



THE PARIS COMMUNE

“ BEFORE MAKING A SOCIALIST CHANGE, A DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT IS DEMANDED, WHOSE PRIME CONDITION IS A PROLETARIAN ARMY. »

[MARX 25.10.1871]

III. The first Workers' Government in History

(72 days)

During its brief and restless life, what could have been the Commune's work? It can be divided into four chapters.

I- The permanent revolutionary government

First Chapter.

On the night of the **18th of March 1871**, the central Committee of the national guard proclaimed: "The proletarians of Paris, in the midst of the failings and treasons of the governing classes, have understood that time has come for them to save the day by taking charge of the direction of public affairs." As soon as it was set up, on the night of the 28th of March, the Commune Council posted up in its turn: "Your Commune is set up. You have just given yourself the institutions which defy all attempts". In effect, the great achievement of the Commune, as an unprecedented workers' government, was simply to exist.

The working class has but its fetters to lose. Besides it, there is no class of revolutionary private owners which can be the recipient of the power conquered by the masses. It must therefore take charge of it, in the name of all the people.

However such a regular power of the majority has not been seen before 1871. What the communards gave birth to is precisely that, a new form of power: a revolutionary government that is no longer provisional as in the past, but a permanent revolutionary government. The working class cannot establish any other one. So it was shown for the first time in 1871 what the working class must supersede the capitalist State with, after having destroyed it in order to become in its turn the dominant class in community. This new State, of the type of the Commune, and which is no longer "a State in the literal sense of the term" (Engels), is what the Russian Soviets were some 50 years later, and what the popular Assemblies with their revolutionary Committee in China are today. What is it made up of?

1- The National Guard, i.e. the armed people, supersedes armed forces and police. Thus the first decree of the Council, on the 29th of March, states: "Conscription is abolished. No military force other than the national guard will be allowed to be levied".

2- The Commune Council, i.e. a rank and file local assembly consisted of common agents of workers and paid as such, who both deliberate and execute, replaces the hierarchy of civil servants. The central government should only be given essential tasks, fulfilled by deputies of the same type. Revealing clue, the Council fixed for its members a maximum remuneration of F 6,000 per year, 10 times less than that which the people of the "Left" granted themselves, forthwith, at the first session on the 4th of September (1870).

3- The revolutionary power is surrounded, controlled and inspired by the workers' party (the International), concern assemblies, ward clubs, societies such as unions, women's Union, Atheists' organization, etc. With newspapers and other means of expression in the masses' hands, it supersedes the democracy for the rich of all the previous regimes. Thus, the first proclamation issued from the central Committee was: "The state of Siege is raised". Under the Commune, 70 newspapers were launched, 50 federated clubs open in the premises requisitionned by the people.

II- Labour manumission

Second Chapter.

The leaders of the Commune proclaimed that the dictatorship of the proletariat was but "a means to the revolutionary goal, that is labour manumission". It has to be said that it is also the only means. And Labour manumission is the movement that leads to Classless and Stateless community, to communist community. In this connection, communards obviously lacked time. But the trend was clear.

First of all, by getting rid of the hierarchical professional army and civil servants of the same type, the Commune accomplished the "cheap State" which had ever been but a dream to the liberal bourgeoisie.

Afterward and above all, the trend was toward social ownership of the means of production, and partnered production dedicated to the contentment of the needs of the people. Thus, about ten deserted concerns were impounded by the Commune, following the 16 April decree. On 10 April, the Work Commission prescribes the establishment of a concern in each district with the aim of giving women work near their home. On 13 May, the Commune decides to place orders in priority from its cooperatives, and thrusts upon private bosses a fixed wages for their staff as part of the conditions of contract.

In concerns checked by the Council, directors and supervisory management were elected, "as in the National Guard", said a person in charge. The day work was lowered by two hours a day, despite the war situation. The Commune closed private employment agencies, banned fines on salaries, removed night shifts for bakers, returned free of charge all things given to the Pawnshop by the poor, etc.

III- The Commune is the People

Third Chapter.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is "the regime of all the classes which do not live on the labour of others", says Marx. This was the main feature of the Commune.

For the first time, a workers' insurrection won the sympathy or the neutrality of shop-owners, peasants and generally speaking the middle class. And that for a reason!

The Commune proclaimed: “the land to the peasant”, “the fruits of the land to those who work it”; it commits itself to have the 5 billions owed to Germany by the warmongers repaid; it cancels nine months’ rent for all Parisians and bans the eviction of tenants; it gives a three years’ respite for the payment of drafts; pays a fixed salary to ushers, notaries and other judicial officers employed by the Commune; it ousts parish priests from schools and prepares a vocational training until then previously unheard of.

IV- The worldly Commonwealth

Fourth Chapter.

The owning classes proved themselves to be all in one jingoist and cosmopolitan. The working class asserts itself as patriotic and internationalist.

Thus, on the 16th on May, the Commune topples the Vendôme column, a “symbol of militarism”, said it. From its very beginning it solemnly accepted foreign revolutionaries into the Council; it acknowledges fighting for the “worldly Commonwealth”.

The Paris Commune – March 1978

طالب فردی

PARIS COMMUNE

The Paris Commune DECREES:

- 1° Conscription is abolished;
- 2° No military force other than the national guard will be allowed to be levied or introduced within Paris;
- 3° All sound citizens are members of the national guard.

Town Hall, 29 March 1871.

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