres, at first refused to fight in the imperialist war and subsequently – in order to survive – had to fight against repressive forces of the state (murdering gendarmes and shoot-outs with them) a expropriate bourgeoisie (eg. robbing rich peasants). The social meaning of their practical activity was thus directed against "untouchable" capitalist relations: against the state power and private property. Green Cadres in the Czech Lands organised themselves on the basis of bare physical survival of their members and of a certain level of class consciousness connected to it. It was even giving birth to the perspective of social revolution class. Nevertheless, Green Cadres did not achieve fully developed class self-consciousness and the revolutionary programme.

Inside militant soldiers' hard cores, which stood behind preparation of military mutinies, the situation was not much brighter (or better said redder) and clear. Each of above described mutinies was, in the social content of their particular practice, an act of the proletarian struggle against the war, despite some of its participants were introducing into the struggle nationalist and other weaknesses. Nucleuses of military militants were able to incite those mutinies, but not to give them a clear communist direction. Unlike their comrades from Kragujevac and Kotor, Rumburk militants achieved, through previous experience and activity, a somewhat higher rate of class consciousness and were able to articulate revolutionary aspirations, which were, however, vague. That is why their actual steps were also tragically insufficient or openly mistaken. All militant nuclei shared the same weakness: they primarily saw themselves as soldiers' business and not as an integral part of the working class and its organisational expression. Irrespectively of the fact, whether mutineers spoke about revolution or not, in practice all of them were capable of attacking the imperialist war logic and the bourgeois army's hierarchy and thus the state's hierarchy. But they were unable to overcome the military aspect of their struggle, relate to other sections of the proletariat and attack all the web of capitalist social relations.

Even industrial workers' delegates committees were contradictory. Those committees were nothing new. They were the traditional lowest organisational unit of left-wing groupings and trade unions. However, passive collaboration of unions and all the other formal parties or federations of historical Social Democracy with bourgeoisie significantly altered their nature. During the war, older skilled workers – antebellum members of those organisations – were forced to find a way how to organise and lead their struggle themselves, without unions and political parties, which, up till that time, had been selling an illusion that it is them who fights for proletariat's interests. Thus workers appropriated delegates committees through which they had always immediately organised themselves. They turned the committees, that previously served to disorganise the struggle, into instruments for organising strikes. Their structures in factories and mines evidently dominated even to unskilled proletarians, who newly came into industry because of the starting shortage of labour forces. Even new delegates committees came into existence, based on momentary workers' needs and designed only to fulfill one single task. By the end of the war in some of the militarised productions, even soldiers speaking foreign languages became delegates as they fraternised with local proletarians and sabotaged repressive functions that they were supposed to carry out. In practice, delegates committees represented an important part of class struggle and crystallization of class consciousness and revolutionary spirit corresponding to the level of the struggle. Nevertheless, they had never consciously cut the umbilical cord connecting them to their parent organisations. For instance in the Kladensko region, the delegates committees, which originally belonged to the CSSDWP, did not rely only on direct actions but they also tried to negotiate through counter-revolutionary mediators, i.e. party deputies, etc. Therefore, when the left-wing counter-revolution actively returns back on the stage with all its might, it again finds a lever for disorganisation of class struggle in workers' delegates. Besides of the not completely questioned workers' loyalty, it could also easily pick up the threads of all insufficient ruptures with Capital and its ideologies on the part of our class.

We have been able to search out only two organisational expressions of territorial centralisation of class struggle: the first workers council in Prague and the Revolutionary Workers Committee in Duchcov. Both these points of centralisation represented a higher level of the class movement as they meant a conscious endeavour to link individual groups and categories of struggling proletarians. It is especially true of the Duchcov Revolutionary Workers Committee as the Prague workers council was ephemeral – it was smashed by the Austro-Hungarian state's repression and not demobilised by nationalism. Besides that, the extent of the movement's centralisation, that it was expressing, was lower as the workers council was limiting itself only to Prague factory workers and anti-war and anti-monarchy actions. On the contrary, the Duchcov committee notified even in its name that its goal is more far-reaching: workers revolution. At the moment, we are not able to say more about it. We do not know, how exactly it functioned, if it involved only industrial workers or also other categories of proletarians. Nevertheless, we know that it was a magnet for all the regional proletariat, including women and youth – not employed in industrial production – and deserters. There were probably only very few such centralising forces, if any except of Duchcov. Even if they were an important step in the development of the movement, they were not immune to nationalist ideology, therefore they could be undermined by the national-liberationist counter-revolution even from within, through their own weaknesses – which might be happened even in the case of Duchcov.

Not even absence of organisation and spontaneous explosions of class violence are the guarantee of a successful proletarian revolutionary action. Furious

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

crowds of rioting and looting proletarians (primarily women and children), who were attacking bourgeoisie's private property and fighting repressive forces of the state in the streets, did not automatically come from riots to an armed insurrection. There were the same holes and weak points in their class consciousness as in the consciousness of all the others and they also became enthusiastic supporters of national liberation and it does not matter, whether of the Czecho-Slovakian, German or Hungarian one. Therefore, we can say that it is not even the movement's militant practice, that a full unfolding of the social revolution follows from. And finally it is neither minoritarian "linkboys" armed with a formal written programme of the revolution, that is a redeeming recipe. Firstly, they can not voluntaristically reverse an unfavourable conjunction of objective and subjective conditions, a balance of forces unfavourable to the proletariat. Secondly, however revolutionary this programme could be, it can never grasp totality of the historical communist programme, which can be revealed only through the multiplying strength, activity and initiative of the class and many vanguard minorities that are born in this liberating historical motion towards the self-conscious revolutionary class.

