

What We Advocate

The Talhwan (The Conquest)

1928

Editor's Note: The *Talhwan* was the publication of the Korean Anarchist Federation in China. "Talhwan" is the Korean translation of "conquest"; the title of the paper is believed to have been inspired by Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*. The following excerpts are taken from the inaugural issue of the *Talhwan* published in June 1928. The translation is by Dongyoun Hwang of Soka University of America (Asian Studies Department).

All products of contemporary society were produced by the joint effort of the workers, and modern civilization was created by the blood and sweat of the masses in the past. Neither an individual nor a government, therefore, can have rights to monopolize the products and own civilization exclusively, no matter what. Since the past, however, capitalism, advancing together with government, has monopolized everything and created the property of a privileged class.

In order for us to live, we cannot help retaking (*talhwun*) the possessions that initially belonged to all human beings. In other words, we advocate that we should accomplish public ownership of property.

Although the struggle between labour and capital may differ in every place according to the status of capitalism and its institutions, the proletariat in every place must be united by taking the same stand for the principles of the struggle. Their present, sole goal is to retake the civilization of a capitalist class and, then, return it to the whole masses. By doing so, the capitalist society will be replaced with a new society founded upon the principles of freedom and equality that guarantee the autonomy of the producers.

We do not allow the existence of a government, no matter what kind of form it may take. Let's look at the human past! In the age of feudalism, monarchial governments supported a system of serfdom serving the interests of the imperial family and the aristocratic class. In the age of capitalism, democratic governments, for the protection of the interests of the bourgeoisie, use a representative system in politics that creates a privileged class, and the wage slave system for its economic system that makes great but subtle machines by utilizing numerous workers' bones, blood and sweat, thus finally enslaving human beings to machines. And, now let's look at the crumbling so-called [Soviet] government of peasants and workers! The regime of the petit bourgeoisie, called the Communist (?) Party, to maintain its despotic and dictatorial politics,

carries out state capitalism, which is an extended form of individual capitalism that concentrates capital in the hands of the government. While the [Soviet] government, mounting a cunning scheme called the New Economic Policy, acknowledges the ownership and free business activities of individual capital in the name of regulated capital...it turns out that in truth the ordinary people of Russia are subject to the dual oppressions of individual capitalism and state capitalism... No matter what kind of form it takes, government is a tool for the minority with power to oppress the masses, and an obstacle that stands in the way of realizing mutual human fraternity. Therefore, we do not allow for its existence...

Capitalism of the past worked with feudalism of the past, and modern capitalism works with the bourgeois government. Consequently, government could not survive without capitalism and vice versa... capital itself is a gift snatched by the strong and powerful. In theory or in practice, capital has already lost all its values. It has forced human beings to do harm to other human beings, denying them the basic necessities of life. Therefore, capital is called the source of all crimes and evils. Accordingly, we admit that, whether they are individual capitalists or state capitalists, all of those who steal the possessions of the masses are robbers.

We are absolutely against something called power, no matter what rules and forms it has. We do not allow others to gain power; we ourselves, at the same time, do not demand power. In fact, a thing called power is a protector of private property and a mechanism that makes human beings oppressed.

While we are going to wipe out the present bourgeoisie and capitalist society, it is not... that we want to get rid of all social organizations. Rather, we only demand a society in which progress and civilization are comparatively well integrated with each other. Our primary principle is that each individual in society consumes according to one's own demand and produces according to one's own ability.

We believe that a society, no matter what kind of society it is, after abolishing private property, cannot help tending and advancing toward the state of common property (*gongsan*) with the idea of non-government (*mujeongbu*). We think that the common property system can be fulfilled only with non-government and non-government can be carried out only with the common property system. The common property system we argue for here does not imply a compulsory communism, a government-patronized communism, which in keeping with Marx's collectivism concentrates capital in government. Rather, it implies a free communism under the autonomy of producers' organizations, namely anarcho-communism (*mujeongbu gongsan ju'eui*) under which there is no government.

With these principles, we are going to give back to the oppressed class of the Korean masses a colony, called Korea ... after retaking it from the hands of the Japanese capitalist government. We are going to refuse forever to come to terms with the capitalist class of our native country under the situation that fighting Japan has become ... [an] excuse for establishing the national united front. Although the capitalist class is a special class in a colony, viewed from the standpoint of its own interests, it will eventually compromise with the conquering capitalist class ...

It is in order to retake the masses and their possessions now under the control of a compulsory power, to restore the true life of human beings, and to provoke a spontaneous surge of the masses that we publish *The Conquest*.

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From Robert Graham (Ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas; Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*.

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