Thus, Communists do not look for delusive guarantees of the revolutionary spirit and ideological recipes for a successful revolution, which eventually always turn to be just traps laid by social relations of the old world (of which we are both bearers and gravediggers) for proletariat's subversive movement. We know that we have no other possibility than to interest ourselves in the social reality of our class' movement and to derive the communist programme precisely from that. The programme is not a dead letter, once written by somebody – either Marx or Bakunin. It gets clarified and stems from practice of the class movement itself, even if it is as invariable in its foundations as the nature of capitalism, which the proletariat rises against. Communists reflect the highest points in proletarian class struggle as well as its defeats, its weaknesses and strengths, because only in this way we can stay on the field of proletariat's historical interests and goals. Only in this way we can be able to act and fulfill the tasks posed to revolutionaries by class struggle and revolution – if we can not do this completely in today's conditions of the spectacular triumph of counter-revolution, than surely in the future we will have to do this. And this activity – inseparably linked with practice – centralises itself in the communist organisation and realises through it, as by its nature this activity is an expression of contradictory social being under the Capital's domination and proletariat's self-awareness stemming from that and not a kind of individualist intellectual entertainment.

The development of proletarian associations and class consciousness as well as the birth of organised communist minorities is an inevitable consequence of contradictions present in our social position of workers. From these contradictions, from opposed interests of people absorbed by the capitalist mode of production arises a practical antagonism between two classes – proletariat and bourgeoisie – expressing itself through class struggle. Only on the basis and in the process of class struggle there can be a rapid development of class consciousness and a rise of our class' revolutionary organisation. These are undeniably decisive elements for an outbreak of social revolution. In order to avoid a misunderstanding, once more we stress the fact, that they can not be brought to proletariat from outside – on the contrary, every attempt of this kind is from its beginning a counter-revolutionary effort of Social Democracy to pacify the insurgent class (eg. the leninist model of the party). The truly revolutionary organisation of the class – the Communist party – always grows organically and from below from the actual proletarian struggle and consciousness, from the proletarian autonomy. This programmatical postulate is not a result of an intellectual speculation and an ideological construct, but a reflection of past revolutionary movements.

What we mean by the autonomy and the Communist party? As a class proletariat can be autonomous only if it constitutes itself as a struggling class, which is aware of itself as a class and of its historical interest, that is the abolition of the class society and therefore of itself, a fights exactly for this interest. However, we can not explain the autonomy only in terms of practical aspects of the struggle, such as class violence, attack against commodities, etc., as proletarians can carry them out without being fully aware of their meaning. The essence of autonomy is that they start to understand the meaning of their actions or that by themselves they develop class consciousness which makes it possible to move the struggle on a higher level. And as the emancipation of the working class is according to Communists really the task of the working class itself, autonomy can be born only in the process of class struggle, in confrontations with Capital, that will change the balance of forces between classes in favour of proletariat. In other words: class consciousness can come into existence only under a certain intensity of the proletarian struggle, only from a practical critique of capitalist social relations. Class consciousness is substantially linked to the proletarian struggle: it is a product of this struggle whose contents and form are at the same time expressions of an immediate level of class consciousness.

In the same way as it would be a mistake to ascribe the birth of autonomy to today's revolutionary minorities, it also can not be understood as a sort of miraculous moment, when the class gets somehow enlightened, it gains consciousness and becomes revolutionary. Even the birth and extension of autonomy are a practical and uneven process (and as we have seen on the example of movement in the Czech Lands, it is also reversible), in which the struggling class and proletariat's historical interest are represented by those workers, who really fight and not those of them whose minds and acts are still stuck in the mud of reformism and counter-revolution. And in this process of fighting constitution and extension of autonomy, there is also the place of revolutionary minorities, which will sooner than the rest grasp, name and seek to realise individual steps of the historical programme of the communist revolution; minorities, which will give direction to the rest of the class movement (and not to manipulate with it in the sense of social democratic bourgeois politics).

These minorities will be born, will grow and multiply precisely due to the high intensity of the struggle, giving rise to a mass presence of class consciousness, which will, in turn, more and more obviously acquire the character of confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution. An effort to organise effectively the revolutionary side will lead to centralisation of those minorities as well as vanguard individuals and to the formation of the class' revolutionary organisation – the Communist party. Therefore, the Communist party can not be defined according to formal features, but according to gathering the most advanced elements of the class and crystallizing and realising the Communist programme in their actions and conscious reflection of these actions.

In the light of everything said above, it is time to summarise and clearly name strengths and weaknesses of the proletarian movement in the Czech Lands at the end of the World War One and all the things following from them for living revolutionary "theory" – for the Communist programme. We are not interested in searching for the purest revolutionary movement, which we could triumphantly claim as is the case with many people, who shout: "Great! We have found another missing link in our family tree! It is the most leftist of all left factions – the guarantee of revolution!" We want to turn lessons from past struggles into a weapon against Capital! Unlike those, who have not got rid off the bourgeois conception of "scientific socialism" yet, we do not submit our class' struggles to a however "radical" inquiry, but we discover and re-appropriate the invariable Communist programme in them. That is why it is important for us to see not only their strongest moments, but also mistakes done by our class brothers and sisters and hope, that thanks to them we do not have to repeat the same mistakes once again. We still fight not only the same enemy, that appears like the monstrous clown of the *It!* Movie and cheats us with colourful balloons, while crushing our bones and sucking our blood, but we also face the same weaknesses in the ranks of its potential gravediggers.

Let's, thus, try to make a short balance sheet of the militant movement between 1917 and 1918:

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

1) On the basis of necessity, the movement started to fight outside of trade unions and Social Democratic political organisations. As far as these organisations called on proletarians to passively suffer from declining material conditions of their lives until the war is finished or until national liberation realises the Republican mirage of social justice, the exploited's radical minorities were forced to act on their own and emancipate from Left-wing channels neutralising our class' subversive potential. **Therefore even in the Czech Lands, re-constitution of class autonomy on the basis of intensive class struggle, self-activity of the class, rupture with embodiments of historical Social Democracy, with all the mediators and false friends of the working class, were confirmed as starting points for the birth of the revolutionary perspective.** We have already discussed, how this struggle was going and what organisational forms it took on, including even the extent to which those organisations were able to attack the dictatorship of Capital in all its totality. It will, thus, suffice only to say, that though proletariat was taking its first steps towards its class autonomy, it was a contradictory process – primarily in the sense that the given level of the struggle did not bring about clearer conscious reflection of all the ruptures with bourgeois ideologies and the social project. Which is the reason, why the proletarian movement did not get from the struggle outside of unions and the Left to the struggle against them as its class enemies and let themselves to be recuperated by them anew.

2) Even this proletarian experience of constituting and losing its class autonomy – on the basis of the beginning rupture with unionism and the repeated return into its pacifying and disorganising open arms – should be a warning for all militants of today, who are prone to believe taratiddles of all possible Syndicalists, Anarcho-Syndicalists, Trotskyists, Stalinists and other Social Democrats, that the working class will become revolutionary only organising itself in unions and leftist political parties. The history of our class' struggles, however, reveals us the exact opposite: **whatever unions (even painted in yellow, pink, red or red and black) and political parties (even if they call themselves federations and they are extra-parliamentary) stay in their social function on the terrain of Capital. That is why, one of the first steps workers take to constitute as the revolutionary class and as the Communist party, i.e. as the organised movement of the Communist revolution, is not just leaving the unionist-leftist framework of bourgeois organisations and reformism, but also a conscious and consistent struggle against them.**

3) And this is precisely what the class movement in 1917-1918 was unable to do. It was constituting its autonomy much more dynamically in practice than on the conscious level. Therefore, while in the strongest moments of the class struggle, many times workers were acting in an internationalist way, at the same time they were the bearers of the Left bourgeois programme of national liberation and national socialist republics. **While internationalism was an expression of struggling workers' strength as it was supporting extension of their struggle and constitution of the class fighting against Capital, national liberation proved to be a bane for the whole movement for it broke the movement apart and tied it to various bourgeois factions, prevented extension of struggle and diverted it on a blind track, disorganised and split proletariat as a class.**

4) Actual attacks against capitalist social relations were essential expressions of the movement too. On its peaks, it got from strikes for a lower rate of exploitation to practical critique of work in the form of intentional shirking and sabotaging the whole production process. Practical critique of commodities and monetary mediation between human need and its satisfaction was done through looting, field trespasses and banditism of deserters. Collective desertions and soldiers' mutinies were a real refusal of a particular form of the dictatorship of Capital and bourgeoisie (embodied either by officers or the monarchy as a whole) and war among various factions of the ruling class. As we already said at the beginning, **every struggle – perhaps only for higher wages or flour rations – directly attacked interests of the state waging war and, thus, in its essence it was "political" and revolutionary: it was an expression of revolutionary defeatism, that by pursuing proletariat's interests contributes to the defeat of "its own" state and ruling class. Inside thousands of acts and struggles, which were subverting so far sacred and unquestionable capitalist relations, and under the influence of proletarian struggles in Russia and the Ukraine, the birth of revolutionary perspective was begun.** However, the given level of practical critique of social relations did not transform in systematic conscious critique. And the class consciousness crystallized only in a very vague form. It did not elaborate itself into a programme derived from the subversive practice of the movement and, therefore, at the last instance the movement accepted the programme of counter-revolution: national liberation, republicanism and chimera of social justice. In other words: it did not overcome its own original weaknesses and, thus, contributed to evoking conditions and forces, which made its recuperation possible.

5) **No movement is crystalline pure, without contradictions, and with workers equipped by the "correct" opinions and "correct" flags.** In this respect, proletarian struggles of the last Austro-Hungarian years are no exception. Daily experienced capitalist exploitation and oppression were often erroneously understood by fighting proletarians as national oppression. The fact, that the part of bourgeoisie, which was responsible for moulding general conditions, in which their exploitation took place (the state and government), was organised on a national basis (predominantly German-Hungarian), obscured the global nature of capital and the fact, that their outright exploiters (bourgeoisie directly buying their labour force: factory owners and their directors, land owners) were coming from all nations. For instance, that is why, striking workers in a factory talk about the "Austrian oppression", even if they are actually rebelling against the oppression imposed on them by Capital. **This contradiction between half-hearted conscious expression of their interests and their radical practice appears again and again in every proletarian revolt. In many places, proletarians were entering conflicts with Capital, while armed only with feeble and basically counter-revolutionary phrases, but at the same time they were able to practically subvert capitalist relations around themselves.** Nationalist rhetoric about a construction of the glorious empire and immortal emperor on one hand and the prison of nations on the other one, found a fertile ground in weaknesses of proletarian consciousness. Nevertheless, they could not prevent, for example, angry soldiers – proletarians in uniforms – from refusing to suppress strikes and hunger riots from time to time, even if their commanders were sending them for this purpose across half of the monarchy, for instance from Hungary to Sudetenland. **However, on the other hand, bourgeois flags have always marked the limits of every struggle, if proletarians were not able to throw them away on the basis of their own practical experience.**

It is not possible to conclude our modest contribution to a critical reflection of the first act in a revolutionary drama, played by proletariat in the Czech Lands and Slovakia too in the last years of the world war and two following years, without putting this drama into the context of a much wider drama: the revolutionary wave, which then shook the world and forced competing bourgeois camps to stop the war before Capital really needed to do so. Only in this worldwide framework, the local events can reveal their meaning for our class, which is as global as Capital. The movement analysed by us was an indivisible part of this framework and from a global viewpoint it was actually one of episodes in the world revolutionary drama. And surely it was not one of the most important episodes, one of the peaks of the class movement.

In 1917-1918, real peaks and epicentres of the proletarian revolution could be found primarily in Russia, the Ukraine and Germany. It is not that revolutionary movements in these countries did not suffer from internal contradictions. But in the process of combat constitution of class autonomy, the most militant workers' minorities (industrial and agricultural as well) made a qualitative leap in their class consciousness, conditioned by practice and influencing practice, which led them to attempts at imposing the social dictatorship of proletariat, i.e. the dictatorship of human needs over Capital and Economy. There were also the first expressions of an organic growth of the Communist party, however contradictory they were and whatever they called

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

themselves: Marxists, Anarchists, Maximalists, Red Guardists, Black Guardists, Revolutionary Insurgents, Communists...

Why this was not the case also in the Czech Lands? In all modesty, as far as we can at least sketch an answer to this question, it seems to us, that the reason does not lie in the rate of exploitation and changes in its organisation, in particular magnitude of suffering and horrors, which proletarians in this or that country were exposed to. All of this undeniably stands behind the boom of class struggle and the birth of workers' autonomy, but its development or setbacks had also something to do with weaknesses of the movement itself and bourgeois ideologies, whose pillars were reproduced by workers themselves and whose influence they were exposed to at the same time. Precisely, the weight of ideologies combined with material conditions and class struggle formed the proletarians' perspective.

More precisely, in Russia, Germany and the Ukraine the old materialisations of Social Democracy (trade unions, Mensheviks, Esers and the SPD) clearly and actively supported the war, which called in as clear response on the proletarian side. The most militant minorities of our class stood up against these bourgeois parties and, based on strength and weaknesses of workers minorities, the extreme-Left opposition grew already during the war. Even during the later rise of class struggle, beginning by the end of 1916, there is a clear confrontation with the combative part of the class and the openly pro-war Social Democracy. However, politics of the CSSDWP was not so beautifully transparent. Neither it actively supported the war nor opposed it actively; simply it aided the war effort calmly and mainly through its passivity. (55) So, even the most radical proletarian minorities shared many illusions about the CSSDWP still at the end of the war. And for those, who did not believe "Marxists" of the Second International, there were National Socialists and their "Anarchist" lackeys waiting and posed like a consistent anti-war and pro-worker alternative.

These blunted points of confrontation between Social Democracy and the class movement were compounded by the main weakness on the side of proletariat itself: belief in national liberation. While neither in Russia nor Germany it was on the order of the day and in the Ukraine it was limping belatedly behind the proletarian revolution, in the Czech Lands, but also in Slovakia (to a much lesser extent) and Poland, it was, together with Republicanism, evoking a confused idea, that social revolution is identical with a national liberationist changeover and a reform of the bourgeois state. If the proletariat in Russia, the Ukraine and Germany was clashing with the state in certain moments, in the Czech Lands it allowed itself to be used for overthrowing the monarchy and proclaiming the Czecho-Slovakian national state. Its frontal conflict with the ruling class and its state was postponed by two years, which allowed the international bourgeoisie to create the Central European sanitary cordon separating revolutionary Germany from the Ukraine and Russia. It also gained time and created conditions for the victory of Social Democratic counter-revolution in these three countries and all this contributed to the fall of council republics in Hungary, Slovakia and the Carpathian Ukraine, or better said, to the fall of proletarian movements, which gave birth to these republics on one hand and were framed, tamed and liquidated by them on the other.

In spite of the failure of the movement in the Czech Lands in 1917-1918 to overcome its original limits and to go as far as in the epicentres of revolution, it is necessary to say, that its weaknesses are essentially identical with weaknesses of the movements in Russia, Germany, in the Ukraine, but also elsewhere, even though they expressed themselves in another way and on another levels over there. In their majority these movements reproduced the concept of nation, which then materialised itself in the form of nationally structured socialist council republics. The fact that the international movement as a whole failed to develop a total revolutionary attack against Capital and State – the real proletarian dictatorship and communisation of social relations – led to Social Democratic counter-revolution of Lenins, Trotskys, Noskes, Eberts... Yes, in certain respects some revolutionary minorities went further than the rest of the movement, but while realising their social project even they did not get any further than to a sort of self-managed capitalism based on labour communes or workers collectives. They did not get from the question, "Who shall be the boss in Communism?", to the question, "What shall be bossed and managed?" Nevertheless, only thanks to the gigantic experience of the world revolutionary movement, today we are able to say much more precisely, what Communism is not and what is or is not subversion of Capital about.

Just as at the end of the World War One, even today proletarian movements are full of internal contradictions. It is all the more like this, because we are not on the eve of the worldwide revolution, but on the contrary in a period of defeat and general atomization of our class. When nowadays proletarian anger erupts in an open conflict with Capital, workers on the other side of the world or even in a neighbouring country tap on their foreheads, why the Islamists, peasants, immigrants or separatists are fooling around. Even bourgeoisie uses these contradictions, when it needs to strengthen its domination over proletariat. Deserters from the Serbian army and demonstrating workers in Sarajevo suddenly change by a magic trick into agents paid by the USA, who deserve to be shelled from cannons, or into fighters for freedom and independent Bosnia – it depends which TV you are watching. Armed guerillas of agricultural proletarians from soya plantations in Somalia are labeled as Islamists, striving for Sharia codex and blood of non-believers, who must be suppressed by the Ethiopian military. Young proletarians fighting for life with the police on poor Parisian suburbs are just a bunch of immigrant gangsters, who do not revere the French state's hospitality.

On the basis of studying the class movement in 1914-1918, we are not able to scientifically reveal, which constellation of objective and subjective conditions reliably gets proletariat to move; which conditions lead it towards ever more intensive struggle, in which it overcomes all physical and ideological separations through which they are structured and divided by Capital according to its needs, towards the struggle from which class autonomy and revolution will be born. Communism is not a science, it is a living movement coming from present capitalist relations and subverting these relations. It does not move according to firmly given laws, which will inevitably lead our class to revolution and realisation of the worldwide Communist community project. Communist revolution and society are not a historical necessity, which will come willy-nilly and which the proletariat will blindly realise. Communist revolution and society are just the only possible overcoming of capitalist inhumanity through self-abolition of the proletariat and thus also Capital, State and all the class society. This self-abolition, however, can not be an unconscious act. Without choosing between Communism and barbarity there will be no qualitative leap from class autonomy to the revolutionary subject of history. And this is true today as it was in 1917...

Notes:

- (1) Bordiga appears to us as a contradictory Leninist, because his practice was strongly Leninist, especially his long-term engagement in the Third International which started off with nothing else but co-writing the 21 Conditions for joining the International and expulsion of true Communists. In later years of his life, however, Bordiga offered many interesting theoretical reflections concerning Capitalism and Communism, but once more accompanied by social democratic practical activity.
- (2) Mutual competition of individual capitals produced a protracted crisis, which could not have been successfully solved for a long time. Existing markets were saturated and it was necessary to conquer new ones and, primarily, value of products and means of production was decreasing. War was the only way out of the crisis – a mass liquidation of surplus constant and variable capitals. It through reconstruction that general destruction (devalorization) renders a new beginning of the valorisation cycle possible.
- (3) *Dál nad námi vlá rudá vlajka čistá*, Prague 1952, p. 135.
- (4) We are aware of the fact that "Czech proletarians" and other expressions of this kind are not a particularly good way of expressing class reality, but as on many other occasions we are here prisoners of bourgeois language. And it happens exactly in the moment when we are trying to attack nationalist ideology and national myths surrounding the Austro-Hungarian dusk and the Czechoslovakian bourgeois state's birth. We want to show to readers that rebellion was not a privilege of "the Czechs", but of proletariat on both sides of the national divide. That is why we ask readers for sympathy and clemency every time they come across such bourgeois-like expressions in our text.
- (5) And they were dying in a large scale... or at least a part of them. Only during the first two war years 450.000 ordinary Austro-Hungarian soldiers of urban and countryside proletarian origin died, while there were mere 50 dead soldiers from the ranks of factory owners and landowners.
- (6) The central printed organ of the CSSDWP.
- (7) As the Austrian Social Democracy Šmeral was a partisan of so called Austro-Marxism, which means that he recognised and actively advocated a bourgeois right of nations for self-determination. This was in Marxist ideological optics accompanying bourgeois revolution, which was in his mechanistic conception of history the only revolution being on the agenda in the Habsburg monarchy. Since for him the necessary outcome of history was a subsequent transformation (of course, carried out by Social Democracy) of national bourgeois states into an international federation of (national) socialist republics, he preferred reforming Austro-Hungary into a federation of national units to its destruction into small independent national states. Thanks to the fact, that as the only one of more important party figures, he was consistently standing behind a leftist slogan of a "socialist republic", he became a leader of left currents in the CSSDWP already during the war. However this can not change in any way the fact, that through his practical policy he vehemently assisted the national liberationist counter-revolution in subjecting a proletarian movement (as we will show further in the text). Already in 1917 the right-wing and much more nationalist faction of the party removed from his position of the chairman. After establishment of the Czechoslovakian Republic an anti-Austrian nationalist was accusing him from a non-patriotic attitude, so the CSSDWP banned him from a public life and put him away to Switzerland.
- (8) "Czech Communists-Anarchists – at least a vast majority of them – lead by a profound consideration and a healthy instinct took immediately at the beginning of the war a resolute stand against the biggest and closest danger, against German and Austrian imperialisms. Today, when we have already had news and documents from abroad, we can see, that also elsewhere the best comrades of ours placed themselves on the anti-German side. (...) Of course we have the same standpoint also towards non-German imperialism. But it will not be ever necessary to fight against Western imperialism through a war; this will be slowly dismantled by victorious Socialism. We can not believe that Anglo-Saxon soldiers would ever be willing to march against continental socialist Europe." "The Congress of Czech Anarchists-Communists", *Červen*, II., 1919, No. 1, pp. 6-9; No. 2, pp. 14-15.
- (9) He was a brother of Viktor Adler, the leader of the Austrian social democratic party.
- (10) Also here we have to draw the reader's attention to the weight, with which bourgeois ideology was laying in minds of the then class fighters. Karel Verner uses formulations such as "Austrian subjection", although proletariat finds itself in a capitalist subjection and it does not really matter, if it is managed by an Austrian or Czech state apparatus.
- (11) He means October 1917 and the influence of the armed insurrection in Russia.
- (12) Antonín Klimek in his book *Říjen 1918 – vznik Československa* (Paseka, Prague and Litomyšl 1998) quotes the period bourgeois press: "On September 29 "farmer, Jan Machek from Doubravice at Bílá Třeboňská was murdered on a public road near his farm. Perpetrators... cut his neck artery with a sharp knife" and stole his money. "The crime was committed by 5 to 6 men in military uniforms armed with repeater rifles. Farmer Josef Hrdinka was robbed by them of 2 big duvets and 84 kg of rye flour equal to 2.700 crowns, all of which they stole from his pantry... Murder culprits were pursued" and while running away they fired 25 rifle shots. They disappeared and "so far the search has been fruitless."
- (13) According to Jakub Sedlařík's recounting a gendarmery unit commanded by constable Kolomazník tried to catch a "Green Cadre" and a revolutionary agitator, František Krška, in Chvalnov. Instead of him, however, gendarmes arrested by chance another "Green Cadre", Antonín Herodek. The news of Herodek's arrest quickly spread and other armed deserters stopped gendarmes, when they wanted to escort their arrestee out of the village. Insulted a lot by a covey of local people gendarmes withdrew back to the village, into Herodek's house, but refused to release the "Green Cadre". "About 15 men arranged Herodek's liberation. They got into the house through the yard, broke into the kitchen and attacked the gendarmes. Kolomazník ordered to shoot, but carrying out of this order was violently rendered impossible by the raiders. Badly beaten gendarmes just asked the people not to take their weapons, because they would be punished by losing their jobs. The action was successful, Herodek escaped, raiders dispersed. And then we saw tired gendarmes in torn up uniforms how they run away through the village backyards towards Střílky."
- (14) But gendarmes were intentionally liquidated even in the Czech Lands. On October 25 1918 gendarmery raided Bystrc woods near Brno city in order to arrest deserters. They arrested a 22 years old deserter Střecha and three his comrades suspected of murdering a 30 years old gendarmery constable Macourek, notorious for "his eager persecution of deserters". The constable was found on October 15 in the river near the village of Komín with 20 serious wounds on his body and no boots.
- (15) It was probably an ad hoc grouping of radically spirited sailors meeting each other in harbour pubs.
- (16) But the Russian Revolution really had an effect on countless other captives, as is for example testified by recollections of one of Rumburk mutineers, Josef Veselý: "As a prisoner of war I was then employed in agricultural works in the Kherson region, when the October Revolution began to penetrate there with all its consequences. My brother was in the "Tatranian" 7th Rifle Regiment of the Czechoslovakian Legions. At the time he was in Kharkov, we were exchanging letters, but I had different views than him, who was preparing for being shipped to the French front. I believed, that it was necessary to start off a resistance directly at home and to finish the war according to the Russian example..." With this aim Veselý and several hundreds of other prisoners of war set on a journey from Zhitomir to home in January 1918. They wanted to sneak through the Russian-Austrian lines and to make a revolution in the Czech Lands. But those, who were not shot dead by the remnants of the Russian army, were again captured by the Austrian army.
- (17) An 18 years old shoemaker from Nový Volinsdorf near Podbořany.
- (18) For example, for a participation in the mutiny and disrupting public order three young „German“ female proletarians were arrested: Maria Kögler,

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

Ida Eiselt and Maria Hille. According to a gendarmery report they urged workers, "standing in the streets to join the mutineers and ridiculed and insulted soldiers, who wanted to stay neutral, in order to incite them to join the revolting subjects." According to another gendarmery report a boy called Umlauf joined the mutineers in Krásná Lípa. Soldiers gave him a bayonet, pistol and cartridges and he marched with them up to Česká Kamenice. When the mutiny was crushed „German“ female workers and soldiers decorated graves of executed mutineers with flowers.

(19) As for example tried (though insufficiently) Makhnovist insurgents in the Ukraine.

(20) In the morning on the same day as Rumburk soldiers the Czech soldiers in Nov ý Bor also disobeyed their officers because of hunger. However, commandant Flibor persuaded them with promises and hidden threats and subsequently used them in the combat against mutineers. Soldiers of the 18th Infantry Regiment from Česká Lípa also let themselves to be used in the counter-mutiny operation, even though on May 10 1918 they also made a little hunger mutiny. This was put down at the very beginning and 48 soldiers were charged with it. But because unlike Rumburk soldiers they did not strive to provoke a social revolution, 39 charged soldiers were freed and a postponement of prison sentences was allowed for the other nine men. This isolation of individual struggles and a failure of other struggling proletarians to actively identify with them also points at weaknesses of the then class movement and indicate illusoriness of Noha's conception, that a mere example is enough to provoke a revolution.

(21) Several days after he would be executed for this statement together with other mutineers.

(22) It is not completely uninteresting, that on the same day, when the Rumburk soldiers arrived at Terezín, lance corporal Fischer found a leaflet written in German in a dormitory of the Terezín 42nd Infantry Regiment. It said: „Dear companions, our oppressors are getting worse and worse. Now they have us shot and prepare cannons. Everybody knows his dogs. Do not forget about Kastell and sergeant major Weber, who is tearing our guts alive. Do not be afraid of the Czechs, they will join us.“ But none of German soldiers plucked up courage for another mutiny. Instead of it another Rumburk soldiers found their death in Terezín, because they were kept in horrible conditions and died of diseases and malnutrition. Today we know names of only 11 of them: Jan Jícha, František (Ondřej) Barnd, František Kunz, Josef Maša, Karel Tucheck, František Veverka, Rudolf Macho, Rudolf Belčický, Josef Prášek, J. Šmidek and Karel Werner.

(23) Flibor would later become an agile officer of the Czechoslovakian army and he would get to the rank of colonel in 1929. His participation in crushing the Rumburk mutiny would never be a particular trouble for him, since on one hand the new state tried to publicly present the mutiny as a nationalist one, but on the other the ruling bourgeois factions perfectly knew, that this was not the case and that by its own nature the mutiny was a subversive class act. This could not be changed even by the fact, that following their liberation from Terezín about 300 Rumburk soldiers fell for the general national elation and enlisted in the Czechoslovakian army and in 1919 they even fought against the Hungarian Red Army in Slovakia. For their new Czech superiors they were automatically beared a stain of being bad soldiers and rebels. The Legion's general, Eduard Kadlec, commented Rumburk soldiers in 1920: "Persons of this kind must be swept out from the army..." Survivors of the mutiny established the Rumburk Mutineers Association in 1928. Although its members had not had anything in common with class struggle for a long time, state authorities considered them as "Reds" or even "Communists" anyway and made a lot of problems to them.

(24) But in the moment, when the national state of the Czech bourgeoisie would come into existence, the same Tusar would persuade Czech soldiers to stay in Austria in order not to make an already difficult situation at home even more complicated, because it was pregnant with class contradictions: "Stay on your places for the moment. There is not enough food for you at home. Trust completely the Czechoslovakian government's deputy, who will lead you out from here as soon as possible."

(25) It is the changeover of October 28 1918, which led to the proclamation of the independent Czechoslovakian state.

(26) They were employed in Austria because of militarization of labour and all-imperial mobilization of labour forces.

(27) Sokol (Falcon) has been a very traditional bourgeois nationalist sport organisation.

(28) The Entente bourgeois press of the time called Masaryk "the Master of Siberia".

(29) Slavishly grateful Czecho-Slovakian bourgeoisie would rename the city of Prešpurk according the US president. Before the city would have gained its present name Bratislava, it would be called for a while Wilsonovo.

(30) Several leading Czech figures (among them Karel Kramář and Alois Rašín), who were members of the Maffie, were arrested for their activities and sentenced for a high-treason, but the new emperor Karl I (unhappily) granted them pardon in 1916 (it would not last long and young proletarian militants will try to violently eliminate these enemies of our class – for them there would not be any possibility of reconciliation as for the last Habsburg emperor and the Czech bourgeoisie).

(31) Soon even the previously mentioned "Centralists" would join the Socialist Council.

(32) Which question should in fact have been of absolutely no importance for the workers, since they did not have a slightest possibility to send their children to be indoctrinated there by bourgeoisie.

(33) Its main protagonists in the October general strike were social democratic leaders Šmeral, Stivín, Bechyně and even more nationalisticly spirited national socialists Stříbrný, Franke and "anarchist" Luisa Landová-Štychová.

(34) The paper *Český socialista* (the Czech Socialist), October 11 1918.

(35) When the bourgeois Right-wing of the National Committee learnt about this plan, they immediately disassociated themselves from proclaiming the republic, because it was afraid of violence, a lost of control over an establishment of its own state and gratuitousness of this act, which was not coordinated with the resistance in abroad and the Entente.

(36) Authorship of this *Circular* and the idea of proclaiming the republic were subsequently ascribed to Šmeral, although the *Circular* featured names of all Action Committee members. It was an obvious attempt of other "socialist" leaders to look better in their Right-wing allies' eyes and to blame Šmeral's extreme Left for the radical rhetoric.

(37) In the same time the leader of the German Social Democracy in the Czech Lands, Seliger, announced his willingness to negotiate with right-wing German nationalists a creation of the National Council of German Bohemia, which was to be similar to the Czech national liberationist National Committee.

(38) There were more cases like this one. For example a right-wing social democrat, Modr áček, made an ironical comment on his co-partisan, Pařízek, that on October 14 in Brandýsko region he was at the head of "the socialist revolution", which was finished, when gendarmes intervened and people went home."

(39) A recollection of a Kladno militant, Karel Verner, from a book *1921 – Vzpomínky na vznik KSČ, Nakladatelství politické literatury, Prague 1962.*

(40) We mean all materializations of historical Social Democracy at the time – ie. not only the CSSDWP, but also National Socialists and their "anarchist" wing.

(41) For example: in the Engert mine. See Antonín Zápotocký, *Rudá záře nad Kladnem, Práce – Vydavatelstvo ROH, Prague 1951.*

(42) Bourgeoisie and its media called everything, what smelled at least a little bit by questioning domination of Capital in its existing form, as Bolshevik. This is why this label was used for/by everybody, from radical social democrats to real classist militants, who were a practical expression of the real communist movement of proletariat.

(43) On October 27 the emperor Karl assigned the Austro-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs, Gyula Andrássy, to ask the Entente for an armistice. So called Andrássy's Note went to the world. The monarchy's government just expressed its agreement with peace conditions of the US president Wilson in it.

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War

Impatient proletarians as well as bourgeoisie in the Czech Lands understood this note as a proclamation of surrender. This happened only on November 3 1918.

(44) For example a shopkeeper František Kopecký wanted to incite a crowd to lynch his Jewish competitors. Even a well known anti-Semite and stupid nationalist and anti-communist songs' writer, Karel Hašler, got into an awkward situation. A crowd wanted to beat him, considering him to be... a Jew (!), so he had to desperately shout, "Folks, do not beat me, I am not a Jew, I am Karel Hašler."

(45) As the Prague command reported to Vienna, "authoritative figures believe this will lead to an immediate increase in productivity of labour." Do not forget, that labour discipline was on a low level in that time and sometimes its decrease transformed into an anti-work resistance.

(46) In neighbouring Germany a Social Democratic counter-revolution also strived to redirect a revolutionary upheaval inside proletarian masses towards a struggle against the empire and for the Republic. Confronted with a much stronger class struggle it however made a much more profound reform of the state shielded by the watchword of "Democracy" (the old empires were democratic in their contents even earlier, though imperfectly, because they hid class antagonism by making from people citizens of a state). It integrated even workers councils and militias into the renewed state structure. Despite the fact, that in 1930s the Czech bourgeoisie would pose as a guardian of "democratic traditions" in Central Europe, during the first years of the Czechoslovakian Republic a part of the German bourgeoisie from Sudeten – especially local German social democracy – based its opposition against the Czechoslovakian state not only on the right of nations for self-determination, but also on the fact, that the Czechoslovakian Republic was not a truly "democratic state", according to their own words.

(47) Which would become a tradition of all Czech bourgeois changeovers and Stalinist February 1948 is no different from it.

(48) In order to strengthen the central power, to make it more effective and to eliminate chaos from the administration, on December 4 1918 Kramář's government disbanded local National Committees and forbade their further functioning.

(49) In an apparent effort to refer to the Taborites faction's communist tendencies in the times of the so called "Husite Revolution", which can be seen as the first modern attempt at social revolution on the European continent, in the course of which two antagonistic camps began to profile: proletariat (the poor, serfs and wage labourers) and bourgeoisie (the Third Estate).

(50) The Czech National Socialist, V. Klofáč, declared already on October 20 1918 at a public gathering: "The Entente will not allow the border areas to be snatched from the Czechs. Anyway even local German factory owners have already notified the National Committee, that they want to stay in the Czech state."

(51) The Austrian bourgeoisie itself and its political representatives were willing to give up anything in exchange for food stuffs, with which they could feed and pacify its own working class. A. Rašín commented on the situation in Vienna in the following way: "They would exchange anything for potatoes: even the Czech state, even Deutschböhmen. (...) Everything is revolving around potatoes and flour. They are afraid of revolution in Vienna."

(52) Here a clear parallel offers itself, a parallel between T. G. Masaryk, who is depicted by the dominant form of bourgeois ideology as a humanist, and another humanist, let us say Masaryk of our days, Václav Havel and his defence of current wars. Both prove, that bourgeois humanism with its preaching of all-human values, rights and morality is a counter-revolutionary ideology, which in fact advocates an uncontrollable, inhuman, alienated and alienating dictatorship of value valorizing itself, exploitation of proletarians and wars, in which proletarians are slaughtered.

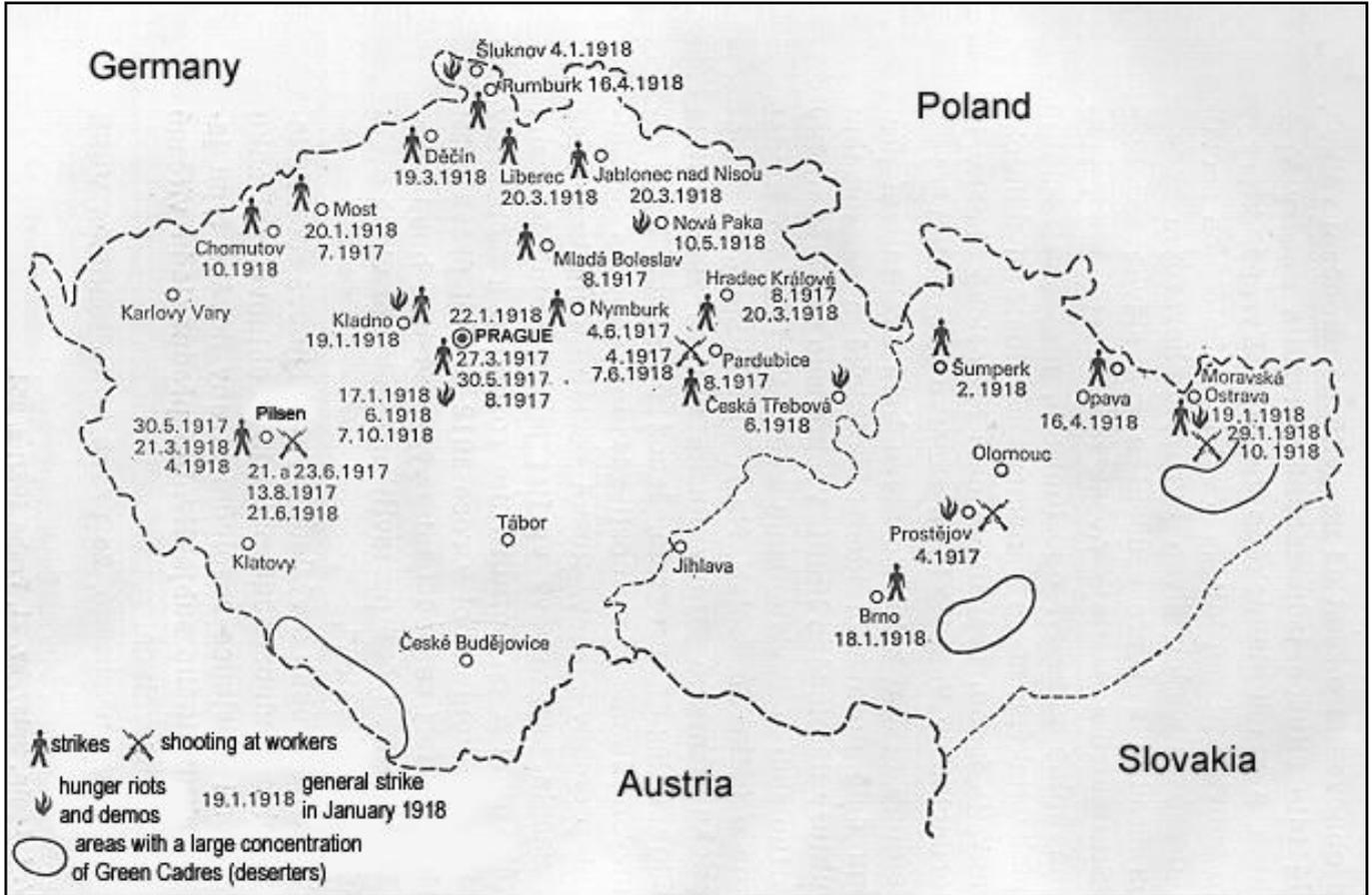
(53) Polish nationalists did not want only a re-incorporation of the annexed areas of Těšínsko into Poland. The most radical of them demanded the whole region of Těšínsko up to the Ostravice river, which demand was expressed by a slogan, "The Ostravice is the Polish border."

(54) Originally the German Workers Party, an analogy of the Czech National Socialists.

(55) Which is the reason, why even the Smeralian "faction" can not be compared to, for instance, Spartacists, Bolsheviks or Left Esers. It worked neither like an independent organisation nor like an organised group inside the party and did not engage in the high-tide of class struggle in the years of 1917 and 1918.

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War



A map of proletarian struggles in the Czech Lands since 1917 till 1918



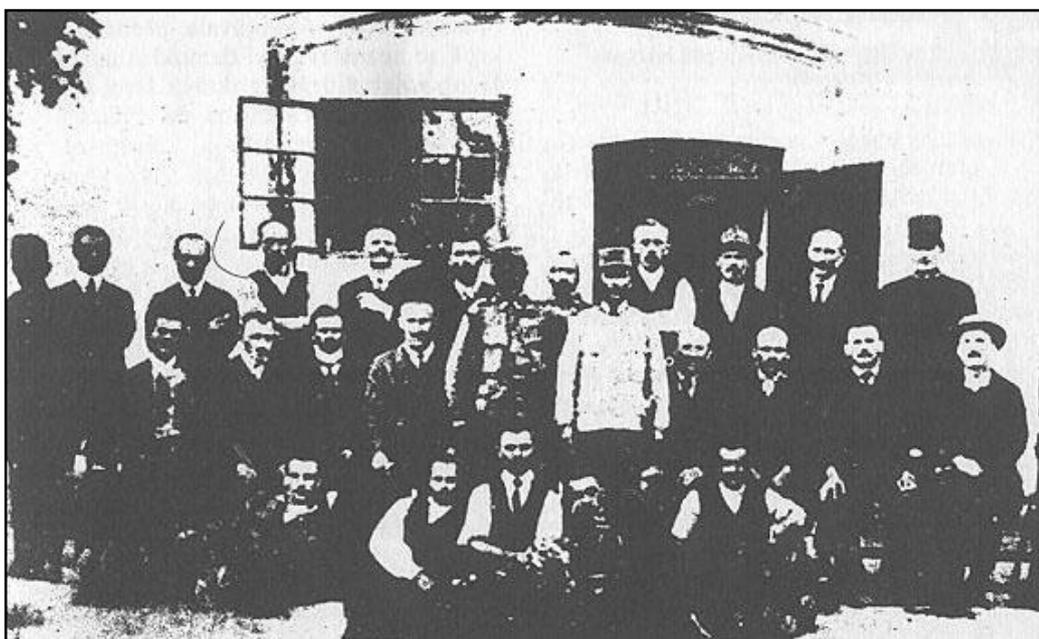
Workers shot dead during a riotous demonstration in Prostějov town



A workers' anti-war leaflet roughly from the end of 1917/ beginning of 1918. It's reading: "To all the suffering people! Extreme dearth, starting poverty, slaughter of our lives have broken the back of our patience. No more can we just watch injustice hitting us. We call on each of you to get ready and come in droves to stop the bloodshed and want. Only through such an uprising we can achieve better future. An injury to one is an injury to all."



A copy of the social democratic paper „The People's Cause“ (Pravo lidu), which, as the first one in the Czech Lands, brought the news of the October insurrection in Russia



Imprisoned organisers of the railway-workers' strike in a small Slovakian town of Vrutky (1917)

DOWN WITH TYRANTS AND TRAITORS ALL!

Class War



Workers' demonstration in Kladno during the social democratic general strike in October 1918. The banner is reading: "We want world peace."



Austro-Hungarian soldiers massively deserting the Italian front in autumn 1918 while taking over whole trains



TŘÍDNÍ VÁLKA (CLASS WAR)

E-mail contact: tridnivalka@yahoo.com

Blog: www.tridnivalka.blogspot.com